

Bures Annual Parish Councils' Report 2021



The Parish Councils' Action Plan for 2020-1 had three main areas of focus: Community spirit and communication; Environment; Community assets, services and enterprise.

1. Community Spirit and Communication - the plan is informed by the Essex and Suffolk strategies for Health and Well-being and the NALC COVID-19 guidance

i) Mental Health and Well-being

We have not been able to hold the planned training and awareness sessions. However we have distributed leaflets at the market and councillors have attended on line training on a range of health and well being matters.

The Swap Shop and refreshments on the recreation ground provided much needed support for some residents. The elderly and vulnerable residents scheme run jointly by the churches and parish councils helped residents to manage over the year and this continues regardless of COVID-19 restrictions. It is hoped that Bures Common and the Dennis Ambrose barn will be used for social events to help encourage residents to safely resume community activities, using the outdoor space as a first step.

It had been hoped that we might explore the interest in a 'Men in Sheds' group. This was a suggested use for the Tawney's Ride garages. There has been no progress on this due in part to COVID-19 and in part to issues around the garages.

We are keen to encourage walking and cycling in the Bures area. Bures is on the Stour Valley Path and a board showing the route has been installed on Bures Common. It is possible to walk a stretch of the path and take the train back. There is new signage at the station explaining this and the Community Rail Partnership has reprinted their Essex and South Suffolk Railway walks leaflet and have the podcast, 'Steam, Dragons and Landscape Painting along the Gainsborough Line' to encourage walkers in Bures.

Bures St Mary Parish Council has taken up the invitation to join the Quiet Lanes Suffolk initiative. QLS reminds drivers to 'Expect and Respect' more vulnerable road users and so allow non-motorised users to enjoy rural lanes in greater safety. We are looking to designate St Edmunds Lane, Hollow Lane and Arger Fen road from Nayland Road to Gazely Gate.

We feel it is important to maintain a good working link with Bures Surgery. To this end we are fortunate to have a councillor who is a member of the Patient Partnership Group and another who meets with practice managers. There have been some issues over the management of

patients waiting outside for appointments. These have not been resolved. However, we are receiving very good feedback on the Hardwick House Group vaccination programme.

ii) Covid – 19

The Parish Clerk has been efficiently disseminating COVID-19 information from national, county and district sources over the period since the last report. Where it has been important to share information this has been through noticeboards and social media. A large display was mounted in the window of Central Stores courtesy of the leaseholder. We have, as detailed above, an elderly and vulnerable residents support scheme which has been used through the period of the pandemic. The Parish Clerk and churches have liaised with the school and the Friday club to help those most in need. The Friday Club has continued to deliver hot meals to those wishing to take up their kind offer.

Social distancing and closure of facilities signs have been used on the recreation ground as needed. The equipment has been disinfected as required under COVID-19 guidance.

iii) Parish Council Communication with residents

Following last year's meeting with the vicar and the editor of the Parish Magazine, another meeting was held with the vicar regarding the secular element of the magazine. It was agreed that the Parish Councils would submit articles for inclusion in the magazine as previously. In addition to the monthly Parish Councils' Snippets page there have been two articles on activities and plans for the recreation ground. We have not, as yet, issued a bi-monthly Parish Council newsletter containing the minutes of meetings. This will be considered again for 2021-2. All Parish Council information is available on the website and on the Facebook page.

iv) Cultural/Social Committee

This idea has not been progressed due to the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Environment – the plan is informed by the Friends of the Earth 20 Actions Parish and Town Councils can take on the climate and nature emergency; the Campaign for Rural England Landscape and Neighbourhood Planning document and The Tree Charter.

i) Hedge and tree planting schemes and areas for wildlife encouraged. (Tree Charter and Climate and Nature Emergency Actions)

The Tree Wardens for both parishes together with other interested parties identified several places for planting trees and hedges this year. The Woodland Trust provided trees and hedging. A row of oaks has been planted on Home Stable Field under an agreement with the Bevills Estate and Bures School. Children from the school helped with the planting. Also as part of an agreement with the Bevills Estate, silver birches have been planted along the entrance to Claypits. Bures Common Land Trust agreed to the planting of some Alders along the riverbank and hedging along the boundary with the neighbouring property. Two Dutch Elm Disease resistant Elm trees have been planted as specimen trees on the common.

ii) Rights of Way

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a provision for a cut-off date of 1 January 2026 for the recording of historic rights of way. This was seen as an opportunity to bring more certainty for the public and landowners alike as to what and where the recorded Public Rights of Way are. The Bures Rights of Way officer has been working with local

landowners to have changes to routes agreed where appropriate. However, the proposed diversion order for Bures Hamlet footpath 5 did not proceed.

iii) Link with Bures Transition Group (Climate Action Group) (Tree Charter and Climate and Nature Emergency)

The Suffolk Community Woodland continues to provide good habitat for wildlife and has been a particularly popular spot for residents to sit and look over the valley during the pandemic. The Essex Community Orchard on the Glebeland Allotments is thriving and hopefully there will be some fruit this coming year. Both of these woodland initiatives are the work of Bures Transition Group.

