

Groton Annual Parish Meeting Attendance Sheet 2018

Please print your name below.

ROGER VIPOND
Susan Vipond
Rosabeth Bandier
Jeff Wells
Peg Wells
PETER LETHBRIDGE
MARGARET LETHBRIDGE
Julie Webb
Olivia Webb
Francesca Mecklenburgh
Peter Mecklenburgh
J Meckley
Dublin
C S Gladmore
Jan Stiel
Mike Grew
Jan Williamson
Josley Sill
Simon Marchant
Rebecca Allen.

A Summary Report for Groton Annual Parish Meeting – 2nd May 2018 From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley

In my last year's report I shared our Conservative manifesto setting out our 10 priorities for the next 4 years in Suffolk, focused on our careful management of the council, its services and its finances. We wrote about Conservative values and how we translated them into our vision of how to run a council and why we should for the next 4 years. We pointed to our delivery of 7 years of 0% basic council tax rises but were careful to say we would do all we can to keep council tax bills as low as we can for the next 4 years.

For the county council elections on 4th May, the opposition parties promoted a manifesto of "spend, spend, spend" which was soundly rejected across the area and throughout Suffolk. In all of Suffolk's 75 Divisions, we fought a vigorous campaign and won 52 Divisions pinning Labour back into Ipswich and just two seats outside.

Almost immediately we went into the surprise General Election and our county councillors put on hold their return to normal duties to take an active part in our Suffolk MP's election campaigns, and of course here in South Suffolk, James Cartlidge's re-election. Following that our Suffolk County Council (SCC) group published the corporate 'Our Priorities' document which makes the link between our manifesto and the organisation – ensuring these priorities were reflected in our officers' priorities and action plans.

A few weeks ago, alongside our budget 2018/19 proposals, we published, for the very first time, a business plan for the next year setting out the targets for the improvements we plan to implement, alongside the further budget savings we have to make. Since 2010 we have stripped £256 million out of our annual expenditure. Despite this we still need to save a further £56 million over the next 4 years. However, we will still spend about £500 million on vital services in our community from protecting vulnerable Children, to helping older people and balancing spending on these vital services against the very important function of maintaining our roads. This is over and above the £500 + million that central government allocates for our schools in the county.

This year the county element of the Council Tax (CT) will sadly rise as our SCC councillors reluctantly voted to increase the basic CT by 2.99% at the Council meeting on 9th February 2018. In addition they applied the National Adult Social Care Precept at 2%. This is sadly very necessary but the group is ever mindful that its residents who pay these bills with their own hard earned income. The plans going forward show that we need to save a further £56 million over the next 4 years and in order to do this there are no easy savings or efficiencies left and therefore difficult decisions are having to be discussed. But as Conservatives, our SCC Group will not duck these difficult decisions, determined as we are that delivering a sustainable budget is the cornerstone of providing vital front-line services to the most vulnerable people here in South Suffolk, and indeed throughout Suffolk.

On a personal note as many of you know, I have spent too much time under medical supervision during this last year. Regrettably, as a result of these circumstance, I have stepped back from my role as SCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport. However with your support I do intend to keep my role as your County Councillor for the Stour Valley division. I am pleased to report that at last that I am slowly returning to normal although I predict I will be under the guidance of the specialists at Charing Cross hospital – who are incredible - throughout the year.

James Finch County, Councillor Stour Valley Division

Tel 01206 263649 Mobile 07545 423796 Email: james.finch@suffolk.gov.uk

GROTON AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

In 2013 the Parish Council (GPC) agreed to conduct a Housing Needs Survey with the help of Community Action Suffolk who have a dedicated Rural Housing Enabler.

The survey results were presented to the PC in January 2014, and showed that over 90% of the respondents were in favour of an affordable housing scheme.

GPC noted the recommendation from the report produced by Community Action Suffolk for a small development of 2 to 3 dwellings of one or two bedrooms, and was informed by them that the next step was to identify potential sites for the Babergh District Council (BDC) Planning Department to consider.

