

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019

The Council - Membership of the Parish Council is up to our entitlement of nine councillors as we prepare for the Parish, District and County Councillor elections on 2 May. Our Parish Council has maintained good attendance and we also continue to benefit from regular attendance at the council meetings by our County Councillor, Jessica Fleming and the local Neighbourhood Watch chairman. Derek Osborne, our District Councillor, has endured a difficult year through illness, but we are pleased that he has now resumed full duties.

Neighbourhood Plan - Botesdale Parish Council has contributed to the development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, which has just completed the Regulation 16 consultation and is being prepared for the Inspector's review. These are the final stages before we can get the plan made, when it will be included in the local planning policies.

Joint Local Plan - Mid Suffolk District Council continues with the process of developing a new Local Plan jointly with Babergh. All the local sites identified in our Neighbourhood Plan for development have either outline or detailed planning approval. The planning process for the larger sites can take a long time, starting with an outline application to determine the number of dwellings, details of the access requirements and identifying the conditions to be applied by the district council. The full detailed application follows to determine the remaining reserved matters.

Finance - The council is financed through the **precept** as a minor part of our council tax, £106.38 out of a total of £1777.31 for a Band D property this year, giving the council a budget of about £30,000. The District Council has introduced the **Community Infrastructure Levy** based on the additional floor area of new developments or modifications. All new developments and extensions are now subject to the Community Infrastructure Levy of which 15% comes to the council in recognition of the increased requirement for local services that will occur. The contribution to the parish council will increase to 25% when the Neighbourhood Plan is made. Botesdale has now received the first payment from the development at The Limes, and we received support from the general fund toward the costs of extending the Health Centre.

Infrastructure Investment Plan - The Neighbourhood component of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be used for projects included in an Infrastructure Investment Plan for the Parishes of Botesdale and Rickinghall to offset the impact of additional housing development. Initially the projects are described as Community Actions in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Parish Councils will be consulting with the community to identify which projects to take forward.

The Council is currently planning further investment in additional play equipment for the Playing Field as well as maintaining a reserve for maintenance of the Parish Council assets such as to replace lamp posts as necessary.

Development - Planning has been a continuing preoccupation this year with the uncertainty over the District Council ability to demonstrate a five-year land supply and delays to the issue of Joint Local Plan for Mid-Suffolk and Babergh. There have been several householder applications for extensions, which have been granted, and applications for change of use of agricultural buildings which have not. The second large development proposal for up to 69 houses South of Diss Road went to the planning committee in April and being approved despite significant reservations from the Heritage Team and Suffolk Preservation Society.

On-going Activities - The Parish Council, in partnership with Rickinghall, has continued to ensure that the Christmas tree remains a festive focus in the Village centre for the visit from Santa. The council welcomed the local support for the Christmas Tree and lights, which help to ensure that the good children of Botesdale and Rickinghall will continue to be rewarded with small presents on Christmas Eve.

The council performs regular inspections of the Playing Field in Mill Road and continues to improve the condition of the grounds by regular mowing, maintenance and repairs. The regular maintenance is performed by Tim Gaddis, who also looks after the street cleaning on behalf of the council. Further work was completed this year in response to the annual ROSPA safety

assessment of the playing field with maintenance and renovation of the equipment, together with additional play equipment for younger children.

The Annual Litter Pick was well supported this year, and covered all the local streets and lanes, but we are fortunate that most areas are maintained free of litter throughout the year, preserving the attractive appearance of the village. The exceptions are the roads out of the village, particularly where there are laybys or parking areas which suffer from significant litter and rubbish deposits.

The Footpaths and Streams Project has continued, led by Councillors Lambert and Green to maintain and improve the conditions of the local footpaths and streams at the end of Fen Lane, with a small but enthusiastic working party. Sightings of birds, including Little Egret and other waterfowl along with regular glimpses of water vole and other creatures of the riverbank continue to be reported, indicative of the popularity of this little footpath.

Traffic issues continue to be raised to the parish council and the Neighbourhood Watch – the twin concerns of speeding and inconsiderate parking, the latter to an extent a result of the success of the food retailers in the village. The Vehicle Actuated Speed Display unit has been used on Diss Road and in the centre of the village to display and record speed data routinely. The display should alert drivers to their speed, and the data logging enables us to highlight periods that excessive speeding occurs and pass that data to the police. Using the information in the local traffic survey, the council requested Suffolk County Council to reinforce the Highway Code limitations on parking near the Health Centre by adding yellow lines at the North end of The Drift. SCC Highways have continued to suffer restrictions in funding in common with other local services, and we should routinely report and follow-up on pot-hole and other road repairs required within the parish. Please continue to report issues with highways or public rights of way to our Parish Clerk.

On the administration front our parish clerk, Leeann Jackson-Eve provides excellent support from preparing the budget and keeping the accounts in a clear and efficiently presented style to preparing the agendas and minutes of meetings. The increased requirements for openness and transparency in local government have been met by the provision of additional data on the parish website <http://botesdale.onesuffolk.net/>, and additional pages have been added to include the details of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Follow the reports of the monthly meetings in the Parish Magazine and on the Parish Council Facebook page.

This completes the eleventh year for me as Chairman, and we have been fortunate in having a team of enthusiastic councillors in Botesdale, and I thank them and our clerk for their help and support throughout the year. Many village groups encounter problems with recruiting committee members and trustees, losing members and finding it difficult to replace officials. It seems that although the population of the village continues to rise, fewer people are supporting the village groups, and I would encourage everyone to participate in the community activities which are one of the advantages to living in these villages.

As before, much of the council business is reactive, but there continue to be opportunities for the council to move forward in a way that develops the aspects of village life that we enjoy and provides a sustainable community for the future. Please continue to let us know how the Parish Council can contribute to this goal.

William Sargeant
Chairman