

Minutes of Bures Joint Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 25th March 2024 at Bures Community Centre at 7.30pm

Present: BHPC: Cllrs J Chambers, S Keeble-Fox, K McAndrew, R Shackell, M Welch, S Manning
BSMPC: Cllrs J Aries, T Fairbairn, G Jackson, J McCrory
PC D Ramdhanie (Suffolk Police), Cllr D Holland (Braintree DC),
Cllr I Reece (Babergh DC), Cllr P Schwier (Essex CC), Cllr J Finch (Suffolk CC),
M Harris (Head Teacher). R Hamilton (Chair of Bures NHP Steering Group)
plus 41 members of the public

Also in attendance: Mrs J Wright (Clerk to Bures Hamlet Parish Council),
Mrs G Turner (Clerk to Bures St Mary Parish Council)

In the Chair: Cllr Jan Aries (Bures St Mary Parish Council Chairman)
Cllr Richard Shackell (Bures Hamlet Parish Council Chairman)

Welcome

Cllr Aries welcomed everyone to the Joint Annual Parish Meeting of Bures Hamlet and Bures St Mary. Community groups had been invited to showcase their efforts via information stands around the main hall - Bures in Bloom, Station Adopters, SpeedWatch, Transition Group, Open Gardens, Neighbourhood Plan and Parish Rights of Way. Revised development plans of the former Chambers Bus Depot site also on display. Refreshments served prior to the start of the main meeting.

Apologies

Apologies received from G Probert and H Turner.

Minutes

Minutes of the Joint Annual Parish Meeting of Bures Hamlet and Bures St Mary held on 27th March 2023 were confirmed and signed (previously circulated).

Suffolk Police Report:

PC Deon Ramdhanie gave a short presentation on behalf of his Community Policing Team covering Rural Sudbury North. Beat Officers have been introduced since December 2023 bringing a greater interaction with the public and schools in the area. Particular to Bures, the Team will cover events throughout the year and are fully aware of the ongoing ASB issues with arrangements in hand to combat those. PC Ramdhanie advised residents to report all incidents however minor, either online or via 101.

Bures Hamlet Parish Council 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 purchased from 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 St Mary Parish Council Annual Report 2023/24

This report refers largely to the Bures Joint Parish Action Plan for the past year which is drawn up by the two Parish Councils. Reviewed annually at this time, it sets out our short- and medium-term aspirations for the village.

We had identified an ongoing need post-COVID to promote the mental health and well-being of the Community and have been delighted to support the Rural Coffee Van scheme which is held on the Bures Common, the next date being tomorrow at 2pm (26th March.) Effective Parish Council communication with residents remains a challenge. We are fortunate in being able to promote Parish Council matters on the Beautiful Bures Facebook site and are currently exploring ways to refresh the Parish Councils' own website to make it more attractive. Parish Councillors are now attending the Bures Market each month to engage with residents in a more accessible way, to make themselves known and to listen to concerns and suggestions. We are hoping that we may find our next prospective councillors on these occasions. As there are two vacancies, we would like both Councils to return to full-strength this year with new ideas and renewed energy.

The Parish Councils are supporting wildflower schemes and tree planting around the village wherever the opportunity presents itself. This can involve a difficult balance between safety, convenience and what looks aesthetically pleasing whilst being environmentally sensitive. Working with the Babergh Biodiversity Officer, we now have Babergh-owned verges around Bures St Mary which are marked as dedicated wildflower areas to reassure residents that they have not been overlooked!

The Parish Councils have agreed not to use harmful weedkillers around the village to support biodiversity. Contractors have used a product called New Way with some success although manual removal is still often required. This has an obvious knock-on effect on manpower hours and increased contractor costs. Since Suffolk County Council agreed to stop using glyphosate in its routine weed treatment in February 2022, alternative products have proved less than effective. Suffolk County Council will continue to monitor and research other methods of managing weeds on roads and pavements but have advised that glyphosate can be applied if used responsibly. In light of this advice, the Parish Council will give this further consideration in the coming months.

Richard has addressed the issue of speeding. I would like to add that SpeedWatch can only take place with the continued support of a brilliant but very small team of volunteers. In order to continue monitoring the speed of traffic at the Millennium Crossing and by Holly Barn on the Sudbury Road, more helpers are very much needed.

HGV traffic remains a major concern throughout the village. The Parish Councils continue to press at every opportunity for the B1508 to be removed from the Primary Lorry Route. Suffolk residents are encouraged to take part in the Local Transport Plan Survey which closes on 8th April (<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ltp4>) to give their opinions about all things to do with our local highways.