Working in conjunction with the BDC Housing Development Officer, Councillors walked the village in June 2014 to identify suitable sites. We were fortunate to have on the GPC at this time a former planning officer, Councillor Rona Kelsey, who had considerable relevant planning experience in other parts of Suffolk.

The eight suggested sites were marked on a map and after review by the GPC were passed to the BDC Planning Department to decide which sites were suitable for the proposed development.

In March 2015 the Chair reported to the GPC that BDC Planning had considered the sites and identified one off Pound Lane next to the houses that are opposite the green with the village sign. This was also the GPC's preferred site, but unfortunately the landowner was not willing to sell the land and an alternative site needed to be found.

All these developments from the time of the Housing Needs Survey onwards were documented in GPC minutes, which were published in the Box River News, posted on the parish noticeboards and more recently published on the Groton website as well together with minutes of PC meetings from 2014 onwards.

Of the sites that the GPC had previously identified there was only one other site that the Babergh Planning Department were prepared to consider. The landowner of this site indicated that he would be prepared to sell land needed for the development, and this meant that the GPC could now go ahead to select a suitable housing association.

At the March 2016 GPC meeting, the full Council approved the recommendation of the sub committee of the Chair, Vice Chair and Councillor Kelsey that Hastoe Housing Association should be appointed to carry out the project. Hastoe has a proven track record with small developments in rural areas and the GPC is confident that they will deliver a good result working closely with the GPC.

The next step was for Hastoe to agree a price for the land required with the landowner and this process started in March 2016. It has taken somewhat longer than we expected for the agreement to be finalised, and we were advised by Hastoe that Heads of Terms were agreed in October 2016, but the Option Agreement was not signed until September 2017.

The GPC did not feel that it was in a position to reveal the location of the site while negotiations were continuing between Hastoe and the landowner, as there was no guarantee that the option agreement would be finalised.

As is now known, the site chosen is the field at the bottom of Groton Street, between the Fox and Hounds carpark and The Old Schoolhouse. The GPC had suggested and expected that the development would be in the lower part of the field near the Fox and Hounds carpark, but Hastoe

later informed us that that particular site was not available and that they would be looking at a site further up Groton Street, next to existing housing.

From verbal comments that Councillors have received in the last few days, we believe that the main concerns of those who are unhappy with the scheme are the location on that particular part of Groton Street and the fear that if this development happens, it will lead to further development on the same site or elsewhere in Groton.

We now look forward to hearing your views.



Anita Robinson <clerkgrotonpc@gmail.com>

FW: Annual Address.

2 messages

Bryn Hurren <Bryn.Hurren@babbergh.gov.uk>
To: Anita Robinson <clerkgrotonpc@gmail.com>
Cc: Sara Godfrey <sara@serenshall.com>

Wed, May 9, 2018 at 4:55 PM

Hi Anita and Sarah. As Promised a printed copy of my annual report which will make your minute taking a little easier. All Best Wishes. Bryn.

From: Bryn Hurren
Sent: 02 May 2018 18:49
To: Bryn Hurren <Bryn.Hurren@babbergh.gov.uk>
Subject: Annual Address.

ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2018.

FROM BRYN HURREN DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Local Plan. Draft has been completed and put out to public consultation, during this period 1,4000 replies and representations were received, these submissions will be drafted into local plan where appropriate and final plan will have a short consultation again before going in front of inspector and if passed will become planning law.

There are two changes that could effect Groton. 1st Hamlet Policy. 2nd B.U.A.B. Five yr Land Supply.

C.I.L. Now up and running. Basically a development tax to fund infrastructure, 15% will come back to host village for local projects 25% if village has a neighbourhood plan. Villages can also bid for monies from general fund.