The plan to take on the s106 land off Cambridge Way has not progressed as Braintree District Council decided to leave it with the present tenant rather than agree its transfer to Bures.

iv) Speeding

Community Speed watch was, unfortunately, put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A long-standing ambition, to have both Essex and Suffolk police working together to provide and share equipment, has been realised. A site on the Sudbury Road and the original one on Colchester Road are now being covered by a keen team of volunteers.

Bures Hamlet has a Speed Indicator Device (SID) on Colchester Road. Bures St Mary have now purchased a moveable SID. This will be used on Sudbury Road, Nayland Road and Cuckoo Hill. The display will inform drivers of their speed and ask them to slow down if they are exceeding the speed limit. In addition to the use of SIDs in the village we have the support of the police carrying out periodic speed checks.

With the ongoing concern of speeding along Colchester Road Bures Hamlet requested the introduction of additional 30-mph roundels. The request was rejected citing that existing streetlight spacing denotes the 30-mph enforcement. Alternative calming measures are being considered.

The Bures Hamlet Parish Council is currently investigating the introduction of a pedestrian crossing at the millennium footpath gate onto Colchester Road. An initial footfall survey has been delayed due to pandemic lockdowns.

Road calming measures at the junction to Colchester Road/ Mount Bures junction have been detailed and requested. Unfortunately, these have not been identified for action in the Local Highways Plan budget for 2021/22.

Preliminary works on the project to install village entry gate signs has taken place. The next step would be gaining the approval of the Highways departments for both Essex and Suffolk and this is likely to take some time.

v) Parking

Contact has been made with Greater Anglia regarding the contract with NCP bringing in charges for parking at the station. The contract covers all stations in the area. It has not been possible for Bures to be taken out of the contract. We are asking for parking to be free when there are events on in the village. This was granted for the Christmas market.

Residents in the Claypits estate put forward the suggestion that householders should be able to purchase the land in front of their houses to provide off-road parking. Babergh District Council

currently owns the land and the proposal to transfer ownership has been taken forward by our Babergh District Councillor.

The parking enforcement along Bridge Street currently does not support businesses in that location. After consultation with residents and business owners and following a meeting with North Essex Parking Partnership an application to introduce "*20 minutes waiting. No return within 40 minutes*" bays is being processed. Controlled parking also introduces both road calming and passive pedestrian protection measures.

vi) Reduce pesticide and weed killer use (Climate and Nature Emergency Actions)

No financially viable environmentally friendly alternative weed treatments have been identified. We are currently having weeds pulled or strimmed.

vii) Continue to work to remove empty property eyesores

Bank House was sold at auction in May 2020. Unfortunately local bids were unsuccessful and the building remains empty. Windows have been secured against the weather. Plans by the leaseholder of Central Stores to use the ground floor for craft sessions were halted by the pandemic.

Tawney's Ride garages have not been used for some time. The area has attracted anti-social activity. We have suggested other uses for the garages and there is due to be a meeting with Babergh officers.

Bures Hamlet has actively supported two planning applications relating to the derelict garage site. Both applications have been approved by Braintree District Council. Application one being for four residential properties (2 Semi, 2 detached) with application two the clearing of the site and installation of safety hoarding. Unfortunately, having gained planning approvals the current owner has unsuccessfully put the site up for auction.

viii) Support the plan to extend the Dedham Vale AONB to include Bures

We worked with the AONB on information boards and walks leaflets – see above. The proposed extension to the AONB is mentioned in responses to planning applications as and when appropriate. It is also being used to respond to the National Grid proposals for the Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement to carry more power from the North Sea.

3. Community assets, services and enterprise – the plan is informed by Babergh Open for Business scheme and Braintree One Vision Strategy

i) The Recreation Ground

The summer of 2020 saw unprecedented numbers of visitors to recreation ground. The area has been increasingly popular with young people in particular. Communication by social media together with the limited possibilities for recreation and leisure due to the COVID_19 restrictions saw hundreds of visitors at peak times. With this increase in numbers came increase in litter and some anti-social behaviour. The Parish Councils worked with the police who produced a Design Out Crime Plan. The plan saw CCTV being installed, a noticeboard explaining how the area should be used, BBQ slabs being installed to reduce scorch marks on the grass and a very successful volunteers litter-picking group. The litter picking group is now active for the summer of 2021.