3 Annual Joint Parish Meeting minutes 25th March 2024

For those on foot, Councillors monitor and try to keep our PRowS accessible with the help of our team of contractors. We are especially grateful to our contractors who all work very hard to keep both sides of the village looking well-tended and cared for. The Parish Councils liaise with the authorities for more major footpath projects. Old-fashioned wooden stiles have gradually been replaced with metal kissing gates. Unfortunately, a request for a permanent boardwalk across the spring on the walk past Ferriers Farm has not been possible so pallets will have to suffice! Access to our lovely surrounding countryside is enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. We are grateful to local landowners for maintaining the permissive paths which make an important contribution to the existing network. This time last year we were looking to replace the Jubilee Bench which had been misappropriated from its position on the Wind Whistle Ridge PRow. We are happy to report that, with public donations and a fair payout by our insurance company, the Parish Council was able to commission a replacement bench, beautifully made by the Cuckoo Hill Woodyard. The Cemetery, managed jointly under Jenny Wright's careful eye by both Parish Councils, is also a pleasant place to walk, much appreciated by many. Considerate dog owners are now very welcome to take their dogs into the grounds, on a lead, to visit or as part of a longer stroll. A wildflower area is now being developed in the grounds and, over time, bat, bird and owl boxes made by the local Scout group have also been added. The rear fence to the Cemetery has been repaired by a team of willing volunteers. The map of all the plots in the Cemetery has undergone a total revamp in a more durable format and it is hoped that the new presentation will help families to locate their loved ones' graves with greater ease.

Many of you will have noticed the scaffolding which has been holding up the Bridge Street Bus Shelter for some considerable time now. Unfortunately, the cost to repair it has skyrocketed over the past year while we have been waiting, as advised, for suitable weather conditions. The Parish Council is now exploring funding opportunities to replace the shelter completely.

An important function of the Parish Council is to act as a consultee on planning applications on behalf of the community. These applications can range from Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) such as the National Grid Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement to simple tree management and much else in between. Currently the Bures St Mary Parish Council is considering its response to the revised application for the former Chambers Bus Yard. The developers have decided not to hold an Open Evening to display the plans on this occasion. To ensure public awareness, the Parish Council has requested and been granted an extension to the consultation period until 10th April. There will be an Extraordinary Meeting on Saturday 6th April (venue to be confirmed) at 11am. for the community to put forward its views.

In September 2023 Jenny Wright retired as Clerk to Bures St Mary Parish Council after ten years of dedicated service. There has been a period of transition for the newly appointed Clerk, Georgie Turner, brilliantly supported by Jenny as she gradually handed over the reins of office. Georgie officially took up the position as of 1st April and we all wish her many interesting and satisfying years ahead as she helps and guides the Bures St Mary Parish Councillors in their work for our community.

We also welcome our new District Councillor, Isabelle Reece, who took up her post in May of last year.

Both Richard and I would like to thank our respective team of councillors for their time and commitment over the past year, for their ideas, patience and good humour.

Finally, County Councillor James Finch will be retiring as our County Councillor in May 2025 having served in the Stour Valley since 2009. Past and present councillors are grateful to him for his guidance and steadfast support. We all wish James success as he continues to make an important contribution to our communities here in the Stour Valley in his role as the Chairman of the Dedham Vale National Landscape.

Jan Aries, Chair

Bures Hamlet Parish Council Financial Report

Balance as at 25th March 2024 11,077.12

Includes

Retention Fund 5,000.00

NHP current balance 330.08

Station Hill unspent grant 1,469.10

Parish precept to Braintree District Council for financial year 2024/25: £32,817.00

An increase of £1,000 on the previous financial year.

Parish Element of Band D Tax Rate 2024/25: £98.21 (2023/24: (£96.60))

Allocation of Parish Budget:

	2023/24	2024/25
Cemetery Authority	£6,000	£5,500
Bures Community Centre	£200	£0.00
Sportsground	£8,321.48	£8,000
Clerk's salary	£7,000	£7,800
Lighting	£500	£500
Insurance	£625	£660
Training	£500	£500
Hall hire	£125	£175
Auditors	£300	£450
Administration	£700	£1,000
Subscriptions	£500	£500
Elections	£1,000	£1,000
Donations/parish items	£500	£500
Repairs	£500	£500
Projects	£1,000	£1,500
Grounds Maintenance	£5,000	£5,500
Gritting/flooding	£500	£500
Jubilee Grove	£500	£1,000

The parish council receives a BDC Street Cleansing grant £881.70 and an Eastlight Community Housing grant £690.26. These grants are to offset ground maintenance costs met by the parish council.