Boundary Review. Size of Babbergh Council will decrease from 43 councillors at present to probably 32 with each Councillor having to represent around 2,500 constituents, three options have been aired so far and this has a way to go as yet, please reply to Boundary Commission if you have your own views.

Enviromental Issues. Going well, Fifteen tons of glass recycled every week from Bring Sites, almost 500,000 raised from the F. I. T. of Solar panel on council

Houses plus cheaper power for residents. Some issues with export of sorted waste to China but they will still take and pay good money for clean sorted waste. No Household waste goes to landfill any more, all goes to the Energy from waste incinerator. Still a cost but not as much as landfill.

Budget. Babergh increase 3.5%, County 5.5% including 2.% for social care, Police 8.5% Parish Councils av 3%.

Babergh's share about 9% of total but we collect for everyone else and take the flack.

Council's now allowed to borrow from Public Loans Board for income investment at around 2%. Up to 50m for B.D.C.

Relocation to Endeavour House has been a Democratic and Financial disaster, please do not believe the press soundbites coming from the press office of Babergh. We have lost many staff from general and key posts, we are struggling to operate a good service in our Heritage, enforcement and planning departments, phones are not being answered promptly or not at all and our new Customer access points in Sudbury and Stowmarket have struggled to provide a service amid staffing and training shortcomings. At the last count 50% of these staff are allegedly seeking other employment. The former Corks lane H.Q. will be developed 58 apartments and private dwellings in the listed parts, everything else will be demolished including the former Council Chamber.

Merger. At this precise moment it is dead in the water and definitely off, while I personally would probably be in favour of one sovereign District Council with Mid Suffolk the savings are not great and with the disruption and decimation of Babergh that has happened during the last two yrs we need a period of rebuilding and regaining the confidence of our public first.

As of next week I will be in my 20th year serving as your district councillor and remain totally committed to the tasks ahead. I serve on the Scrutiny Committee, am the rep for the Ipswich C.A.B. and still volunteer at the Quay Theatre. I am a keen advocate of housing for local people and have followed your enterprise here in this village and will continue to support your efforts to house village residents locally as I do on the wider District.

Thanks to you all for your friendship and support and will be pleased to answer questions.

Anita Robinson

From: Anthea Scriven <arscriven@btinternet.com>
Sent: 10 April 2018 19:15
To: Anita Robinson
Subject: Groton Annual Parish Meeting

Dear Anita,

There follows a short report on Groton Educational Foundation's activities during 2017. I am sorry I will not be able to come to the meeting; there seem to be quite a few new residents in Groton during the last year, I hope some will join our organizations.

GROTON EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Throughout 2017 the Trust has continued to support a variety of applicants, both organizations and individuals, some of whom were applying for the first time. Grants have been awarded to help with the costs of university, transport to local colleges for A level courses, school trips, specialist coaching and equipment needed in an educational context. As our capital has increased, so has our income, giving us more to distribute in grants. It is therefore, as ever, important to make all residents of Groton aware of the Trust. Our grant meeting will be held in the first fortnight of September, notice of the date will be in the Box River News in July and August. Anyone wanting further information can call the ClerkAnthea Scriven.



Virus-free. www.avast.com

Groton Winthrop Mulberry Trust

Brief report in the Chairman's absence
for 2018 Annual Parish Meeting

Trustees:

Bob Bowdidge Chairman

Gerald Becker Treasurer

(Vacant) Secretary

Margaret Kent

Roger D'Alton

Frances Mecklenburg

Peter Lethbridge

Jeremy Osborne

The Croft continues to be popular with parishioners from Groton and surrounding villages, often with their dogs. The problem of dog fouling persists, although the majority of walkers do make use of the dogbin installed by the Parish Council.

Funds are currently adequate, but the Trust is no longer in receipt of a grant from DEFRA, and fund raising may need to be considered in the not too distant future.

