

Bures Annual Parish Councils Report 2020



The Annual Parish Meeting where the Chairmen of both Parish Councils, Hamlet and St Mary; both District Councillors, representing Babergh and Braintree and both County Councillors representing Essex and Suffolk would have reported to you, was due to be held on Monday 23rd March. We are living in very strange and difficult times. The meeting had been cancelled ahead of the date and the people of the United Kingdom were put under considerable restrictions to their movements to prevent the spread of COVID-19 that very day.

Despite not being able to report to you in the usual way we feel that it is important to summarise the Parish Councils' work on behalf of the parishioners of Bures over the year.

The categories for the report are those from the Parish Survey and from the Points for Action May 2019, with some additional items as we work in a dynamic rather than a fixed way.

There have been some changes to the membership of the councils over the year. Julie Brice joined Bures St Mary but then stood down due to ill health. Sadly Julie died in February, our condolences to her family. Susan Sills has now joined Bures St Mary Parish Council.

Bures Hamlet began the year with 3 re-elected Councillors Mo Baker, Carol Ellis and myself. Subsequently under co-option 4 new members were appointed, Ken McAndrew, Deborah Monk, Barry Raymond and Richard Shackell. Parish Councillors also serve on the Cemetery Authority or Sportsground Committee.

The work of both parish councils has been acknowledged this year. Bures St Mary Parish Council was awarded Suffolk Small Village of the Year Ward 2019 by Community Action Suffolk in September. Bures Hamlet received a Special Commendation Plaque from EALC for its work in the community. With this award came a £100 voucher for use in Councillor training.

The work of the councils has also been accredited as meeting the standard to be awarded Local Council Awards by the county associations of Local Councils,

SALC and EALC. These awards are largely due to the outstanding work of our clerk, Jenny Wright.

1. Countryside and village appearance

- i. When planning applications are received their impact on the countryside and village appearance will be assessed, mindful of local designations.

Most planning applications are seen as reasonable by both the Parishes and the decision-making District Councils.

In Bures St Mary we have had two contentious planning issues this year.

The first is the on going matter of the housing at the Slaughterhouse site on Cuckoo Hill not being built to plan. Having secured a victory over the developers when Babergh District Council turned down the application in August 2018 we were shocked and bitterly disappointed to have Babergh give permission for four of the six properties in July 2019. An unsuccessful attempt, by parishioners, to have the case heard at a Judicial Review followed and the Public Inquiry into the enforcement cases regarding the demolition of the houses on plots 5 and 6 has now been postponed due to the Coronavirus. As a Parish Council we are now working with Babergh District Council to ensure the strongest case against the developers. We welcome those with personal accounts of the impact of the houses on their lives to come forward and contribute to the case.

The second case is that of the use of the former Chambers Bus Garage and yard. The current tenant applied successfully for permission for industrial use for the site. The Parish Council does not see some of the work that takes place as suitable for a residential area in a Conservation Area. Despite this point being strongly made at the Planning Meeting, the Babergh councillors granted the permission.

In Bures Hamlet development of the vacant garage site at 7-9 Colchester Road continues to be an issue which is difficult to resolve. Following refusal for outline permission by Braintree District Council in 2018 involving construction of 2 detached and 2 semi-detached homes, a further application for 2 detached homes and restoration of the existing 2 storey rear building was submitted in December 2018. The second application was granted outline permission by the Local Planning Authority, Braintree. However, a 3rd application for 2 detached and 2 semi-detached homes was re-submitted in February 2020 and is awaiting determination.

- ii) Hedge and tree planting schemes will be supported and areas for wildlife encouraged.

Bures Transition Group has taken on a derelict allotment at the Glebeland on Lamarsh Hill. A Community Orchard has been planted with some trees being donated by villagers and a donation being made by Bures St Mary Parish Council. It is envisaged that the fruit will, in time, be available through the Transition Group stall at the market.

