

# **Bures Annual Parish Councils' Report 2022**

## **1. Community Spirit and Communication**

### **i) Mental Health and Well-being**

Braintree Well-being Service organised a very successful Community Information Session recently. Help and advice on a range of topics was available. Several residents have asked for another such event to be held at a weekend when working people are able to attend.

Our clerk receives emails from the district and county councils relating to support for mental health and well-being and forwards them to the village organisations best placed to link with those needing support.

We continue to encourage walking and cycling in the Bures area. Bures is on the Stour Valley Path and the board on Bures Common showing the route has now been added to by another at the station.

Our District Councillors Melanie Barrett and Wendy Scattergood have kindly given us grants from their Community funds to purchase planters with water reservoirs for the Bures in Bloom scheme. A keen group of residents has come forward to add colourful floral displays to our streets. Flowers are known to lift the spirits of both those working with them and those seeing them and appreciating their beauty.

Last year we applied for a grant to provide Welcome Packs for new residents. We had thought that a pack to encourage all residents to resume normal life in the village after the pandemic would be a boost to the mental health of residents but the process was rather slow and most aspects of village life are now back in swing. The grant was dependent on a Good Neighbour Scheme being set up. We are pleased to report that this has now happened and the constitution has been sent off. A bank account is in the process of being set up and contents for the Welcome Pack are being assembled.

We have continued to pursue 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, Smallbridge Entry and the first section of the road to Arger Fen. It is encouraging that Nayland with Wissington and Wormingford are looking to continue this designation for the road up through Wormingford past the church to the B1508. There are very few lanes within the Bures Hamlet parish boundary that satisfy the requirements for the Quiet Lanes initiative, so it was decided not to pursue in this instance.

### **ii) Covid - 19**

The Parish Clerk continued to disseminate COVID-19 information from national, county and district sources whilst this information was being sent. We are now at a different stage where we rely on individual responsibility.

### **iii) Parish Council Communication with residents**

Over the last year we have increased our communication with residents through the use of the Parish Councils' and Beautiful Bures Facebook pages. We have also increased our input to the Parish Magazine through the Snippets page and separate articles and item for information. We have not progressed with the idea of a bi-monthly newsletter as the focus has changed to communicating details of the Neighbourhood Plan, which has its own dedicated website. Please do let us know if you would find a newsletter useful.

## **2. Environment**

- i) Hedge and tree planting schemes and areas for wildlife encouraged.**
- iii) Link with Bures Transition Group (Climate Action Group)**

The major achievement in terms of tree planting this year has been the creation of the new mixed woodland, shrub and grass areas on the land off Cambridge Way. The ownership of the land has been transferred from Braintree District Council to Bures Hamlet Parish Council and the planting project was organised by Bures Transition Group in conjunction with The Woodland Trust. The Transition Group worked with children from Bures School and volunteers from the village and the Woodland Trust Essex volunteers to plant over 800 trees and shrubs. The children were very enthusiastic and it was great to see the younger generation so actively involved in a project for the future of Bures.

The survey to list significant trees in the village, with a view to obtaining Tree Preservation Orders, has yet to be completed.

The Suffolk Community Woodland continued to be a particularly popular spot for residents to sit and look over the valley during the pandemic.

The Essex Community Orchard on the Glebeland Allotments has had further donations of fruit trees and should be providing fruit this year.

### **i) 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 continued working with local landowners to have changes to routes agreed where appropriate. One route that has been successfully changed is FP5, the path from Ferriers Lane to Bombose Lane/Hornes Green.

### **iv) Speeding/ Road Safety**

Community Speed watch was suspended during the worst of the pandemic and resumed at this time last year. Despite initial enthusiasm the team dwindled over the winter months. CSW is recognised as one of the most successful ways to deter speeding drivers. If you are willing to join this important initiative please let us know.

Bures Hamlet has a Speed Indicator Device (SID) on Colchester Road. The moveable SID purchased by Bures St Mary Parish Council has been helpful in reminding drivers of the speed limit. We have the data collected by the equipment and when a vehicle repeatedly speeds along the same stretch of road we can ask the police to put in a check to apprehend the offender. Moveable signs are considered more effective as motorists become accustomed to the fixed signs and do not 'see' them. Bures Hamlet have considered changing from a SID to a movable Vehicle Activated Speed (VAS) device, but the cost is prohibitive in the current environment. In addition to the use of SIDs in the village we have the support of the police carrying out periodic speed checks.

