

The report of the Chair of Creting St Peter Parish Council – May 2022

One of the things about being an optimist is that you assume that things will get easier at some point. My fourth year as Chair has proved that that isn't necessarily so...

When the year began, I made it known that this would be my last year as Chair. I strongly believe that nobody is, or should become, indispensable, nor that it is entirely healthy for someone to continue as Chair for too long. Things were beginning to return to normal(ish) though.

So, what have been the key events of the year?

Well, Gateway 14 has been the biggest ongoing issue, with planning permission granted despite our reservations over the viability of the project. Work has started on the core infrastructure, including the bund that partially surrounds the Clamp Farm area, and the related closure of the stretch of Mill Lane from Clamp Farm to Cedars Park will follow soon, opening up a more direct link to Tesco, Stowmarket and the A14.

Unfortunately, and to a great extent due to the failings of Mid Suffolk District Council, permission was granted to Poundfield Precast to extend their operating hours on the grounds that they had been in breach of the planning conditions imposed upon them for so long that they couldn't be stopped from continuing. It puzzles me that, having set conditions, Mid Suffolk District Council seem either incapable, or unwilling, to enforce them. The message that sends out is not an encouraging one for small communities such as ours, but we will keep doing what we can to protect residents.

On the positive side, the appeal to the Secretary of State regarding the proposal for the 'Meadows' site was rejected. It was reassuring that the Planning Inspector concluded that, whilst the District Council and its Local Plan wasn't entirely effective in terms of setting restrictions, the village itself really isn't suited to development, applying national planning standards.

As far as the running of the Parish Council is concerned, the resignation of our Parish Clerk, Jennie Blackburn, in November, has proved to be a challenge. It would be fair to say that nobody truly realises what a Parish Clerk does until there isn't one. We have attempted to maintain continuity, but it hasn't been easy and, in the continued absence of a Clerk, Council will need to find medium term solutions to share the administrative burden.

In terms of our finances, we were able to reduce the precept for 2022/23, with the band D charge falling from £52.27 to £51.20. In the short-term, the money saved by not having a Clerk will go towards the cost of replacing the street lights but, if we should choose not to fill the vacancy, we will need to take a view as to a reasonable level of precept to set for 2023/24.

Again, we have successfully carried out a full Financial Risk Assessment, as well as a review of our Internal Audit processes, and our Financial Regulations remain adequate for our purposes.

On a personnel note, we have said goodbye to Terry and Ginny Taylor, who served the community with incredible dedication, as Parish Councillor and Tree Warden respectively, but did so much more by way of their contributions to village life. There's a community in Derbyshire who might not yet know how lucky they are. Terry was replaced by Russell Stott, who has played a key role in challenging the Gateway 14 project team and has continued in a similar role since joining us.

I mentioned in my report last year that we were looking for a replacement for Machala Peacock, and that turned out to be Lynne Jardine. Lynne has led for us in our response to the various Poundfield Precast planning applications, as well as keeping a close eye on the footpath network, and has proved to be a valuable addition to our ranks.

My Vice Chair, Richard Hitt, and Dan Mason have continued to be supportive and hardworking, and I would have to say that, despite everything, it has been a pleasure to work with a group of people whose commitment to making the village a good place to live is so great.

I should also pay tribute to our outgoing Parish Clerk, Jennie Blackburn. There is little doubt that the job of Parish Clerk evolved over the period she worked for us, becoming more complex and more challenging as time went by, and I deeply suspect that we were getting far more than simply value for money by employing her. Jennie was a pleasure to work with and any successor will undoubtedly benefit from the foundations she has laid.

We are also lucky to have two committed local councillors representing us. Keith Welham became our County Councillor in May, returning to us after boundary changes had removed him as our District Councillor, and it has been as though he was never away. His knowledge and enthusiasm has been greatly appreciated, and he has been of huge support to me and to Council generally. Mike Norris, one of our two District Councillors, has raised our issues and connected us to appropriate officers at Mid Suffolk District Council, and that in turn has given us opportunities for funding and support that we are still exploring.

Next up, the Gateway 14 Residents Campaign Group. There are certain things that a campaign group can do that don't sit well with a Parish Council. Our role revolves around the planning aspects as a statutory consultee, but the wider issues surrounding the project are better addressed by a less formal body. There is no doubt that the Residents Campaign Group has worked hard to persuade the developers to do better than might otherwise have been the case, and I think that the community owes a debt of gratitude to them.