A VAT claim of £1,696.67 scheduled to be submitted early April.

The Christmas Lights fund is held in Bures St Mary Parish Council accounts and currently stands at £1,038.12. The Bures NHP fund is held in the Bures Hamlet Parish Council accounts. A preliminary grant of £3,942 was received during 2021/22. A further grant of £3,695 received in July 2022. A 3rd and final grant of £10,000 received in 2023/24. Current balance of £330.08 to be spent by 31st March 2024.

£5,000 grant from the BDC Community Garden Fund received to cover further improvements to the Station Hill garden project. £1,469.10 remaining balance to be spent by 31st March 2025.

Administration figure includes changeover of HMRC finances from Clerk to out sourced plus use of Dropbox.

Bures St Mary Parish Council Financial Report

Balances as at 25 th March 2024	12,756.13
Includes	
Christmas Lights Fund	1,038.12
CIL Fund balance	5,428.60
Jubilee Fund reserved	410.00

Parish precept to Babergh District Council for financial year 2024/25 : £32,435

An increase of £1,000 on the previous financial year.

Parish Element of Band D Tax Rate: £80.77 for 2024/25 (£75.36 for 2023/24)

Allocation of Parish Budget:

	2023/24	2024/25
Cemetery Authority	£6,000	£5,500
Bures Community Centre	£200	£0.00
Sportsground	£8,500	£8,000
Clerk's salary	£6,420	£7,909
Lighting	£400	£500
Lighting Loan	Nil	Nil
Insurance	£700	£750
Training	£300	£300
Hall hire	£150	£160
Auditors	£300	£450
Administration	£600	£600
Subscriptions	£500	£500
Elections	£1,286.77	£1,000
Grounds Maintenance	£5,500	£7,000
Gritting	£250	£250
Donations/parish items	£500	£500
Repairs	£200	£200
Speed Indicator (SID)	£300	£500

CIL Fund: 7,826.93

Allocation:

SID	3,050.00	Spent
SID poles	380.00	Spent
SID STC costs	300.00	Spent
Bench	250.00	Spent
Tennis courts	2,000.00	Spent – refunded by SG Committee
Telephone box	400.00	Spent
QLS	142.50	Spent
Land registration	539.00	Spent
SID STC costs	743.08	Spent
Jubilee bench plaque	22.35	Spent

Unspent CIL funds 2,000.00 - set aside for bus shelter repairs

2nd CIL fund 3,428.60 - still to be allocated

Street lighting loan balance paid – final payment March 2023

The parish council receives a Street Cleansing Grant from Babergh District Council (£1,625.52 to offset costs paid for the Parish Street Cleansing Contractor. Increase due April 2024.

The parish council received £7,826.93 from BDC CIL funding for parish amenities and a further CIL fund of £3,428.60 during the last year. (See above)

The Christmas Lights Fund currently stands at £1,038.12 which is administered by Bures St Mary Parish Council.

The Bures NHP fund is administered by Bures Hamlet Parish Council with grants applied for to cover ongoing costs. A preliminary grant of £3,942 was received during 2021/22. A further grant of £3,695 received in July 2022. A 3rd and final grant of £10,000 received in 2023/24. Current balance of £330.08 to be spent by 31st March 2024.

Presentation

Michaela Harris Head Teacher Bures Primary School

School Vision and Values

Ms Slater and the wider team made a fantastic start in the project to relaunch the school vision. Some of you may have come across it in the last 18 months or so but if you are not familiar with it, it is intentionally in narrative form to reflect the language we want to promote in our children. It includes phrases such as ‘fighting the fear of failure’ and ‘creating the unimagined – works of pure beauty’. We have used collective worship as a time to reflect as a school on what these words mean and how we can live up to them. The latest part of the project involves redefining our school values. Historically, there were 5 school values and 6 Christian values but I feel they are one and the same. A lot of work has gone into reducing our core values so that they are memorable and the children can refer to them with ease. Currently, the thinking is that we want values to represent both character development as well as learning skills. Therefore they are:

- Reflection – thinking about our place in the world and the impact of our behaviour as well as self-evaluating our learning
- Relationships – building links in the community as well as between concepts across the curriculum
- Responsibility – making the world and better place as well as challenging ourselves in learning

We are working on different ways to celebrate these behaviours in children, staff and the wider community! I would welcome your thoughts on these 3 values and their relevance in life in Bures.

Across the Curriculum

Reading is everything! We support all children to read fluently and accurately as soon as they can as this is the gateway to the rest of the curriculum. We try to ensure that we remove reading as a barrier to access the other subjects across the curriculum. We are very proud that 90% of our year 1 cohort last year passed their phonics test, this is significantly above the national average.