Over the winter a new in-ground trampoline was installed. This has proved extremely popular. Fencing has been put around the main play area. There had been several unpleasant dog incidents where children were playing. Dogs are not permitted in the play areas. The rather worn skateboard ramp is due to be renovated this month.

The Sportsground Committee is keen to encourage residents to take part in physical activities. Tennis and pickle ball equipment is available on request. A new resident has kindly provided nets for the basketball hoops. The Cricket Club have installed new nets and are keen to hear from anyone interested in joining.

ii) Cemetery

The project to improve vehicular access to the cemetery is proceeding. A turning space for hearses will be provided. Work is due to begin in May. The Cemetery Authority suspended its charges for the period of the pandemic a move much appreciated by those already distressed by the impact of COVID-19 on their families.

Both the access project and the fee suspension have been made possible by a government COVID grant.

iii) Facilities for Visitors

Last summer the sale of refreshments on the recreation ground proved popular. This year we put out to tender the contract to provide refreshment. The business has made a good start operating from the corner of the car park near the main gate to the field.

When visitors were spending the whole day on the recreation ground it was identified that toilet facilities would help prevent people using the rookery and the Coronation shelter for this purpose. The parish councils have a portable unit at the car park on a contract from April to September. This is a trial and, so far, it is being used responsibly.

iv) Lighting and pavements

The Parish Survey identified several areas where additional lighting would be helpful to residents. A solar powered light has been installed on the footpath next to the Three Horseshoes. Additional similar lamps may be provided if this proves successful. The village contractor has also repaired this footpath. Consideration is being given to the introduction of an extra streetlight on Parsonage Hill. A potential location has been identified but the recent lockdown has delayed progression.

Pavement maintenance is progressing all be it at a slower pace than normal due to pandemic restrictions. Particularly, the raised pavement due to tree routes on Station Hill, works have been agreed but no start date has been identified.

v) Retail facilities

The Post Office and the Deli continued trading throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This was very helpful to our residents.

November saw the opening of the new village shop, Rose's Stores. This provides a very welcome addition to the retail facilities in the village. It has been hugely helpful to residents reducing, as it does, the need to shop elsewhere. The parish councils are committed to taking any opportunities they have to promote the facilities in the village.

vi) Superfast Broadband

Since last year a community group along the Sudbury Road has been successful in improving their broadband through Openreach. The group at Arger Fen was very successful and residents in that area are very pleased with their improved provision.

Two areas, Smallbridge and St Edmunds Lane have been identified by Openreach for fibre Broadband in the next year which is very welcome news.

County Broadband have completed installation works for highspeed broadband at the following locations: Colne Road, Station Hill, The Paddocks, Colchester Road up to Cambridge Way and Hamlet Court. Throughout, County Broadband engaged with the parish council address issues to identify the least intrusive location of any telegraph poles required within the village conservation area.

Parish Council business conducted this year that is not covered by the Parish Plan includes major issues related to the Cuckoo Hill development. The Public Inquiry in October 2020 decided in Babergh District Council's favour and agreed that the houses on Plots 5 and 6 should not be permitted as built and that the enforcement order should continue. The developer has submitted new plans reducing the height of the properties. This, and the outstanding conditions relating to the development of the whole site, has yet to be decided on by the District Council.

Bures Parish Councils were invited to contribute to the Essex Association of Local Councils Conference on Climate Change. The presentation is available to those interested.

The Local Council Award Scheme celebrates the successes of the very best of local councils. Both Bures councils were awarded Foundation status under the scheme this year.

Our clerk, Jenny Wright, has been recognised by the HM Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, Clare Countess of Euston in recognition of outstanding work to the community in Suffolk during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Congratulations to Jenny who works so tirelessly behind the scenes on so many aspects of life in Bures.

The Parish Councils are considering beginning work on a Neighbourhood Plan in 2021-2. If you are interested in helping with this major project please contact the clerk.

With many thanks to all parish councillors who work so hard for the village, to our District councillors, Melanie Barrett and Wendy Scattergood, our County Councillors David Finch and James Finch and especial thanks to our outstanding clerk, Jenny Wright.

Gill Jackson, Chairman Bures St Mary Parish Council and

Richard Shackell, Chairman of Bures Hamlet Parish Council.