The Parochial Church Council has seen a change in its leadership following the departure of Alice Mathewson and has been challenged by the restrictions on in-person events. But I am delighted that things are returning to normal and that their role at the heart of our village's social life has resumed. I make a point of encouraging newcomers to our village to attend events whenever I can, and I look forward to the continuation of the fruitful relationship between the two Councils over the months and years ahead.

And finally, on a personal note, I have become Chair of the Mid Suffolk South group of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils, and an Executive Committee member of the County Association. This has been hugely useful during the past five months, as I have ready access to the expertise of its professional staff and the support they offer.

It has been an honour and a privilege to chair the Parish Council for the past four years and I have mostly enjoyed the experience hugely. I've even learned a few things about leadership and community building which I hope will enable me to continue to contribute to the life of our small (but perfectly formed) community as we go forward. I would like to end by thanking everyone who has helped, advised, suggested or simply listened over the past four years or, in the case of my wife, Ros, act as a sounding board and supplier of wisdom whilst I demonstrate just how little I know about local government.

Mark Valladares
Chair, Creeting St Peter Parish Council
10 May 2022

Annual Report to Creeting St Peter Annual Parish Meeting for the period May 2021 to April 2022
From Suffolk County Councillor Keith Welham

GLI Group becomes Official Opposition

The County Council Elections in May 2021 returned 9 Green Party Councillors giving the Greens the second largest number of seats. An opposition group comprising Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent councillors was formed - the GLI Group with 15 members. Our role is to hold the Conservative administration to account and bring forward suggestions for improving the service provided by the Council. The Conservatives have a strong majority with 55 seats out of 75, but we have been able to bring forward questions and motions throughout the year and challenge them to do the best for Suffolk.

Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined

In February, County Councillors debated and voted on the Council's budget for 2022-23. Council Tax will rise by 2.99% - an increase of £41.76 for a band D property from £1397.16 in the current year to £1438.92 in 2022/23.

Our Group were concerned that the budget relied too heavily on transformation savings, and that the Conservatives did not take the maximum social care precept to fund adult care allowed by Government. We highlighted the need to invest more in adult social care, as well as in innovative projects to reduce the energy bills of those most vulnerable, considering the current energy and cost of living crisis. Both ideas were rejected by the Conservatives, but our Group will continue to champion more investment into social care and green technology.

No Scrutiny of Carbon Budget

Conservatives brought forward the first Carbon Budget for Suffolk, but it wasn't part of the main budget and wasn't given formal scrutiny. The Carbon Budget is aimed at helping us understand the level of emissions the Council are responsible for and help to achieve the Council's ambition of being carbon neutral by 2030. It is important the Carbon Budget is scrutinised, as there are many issues with data collection and performance measures that weren't addressed. Our Group raised concerns about this and has been assured that this will form part of the general budget process for next year.

Levelling Up: A Devolution Deal for Suffolk?

The Government published its White Paper on Levelling-Up, within which it has agreed that Suffolk will be one of nine initial 'County Deals' up for negotiation. A new deal will potentially give local leaders more powers to make decisions for their communities for the first time. Our Group welcomes the idea of bringing more power to the communities of Suffolk. However, we are concerned about a potential Mayoral position created in Suffolk and the effect this may have on marginalising the role of district councils in Suffolk.

Report into SEND Provision: Review and Recommendations

Suffolk County Council commissioned an independent review of Special Educational Needs and Disability provision. The report found severe failings in the delivery of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans for children, serious issues in communicating with parents and guardians, as well as an inefficient work environment within the service.

The scrutiny committee have met since the report to listen to lead officers within the service and parents, debate necessary changes, and submit recommendations for improvement. These included extended training, additional managerial posts, and new accountability structures to help deal with the issues outlined in the report.

Bus Back Better: Initiative from the Department for Transport

The Bus Back Better scheme was launched in 2021, aimed at updating, expanding, and improving our bus services in Great Britain. The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council approved a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which was submitted to Government. In response, Government gave Suffolk zero funding, as the bid was not sufficiently innovative and did not include a pathway to zero carbon bus service provision. The BSIP proposals that were approved by Cabinet can be viewed [here](#).