Costs are kept down due to the fact that basic maintenance and path cutting are carried out by the Chairman and other Trustees

Sheep and lambs will be grazed as in previous years

Suffolk Wildlife Trust continue to monitor the owlbox, and confirm that tawny owls have been using it. There have also been reports of barn owls in the vicinity.

An expert on mulberry trees from London University came to see the Groton mulberry and believes it is one of the oldest black mulberries in the country. He will be writing up an account of his findings which we hope to publish in the Box River News in due course.

We are currently trying to recruit a Secretary, and will be pleased to hear from anyone who is interested in joining the Trustee team

**GROTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
WEDNESDAY 2 MAY 2018**

REPORT FROM GROTON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL (GROTON PCC)

1. First, please accept and record my apologies for absence from this evening's meeting. Unfortunately, the date and time clash with the annual Archdeacon's Visitation service in St Edmundsbury Cathedral. This is the service at which the churchwardens in Sudbury Deanery (among others) are 'sworn in' for the coming year: it is a service that, as lay chairman of the deanery synod, I ought to attend. I am sorry, however, that it means that I will not be able to contribute to any discussion of Hastoe Housing's proposed affordable housing development in Groton Street. (I make further reference to this below.)
2. Second, although I have already written an acknowledgement letter to Anita Robinson as parish clerk, may I take this opportunity to thank the parish council publicly for their recent generous donation of £330 to the PCC towards the upkeep of the churchyard. This annual contribution is appreciated, both as a recognition of the role of the church and its value in the local community, regardless of whether or not people attend the church for worship, and for its value to the PCC who struggle (as do most small rural churches) to 'balance the books' — the two main areas of expense being to pay the 'parish share' (that largely goes to assist in 'paying' for our benefice priest, Judith Sweetman), and to maintain our historic Grade I listed church building. This year, the parish council's financial contribution is especially welcome as we have had the additional expense of pollarding three lime trees on the northern boundary of the churchyard.
3. Perhaps the main item that I should mention in this report is the news, announced on Palm Sunday, 25th March, that Judith is to retire at the end of July. Her last service in the benefice will be at 3.00 pm on Sunday 29 July 2018 at St Mary's Church, Boxford. This will be a service for all five parishes in the Box River Benefice and will be followed by tea in Boxford Village Hall. It goes without saying that we shall miss Judith hugely: she is loved across the benefice, especially for her pastoral care. The service and tea on 29th July will be the opportunity for people from across the benefice to thank Judith for her ministry among us over the past nearly 8 years, and to wish her and Rufus a long and well-deserved retirement as they move to Reepham in Norfolk.

4. That said, I am pleased to be able to convey to the meeting the good news that the Diocese intend to appoint an incumbent to replace Judith as priest-in-charge (it may be as rector) in the benefice. There is no current intention to carry out any pastoral reorganisation that would affect the benefice, in particular by merging the Box River Benefice with another benefice, or by adding any further parishes to the existing five. However, it may be some time before a new priest is appointed. Realistically, and based on experience, we can expect an 'inter-regnum' of around nine months. During this time, services will continue as at present in the five churches, perhaps with some of the 8.00 am Holy Communion services not able to be 'staffed' and with other non-eucharistic services lay-led. (The rural dean, the Revd Dr Simon Gill, will be responsible for ensuring 'cover' for the services.)
5. While referring to retirements, I ought to mention the impending retirement of Mrs Pat Kennedy Scott, who has chaired the PCC's fundraising committee for more years than I can recall. Pat will be moving to Sudbury later this year. The money raised each year by the team that Pat has led has provided an enormous contribution to the PCC's income, as well as the events run by the committee (e.g. the annual Harvest Supper and Cheese and Wine Party, numerous flower festivals, concerts, and, more recently, the 'Quiz and Chips') being the main 'social events' in the parish. At the cheese and wine party in December we also thanked Pat and Gerald Smith who have stood down (also after many years) from running the bar at social events. An innovation this year was a Groton 'Open Spring Gardens' on 8 April 2018, photographs of which are on the front page of the May 2018 Box River News.
6. Turning to the church building, those present will have seen the scaffolding currently in place against the north aisle. The lead (stolen in October 2015) is now being replaced by a specialist firm based in Whittlesey, and the opportunity is being taken at the same time to renew the vestry roof, which has been leaking for a long time, with attempts to cure the problem having so far been unsuccessful. As parishioners will know, the PCC were fortunate to be awarded a Government "Roof Repair Fund" grant of £39,000, which will largely cover the cost of this work. Weather permitting, it is hoped the roof repair works will be completed by 18th May.
7. People will have noticed the sign by the Groton Hall gate stating that there are commonwealth war graves in the churchyard. This has been placed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as part of their nationwide project to have all churchyards containing such graves so identified.

