

# Bures St Mary Annual Parish Council's Report 2023



The Parish Councils' Action Plan for 2022-3 was agreed in September so this is very much a mid-term review of the aspirations set for Bures St Mary Parish Council in collaboration with our partners in Bures Hamlet. As in the past, the Joint Plan has four main areas of focus: Community Spirit and Communication; Environment; Community Assets, Services and Enterprise and The Neighbourhood Plan

## **1. Community Spirit and Communication - the plan is informed by the Suffolk strategy for Health and Well-being.**

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

A new venture, delivered by Inspire Leisure Training, was trialled just recently in the village to provide basic first aid training about CPR and use of the defibrillators which are kept in Church Square and in the Bures Station waiting room. It was such a productive workshop that the Parish Councils are eager to organise this on an annual basis for any members of the community, regardless of age, who wish to learn a new skill or to simply refresh their existing knowledge.

We have successfully initiated the Quiet Lanes Suffolk (QLS) initiative in Bures St Mary. QLS reminds drivers to 'Expect and Respect' more vulnerable road users and so allow non-motorised users to enjoy rural lanes in greater safety. St Edmunds Lane, Hollow Lane, and Smallbridge Entry have all now been designated as Quiet Lanes. Nayland with Wissington Parish Council have been especially supportive of the scheme and have agreed to the extension of Smallbridge Entry QLS across the parish boundary as far as the River Stour at Wormingford Mill. Signage is being attached to existing Highways poles thus minimising the need for additional roadside furniture which had been an understandable concern for some residents.

Councillors continue to attend the Bures monthly market on the Bures Common, these having restarted after the winter break. It is hoped that this will create opportunities for residents to get to recognise their Parish Councillors and feel able to raise issues of interest or concern in a relaxed, non-formal setting. The sterling work of the Joint Neighbourhood Plan Team, comprising of both councillors and non-councillors, continues apace, currently revising and redrafting the final document. News of its ongoing progress is regularly on display at the market as well to keep the local community up to date with its development. The Joint Neighbourhood Plan also has its own dedicated website to ensure residents remain well-informed. This important document, once adopted, will help to shape the future of your community up to 2035.

The Parish Councils decided to arrange a slightly different format for the Annual Parish Meeting this year. With King Charles III's own chosen focus on volunteering and the 'Big Help Out' on 8<sup>th</sup> May, we wanted to highlight just a few of the initiatives taking place around the village. Members hope that you have found the displays informative, of interest and may have even inspired you to offer your help.

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

The Suffolk Community Woodland continues to be a particularly popular spot for residents to sit and look over the valley. The Parish Council had discussed as one of the ways of improving access to and enhancing the local environment would be to provide more resting points for residents and visitors walking in and around the village. A very handsome and distinctively designed bench was commissioned to celebrate the late Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee. Made from locally sourced wood by the Cuckoo Hill Woodyard, it was sited on Wind Whistle Ridge, a Public Right of Way, overlooking the village and beyond. Sadly, the bench was recently removed without a trace. The Parish Councils would now like to launch a fundraising effort to replace the bench and we will be inviting donations from the community here this evening, on Beautiful Bures FB and in the Parish magazine.

As part of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils biodiversity action plan, Bures St Mary Parish Council took up their invitation to participate in a scheme to increase the number of wildflowers in the district. The scheme offers expert advice, support and the provision of wildflower seed mixes for meadow creation. The aim of the project is to create both a wider range and larger area of habitat for wildlife, often in places that are currently of limited biodiversity value. These areas, in turn, then connect wildlife corridors or expand existing sites of higher wildlife value. To qualify, all sites needed to be accessible to the public, or at least have high public visibility. There will now, over time, be 'unused grassed areas left to nature' for a year to see what wildflowers naturally appear, having been spared seasonal mowing. Notices will be erected to reassure residents that these pockets of grassland have not been abandoned. Other varieties of suitable wildflowers will be introduced in the following year.

The Parish Council also hopes to support the Transition Group's participation in 'The Wilder Together in the Stour Valley Project' led by the Dedham Vale AONB this summer whereby the community will be encouraged to mount swift boxes on suitable properties. When considering any planning applications for new builds, we will be suggesting the inclusion of swift bricks where appropriate.

Following an in-depth tree survey in the Bures Cemetery, fairly extensive remedial work has been carried out over the last year on some of the older trees in the grounds. Bird and bat boxes, made by the Scouts, have been introduced to restore some lost habitat. The Ferriers Barn Day Centre made a fine owl box which has been mounted on a tall conifer for all to see. Two hundred hedge whips of native species, donated by the Woodland Trust, have recently been planted by a team of volunteers along the south-easterly boundary bank from which there is now an open view across the village.

### **iii) Rights of Way**

Bures St Mary enjoys an extensive network of PRowS which is further enhanced by many permissive paths, generously opened up by the local landowner, creating several circular, well-connected routes. The Parish Council, using a combination of volunteer and contractor input, maintains the paths, keeping them as accessible as possible for the enjoyment of allcomers. It is, however, the responsibility of all those who use the footpaths to keep them free from litter and dog-fouling.

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

The members agreed that the Parish contractors should avoid the use of pesticides and weed killers wherever possible. This has obviously increased the need for the manual removal of side growth along the pavements and gutters, resulting in extra costs for the Council. Members have helped to sweep and clear pavements. Any assistance from residents to keep the gutters and pavements clear to the front of their properties will help considerably to keep costs to a more manageable level.