Biodiversity Enhancement

Suffolk County Council will be doing more for the county's natural environment, as it confirmed plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land by 2030. Our Group had a major influence in providing recommendations to SCC which are now a part of the Council's ambitions to enhance biodiversity. Examples include planting more hedgerows, improving highway trees, and developing natural flood management solutions. For more information, visit: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/show/councils-commitment-to-further-enhancing-suffolks-natural-environment>

Sizewell C: Where are we now?

Our Group has asked searching questions regarding this project, arguing the environmental and socio-economic impacts on local communities are far too great. The Government announced their strategy to retain investors, by shifting the costs of Sizewell C onto consumers, in the form of a taxpayer subsidy known as a 'Regulated Asset Base' funding strategy. Our Group rejected this strategy, and strongly recommended that the Government reconsiders before it puts the burden of cost onto our local communities, and instead looks into investing in cleaner, cheaper forms of renewable energy which could produce energy sooner. However, Suffolk County Council have announced their general support for Sizewell C but have taken up 'important concerns' with the Secretary of State.

New Investment in Drainage and Footway Infrastructure

The Cabinet approved £10m to replace broken pipes and provide new drainage schemes, as well as a £10m increase in the budget for the maintenance of footways.

Lorry Route Map Review in Suffolk: Interactive Map to be Published

Suffolk County Council undertook a review of recommended lorry routes across the county; the first major review of the network since 2011. Suffolk County Council invited parish and town councils for their views, and to provide up to three routes where they believe HGV traffic has the highest impact on their communities. The review will be completed in Spring 2022 when the County Council plan to publish a new interactive lorry route map. For further information, please contact lorry.routes@suffolk.gov.uk,

Local Electricity Bill: Suffolk GLI Motion Passed by Council

A motion submitted by our Group, which asked Suffolk County Council to support the Local Electricity Bill, which is waiting to be debated in Parliament for its Second Reading, was passed unanimously by the Council. The Bill seeks to localise energy supply, making local electricity cheaper, more reliable, and community based. Details of the motion and Local Electricity Bill can be found [here](#).

Gateway 14 and the Clamp Farm Bend

Gateway 14 is a development on MSDC land by a MSDC owned company so I will leave District Councillor colleagues to give an update on the project. My involvement as your County Councillor has been to try to persuade MSDC to purchase the necessary land and provide a straightening of the road at Clamp Farm, both on road safety and environmental grounds.

Contact Details

If you would like to find out what the GLI group are doing on behalf of residents, go to:

Twitter - Suffolk Green, Lib Dem & Independent Group (@SuffolkGLI) / Twitter

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/

Website - Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council (suffolkgli.wordpress.com)

And finally:

A big thank you to the Parish Council and local residents for the support I receive. It has been a pleasure to represent you for the last year and I will continue to do my best for all residents of my division in the future.

Keith Welham

Email: Keith.Welham@suffolk.gov.uk

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT TO CREETING ST PETER ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

This report is on behalf of District Cllr. Steve Phillips and myself.

Council Tax

Mid Suffolk District Council has frozen its element of the Council Tax this year but investment in recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic is to continue, aiming to help residents through post-pandemic recovery while still investing in priority areas to improve the quality of life.

An update on Covid-19 in Suffolk

Thank you to everyone who has helped to support the Covid-19 response, which has seen the Government revert to Plan B and the NHS ramping up the vaccination rollout to combat the spread of the latest variant. Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils continue to provide regular bulletins giving a snapshot of the current Covid-19 situation in Suffolk, along with case numbers and updates. You can find the bulletins via the Suffolk County Council website.

Economic Recovery Plan launched

Following two years of unprecedented challenges Mid Suffolk and Babergh have launched their economic recovery plan outlining the different initiatives, schemes and packages to help businesses. The aim of the recovery plan is to provide a direction for the councils to support businesses and communities post Covid to stimulate innovation, attract inward investment and encourage strong economic growth. Further details are available from the councils' websites.

Neighbourhood planning

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils were named earlier this year as part of a pilot scheme to allow residents an easier way to shape and influence development in their area. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced that Mid Suffolk and Babergh are among 11 areas nationwide to be chosen as part of a pilot scheme to boost participation in neighbourhood planning. The councils have received an element of Government funding to go towards the cost of employing an additional officer, designed to encourage more parish councils to become involved with neighbourhood planning.