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 was undertaken in October with another scheduled for Spring 2022. Data gained will augment the crossing application.

Road calming measures at the junction to Colchester Road/ Mount Bures junction have been detailed and requested. These continue to be delayed despite escalation at District Level.

We are currently completing a Local Highway Panel application to extend the 30mph speed limit on Lamarsh Hill to the village sign. The parish council is grateful for all the letters of support received on this initiative.

### **v) Parking**

It is proving exceedingly difficult to relieve the parking issues in the village. The car park at the recreation ground is under increasing pressure. It's really good to see the numbers of children involved in Bures Football Club but the car park is unable to cope with the number of cars this generates.

We are currently considering the application for the redevelopment of Chambers bus depot and whilst it is good to think that this brownfield site will be put to good use, the implications of loss of on street parking is a difficult issue.

Greater Anglia have granted free parking at the station on a few occasions but even for the Open Gardens event this year they are only granting this for the Sunday. Representations have been made to remove the current parking charges but as this activity is outsourced it is proving difficult to obtain a definitive response.

The wheels of progress grind exceedingly slowly when it comes to projects such as the request by residents in the Claypits estate 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 and is still with the estates dept.

It was considered that the original parking enforcement along Bridge Street did not support businesses in that location. After consultation an application to introduce "*20 minutes waiting. No return within 40 minutes*" bays was made. Unfortunately, the alternative proposal from North Essex Parking Partnership was wholly inappropriate and it was decided to continue with existing arrangements.

#### **vi) Climate and Nature Emergency Actions**

Bures St Mary Parish Council joined the Green Suffolk initiative to encourage home owners to reduce their carbon footprint. We do not feel it was a particularly successful project. More successful has been the Essex initiative encouraging home owners to install solar panels.

An application was made to Plug in Suffolk to provide two electric vehicle charging points in the car park. The scheme was inundated with applications. Although Bures was not successful in the first round, it is hoped that the second round may bring better news.

#### **vii) Empty property issues**

The planning application for the redevelopment of Chambers Bus Depot has been submitted to Babergh District Council. The application includes housing, retail and highways changes. This is the most significant Bures planning issue in recent times.

The empty garages at Tawneys Ride and Claypits are being reviewed by Babergh. This may result in additional housing and possibly more space for the school. No decisions have been made at this point.

There has been a planning application for Bank House and we are pleased to report that the new owners are planning a café. In the recent survey, a considerable number of residents were keen to see a café in the village.

Bures Hamlet has actively supported two planning applications relating to the derelict garage site. Both applications have been approved by Braintree District Council. Unfortunately, over a year on and the current owner has not progressed either application. The council raised concerns about the structural integrity of the garage canopy but upon inspection Braintree engineers considered it not to be an unsafe structure.

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

The parish councils continue to support the extension to the Dedham Vale AONB. Cycle routes have been identified and it is proposed to put cycle racks at the recreation ground and the common.

In response to the National Grid Bramford to Twinstead proposals both parish councils have joined with neighbouring parishes to submit responses regarding routes and positions of cable sealing end compounds. This is a major engineering project that will affect the lives of all residents in the area.

#### **ix) Flooding issues**

Throughout the year there has been extensive works undertaken to alleviate flooding issues on Colchester Road/ Station Hill junction. These appear to have been successful although there are still further works to be completed. Particularly, in Bridge Street where localised flooding still occurs.

It is proving very difficult to manage the water by Bevills on the Sudbury Road and by St Edmunds Lane. This is partly due to it being the result of springs and partly the lack of regular gully clearance by Suffolk CC Highways.

### **3. Community assets, services and enterprise**

#### **i) The Recreation Ground**

The Summer of 2021 saw similar, but not as serious, issues as the previous year with large numbers of young people visiting the recreation ground. The volunteer litter pickers were very helpful, not only in helping to keep the village looking good but also in providing an important adult presence on the rec.

We have successfully applied for a grant from the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner's Fund. It is intended that this funding will pay for youth workers to spend time engaging the young visitors in a positive way.

The skateboard ramp was renovated last Summer although, sadly, it was the target for graffiti soon afterwards. It is good to note that graffiti is not the problem it used to be and the desecration of the skateboard ramp was a rare occurrence.

New equipment has been ordered for the Under 7s play area. They will soon have an exciting 'Dinosaur domain' to explore and climb on. The in-ground trampoline was so successful that a second one will be installed for the younger children.