There has been some frustration in the plan to set up a woodland area at Brook Field Grove off Cambridge Way. A leaflet showing the ideas being suggested by the Parish Councils, Bures Transition Group and Bures Common Land Trust, should soon be with you. Braintree District Council delayed the scheme for a year to carry out their own consultation. Hamlet residents should also look out for this. We hope you will support the scheme which was inspired by the feedback we had from the Parish Survey.

Members of the public have taken part in tree planting at Little Ropers Farm and, outside the village, but led by a village resident, at Twinstead.

iii) Measures to protect the historic fabric and to enhance the appearance of the village to be taken when opportunities arise.

Bures St Mary Parish Council was keen to protect the historic fabric by opposing industrial use of the site opposite the church. However, Babergh District Council did not share our view. We are also seeking to stress the importance of the heritage of the village in supporting the enforcement against the developer at Cuckoo Hill.

The Parish Councils continue their drive to work with the owners of empty properties in the village with a view to helping to bring about improvement to the appearance of these properties.

2. Community spirit and communication

i) The Parish Councils believe that community spirit is important and where possible they will act to enhance this.

The Action Plan includes the proposal to hold Parish Council clinics in conjunction with the markets. This has been a very successful initiative with many of those visiting the markets taking time to speak to Parish Councillors about village issues. The markets, sadly on hold at present due to COVID-19, provide great opportunities to experience the strong community spirit in Bures. Bures St Mary Parish Council has set aside funds to support the Royal British Legion in their plans to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of VE Day. Unfortunately the activities to mark this historic date have been put on hold due to the current restrictions on movement and gatherings.

ii. Using a range of communication media, ensure all households have access to information about local community facilities and events.

The Parish Councils website is continually updated and all parish council information can be found there. Please follow the link <http://bures.onesuffolk.net/>

All Parish Council issues of note are now posted on the village Facebook page, Beautiful Bures and on the Parish Councils page. This ensures that a wider section of the public are aware of meetings and issues.

The Parish Councils submit a Snippets page to the monthly Parish Magazine. This gives a flavour of the issues of the day. It has again been noted at Parish Council

meetings that a magazine available to all, such as that produced in Leavenheath, would be helpful but no steps have been taken towards this end.

3. Community assets and services

i. To shape and maintain good transport links throughout the village.

The Parish Councils each have a councillor with responsibility for public transport. We are informed of and welcome improvements and will challenge any moves to reduce services.

Regretfully we need to report that the improved half hourly bus service has returned to the hourly service. Chambers have now introduced an emergency timetable from 28th March reducing the number of 754 buses operating through Bures due to COVID-19.

The change making Bures Station a request stop has now been reversed and all trains once again stop at Bures. Greater Anglia has introduced its new 3 car sliding door trains on the Sudbury branch line. These offer much improved comfort and currently retain the conductor service for on-train ticket purchase. The Company is in the process of replacing all their fleet with new trains and hope to complete this transformation by the end of 2020. As from 23rd March GA is operating temporary timetables as a result of reduced numbers of passengers travelling.

The new Station Adopter Group has gone from strength to strength. In July the group won the Greater Anglia Station Adopters Group of the Year and were shortlisted for a National Award in Telford. In February they hosted Station Adopters from across the area at the Dennis Ambrose barn on the common. Greater Anglia, Essex CC and Bures Hamlet Parish Council finance the work done by the group.

In 2016 Network Rail initiated a consultation to close 130 level crossings in East Anglia, one being the pedestrian crossing between The Paddocks and Colne Road. A Public Inquiry into the closures commenced in October 2017 and was completed in January 2019. No decisions have been made with regard to the Bures Level Crossing.

ii. Assets, other than retail, seen as valuable elements of village life.

Bures School - The Chairman of the Governors provides a report on the school for both parish councils. This report is also put on the website. The school is currently considering the future of its nursery provision and is undergoing a non-statutory consultation period.

Bures Doctors' Surgery - Parish Council has a councillor with responsibility for Health matters. The Parish Councils will work with the Patient Group as and when the need arises.