Gateway 14 update

Construction has now commenced at Gateway 14, the 156 acre site which is owned by Mid Suffolk District Council at Mill Lane, Stowmarket on land opposite Tesco off the A1120, adjacent to Junction 50 on the A14, following a ground-breaking ceremony on 25th April. The site will aim to offer business, innovation and logistics development facilities and has been appointed Freeport East status. Freeports are intended to stimulate economic activity - goods imported from abroad are exempt from tariffs that are normally paid to the UK government on arrival. It also means that manufacturers in Freeports can import raw materials tariff-free, only paying tariffs on finished products leaving the site for elsewhere in the UK, or the goods can be re-exported overseas without the UK duties being paid. In England, it has been confirmed that companies inside the sites will also be able to claim lower property taxes, including on new buildings that they buy, and companies based in Freeports will also benefit from lower rates of national insurance if they take on new staff.

The main infrastructure works to create the framework for this new business park are scheduled to be completed by winter 2022/23.

Detailed negotiations are underway with a number of local and national occupiers to deliver a range of buildings which will deliver a range of employment opportunities.

£1.6m boost for Mid Suffolk and Babergh neighbourhoods

Town and Parish Councils across Mid Suffolk and Babergh have received almost £1.6 million in the latest round of neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments – paving the way for a range of vital community facilities and projects. Developers are charged CIL when building new homes in the districts – enabling local infrastructure to keep pace with housing growth.

A proportion of this funding is automatically paid to town and parish councils, who are eligible for up to 15% of collected funds from their area, subject to a financial cap, with the potential for this to increase to 25% if they have successfully adopted a Neighbourhood Plan, which is the case in Needham Market. They can then decide how to spend this money to support the development of their local area – ensuring that the funding best meets the needs of the community.

The latest payments, made during April, saw almost £1.6 million distributed to 84 town and parish councils across Mid Suffolk and Babergh. Of this just under £1.026 million was allocated to 49 town and parish councils in Mid Suffolk.

Ukraine Refugee Scheme

Mid Suffolk and Babergh are members of the Suffolk Ukraine Task Group which aims to ensure that refugees' arrival into Suffolk goes as smoothly as possible in respect of the refugees' health and wellbeing needs, assistance with school admissions, and support to help with integration and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). The Task Group also contacts any matched sponsors to arrange property inspections to ensure the homes are appropriate and safe, and DBS checks (basic Disclosure and Barring Service checks to check for any criminal record) are completed with the help of Community Action Suffolk.

A new Digital Skills Programme for businesses

Business owners in Mid Suffolk and Babergh who want to learn new methods or improve their existing digital skills can now access free courses as part of a new business support programme. More details on the councils' websites.

Additional funding to support districts' rough sleepers

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Council were awarded £324K to provide specialised emergency accommodation for rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness. The funding, from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme, will see new energy efficient homes in Stowmarket and Sudbury, to provide emergency accommodation for vulnerable adults at risk of living on the streets.

Councils urge National Highways to 'unblock the Copdock Interchange' on the A14

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils submitted a joint response to a consultation by National Highways on proposed improvements to the Copdock Interchange – urging the creation of a new link road from the

A14 to the A12 to keep business traffic flowing freely. Traffic flow counts at the interchange have identified this as potentially the most effective solution.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils respond to new 'County Deal'

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils welcomed news that Suffolk is one of nine counties invited to negotiate a ground-breaking devolution deal – bringing more control over areas such as transport, infrastructure and skills to the local region. Further details are to follow.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh Joint Local Plan

The Joint Local Plan Examination hearing sessions are paused while officers undertake further work to review parts of the evidence base. It is important that the time is taken to ensure this information is robust. For context, the total process for developing a Local Plan is lengthy.

According to the Government's Planning for the Future White Paper, development of a Local Plan takes on average seven years, with the examination element usually taking around 18 - 24 months – often with requests for further work or clarification. The Planning Inspectorate have published performance data that shows the average time for examination is currently 18 months. They also say that plans in rural areas tend to take longer, and that joint Local Plans tend to take longer still. So in essence, the examination has paused but this is a normal part of the process.

