

## Minutes of the Groton Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 4 May 2022 in Groton Village Hall at 7.00 pm

**Present: (Groton PC) P Roberts, G Becker, A Dixon-Smith, S McGrath, N Chapman, J Long J Finch (Suffolk County Council), B Hurren (Babergh District Council) Hugh Phillips (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.

Boxford Playing Fields Management Committee – Hugh Phillips reported the following:  
He thanked the Parish Council for its continued support, in particular the grant payment. Covid 19 had taken a toll and restricted the hiring out of the pavilion. Tennis Courts and Play Area had been open 'on and off' and Football and Cricket fixtures were virtually completed.  
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 £5,932.37 and £9,318.98 at the end. This was made up of £6,615.62 in the current account and £2,698.36 in the reserve account

The precept received from Babergh District Council was £4,375.00, the same as the previous year which calculated as a £0.45 rise for a Band D property.

The Council also received a Community Infrastructure Levy Grant of £2,442.44 which must be used to specifically benefit the community.

The Council's main expenses were salaries and donations to local groups.

During the year, the Council transferred its banking operations from Nat West to Unity Trust Bank which will make the management of the Council's finances easier and more accessible.

#### 6. **Groton Parish Council Chairman's Report**

Piers Roberts on behalf of Groton PC thanked his fellow Committee members for their continued support and dedication in helping to preserve the unique nature of the Parish.

Although it had been a fairly quiet year, following on from the difficulties of 2020/21, the Parish Council had seen a number of changes with the departure of long-standing Councillor and Vice Chairman, Nick Cox and Councillor Adam Crane, and the appointment of three new Councillors, Sarah McGrath, Nigel Chapman and Jeremy Long.

The Council had continued to review Planning Applications in a reasoned and unbiased manner and was pleased to see the new Social Housing development in Groton Street completed during the year and especially pleased to see families from the Parish being housed there.

He looked forward to continuing to serve the good people of Groton in the coming year and helping the Parish Council to carry out its duties to the best of his abilities.

## Suffolk County Council Summary Annual Report 2021/22 for the Groton Annual Parish Council Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022

### ➤ **Children's Services & Adult Care at the heart of Suffolk County Council's 2022/23 budget.**

In December 2021, Suffolk County Council outlined how it plans to spend more money on public services in 2022/23.

- **More money to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) with an increase of £1.1m in the revenue budget.**

This follows a review carried out by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and a parent carer network. The review made nine recommendations and they used these to draft an action plan, which can be read online. One of the recommendations made in the review was to work with a third-party organisation to deliver improvements. The council has since secured Impower as a strategic partner, who will bring capacity and extensive experience of working on SEND systems across the country.

There is an £45.1m capital programme agreed in 2020 to create an additional 870 specialist education places over a 5-year period to 2024. At the moment, more than 6,000 children in Suffolk currently have a health and care plan to identify what support they need to help with their special educational needs. The number has nearly doubled from 3,000 in 2014. A further 12,000 pupils have special educational needs and do not require a health and care plan. Currently, there are 2,000 places at either special schools or specialist units for those with more complex needs. We continue to increase the number of places. Children's education and welfare is fundamental.

- **Extra resources for adults in need of care launches the new Cassius service for an improved home care service.**

In early June 2021, it was announced that SCC are partnering with Alcove, Rethink Partners and Provide CIC to deliver their innovative care technology service to people in Suffolk over the next 3 years. From July 2021, the Cassius service gave our social work practitioners, occupational therapists and other front-line professionals, new ways to support people to live better and independent lives. Initially the service launched with a high impact, targeted range of technology that will continue to grow into the full Cassius collection. This means that the technology can be customised to meet people's needs and to address individual challenges which will help them live independently at home for longer. More details on the Suffolk Website [here](#).

- **Additional funds to prevent flooding and fix footpaths**

In December 2021, the Council committed an extra £20 million over the next three years into further improving Suffolk's highway drainage systems and footpaths.

In recognition of the increasing maintenance demand on these areas, councillors approved the use of £10 million to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes that deal with problems that affect larger numbers of people, and a further £10 million to improve footpath quality and access.

Under the proposals, the council's budget for 2022-23 would rise by 4.5% (from £598.2 to £625.4m). This additional money is generated by a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in grants received from the Government. The proposals were presented for approval by councillors in February.

### ➤ **Another Year of COVID 19 but with restrictions easing – however still be aware !!**

23rd March 2020 marks the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the first lockdown. We have all learnt a lot to manage this prevalent virus and man of us learnt to avoid it. Last year I said "*my belief is that there is always good that comes out of bad*".

Here is some of the good we have learnt to overcome the unprecedented incident of Coronavirus throughout the year.