The Community Centre has installed Air Source Heat Pumps to heat the hall. This has considerably reduced the cost of the heating and utilises the solar energy from the roof installation.

iii. The Recreation Ground, Common, and Community Woodland are important areas for recreation. The Parish Councils will continue to commit to the provision of high quality leisure, sports and play areas

and support of other areas for recreation, including footpaths. The Parish Councils also maintain the cemetery.

The Joint Sportsground Committee has continued to work on maintaining and improving facilities on the Recreation Ground and at Pikes Marsh. The committee comprises members of Bures St Mary and Bures Hamlet Parish Councils and representatives of the sports clubs attend.

Over the past year, the new Wicksteed roundabout has been installed and Noah's Ark obtained a large grant to completely renew their outside space on the recreation ground. Both are great improvements to the area. The tennis courts, provided as part of the Millennium Project, have been cleaned and the lines repainted. Lines for Pickleball were added and the courts are regularly used for this sport. The riverside information boards installed as part of the millennium project had faded and have now been renewed.

There are plans to fence the playground designated for the over 7's and to add to the equipment. Other plans being worked on are improved barbecue facilities, repairs to the landing stage and revamping of the skateboard ramp.

We have been working with the police regarding the anti-social behaviour that occurs down by the river in the Summer months. As part of this work it is planned that CCTV will be installed.

We have begun including items from '20 Actions Parish and Town Councils can take on the Climate and Nature Emergency' and these will inform our plan for next year. In particular, the councils have decided to cease using glyphosate weed killer and are looking at alternative ways of controlling weeds around the play equipment and elsewhere in the village.

We welcome Shelley Boydell who has taken on the important role of Assistant Sportsground Clerk to work with the Committee.

The Cemetery is a beautiful tranquil area. Members of the two Parish Councils manage it jointly. The Parish Clerk plays a valuable role in responding to the needs of bereaved villagers and supporting them with arrangements for burials and burials of ashes. The chairman and the clerk have mapped all the graves in the cemetery and a complete, accurate record is now held. New paths have been put in and the mature trees continue to be monitored, as does the boundary with the new development.

Bures Common continues to be a valuable village resource, both as open space and as the venue for the monthly markets. The barn has been named after Dennis Ambrose, a trustee and former Bures St Mary Parish Councillor, who sadly died in September last year.

The Footpath warden produces reports on the rights of way for Parish Council meetings and these reports are available on the website.

The plan to provide a walks leaflet for residents has been completed. These leaflets also contain interesting information about historic buildings in the village. They are widely available for residents and visitors alike. The Dedham Vale AONB Project funded the leaflet. A noticeboard featuring a map of the village and showing the routes has been installed at the Recreation ground. Funding for this was obtained through District and County councillor locality budgets.

- vi) It is important that residents feel safe and the provision of appropriate street lighting is important in this context.

The lighting has been reviewed and there are now plans to improve this in areas identified by the responses to the Parish Survey. In Bures Hamlet, the route from Parsonage Grove to the station needs lighting and an application has gone to Essex CC. The bollard lighting in Bures St Mary needs replacing and it is planned that a bollard be added to light the path from Friends Field to Nayland Road.

- vii. To ensure that the Parishes are well served with a fast and reliable Broadband service.

Last year it was reported that broadband to the centre of the village had been improved by Openreach installing fibre optic cables and cabinets] [Bures Hamlet is communicating with a local Internet Service Provider, County Broadband (CB), who plan to install equipment to provide facilities for high speed broadband in the village. However, discussions are ongoing to prevent CB from erecting wooden transmission poles in parts of the village. CB will utilise underground ducting where this is already available but is resisting installing its own underground cable ducting for financial reasons.

For outlying areas the problem has proved more difficult to solve. We understand that a group of properties along the Sudbury Road may soon benefit from Community fibre Openreach. Hopefully, following this other outlying groups of houses can use the same route to gain better access to broadband.

