

**Mitford Parish Council**

**Chairman’s Annual Report**

**May 2022**

Covid-19 restrictions resulted in the cancellation of the Parish Council AGM in both 2020 and 2021, with most Council meetings taking place remotely using Zoom, in-person meetings have been held again since February this year. I propose to briefly cover Council activities since the last AGM as some issues have been tackled over multiple years.

Speeding vehicles have continued to be an issue on roads in both Mitford and Tranwell villages, and in Tranwell Woods. A particular problem has been the increased traffic on St Leonard’s Lane with traffic approaching the top of the Spital Hill too fast. We have worked with NCC to implement speed calming measures on Spital Hill which include extending the 30mph restriction and erecting gateway features to indicate the boundary of the village. This is reinforced by a speed indicator sign funded by our County Councillor. Implementation of gateway features is also planned for the east and west approaches to Mitford village, in Tranwell village and in Tranwell Woods; the Parish Council has set aside funding to support this objective.

Water flowing off Spital Hill and flooding on Mitford Road opposite Wansbeck Cottage has been an issue for three years, the source of the water is still a mystery but is believed to be either from a spring or old land drains. Additional drainage was installed at the top of Spital Hill in 2019 to intercept the water but transferred the problem to the bottom of the hill, this issue was largely resolved earlier this year by installing an additional gulley on Mitford Road as part of the resurfacing programme.

The condition of our roads has improved considerably in the last year with the repair of St Leonard’s Lane and resurfacing of Mitford Road including repair of the pavements. There is still work to do, notably Mitford Steads Road which has deteriorated badly over the last winter.

A second significant landslip behind the village hall occurred in February 2021 with another section of the allotment sliding into the river Font. A cost-effective solution was considered using live willow spiling to shore up the riverbank, discussions were held with the Environment Agency and a specialist contractor but the cost of the necessary survey work, design calculations and permitting meant that the project was not financially viable. The Parish Council has worked with the Mitford Estate to plant willow along the bank upstream of the erosion site, we plan to add to this planting and will continue to monitor the situation.

A boundary review was initiated by Morpeth Town Council in 2019 which would have seen the MTC boundary extend to include new housing developments on the fringes of Morpeth including the proposed development west of Lancaster Park. The changes were vigorously opposed by both Mitford and Hepscott parish councils, and whilst the County Council approved some changes in January 2021, the boundary between Mitford and Morpeth was not changed.

Parts of Mitford Village and the surrounding communities have suffered dismal broadband speeds for many years. In 2021 we worked with a community group to demonstrate sufficient demand for fibre-to-the-premises to enable a project with Alncom to deliver fibre to over 60 properties at no cost to the households. The project also delivered free broadband services to the village hall, church hall and cricket club.

Financially the Parish Council is in a strong position, we have reserved £6,000 for future gateway features as detailed above, set aside £3,500 for a Covid Recovery Fund, leaving total unreserved funds of £7,197. We have frozen our budget for the second year which translates into a small reduction in the Parish component of council tax due to the increase in housing stock.

Finally, I wish to thank my fellow councillors for all their hard work during a difficult period, our Clerk for keeping the show on the road with countless virtual meetings, and our County Councillor for his continued support despite his heavy workload. I make a special mention of Esther Ridley who is moving away from the area and will shortly step down from the Council; she has represented the Tranwell Woods community for many years and has latterly served as vice-chair of the Parish Council.

**Dr MRG Sharp**

**Chairman**