- 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 with
- The introduction of "Home but not Alone" free phone line for the lonely.
- 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.
- We have all learn to handle the technology to enable online virtual meetings
- We have saved travelling time and as a result become more productive.
- We should all thank each other for the collaboration that has been achieved.

➤ **Leaders earmarked major investment on road to Covid recovery**

It was announced in late June 2021 that a significant investment of £6.238m was approved to support Suffolk's long-term recovery beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) approved a significant investment of £6.238m towards a range of strategic, community focussed projects and programmes that support efforts in Suffolk's long-term recovery beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. This money will be used to increase the offer for young people and families, to improve access to housing, to help local businesses get back on track, to address the climate emergency commitment and to drive future public engagement plans. This includes - £2.6m to invest in future housing projects, improve literacy levels, identify families most in need of support and strengthen the local care offer for young people.

➤ **99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day**

In April 2021, 99 % of children were offered a place at one of their parents' three preferred schools and 95% were offered a place at their first preference school.

➤ **State-of-the-art vehicles join Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's fleet**

In May 2021, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled three new vehicles, packed with the latest technology, to support firefighters at emergency incidents. The Command Support Vehicles will typically be used as a hub at large, complex incidents, from which officers can manage operations and work with other emergency services. Some of the new features on the vehicles include:

- Dedicated WiFi, enabling officers at the scene to quickly stream and share data, images, footage and plans with colleagues who are based remotely, for example at the Combined Fire Control Room
- LCD display built into the side of the vehicle, allowing officers to share content with other agencies attending an incident, such as live drone footage and plans
- Latest communications and computer technology with access to live information, weather reports, data on substances and chemicals, and direct contact with other agencies and services

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has invested £360,000 in the new units, which replace the three existing Command Support Vehicles. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service have also unveiled state-of-the-art rescue vehicles and equipment to provide firefighters with the latest technology for rescues.

➤ **HRH The Duke of Gloucester officially opens The Hold**

On September 15th 2021, His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester officially opened The Hold, a new archives and heritage centre on Ipswich's Waterfront. The Duke was given a tour of the £20million building, a partnership between Suffolk County Council and the University of Suffolk, which is home to more than nine centuries of history safely preserved by Suffolk Archives. The Duke was shown treasures from the Suffolk Archives collections spanning 900 years of Suffolk's history, including the oldest document - a Charter of King Henry I granting churches and property to the monks of Eye Priory from around 1119.

➤ **MPs from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and County Councillors, unite to protect the countryside and communities from the worst impacts of new pylons and cables**

In October 2021, the Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) was set up to review and respond to the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR).

A new group of MPs from across the region, under the chairmanship of Sir Bernard Jenkin, and including County Councillors from the region, has been set up to ensure that the emerging proposals of the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR), and proposals to change the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning regime, are effectively scrutinised.

OffSET supports the government's commitment to meet the target of Net Zero by 2050, and the aspiration to deliver 40GW of Offshore Wind, by 2030. *However, this will result in a succession of electricity generation and connection projects in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, over the coming decades, which will have significant impacts on the environment and communities of the region.*

The group believes that these ambitions and targets cannot be met, on an "at any cost" basis. Therefore, the further development of the onshore transmission system, and the connection of offshore wind farms, and interconnectors, will require a new deal for communities and the environment. It remains a key priority that we speed up the Government's timetable to transition to the offshore transmission system, in order to protect our communities from the damaging effects of multiple cable corridors.

➤ **National Grid informal and Statutory Consultation on the Bramford – Twinstead Reinforcement of the Cables and Pylon connection through South Suffolk and the AONB**

Much time has been spent by many in preparing for these important consultations during 2021 and early 2022. Enough has been said and written. Suffice to say my thanks go to all the work that individuals within the parishes have put into this important consultation for the area and my thanks also go for the support we have all received

from the planning and technical team in Suffolk County Council. After much of a battle, I was pleased to have the opportunity of having face to face discussions with the National Grid Team which were most productive.

➤ **Annual Public Health Report focuses on Mental Health impact of Covid-19**

Suffolk County Council, in December 2021, endorsed far-reaching recommendations to improve Suffolk people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes the creation of a dedicated fund of £2.5m and the development of a cross-system group to support community wellbeing in Suffolk.

The strains of the Covid-19 pandemic have meant that the issue of mental health has been in the public consciousness like never before. The unprecedented measures required to reduce the spread of the virus, have placed extraordinary pressures, and demands on the whole population, with around 1 in 5 adults in Britain experiencing some form of depression in the first three months of 2021.

[The report can be viewed here.](#)

**James Finch, County Councillor for The Stour Valley Division**

**April 2022**

**Annual Report for Groton APM. 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022.**

**By Cllr Bryn Hurren.**

Firstly, the budget news is that the District Council is increasing Council tax by 2% this year.

