

**Bures St Mary Parish Council
Chairman's Report May 21st 2015**

This year has seen the usual pattern of full council meetings taking place bi-monthly. The joint St Mary and Hamlet committees that run the Sportsground and the Cemetery meet prior to the full council meetings and their business is then shared with other councillors. Reports from Bures Hamlet PC, Bures Community Centre, Bures Primary School, Bures Common and Bures Transition are also shared at the parish council meetings. The council has a Rights of Way Officer, a Transport Officer, a Tree Warden and a representative at The Suffolk Association of Local Councils, SALC. All these aspects of village life come together to help the council to make informed decisions.

This year has seen the completion of the building development known as Pikes Marsh. This required considerable work by councillors who both identified and ironed out problems. Particular thanks are due to Tracy Saer, Carolyn Holbrook, Mike Seymour and Dennis Ambrose for their sterling work keeping the needs of Bures residents in mind at all times. A further development at the old slaughterhouse site was approved much to the disgust of the parish councillors and the then Babergh District Councillor, James Cartlidge. A blatant disregard was shown for local knowledge and this was another example of planning being approved when Suffolk County Council Highways report, 'No issues.'

At last year's May meeting James Finch, our Suffolk County Councillor declared that he would resolve the issue of the Croft. The Parish Council duly consulted with the residents about possible contributions to this solution and the meeting in July was packed with villagers from the Croft. By January it was apparent that no progress had been made and I wrote to Councillor Tim Underwood apologising for my part in encouraging residents to think that the road would be surfaced. Over the years Tim has been unwavering in his determination that SCC should admit that Melford District Council made an error and that responsibility for the Croft should have transferred to the new highway authority. I would like to take this opportunity to apologise more publically for my part in leading residents to believe a solution would be found. Another on-going saga is that of the sorry state of Bank House. There is no end in sight to our attempts to have this issue dealt with by either the owner or by Babergh District Council.

On a more positive note, Tracy Saer, the champion of our rights to Section 106 money linked to building developments, managed to secure the funding for the aerial runway and adult exercise equipment on the recreation ground. Tracy is now helping to carry out a survey to see whether villagers would prefer the next S106 money to be spent on a new roundabout, playground fencing or a safe crossing point.

Unfortunately news from the Sportsground Committee is not all good. This year has seen a shocking number of dog-related incidents. The most serious of these have seen users of the Sportsground attacked by dogs. Other incidents have included blatant disregard of notices to dog owners, with dogs running loose and frightening people and the seemingly never-ending problem of dog mess. I would like to take this opportunity to remind people that the clue is in the name – Sportsground; sporting activity is incompatible with out of control dogs and the

mess left by dog owners who do not pick up after their pets. I am aware that some very selfless animal lovers pick up after those who fail to do so.

Last year we changed the streetlights to low energy led lamps. We are now seeing the beneficial effect on the budget with the savings paying the loan for new lights. On the subject of lights I am pleased to report that both Parish Councils responded positively to the idea of taking over ownership of the Christmas lights. This means the insurance worry, which led to the lack of lights at Christmas 2013, has been relieved. We are keen to support the community efforts of initiatives such as those carried out by Teamtree.

The parish councils are a link between the residents and the Bures Common Trustees. At the Bures Common AGM Richard Sills stood down as a Bures St Mary trustee and Bures St Mary Parish Council nominated Dennis Ambrose to serve as a trustee in his stead.

This year four councillors decided not to stand for re-election. We are very grateful to Mike Seymour who served as a parish councillor for twenty-four years, Tim Underwood who served for nineteen years, Carolyn Holbrook for thirteen years and Tracy Saer for eight years. That's a grand total of sixty-four years of public service to the parish of Bures St Mary! All four councillors have been a pleasure to work with and will be sorely missed. We are also in the position of saying goodbye and thank you to our Babergh District Councillor, James Cartlidge who successfully stood to serve us as our Member of Parliament at this month's elections. Thanks as always to the clerk, Jenny Wright, who keeps things running so smoothly and efficiently with admirable diplomatic style.

Gill Jackson