As always the Sportsground Committee is keen to encourage residents to take part in physical activities. There are clubs for tennis, cricket and football; all provide a friendly welcome to new members. Pickle ball also continues to prove popular.

#### **ii) Cemetery**

The rededication service for war casualty Katherine Carr was held at the cemetery on Saturday 18th September. Members from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Royal British Legion, Bures St Mary Parish Council, Cemetery Authority and members of the family attended the short service with laying of wreaths.

The projects to amend the vehicular access to the cemetery and to plant bulbs have been completed.

#### **iii) Facilities for Visitors**

We are pleased to announce that the Hobby Horse was once again successful in tendering for the contract to provide refreshments for residents and visitors using the recreation ground.

The provision of a portable toilet last year was successful and the decision was made to keep the facility in place over the winter and for the coming year.

#### **iv) Lighting and pavements**

An extra streetlight for Parsonage Hill has been put on temporary hold due to a change in environmental circumstances.

Pavement maintenance is progressing all be it at a slower pace than normal due to pandemic restrictions. However, one of the raised tree roots on Station Hill has been rectified with the remaining one scheduled for later this year. Also, the uneven pavement outside the old police house on Station Hill has been extensively repaired. The councils continue to identify and report all pathway damage, potholes and drainage issues.

#### **v) Retail facilities**

The parish councils have continued to support retail facilities in the village. Roses Stores has been a welcome addition to the very popular Bures Deli and the essential service provided by Bures Post Office. We would urge all residents to use the facilities we have in the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan project has produced a £25 Bures voucher which can be used at any one of thirteen retail and service outlets in the village.

#### **vi) Superfast Broadband**

Although the installation of County Broadband was not without its difficulties, residents of Bures Hamlet are benefiting from the speeds provided by this service.

There have been no further community groups in Bures St Mary applying to Openreach for superfast broadband however, two areas, Smallbridge and St Edmunds Lane are due to have the service this year.

### **4. Bures Neighbourhood Plan**

Neighbourhood Planning came from the Localism Act of 2011. A Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to shape the development and growth of the local area. It is a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs.

In September 2021 an application was made for the joint parishes of Bures Hamlet and Bures St Mary to be agreed as an area for a Neighbourhood Plan. Being on the border of two counties made this more complicated than usual but permission was granted with Braintree being the lead Local Planning Authority for the project.

Two public meetings were held to enlist the support of residents who were willing to be part of the team for the NP. There is an active group of twenty people taking the project forward. The public meetings were followed by gathering of residents' views on what they valued most about Bures and how they would like Bures to be in 2035. These were to inform the "Vision Statement" that will underpin the policies of the final plan. With all public consultation for the NP we endeavour to gather views from across the age ranges. We have consulted again on the Vision Statement that was distilled from the 120 responses on views of Bures and having listened to your opinions this is the working version.

#### **Our Vision for Bures....**

- The distinctly special qualities of our **beautiful village**, nestled as it is in the **historic and natural setting** of the **River Stour**, will be valued, protected and enhanced.
- Bures will continue to be a **working village** with **real vitality**.
- It will embrace **green technical innovation** and **social change** whilst **valuing its heritage and protecting its historic buildings and natural boundaries**.
- Bures will also remain **well connected** with the world beyond.
- The qualities highly valued by the community- including its **strong identity, community spirit** and **kindness and diversity** will be sustained.

The groups that make up the NP team are Housing and Community Assets and Services, Heritage and Landscape, Environment, Business and Commerce and Transport. All residents will be aware that the Housing Group has commissioned the Rural Community Council for Essex to carry out a Housing Needs Assessment. The Heritage and Landscape Group are working with AECOM on design codes and the

Business group is preparing a questionnaire for business with the intention of identifying how best to support the needs of commerce in the village.

We will be reporting on progress at the April market on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April and in the Community Centre on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>. Please come along and contribute your views.

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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 Peter Schwier and James Finch and special thanks to our outstanding clerk, Jenny Wright who earlier this year celebrated 40 years as clerk to Bures Hamlet and the Cemetery Committee.

Thanks also extend to all the volunteers who have responded to our appeals for help for Bures this year. From planting trees to cleaning bus shelters and picking litter to agreeing to organise Good neighbours and Bures in Bloom we are really fortunate to live in such a giving community.

**Gill Jackson, Chairman Bures St Mary Parish Council and**

**Richard Shackell, Chairman of Bures Hamlet Parish Council.**