Development Control (Planning)

Development Control (Planning) has again been an interesting experience over the past year with several quite contentious planning applications to consider, mainly driven by Central Government's requirement for increased housing allocations. The Coronavirus has also had an impact on the way in which Development Control Committee meetings took place and meetings have mainly been held online via Microsoft Teams, although we have recently reverted to face-to-face meetings with normal Covid-19 restrictions in place.

Needham Lake Visitor Centre

The Covid-19 situation inevitably had a considerable impact on the delivery of this project, which was originally planned to be operating during the latter part of last year's summer season. However, I am now pleased to confirm that the Visitor Centre and café will be formally opened next Monday 16 th May, in time for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations at the beginning of June.

The Visitor Centre will be called 'The Duck and Teapot' following a local poll of suggested names.

Locality Awards

District Cllr. Steve Phillips and I were pleased to be able to financially support a number of local organisations from our MSDC 2021/22 Locality Awards fund, including 1st Needham Market Scout Group, Needham Phoenix Football Club, Needham Market Bowls Club, the River Gipping Trust, Christchurch Packed Lunch Project, Needham Market Community Chinwag, Gipping Women's Club, Gipping Angling Preservation Society, 1 st Needham Market Rangers, and the Skate Park Committee.

The 2022/23 Locality Awards scheme has now opened and application forms can be obtained from either myself or District Cllr. Steve Phillips.

We hope that this report gives you an insight into some of the areas that we have been involved in. If you have any questions I will endeavour to answer them or I will obtain the answer for you.

Mike Norris
Mid Suffolk District Councillor
Joint Ward Member, Needham Market Ward

CREETING ST PETER PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021/2022

The PCC met six times during the year.

The meetings on 28th April 2021, 17th January 2022 and 14th March 2022 were via Zoom. The meetings on 2nd June, 7th September and 23rd November 2021 were held in the Church Room. An extra meeting was held in the churchyard on 27th May to discuss how to move forward in the future with the vacancy for churchwarden.

The main items of discussion have been:

- Fabric – mainly focusing on the completion of the major building work on the church tower and East window, the recent damage to the tiles on the south side of the church and the work needed to improve the Church Hall
- Treasurers Report
- Deanery and Diocese Synod reports
- Safeguarding and updates
- Special services including Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest, Toy and Gift and Christmas
- 'Growing in God'
- Services and the return to holding them inside the church
- Opening and closing of the church

Annual Vestry Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting

These meetings were held via Zoom on 28th April 2021

Electoral Roll

The number of people on the role remains at 20.

Election of officers

At the Annual Vestry meeting, there is a vacancy for the role of Churchwarden.

Mission Focus

Our focus of 'Community Outreach' coffee mornings, BBQs and pub nights which were suspended during lockdowns have been able to resume.

Sponsored Cycle Ride

This again took place in September. Thanks to Sue who walked around churches in Felixstowe in order to raise funds for our church. However, in 2021 the church was again manned to welcome cyclists to our church.

Special Services

The Harvest Festival service 2021 took place in the church with gifts of tins/packets of food accepted and taken afterwards to the Stowmarket and District Foodbank which were very gratefully received. A treasure hunt was available inside the church over the Harvest weekend for the children.

The Toy and Gift Service took place with the Christmas story told with the creation of the Nativity Scene using the lovely models. Children in the village were given decorations in advance of the service which they could place on the Christmas tree in the church during the service.

The Carols by Candlelight on 24th December took place in the evening in the churchyard with the opportunity to walk through the candlelit, decorated church after the service.

Mothering Sunday was celebrated in the church and the village children were invited to bring along their completed 'Thank You' card that they were given in advance of the service. These were displayed on the front of the choir stalls.

Easter service was celebrated on 17 th April. Again, the children had been given an activity in advance of Easter and the completed ones were displayed on a small tree inside the church. Easter eggs were distributed to those children that took part.

Special Thanks

Special thanks are due once again to the PCC and everyone who help with the running, upkeep or decoration of the Church and the Church Room. A thank you to the Mason family for acting as caretakers for the Church Room. As always, we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to those people who support the church by cutting the churchyard grass, being part of the flower and cleaning rotas, distributing the 10 Village News and also to everyone who supports the events in the village. Also, thanks to those who help with the smooth running of the services on a Sunday.

Margaret Moyes
Secretary
Creting St Peter PCC