8. We now have the necessary faculty approval from the Diocesan Chancellor to proceed with the intended 're-ordering' to provide a servery/kitchen facility in the base of the church tower and a toilet in a specially-designed timber building in the churchyard (for which planning permission was granted in 2014.) The proposed works are currently out to tender and we hope that we can implement the project before the end of the year. The hope of the PCC is that these changes will enhance the church building as a community building to be used by all in Groton – not just by those who attend for worship.
9. One additional facility that would enhance the use of the church building would be the provision of a church car park. The possibility of providing a car park was looked at back in 2010 but not then pursued. I hope that as part of the proposed Hastoe Housing scheme in Groton Street (opposite the west end of the churchyard) the opportunity may be taken to explore, at least, the possibility of including a church car park as part of the scheme.
10. Also approved by the faculty are new glass-fronted noticeboards for the Groton Hall and Groton Street entrances to the churchyard. These have been made by Bryn Hurren and should be erected later this month. The new boards will enable the PCC better to publicise parish events.
11. Finally, coming back to people, we would want to acknowledge the PCC's thanks to the Martin Wood (who died in February and who had also served as parish clerk) for all he did for both the PCC (for many years he was the PCC secretary) and in establishing the parish's connection with the Winthrop family in America. It was due to his efforts that Groton has welcomed as a visitor two US ambassadors to the Court of St James (Philip Lader in 1998 and Matthew Winthrop Barzun in 2015): I doubt whether many (or, indeed, any) other small rural parishes can equal this!
12. The church is there for all in the village: so do please support us and, if you come to a service, you will be very welcome.

David Lamming
Hon Secretary, Groton PCC
2 May 2018

GROTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

May 2nd 2018

REPORT ON GROTON UNITED CHARITIES

TRUSTEES

Brian Jones Chairman

David Elliott

Catherine Lucas

Rev Judith Sweetman (ex officio)

Jeremy Osborne Clerk to the Trustees

Objectives of the Charity

- 1 For the benefit of the poor and needy in the Ancient Parish of Groton
- 2 For general charitable purposes within the Ancient Parish of Groton and, at the discretion of the Trustees, within adjacent parishes where this would be of benefit to the inhabitants of the Ancient Parish of Groton

Income

The Annual income of GUC for two parcels of land, one of which is shared with Boxford United Charities, is £691.50.

Grants

We have made one grant for educational purposes this year, and will be holding one final meeting shortly to consider a request from Groton Village Hall and we are expecting a request from the Boxford Playing Fields Committee.

Future of the Charity

Discussions have been ongoing with Boxford United Charities about a merger of the two charities under the name 'Boxford and Groton United Charities' and we are expecting the first meeting of the new charity to take place ~~in late May or early June~~ on June 18th.

The merged and enlarged charity will have 4 Trustees from Boxford and 2 Trustees from Groton, together with the Priest in charge of the Five Parishes as an ex officio member.