### **iv) Speeding/ Road Safety (From 2020-2021 Action Plan)**

Community SpeedWatch remains one of the most effective ( and inexpensive) ways to deter speeding drivers. Speeding motorists all receive a warning letter from the police. Repeat offenders identified on the county database face more serious consequences! Untaxed vehicles or those without a valid MOT are also reported. If you are willing to join this important initiative, the team will provide training and make you most welcome.

The moveable SID ( Speed Indicator Device) purchased by Bures St Mary Parish Council has also been helpful in reminding drivers of the speed limit. The Councillors regularly examine the hard data produced by the device and this can be used this as evidence to support requests for additional police support. The device is moved between three sites in the village on a rotational basis thus reducing motorist complacency. Bures Hamlet is considering sharing the use of the SID but will need to apply to Essex Highways for an engineer's assessment and approval.

Currently Suffolk CC Highways, in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Constabulary (the Suffolk Roadsafe Partnership), have purchased ANPR (Automated Number Plate Recognition) cameras which are being 'loaned' to parishes across the county for short periods ( one week) to influence driver behaviour as part of a two-year trial . Bures St Mary have applied for 'a turn' for the Sudbury Road but inevitably must wait in the queue!

### **v) Parking (From 2020-2021 Action Plan)**

The suggestion from residents in the Claypits estate, requesting that householders should be able to purchase the land in front of their houses to provide off-road parking, is still under review. Babergh District Council currently owns the land and the proposal to transfer ownership has been pursued by our Babergh District Councillor. There is some progress to report in that a meeting has been arranged for 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 between all the relevant parties from Housing , Assets and Parking to discuss this single topic! We wait in anticipation!

### **3. Community assets, services and enterprise – the plan is informed by Babergh Open for Business scheme**

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

The Summer of 2022 again saw similar ASB issues as in the previous years with large numbers of young people visiting the recreation ground. Volunteer litter pickers continued to clear the inevitable debris.

The grant awarded from Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner's Fund to provide a youth worker to engage with the visitors and establish some understanding of acceptable usage of the area was returned as no applicant for the post was forthcoming.

Matters finally came to a head and a Dispersal Order was issued for the entire village centre for 48 hours. The situation was reviewed by the Police and the Order was repeatedly rolled over until the authorities felt confident that the situation was under control. The whole community was so grateful for this intervention with both Constabularies working together to bring order to the village again. A meeting with Suffolk and Essex police is to be arranged in the near future with members of the Parish Council and the Babergh Community Safety Officer to discuss strategies to prevent ASB issues developing again this summer.

In addition to the installation of new play equipment for the younger children, the most significant achievement for the Sportsground Committee this year, led by the Chair, Gill Jackson, in her indomitable fashion, has been the refurbishment of the tennis courts, funded by a successful grant application and generous public donations. As yet, no Clerk has been found to take on the administrative duties of the Committee. The Parish Council is very grateful to the Chair who continues, in the absence of a Clerk, to manage the affairs of the Sportsground.

Meanwhile, volunteers also continue to help maintain the fabric of the Sportsground facilities, repainting, repairing and revarnishing, alongside our team of hardworking contractors. It is hoped that all those using the Sportsground will realise that this lovely space is provided for the enjoyment of everyone.

The Sportsground will be 'hosting' the Bures Music Festival again this year which continues to be a major highlight in the village calendar, raising significant sums of money for local charities.

#### **iv) Pavements**

Both councils continue to identify and report all pathway damage, potholes and drainage issues. Councillors appreciate the public bringing issues to the attention of the Parish Councils. The Suffolk Highways portal is a very accessible means for any person to report a Highway problem and we encourage our residents to make good use of it. The road bridge (B1508) is due to be repainted this summer and this inevitably will cause some disruption to local traffic. A preliminary survey of dropped kerb access around the centre of the village has been carried out to identify points where improvement is needed, particularly for those with mobility concerns. This will be shared with Highways in due course.

# Bures Neighbourhood Plan

## 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.

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As we come to the end of the four-year term of office, we extend our thanks to those councillors who have decided to stand down, for their contribution and commitment to village life. And, of course, many thanks to those who continue the good work, with our dedicated County Councillor, James Finch, taking on new challenges on behalf of the community and helping to make Bures the special place it is. Holding it all together, of course, is our Parish Clerk, Jenny Wright, who somehow deals with whatever each day brings, calmly and patiently ensuring that the job gets done.

Our District Councillors Melanie Barrett (Babergh D.C.) and Wendy Scattergood (Braintree D.C.) are both standing down this May with the forthcoming Local Elections. They have both worked closely with their respective parishes to progress significant initiatives over their term of office, providing invaluable support and advice to the Clerk and the Councillors. Both communities thank them for their contribution to the village and wish them well in their future endeavours. The Parish Councils look forward to welcoming our new local representatives and continuing to build on our very important relationships with our respective District Councils.

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May, various groups will be celebrating the 'Big Help Out' on the Common with music and entertainment for all the family. Children of the Parish will receive a commemorative coin to mark this historic occasion, the coronation of King Charles III. The Parish Council would especially like to thank all those in our community who give so freely of their time, in whatever capacity, to care for others and for our village.

**Jan Aries, Chairman Bures St Mary Parish Council**