

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING TUESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2026 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Parish Council has had another very busy and productive year on behalf of the community and would summarise this as follows....

The Council continues to facilitate an open, dynamic and two-way communication environment with parishioners. Meetings are preceded by an informal "surgeries" during which time any resident can come and discuss any matter of concern to them and our Facebook page now has more than 200 followers who can keep up with matters that affect them in real time. In addition to this, our website carries the same content and information as the Facebook page, thereby enabling residents who may not access social media to keep abreast of relevant village matters. Finally, another Newsletter was distributed with February's In Touch magazine which seemed to be well received by all.

On infrastructure matters, our Neighbourhood Plan was supported by 80% of voters at Referendum last July and has now, therefore, legal standing within the strategic planning process. We continue to stay very close to developments with Babergh's Joint Local Plan considering central Government decisions, firstly to increase Babergh's annual housing target by 83% and then secondly to abolish District Councils altogether and replace them with unitary authorities (in our case Ipswich & South Suffolk). Whilst the impact of all this local Government upheaval is extremely uncertain, residents can be assured that retaining our village identity remains our overriding objective.

The Council continues to be very active in trying to manage and reduce vehicle speeds within the village which we know remains a major concern to residents. Our two Speed Indicator Devices are having a noticeable impact on driver behaviour as is the very visible presence of our Speedwatch team of volunteers who give up their time to make the interior of the village a safer place to walk or cycle. Our application for a 20mph limit on Back Lane, Elm Lane and The Street (supported by 85% of parishioners in a village survey) has been approved in principle and is progressing through the necessary legal process. All these initiatives cannot, sadly, be utilised along the Old London Road for safety reasons but we continue to work with the Police Safety Camera team who advise that there were on average 2 visits a month during 2025 with an average of 7 fines issued on each occasion.

On environmental matters, we led a project to have 11 stockproof pedestrian gates installed on Public Rights of Way footpaths around the village, some of which have been adopted / sponsored by residents in memory of loved ones. Hearing stories of the positive difference this has made to parishioners' enjoyment of the village has been very heartwarming.

The renovation of the village centre island has been completed, creating a more welcoming space for residents and visitors. The new oak shelter enhances both function and appearance whilst the proposed adoption of the memorial seat area by members of the allotments group to create an "Edible Copdock & Washbrook" feature gives it yet another added dimension. Resurfacing of the whole island and a new dropped kerb have further enhanced safety and accessibility.

We have worked hard to mitigate the impact of the gravel pit and inert waste processing plant at Brockley Wood and represent the community at formal liaison group meetings chaired by Suffolk County Council. A simple and effective process through which residents can report potential HGV transgressions has been established and is working well, with the few reports to be submitted so far, all followed through on and addressed satisfactorily. The Section 106 Traffic Regulation Order process for the northbound weight restriction on Swan Hill has begun and we will continue to do what we can to accelerate its progress.

Our investment in CCTV technology continues to be successful in eliminating anti-social behaviour and criminal road traffic offences at Whights Corner, returning this part of the village to a more peaceful and less intimidating state for those who live there. On other road safety matters, we continue to press Suffolk Highways to discharge their responsibilities properly, most notably by installing better HGV signage at J32b of the A12, improving dual carriageway warnings across the Elm Lane staggered crossroads and addressing persistent flooding in Church Lane.

Apart from maintaining progress on all the issues above, our main priority for the coming year is the upgrade of the Mill Lane play area, a much-loved space in need of significant modernisation. Our application for some District funding is underway, and potential designs have been sought from different suppliers, all of whom have delivered similar schemes elsewhere. We will be working with the school and pre school to establish a feedback process through which children (and their parents) can have their say and want to ensure that the final design is grounded in the widest possible consultation and involvement.

Finally, we also continue to look closely at our own expenditure and, for the third year running, have maintained our budget (precept) at its current level which means that residents will once more see no increase on the Parish Council element of their Council Tax bill for the coming year.

We will continue to keep residents abreast of developments on all these matters via the communication channels covered at the beginning of this report.

Adrian Ward

Chair