Jeremy Osborne
Clerk to the Trustees
Groton United Charities



Boxford Playingfield Management Committee

Hugh Phillips, Treasurer. 1 Boxford Lane, Boxford.
CO10 5JU Tel: 01787 211729

Dear Councilors,

Report to Groton Parish Council

During 2017 the Boxford Playing Fields Management Committee continued to pursue its charitable aim of providing a recreation ground for the benefits of the inhabitants of the Parish of Boxford, though in practice the facilities are, as you are aware, equally open to members of Groton and the other surrounding parishes.

Our playing fields have continued to be well used by Boxford Rovers Football club; by Edwardstone Cricket Club; as the venue for the annual fireworks show; the Boxford Tornado and also for the 50th Anniversary party for the playing fields themselves. All 17 allotments continued to let in 2017 and the childrens' play ground and tennis courts have all been available for use by the community throughout the year. The pavilion was also available for hire but sadly the take up in 2017 was significantly reduced from the previous year due in part we believe to the ready availability of other larger venues within the area.

We were engaged during 2017 in looking to our housekeeping and legal compliance conducting an overhaul of our Health and Safety and security arrangements; an in house survey of the condition of the pavilion and obtaining professional assistance on a pro bono basis to conduct a more formal professional condition survey and a valuation. The financial management was tightened up and our charity governance issues have started to be addressed though there is still much to be done. Equally significantly we also considered the option to demolish and rebuild our pavilion on the same site with enhanced facilities but were deterred by the estimated overall project cost of around £300k. This remains a long term possibility but it is clear that it can not be brought to fruition within the next few years at least.

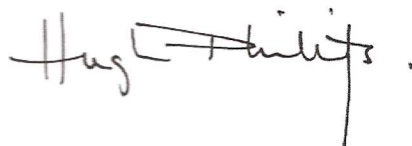
Financially we showed an overall excess of expenditure over income for the year of £2,414 principally due to increased maintenance costs and water usage charges incurred through a leak. Much of the water charge is in the course of recovery from the utility company and insurance but never the less the combined effect of net losses in 5 of the past 7 years reduced our net assets to £4,346.58 at 31st December 2017. We have budgeted for 2018 to show a surplus through a combination of cost

reductions, a modest increase in our charges, the licencing of facilities to "The Coffee Box" on Saturdays and fundraising events but we will continue to rely on the generosity of funders such as yourselves well into the future.

This would be a sustainable basis for planning were we to have a pavilion property which was in good repair but it is clear from the condition surveys that this is not the case. The pavilion is now 25 years old and has no major structural problems to cause us concern but it has suffered from a lack of timely maintenance over the years. As a result it is now in need of a comprehensive overhaul of its external woodwork, windows, decorative appearance, rainwater gear and the like. There is also some work needed internally to overhaul or replace defective equipment and systems. All of this will of course need to be funded so we are now compiling a budget of the likely costs based, where possible, on self help from within the community. A first look indicates a comparatively modest requirement for around £10k to £15k. We look to hold a "Dog Show" event in early September to start the process of fundraising on a DIY basis but have also started to look for external sources of funding. Councillor James Finch has been good enough to allocate us £1,000 from his county council localities budget and the Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Council team has indicated preparedness to help. There are a host of other potential sources of grant funding but it must be recognized that our cause is far from being emotive or eye catching having arisen due to a lack of core funding over several years. Never the less we are committed to making improvements and to rectifying matters.

Overall 2018 is a busy year for us with much to be accomplished and we remain very grateful for the financial support which Groton Parish Council has been able to give to us.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hugh Phillips". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the name.

Groton Parish Council – Financial Report 2017-18

You have a copy of the audited Receipts and Payments accounts and the Income and Expenditure Accounts behind them. At the start of the financial year the Council had £6811 in its bank accounts, and at the end it had £7062. The Council was able to obtain a £50 Transparency Fund Grant to cover the annual fee for its website. Donations were made to local organisations including an additional £100 towards the work on Boxford Playing Fields' pavilion.

In the light of anticipated additional costs, in particular relating to the General Data Protection Regulation, it was decided to increase the precept for 2017-18 from £4149 to £4290, the first increase since 2014. This is just over £1 per annum for a Band D property.

Anita Robinson

Responsible Financial Officer

May 2018

GROTON PARISH COUNCIL

RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNT - YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2018

	2016/17	2017/18
RECEIPTS		
Precept	£4,149.00	£4,149.00
Parish Council Tax Grant	£47.25	£0.00
VAT Refund	£35.97	£125.17
Bank Interest	£1.20	£0.91
Tax refund	£72.60	£68.20
Transparency Fund Grants	£857.86	£49.92
Total Receipts	£5,163.88	£4,393.20

PAYMENTS

Parish Clerk Salary	£1,765.64	£1,855.93
HMRC PAYE	£6.80	£11.20
Training	£0.00	£32.40
Expenses	£203.86	£268.56
Laptop purchase	£249.99	£0.00
Dog bin purchase	£152.02	£0.00
Subscriptions	£127.68	£131.90
Insurance	£188.05	£196.27
Storage Fee	£40.00	£0.00
Audit Fee	£105.60	£162.00
Section 137 Donations	£350.00	£300.00
Donations	£775.00	£900.00
Dog/Litter Bin emptying	£148.65	£148.64
SALC payroll	£34.80	£39.60
Information Commissioner	£35.00	£35.00
Website fee	£60.00	£60.00
Perspex for noticeboard	£0.00	
Total Payments	£4,243.09	£4,141.50

Groton Parish Council

Chairman's Report on Past Year to Annual Parish Meeting May 2018

Affordable Housing

This has progressed during the year and a report has been provided to the APM and will be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Fraulo and myself recently attended a meeting called by our local MP to encourage Councils to consider developing neighbourhood plans in order to protect themselves from unwanted planning applications. Plans can be produced by individual councils or by groups of councils and we have made contact with the appropriate Boxford councillor who is dealing with this. If we did go ahead, we would be looking for input from Groton parishioners, who do not have to be members of the Parish Council.

Precept

We have not increased the precept for three years, but decided this year to increase it by just under 2%, which represents an increase of £1.09 per annum on a Band D property. We are facing increased costs because of the recently introduced General Data Protection Regulations and possible increased external audit charges.

Potholes

I need hardly say that this is a major concern to all of us. The Parish Clerk reports all problems very promptly, and we bring these to the attention of our Suffolk County Councillor frequently at Parish Council meetings.

Footpath cutting

We have not been satisfied with the way that SCC contractors have handled this, and we have now agreed that the Parish Council will receive the allowance for this from SCC, and we have appointed a local contractor who will work closely with the Parish Council.

Dog bins

The bin that was installed in Groton Street by the entrance to the Croft has improved but not solved completely the problem of fouling on the Croft. We are installing a further bin in Broad Street at the request of the Village Hall Committee.

Broadband speeds

The problems persist and we have liaised with neighbouring parishes to see if we can get much needed improvements. We receive conflicting reports about the services available from BT and BT Openreach. We will continue to follow this up.

Boundary commission review of Babergh constituencies

We responded to the review and argued strongly that Groton should continue to be linked with Boxford and Edwardstone, and this proposal seems to have been accepted. We await final confirmation.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their contributions during the year and our Parish Clerk for her extremely efficient handling of Parish affairs. We are very sorry that she will be leaving us later in the year and we have begun the process of recruiting her successor. Please bring this to the attention of anyone who you think may be interested.

I would also like to thank our District and County Councillors for their attendance at meetings . Councillor Bryn Hurren has reported at nearly every meeting, but Councillor James Finch has unfortunately been prevented by illness from attending some meetings. We have not had any police presence at our meetings.

And a final thankyou to those who have reported this evening on the various Parish organisations they represent. Groton may be small but is clearly an active community.

Jeremy Osborne, outgoing Chairman, Groton Parish Council

2nd May 2018