

Old Catton Parish Council

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Old Catton Parish Council Annual Report 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025

Welcome to this year's Annual Report from your Parish Council.

As I write this, the sun is shining, and it finally feels like spring is here — with summer just around the corner. It's wonderful to look around our Parish and see all the fantastic amenities we're lucky to have. At a time when green spaces are increasingly under threat from development, it's a real joy to watch the grass, wildflowers, and woodlands of Catton Park, the Deer Park, the Recreation Ground, Woodham Leas, and Lavaré Park burst back into life. I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of such a beautiful and thriving community.

This year, the Parish Council has continued to champion our brilliant community groups and organisations — the beating heart of Old Catton. From the WI and the Church to the RBL, Scouts and Guides, football clubs, youth groups, arts, crafts, and sports — we are truly blessed with a huge variety of activities for all ages. A huge thank you goes to all the volunteers who give their time so generously. If you missed it, our special Winter Newsletter lists all the fantastic groups you can get involved with. It is still available on our website: https://www.oldcattonparishcouncil.co.uk/images/newsletters/Winter_2024.pdf.

With the new playing season underway, we're delighted to welcome back our sports groups to the Recreation Ground — Thoroughbreds Netball, Old Catton Cricket Club, and our three bowls clubs: Wensum, Catton, and Old Catton. Thinking about taking up a new sport (or getting back into an old one)? You'll find all the details on how to join these clubs in our Newsletters and on our website. Plus, don't forget — our tennis courts at the Recreation Ground are available for hire! Book your court online here: <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/old-catton-recreation-ground>.

We are very pleased to welcome our newest Member of the Parish Council, Mark Winhall. We are already reaping the benefits of Mark's knowledge and positive contributions to the Parish. The Council still has x3 vacancies — if you are passionate about your Parish and want to make a difference in your local community and enjoying working as part of a team please consider joining the Parish Council. More information is available on our website: <https://www.oldcattonparishcouncil.co.uk/i-want-to/become-a-councillor.html>. Alternatively come along to one of our monthly meetings held every 2nd Monday of the month at the Pavilion, Recreation Ground (next meeting will be held on 9th June).

We are also delighted to welcome x3 new members of staff to our team. Vanessa Middleton has joined us as Administration Officer, Tabitha Blomfield as Catton Park Assistant and Graham Gill as Groundsman. Each brings valuable skills and experience, and we are confident they will be a great asset, helping to further enhance our already successful team. We look forward to the contributions they will make as we continue to grow and thrive.

We recently said farewell and thank you to our Groundsman, Neil Shiach who left us at the end of June. We also extend our thanks and best wishes to Jean Vincent, who originally joined us for just two weeks

to cover admin duties — and stayed for an amazing 15 months! We are truly grateful for the contributions Neil and Jean have made to the Parish and we wish them every health and happiness for the future.

We are thrilled to announce that planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of facilities at Lavaré Park. The brand-new Clubhouse will deliver long-overdue upgrades for Old Catton Junior Football Club, including modern changing rooms, first aid and referee rooms, a kitchen, and improved toilet facilities. A spacious meeting room — with capacity for around 150 people — will also provide the much-needed community hub residents have been calling for in the north of the Parish. We're committed to building a Clubhouse that meets carbon literacy standards, using eco-friendly materials, and incorporating solar panels, heat source pumps, and recycled air systems. Our consultants are now refining the approved plans ready for the project to go out to tender — and we can't wait to break ground later this year! Meanwhile, planning permission for the Pavilion redevelopment at the Recreation Ground is still pending, and we hope to see it approved in the coming weeks. Regarding the development of land near Morrisons and Lavaré Park (part of the Beeston Park project), the Parish Council has not yet received any updates. We know these developments will have a significant impact on Old Catton, particularly on housing and local services like schools and surgeries. Please rest assured: the Council will keep all residents informed and will invite everyone to a Public Consultation as soon as updates are available.

The Council is delighted to continue supporting the vibrant youth in our community! Whether it's grassroots football at Lavaré Park with Old Catton Junior Football Club, youth netball with Thoroughbreds Netball, or Dynamos Cricket with Old Catton Cricket Club both held at the Recreation Ground — there's something for every young person to get excited about. We're also incredibly proud to back the amazing work of Sprowston Youth Engagement Project (SYEP), offering a wide range of programs in Old Catton, including a Youth Group, LGBTQ+ Group, and youth football teams. The future's bright, and we're here to help make it happen!

Looking ahead to 2025/26, the Council is gearing up for the exciting planning work needed to extend Old Catton Cemetery. This expansion will include Parish Council land to the west of the current site, creating much-needed space for more burial and cremation plots. While this project will take time — with thorough ground water surveys needed to ensure suitability — we're optimistic that the new area will be ready within the next couple of years. Meanwhile, planning for improvements to the Deer Park will kick off. Plans include new fencing, tree planting, and information board(s) on the horizon (funding towards the boards is made possible by funds donated from the DPAG). But first, we'll be diving into the review of the Old Catton Neighbourhood Plan. A dedicated Steering Group of local volunteers has already formed, and they'll be working to improve and update the existing Plan. Keep an eye out for consultation documents coming to your door in the next few months — your input on this review is absolutely vital! All of these projects come with significant funding needs, and we're actively exploring various funding sources to bring them to life.

Finally, are you aware of the Norfolk and Suffolk Devolution Plan? The Government's Devolution Plan is coming to Norfolk and Suffolk, aiming to bring more power and funding to local communities. This means a directly elected mayor overseeing vital areas like transport, housing, and economic growth. The plan also proposes replacing the current two-tier local government system (this being County and District Councils) with unitary authorities, saving millions. Parish Councils will not be affected. Broadland District Council are already running a public consultation to hear your views — so now's your chance to have your say. These changes could be in place by 2026, shaping our future for years to come. Don't miss out — get involved and help shape the direction of our region! To view the consultation go to: <https://www.future-east.co.uk/>

We close this report by shining a well-deserved spotlight on the outstanding work of our grounds staff, led by Head Groundsman Ross and Park Warden Matt. These dedicated individuals work tirelessly, in all

conditions, to maintain the highest standards across our Parish facilities. While public recognition is rare, their commitment is truly exceptional. From the Recreation Ground and Catton Park to the Cemetery, Churchyard, War Memorial, Lavaré Park, Deer Park, Woodham Leas, Allotments and the Village Pond — the staff's hard work touches every corner of our community. Thanks to their efforts, Old Catton remains a stunning, well-kept place to live. A huge personal thank you to Ross, Matt, Chris for their incredible dedication over the past year and to Tabby, and Graham for their enthusiasm over the past few months.

All that remains is to personally thank my fellow Councillors (both old and new) and the Council staff for their unwavering support, expert advice, and tireless hard work. I am excited for what we have already achieved and what we can achieve together in the coming year for the Parish and the Council. I would like to give a special thanks to Sarah for her exceptional help and support over the past year — her commitment continues to be invaluable to us all.

Mr Bradley Sabberton-Coe
Chairman