

Bures Hamlet Annual Report 2023/24

Bures Hamlet Councillors

During the year Bures Hamlet saw a change in personnel with the departure of councillors Carol Ellis, Barry Raymond, and Michelle (Mo) Baker. The council wishes to extend thanks for their dedicated service. The council also wishes to welcome two new councillors, Shirley Keeble-Fox and Sarah Manning along with Jane Chambers who has only very recently been co-opted on to the council and has still to join her first council meeting.

One vacancy still remains on the council so if there is anyone interested, please contact the Bures Hamlet Parish Clerk.

Nigel Norton has kindly agreed to become the new parish tree warden.

Jubilee Grove

The purchase of land referred to as Jubilee Grove is complete and awaiting formal registration with the Land Registry. The land is now formally owned by Bures Hamlet Parish Council with Bures Transition Group maintaining the site. Trees planted in 2022 have become established and are thriving. The old access gate has been replaced and now enables both maintenance vehicle and pedestrian access. Benches provided by Cuckoo Hill workshop have been installed. Future projects for this year include the establishment of formal pathways throughout the site.

Water Lane Flood Management

The ongoing issue of flooding in and around Water Lane has been assessed by the Essex County Council Watercourse Regulator. The conclusions are that the bed of the stream needs lowering as many of the residential access crossings are acting as pinch points meaning the stream cannot run at full capacity. It was also noted that verge is being eroded and could do with shoring up.

Flood signs have been purchased and will be deployed to warn traffic such that vehicles are pre-warned and do not create bow waves which impacts properties on Station Hill and Colchester Road.

Speed Management

Speeding remains an issue with many residents. The council continues to lobby the local highways panel with several requests for mitigations. Specifically requests for an extension of the 30mph limit on Lamarsh Hill is awaiting decision as is the introduction of 40mph limit from top of Lamarsh Hill to Middleton. This initiative is being championed and led by District Councillor David Holland.

Initiatives for speed mitigation along Colchester Road are ongoing with the introduction of wheelie bin stickers, formal agreement for the introduction of a shared Speed Indication Device with Bures St Mary, monitoring of on street parking and regular Speed Watch monitoring. Essex Traffic police have also undertaken on site monitoring.

Potholes are an ongoing issue to road users throughout the country. Members of the parish are reminded that anyone can report a pothole through the Essex Highways on-line reporting tool.

Colchester Road Land Sales

Many will be aware of the ongoing sale of land along Colchester Road. Status being that all plots on both sides of the road have been sold or are currently under offer. The Parish Council have submitted a request for an Article-4 direction with ECC which restricts the changes landowners can make to the outside of their properties without obtaining planning permission in order to maintain the special character or appearance of conservation areas. This includes types of fencing, sheds, etc. A decision is outstanding.

The Water Meadows have been designated an Asset of Community Value which means that the Community gains the Right to Bid on any land that may come to sale. The Water Meadows are designated a category 3B flood zone which means it is a functional floodplain with no opportunity to build upon the land.

Sports Ground

The major sports ground project undertaken this year was the successful resurfacing of the tennis courts.

Life expired and damaged fencing in the car park is due to be replaced this year. A village-based contractor has been awarded the contract.

Following the successful expression of interest submitted, a full application for EV charging points at the car park was submitted during February with a site visit expected soon.

The car park surface has been assessed and the committee have been advised that this was in relatively good repair. Pothole patching will be the best option to maintain and increase the life of the current surface by an estimated 10 years.

Throughout the year consideration has been given to extending the current skateboard ramps to create two 1/4 pipes and a new fun box with grind rail situated centrally between the ramps. A design has been suggested and funding will be requested through community funding application.

Richard Shackell

Chair, Bures Hamlet Parish Council