4. Retail Facilities

- i) The Parish Councils will seek out and support initiatives to improve the retail facilities in the village.

The Bures Deli has expanded its range of goods to meet the needs of customers. Bridge Stores has closed as a newsagent and the owners have plans to open it as a general store. The newsagent now operates from outside the Eight Bells early morning then at the Community Centre and this arrangement is reported to be going well.

The Post Office continues to be a very important resource. Please remember that for many banks the PO can provide a 'cashpoint' facility. Shops in neighbouring villages meet the needs of some villagers although we continue to work towards these needs being met in Bures.

The Retail Working Party has been exploring possibilities for improving retail facilities. Contact has been made with the owners of empty shops. The garage site is a very expensive one to develop and appears more likely to go to housing than retail. The former Central Stores has been sold and leased back by Sworders Estate Agents who still maintain that they will be opening on the ground floor of the building. The first floor has been let as offices for a Landscape Planning and Design business. The future of Bank House is uncertain following the sale falling through.

5. Housing

- i) **The Parish Councils will seek to ensure that housing is appropriate for the needs of the whole village, whilst maintaining the essences of village life and community**

There have been no applications for housing developments this year in Bures St Mary. In Bures Hamlet there is a housing application for the vacant garage site. We would welcome the opportunity to support sheltered accommodation or a care home but no such applications have been made. We would also support applications for housing for young families.

Work is well under way on the building of eight bungalows and one detached house on the site adjacent to the railway level crossing off Colne Road, Bures Hamlet.

6. Traffic management – speeding and parking

- i. **The Parish Councils are committed to improving traffic management throughout the Parishes.**

The management of traffic in the High Street is still a concern. Work with Suffolk Highways resulted in some changes but large vehicles still pull onto the pavement and damage our historic buildings.

The Essex Speed watch scheme continues to work well although at the time of writing all Speedwatch schemes are suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic. A further training session for volunteers took place in February.

The persistence of the Speedwatch Co-ordinator has paid off and the Essex equipment will now be allowed to be used in Suffolk. Sites for Suffolk Speed watch have already been identified and we are awaiting training. The Suffolk police have continued to carry out monthly speed traps on Sudbury Road. Essex Police carried out a speed check on Saturday 14th December from 1.00pm on Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet. As a result of this, 6 verbal warnings were given and 2 motorists were offered speed awareness training.

- ii. **The lack of availability of parking places and failure to comply with parking regulations were concerns expressed in the responses to The Parish Survey.**

Concerns about parking in Water Lane since the parking charges were brought in at the station have been addressed through the use of notices reminding drivers of the Highway code regulations on parking. The result of the introduction of station parking fees has exacerbated car parking problems throughout the village.

Concerns have also been expressed about the parking at the bottom of Cuckoo Hill. Again, notices reminding drivers of the regulations have been employed to improve the situation.

The Bures St Mary contractor and Tree warden have both undergone training regarding minor works on the highway. This means works specified in the Suffolk Highways Community Self-help scheme may be carried out without recourse to the Highways dept.

Our plan for 2020-21 will be informed by the Essex and Suffolk strategies for Health and Well-being, '20 Actions Parish and Town Councils can take on the Climate and Nature Emergency' and 'The Charter for Woods, Trees and People.' If you have particular ideas for inclusion in our plan please let us know by contacting the clerk.

Essex County Councillor, David Finch, and Braintree District Councillor, Wendy Scattergood, still find time in their very busy schedules to attend most Parish Council meetings to present their reports on matters concerning Bures Hamlet. Suffolk County Councillor, James Finch and Babergh District Councillor, Melanie Barrett attend the Bures St Mary meetings. We are grateful for all the advice and assistance given to us throughout the year.

With many thanks to all parish councillors who work so hard for the village and especial thanks to our amazing clerk, Jenny Wright

Gill Jackson, Chairman Bures St Mary Parish Council and

Mike Welch Chairman of Bures Hamlet Parish Council.