We endeavour to bring the rest of the curriculum to life through teaching a wide range of subjects.

We have had an art session run by Gainsborough House as well as science from Colchester Zoo.

In the autumn term we implemented new tests to assess how the children are doing. These closely match what is being taught and can be used to identify gaps in learning to ensure we address them.

These assessments have been shared with parents in a new term report. Following parent feedback, this has been really useful to parents and helps them to know how their children are doing as well as how to help at home.

School Staff

It is natural that there is some staff changes with a change in leadership. We have been running a little light on staff this term but I am delighted to welcome Ms Rhian Dickeson to the team after Easter. She will be our Deputy Headteacher and joins us with a skill set that will complement the team. She currently works in a large, London primary school and has a passion for a broad and balanced curriculum with skills and knowledge mapped out for progression, enriched with lots of first hand experiences to bring it to life. I am delighted that for every role that we have advertised, there have been a lot of interest resulting in lots of applicants. It is a privilege that shortlisting is so difficult! We are about to interview for a teacher role for September, and there may be more before the end of the year – if you are interested keep an eye on the Suffolk Jobs Direct website. It truly is a wonderful place to work!

Pupil Numbers

We currently have 190 pupils on roll, with a capacity of 210 if we were full. Our smaller cohorts are Reception and Year 3. In addition, it is difficult to predict our future numbers as we are on the border between Essex and Suffolk. Our finances are based on our numbers so, ultimately, we want to be full in order to avoid making difficult decisions. Therefore, we are doing a lot of work behind the scenes to launch a new website before the end of the academic year so that it reflects the wonderful things that are going on each and every day. We want to be the school of choice in the local area.

Presentation

Robin Hamilton, Chair of Bures Joint NHP Steering Group

Robin gave a short presentation on the progress of the Bures Joint Neighbourhood Plan. A display stand in the hall for this evenings event is available for residents to view the progression of the plan. Following the defeat of Gladman's approach to develop a large area of land in the village a Steering Group including parish council members and volunteers rallied together to create a NHP for Bures which gives some legal weight in future planning decisions. The draft plan has been sanctioned by both parish councils and can be found on the Bures NHP website. Policies and Design Codes are included in the draft which accepts the need for some housing and in particular affordable housing. Robin noted on the passionate desire of many to see the AONB extended which would give added weight to planning decisions as well. A 6 week consultation will now follow for all residents, district councils and other interested parties to make comments. The final draft will go out to a village referendum for final approval later in the year.

Robin thanked all volunteers for their hard work in getting the draft plan through the long process.

Public Questions/Comments

What is the latest status of the AONB? Cllr James Finch responded – he has been regularly asking for an update on the progress for an extension in the Bures area. There are 2 extensions being progressed at the moment and sadly not for this area.

Are 'Bleed Kits' to be made available on the recreation ground? Agreed to be investigated.

Is BHPC considering 20mph speed limit for the parish? One resident also requested a show of hands as a principle for 20mph. Cllr Aries advised that she regularly held speedwatch patrols at Colchester Road which did not appear to show a major speeding issue. Demonstrable speed data is needed and the parish council is in the process of installing a Speed Indicator Device at the location to give this required data. Cllr Shackell advised that the parish council is mindful of speeding and pedestrian safety and is looking at ways to mitigate these along the B1508.

Can the stile over the railway line from Tenterfield to The Paddocks be made more accessible for the elderly and dogs? Cllr Aries advised that she had written to Network Rail on this matter and continues to press as she considered the stile was not suitable.

Please could BHPC reconsider its response to the planning application for No. 20 The Paddocks? Requisite planning application signage was not placed on site. Resident's objections to the application have been submitted online. Members agreed to view these objections and reconsider as appropriate.

Concern raised regarding vehicles speeding at Lamarsh Hill. Advised that BHPC has requested the 30mph speed limit to be extended further up the hill thus allowing speedwatch data to be gained as evidence of speed.

Concern raised to improve the safety of pedestrians walking along Bridge Street. Resident's concerns to be emailed to all members for follow up at the next BHPC meeting. Resident felt that a 20mph speed limit throughout the village may address the issue.

Did Assington Parish Council gain data for its recently implemented 20mph speed limit?

Advised that the implementation of the 20mph speed limit cost in excess of £30,000 with costs met from the parish Community Infrastructure Levy fund. Cllr Finch confirmed that data was produced but not all residents happy with the 20mph speed limit. Cllr Finch considered that Bures community should encourage drivers to be more responsible for their actions.

Both Chairmen proceeded to thank all those present for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm