

# **Minutes of the Groton Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 26 May 2021 in Groton Village Hall at 7.00 pm**

**Present:** (Groton PC) P Roberts, A Dixon-Smith, G Becker, R Cheeseman, S McGrath  
J Finch (Suffolk County Council), B Hurren (Babergh District Council), J Willis (Groton Winthrop Mulberry Trust), David Burden (Boxford Playing Fields Management Committee)  
R Jones (Minutes)

1. The Chairman of Groton Parish Council welcomed all attendees.
2. **Report from Suffolk County Council**  
Councillor James Finch presented a report on behalf of Suffolk County Council a copy of which is attached.
3. **Report from Babergh District Council**  
Councillor Bryn Hurren presented a report on behalf of Babergh District Council a copy of which is attached.
4. **Reports from local organisations and charities:**  
  
Groton Education Foundation - A report was tabled and noted a copy of which is attached.  
  
Groton Winthrop Mulberry Trust - James Willis reported the following:  
The trust relied solely on fundraising and donations and thanked the parish Council for its continued financial support. There had been a huge increase in users which in turn meant more maintenance was required. The Drift had been resurfaced and some tree work carried out, but more tree maintenance was required in the coming year.  
  
Boxford Playing Fields Management Committee – David Burden reported the following:  
He thanked the Parish Council for its continued support, in particular the increased grant payment towards the maintenance of the pavilion which had now been completed. The Football season had now ended and Cricket had now started and the cricket square was in very good condition. A sinking fund had been set up to help with maintenance of the Tennis Courts. The Allotments had been cleared and the metal fence surrounding the playground was almost complete. Future plans included improvements to the car park.  
He thanked his fellow Committee members for their work over the past year in trying circumstances.
5. **Groton PC Financial Report**  
Richard Jones on behalf of Groton PC provided the following report:  
At the start of the financial year the Council's balances in its bank accounts totalled £6,517.45 and at the end £5,932.37. This was made up of £3,824.62 in the current account and £3,532.30 in the reserve account.  
The precept received from Babergh District Council was £4,375.00, an increase of £85.00 from the previous year which calculated as a £0.01 rise for a Band D property.  
The Council's main expenses were salaries and donations to local groups.
6. **Groton Parish Council Chairman's Report**  
Piers Roberts on behalf of Groton PC thanked his fellow Committee members for their support in difficult times. He was pleased that the Council continued to financially support local groups.  
As was the norm, the Council had considered a number of Planning Applications and had done so in a fair and reasoned manner, always respecting the unique nature of the Parish.  
He noted that the Council still had a Councillor vacancy to be filled.

## **Suffolk County Council Summary Annual Report 2020/21 for the Groton Annual Parish Meeting on 26th May 2021 in the Groton Village Hall**

**The Year of COVID 19** The year has been dominated for all of us at National and local level by pulling together to overcome the unprecedented incident of Coronavirus throughout the year. The County Council with the Suffolk fire Service reacted from the very beginning back in March 2020 in many ways to the National guidance given by the Ministry of Health and the NHS. These are just some examples of actions taken by the Council:

- Immediate response supplying the elderly and vulnerable with food packs so that they were well fed and nobody suffered because of the 1st lock down and were unable to visit the shops.
- The collection and dissemination of local data and advice to guide the local policy for best practice control.
- The organisation of Home Schooling with the local authority in maintained schools
- The introduction of "Home but not Alone" free phone line for the lonely.
- Support Lines for those with Financial Worries.
- The follow up to Test and Trace and now recently totally co-ordinated at the local level since March 2021.
- Local co-ordination of the Vaccination programme with Clinical Commissioning Groups via the Director of Public Health – Stuart Keeble.

There will be lots of lessons learnt for this last year and no doubt our future modus operandi both in work and leisure will be different in the future. We should all thank each other for the collaboration that has been achieved. My belief is that there is "always good that comes out of bad".

**Resurfacing of 25% of the Suffolk Highway** On 5th August it was announced that Suffolk Highways completed its 1000th resurfaced mile following the Council's commitment to relay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's road network. In 2017 Suffolk County Council's Cabinet committed to resurfacing 1,000 miles of road across Suffolk over a fouryear period in a bid to improve the quality of roads and reduce the number of potholes. There is still more to do.

**Electric Vehicle Charging Points** In September it was announced that 100 fast charging points for electric vehicles were to be built in rural parts of the county. The council have reached out to interested parish and town councils and non-profit organisations to put in fast chargers where there are currently none. The funding will cover the installation and set-up costs, meaning very little expense for the hosts and possibly creating a source of income for them. The up take has been good.

**Fostering and Adopting in Suffolk** In October the Council launched Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England. Adopt East will work across local authorities to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. The target has also been doubled for increasing number of new foster parents from 30 to 60 for 2021/22 as a result of the predicted extra numbers required following the Pandemic.  
From James Finch County Councillor Stour Valley Division Endeavour House 8 Russell Road IPSWICH IP1 2BX

**Choice of Schools for September 2021** On National Offer Day 98.57% of Suffolk children were offered a place at one of the schools preferred by their parents. Suffolk County Council received 7,602 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2020. Some 7,116 children received offers for their first preference school and 7,493 children received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

**Suffolk' Response to the Climate Emergency** In response to its declaration of a climate emergency, SCC aims to lead the way with an unparalleled range of activities and policy changes to support its ambition of being a 'net zero' authority by 2030. The council's cabinet reviewed and agreed an extensive programme of recommendations to achieve this ambition including dozens of changes and new ways of working. Being 'net zero' means the council will remove its carbon emissions where it can; if it is unable to do so, it will compensate for those emissions.

**Investment in Suffolk's Natural Environment** The County Council will be investing in tree-planting, restoring hedgerows, and improving roadside verges for wildlife. £228,000 from the Suffolk 2020 Fund will enable Suffolk County Council to enhance its work to protect and encourage biodiversity in the county. The authority will do this through a number of new schemes, as well as building on existing work.

**Suffolk Archives New Home** "The Hold" Welcomes First visitors in 2020 Monday 28 September saw the public able to access The Hold, Suffolk's flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront. This versatile new building will be the permanent home of the Suffolk Archives Ipswich branch and is shared with the University of Suffolk, who have dedicated teaching spaces within the building. The creation of The Hold, and its associated countywide programme of events and activities, has been made possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further funding support from other national organisations and local Suffolk heritage groups.

Better Broadband for Suffolk reaches 100,000th customer as the 3rd phase contract is agreed with the UK Government. By June 3, more than 100,000 households across Suffolk were using faster broadband, thanks to the council-led Better Broadband for Suffolk programme. The partnership - between Suffolk County Council, Openreach, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and local councils – has made faster broadband available to around 150,000 premises so far, since being launched in 2010. It means the current total superfast broadband coverage in Suffolk now stands at more than 98 per cent coverage. The team has plans to go even further, after today announcing an additional phase of work, to provide connectivity to approximately 5,000 more premises, including over 550 businesses, in some of the most rural parts of Suffolk under Phase 3.

**Suffolk County Council secures £3.1M for building decarbonisation initiative.** Suffolk County Council (SCC), working in conjunction with property specialists Concertus, has secured £3+M of funding from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to promote capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within buildings used to provide frontline public services. Working with Concertus, the council has been preparing a range of packages to support the decarbonising of various buildings in the Council's estate including applications for the council's headquarters at Endeavour House in Ipswich, four rural fire stations, Beacon House, Waterloo Centre and Leiston Children's Centre. All this is to help reduce the County Council's running costs for the future.

**County Council Elections – 6th May** I am honoured to have been elected as your County Councillor for a 4th term. May I thank Mildenhall residents for the confidence they have shown in me for the next 4 years. As before I am here to represent everyone who live in the Stour Valley Division at the County Council and will continue to do so to the best of my ability.

**James Finch, County Councillor for The Stour Valley Division - 26th May 2021**

Babergh Annual Report for Groton PC. by Cllr Bryn Hurren. May 21.

This year for most of us has been a year like no other for all the wrong reasons. Having said that it has also been a year where Babergh as a small local District Council has shown a distinct willingness to support their electorate and businesses to the very best of its ability. We have made sure that all who were entitled to business interruption grants and rate relief have received the best and the most that we were able to give them.

Also, as landlord to close on 4,000 tenants the Baberghmidsuffolk housing teams have been there to advise and help those that have been shielding, alone, short of supplies and in debt to make ends meet at crucial times, while always trying to see that bills were paid both for rent and other critical utilities before due deadlines. One thing that soon became apparent was that the much-criticized universal credit system was not suitable for quick fixes and parachute payments as it is cumbersome and slow to administer and bring help and at times it seemed it was designed to be just that.

As a long-time serving Councillor it has been good to see staff at all levels continue in their posts even when distant from colleagues and other team members but there has been a toll I feel, on some of the younger members of staff who have lacked guidance and the mentoring that normally would come from an office environment. For myself I have put in all the effort that I have been able to summon in pursuit of my elected duties and as joint chair of the Audit and Standards Committee it has fallen to myself to see that money allocated has gone in the direction and cause that it should. The death rate from Coronavirus in Babergh has been amongst the lowest in the whole country but still tragic to know that close to 260 souls in the Babergh District have lost their lives to this virus.

I was especially saddened to lose a close friend in Eddie Kench who has always been a support and a source of comfort to me especially when writing items for the BRN. If you feel it, write it, was his constant advice and the more controversial the better. I spent time in his house fitting and fixing ramps and steps so that he could push his wife Janet around in the new wheelchair just before I heard that he had become ill and still wish that I had spent more time with him before rushing away to do the next job.

Thankfully at the last district election the public voted to have a council of No Political control which has made it essential that we all work together and for the minority groups to contribute and get on with the work we were elected to do, without a ruling political group going off on vanity trips and chasing political white elephants or even blue ones.

Although planning and heritage issues are still our achillies heel I do feel that all other departments and functions have performed well. With the huge environmental challenges that we all face being tackled despite not really much leadership from the government we have implemented our own climate emergency and have used CIL monies to start a program of converting our fleet of vehicles to bio diesel fuel and a move to electric rechargeable vehicles for fleet cars. We will also make a start on tree planting and biodiversity on land that we own or on host land for those willing to take part. It is also hoped to switch our investments in bonds that are associated with fossil fuels to more green and environmentally friendly alternatives. We also try to keep people safe with our food inspections for hygiene and safe working methods and the score on the door system of grading has served us well for restaurants, shops and eateries of all sorts. While one recent case has hit the headlines, it should be remembered that thousands of inspections take place every year to keep us all safe.

Plans are also in place to enact a decision to take back our public realm function in house, this hopefully will mean better control of work and hopefully more work carried out with less taxpayers money. I hope that we will then have access to a scraper for our road cleaning duties which will mean that we will no longer have to wait for County Highways to get the mud off the roads before we can effectively sweep them. Hopefully this will mean we do not have a repeat of the stand-offs that occurred this past winter.

Locally I have done my very best to be here for you whenever needed and have always tried to throw my weight behind you, which it certainly has been on a few occasions this past year. I look forward to expanding on this report and answering your questions when we meet on Monday evening. Thank you to our clerk, Councillors and all residents of Groton and I look forward to continuing to work together for the next two years.

**Bryn Hurren.**

**GROTON EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION Registered Charity 1118325 Report for Groton  
Annual Parish Meeting 2021**

Throughout 2020 the Trust continued to support a variety of applicants, both organizations and individuals. Grants have been awarded to help with the costs of university, extra activities for applicants with special needs, computers and internet connexions, specialist coaching, team sports and training, travel and equipment.

Our disposable income has increased slightly during the year so, as ever, we should be grateful if members of the Parish Council would draw the attention of new residents to the Foundation.

Applicants are not means tested.

At the AGM in March Anthea Scriven retired as a Trustee and as Clerk and was thanked for her many years of service. Stephen Watkins was appointed as Clerk. Our main grant meeting will be on 13th September and notice of date, time and venue will appear in the July and August issues of the Box River News.

Anyone wanting further information should contact me. Stephen Watkins Clerk to the Trustees Whitewebbs Daisy Green Groton CO10 5EN 01787 210977 [stephen\\_watkins49@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stephen_watkins49@yahoo.co.uk)