This seems quite small as it only amounts to 29 pence per week and £3.40 per year, but bearing in mind that Babergh only keep just under 9% of what we have to collect and others are asking for slightly bigger increases, it is likely that we will all have to bear an overall increase in council tax rates of just over £60.00 per band D households this coming year.

Also please bear in mind that local government receives no central funding from national government whatsoever anymore and in the case of Babergh we fund all of our activities and duties with a mixture of your council tax (under 50%) new homes bonus, new business rates. the solar panel investment scheme, cifco and other investments and whatever charges that we can make from our services.

At about £3.50 per week per band D household, I do maintain that your District Council remains good value for money for all that we do and we do not reward failure or award knighthoods to those that let us down.

I would also state from personal experience that all our accounts and services are thoroughly audited and to the best of my knowledge all of your hard earned tax is wisely spent and not wasted. Everything that we spend goes through a visible procurement process and in almost all cases we award contracts to local firms and increasingly provide services from in house.

I make no comment whatsoever here about what happens currently at national level.

It has been once again a year largely dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic and we have done well to deal with all the monies sent down from national government to distribute to local businesses and infrastructure and also to keep all our own services functioning and on the road.

We owe a lot here to our very dedicated staff who have had to adapt to periods of home working which has been difficult for some, especially for younger members who were used to working as part of a team.

Councillors have also had to get used to contact and remote meetings and as much as I hate Zoom, it has proved very useful for quick contact and I have adapted well and no longer have to shout you're on mute quite so much. We have made a decision to adopt a version of hybrid working, with many staff able to work from home two or three days a week and many staff and councillors alike conducting meetings and briefings without the need to travel. We are finding that we are increasing productivity this way as well as cutting down on needless travel.

There has also been a financial benefit as well and we will be giving up about a third of our floorspace at Endeavour house which will bring considerable savings.

Having managed to survive and succeed during the pandemic, we are now facing other challenges. Following on from the need to house a proportion of the Afghan refugees we are now with others across Suffolk working to house many fleeing from the Russian ravages of Ukraine. Around 70 have or are to be housed with host families here in Babergh, we are expecting many more as visas are issued during the oncoming months.

We remain at Babergh, landlord to nearly 4,000 tenants and have increased our housing stock recently, despite the government RTB still being in operation and hemorrhaging many homes each year, we have done

this through building more stock on land that we own as well as buying up stock from windfall sites and becoming landlord to them, instead of housing associations.

Despite this we are facing the greatest shortage of housing ever as a local housing authority, this present governments Build, Build, Build policy has done us no favours whatsoever. All it has achieved is cheaper houses for those who already had expensive ones, a greater strain on our public services from an increased number of houses (not necessarily more populous) and an ever increasing demise on our greenbelt and farmland. We just need houses that the next generation and the low waged can actually afford to either buy or just rent to get a roof over their heads.

Our tree for life scheme has once again been a success this year and across Baberghmidsuffolk has attracted over 400 recipients across the area from parents of newborns, we hope that this scheme as well as providing and producing more trees, will raise more awareness amongst communities and the young about climate change and nature.

We have this past year converted our fleet of vehicles to run on HVO (hydrated vegetable oil) to decrease our vehicle emissions very drastically and have tried where possible to install air source heat pumps to our rented properties and Leisure centres. Also almost half our properties were fitted with solar panels back in 2014/15 which earns us about £350,000 per year in FITs as well as providing tenants with cheap power. We are now developing the need for charging points and terminals ready for the demise of the combustion engine and the switch to electric powered cars, with your district council being a leader in this new phase.

I seem to have been very active these past three years as your councillor and will i am sure remain so, in years to come. I have been pleased to support the fight against the 64 houses on the Boxford bypass which is once again coming to committee on 25 May. I have also been quite active in housing and planning matters including the completion and letting to local residents of the four little affordable homes in Groton St and I am sure will remain so on many other matters and projects including the development and expansion of Boxford playingfield.

I am happy to answer questions either in this public forum or privately at the end of this meeting and would like to put on record thanks for the help and co-operation, I have received from the chairman, clerk and all members of Groton Parish Council.

With Best Wishes and Thanks from Cllr Bryn Hurren.

### **Report for Groton Annual Parish Meeting 2022**

Throughout 2021 the Trust continued to support a variety of applicants, both individuals and organizations. Grants ranged from help with the costs of university, specialist sports coaching and the Wine and Spirit Education Trust courses to library improvements at Boxford School, fencing work at Boxford playing fields and internet charges for Mary's House. As ever, we should be grateful if members of the Parish Council would draw the attention of residents, especially newcomers, to the Foundation.

Our main grant meeting will be on 8th September and notice of the date, time and venue will appear in the July and August issues of the Box River News. Anyone requiring further information should please contact the Clerk.

Stephen Watkins  
Clerk to the Trustees  
Groton Educational Foundation