

GREAT BRICETT

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH

*Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish held on
Tuesday 24th May 2016 in Great Bricett Village Hall at 7.00pm*

Present: Cllr A Triggs, Cllr D Payne, Cllr R Craddock, Cllr S Hines
In attendance: Vivienne Pratt (Clerk), Dist Cllr David Whybrow, Cty Cllr Julia Truelove, 3 members of the public
Apologies: Cllr Burnett, VHMC – Resignations received from Cllrs James & Horne

GBAPM1/0516	Welcome – Cllr Triggs opened the meeting at 7pm	
GBAPM2/0516	To receive apologies for absence – Apologies had been received from Cllr Burnett (holiday). Since the meeting on 22 nd March, resignations from Cllrs James and Horne had been received due to personal reasons.	
GBAPM3/0516	Minutes of the last Annual Meeting of the Parish held on 14th May 2015 - Decision - It was proposed and resolved to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 14 th May 2015 as a true record. The Minutes were duly signed by Cllr Triggs.	
GBAPM4/0516	Matters arising from the last Annual Meeting of the Parish held on 14th May 2015 - None	
GBAPM5/0516	To receive outgoing Chairman's report – A report had been received from Cllr James prior to the meeting. Copy attached.	
GBAPM6/0516	To receive Annual Report from County Cllr Truelove – copy attached. The report was discussed at length and Cllr Truelove advised that further info on the devolution plans should become available in the next few weeks after a number of further meetings. She also advised that there is a Cty Council meeting the following Thursday where the Fire Service plans were to be discussed after concerns that the current plans would not provide adequate cover. She advised that the offer of £200 towards the VHMC Queens 90 th birthday event was agreed and would follow in due course, however, there had been a temporary freeze on finances due to the elections. The local area road closures were discussed and it was agreed generally that the communications had not been good enough although the closure of Somersham Road earlier that day was an unscheduled closure for emergency purposes. Cllr Truelove expressed her gratitude to the Clerk and Cllrs of Great Bricett for their hard work and support throughout the year.	
GBAPM7/0516	To receive Report from District Cllr Whybrow – copy attached. The report was discussed and particular mention was made of the 38 new Council Houses will be built during 2016-17 for occupation by local people, the first having been completed in Elmswell, and that the 3 properties in Barking are approaching completion. Cllr Whybrow also expressed his thanks to the Clerk and Cllrs of Great Bricett for their hard work and support throughout the year.	
	After this agenda item, Cllrs Truelove and Whybrow left the meeting as they had another Annual meeting to attend	
GBAPM8/0516	To receive Police Report – The Clerk reported that the new format monthly report had been published online, however, the system is still not fully operational and no crime figures were available so she had not circulated the report. She advised that she had invited a member of the local Police Safer Neighbourhood team to attend the meeting or prepare a report but none had been received.	

GBAPM9/0516	<p>To receive Report from the Village Hall Management Committee</p> <p>– An extensive report had been received for the March meeting and therefore no further report had been prepared. The Clerk reported that the ongoing Cesspit issue and Insurance claim would be discussed during the PC meeting that followed this meeting, however, a letter had been received from the Loss Adjusters prior to the meeting and the most recent quote to replace the cesspit was in excess of £27,000. She advised that this letter also advises that the VH is under insured and any claim will therefore also be reduced. The Clerk advised that she had undertaken a Risk Assessment of the Village Hall and that the two issues found were within the garden, a damaged brick wall and slippery brick steps. She advised that the VHMC must ensure that any hire agreement ensures that the garden is not used, unless in an emergency escape situation. The Clerk to forward a copy of the Assessment form and Loss Adjusters letter to the Chair of the VHMC</p>	Clerk
GBAPM10/0516	<p>To receive Report from Better Broadband for Suffolk – The Clerk advised that she had requested a report but none had been recd. The information currently on the Better Broadband for Suffolk website, which advises that Great Bricett is under consideration for superfast broadband by 2019 although the Wattisham Airbase is scheduled for 2016.</p>	
GBAPM11/0516	<p>To receive report from Oliver Cooper regarding his historical research of Great Bricett – Oliver Cooper provided a most interesting and comprehensive explanation of the results of his 4 year research project into the lost history of the Great Bricett Priory, now used as the Church. He advised that the project had started initially with a History Graduate assisting him with a summer job but had turned into a much larger project and her father took over when she had to leave off. Two years later, a professional Historian, Edward Martin, agreed to take the project further and has since produced a 50,000 word document and it is hoped that most of the primary research will be completed by the end of 2016. Oliver explained that he had visited France two years before and had obtained important information and photographs although a number of Copyright issues had come to light afterwards. He advised that Edward Martin is returning to France in June this year to bring back further relevant information and photographs and to resolve the copyright situation. He explained that a team has been formed which includes the Archaeological Society, who have established where the Monks were and the existence of a vault on the south side of the Church, a Doctor from a laboratory in Oxford, who has taken a sample of wood and has been able to date to within a year and a Specialist in oak structures in old buildings, who originally visited the Church 40 years ago and has made documents and drawings available from his first visit. Oliver explained that it is his long term intention to hand over the finished book to the Parish Council although there are several issues still outstanding and will take at least another year to finalise and may possibly involve a financial contribution by the Council. It was generally agreed that this important information must not be lost and that the Council would be happy to consider the help that they may be able to give in the future and that Oliver should provide updates on further progress via the Clerk. It was agreed that, when the assistance amount and details are known, it should be raised as an agenda item during a full Parish Council meeting and the Clerk advised that the budget is considered every November. All Cllrs extended their gratitude and thanks to Oliver and agreed that Great Bricett is lucky to have someone so committed and passionate to this extremely important local information.</p>	

GBAPM12/0516	To receive report from the Parochial Church Council – Copy attached. The PCC representative gave thanks to the Parish Council for their ongoing support of the grass cutting of the churchyard and the flood lighting of the Church. It was advised that the two previous grant applications for the roof repairs had been unsuccessful and that a new grant was being applied for to cover the £65,000 estimate to repair the urgent roof repairs. It was advised that the Priest in charge, Bernie, had now retired, and that no applications had been received and the role is currently being covered by local Clergy.	
GBAPM13/0516	To receive report from Neighbourhood Watch – copy attached. The report was discussed and the Clerk advised of the Police Connect service which provides immediate and free of charge local area crime information via email and phone.	
GBAPM14/0516	To receive report from Tree Warden – copy attached.	
GBAPM15/0516	To receive report from Ringshall School – copy attached. The report was discussed in length and the representative from the school provided an extremely useful and comprehensive account of the schools projects and achievements. She also advised that the school was made up of approx. 70% of children from Wattisham Base and that the current class room size is 20-25 children.	
GBAPM16/0516	Open Forum – no matters or issues raised	
	Date of Next Meeting The next Annual meeting of the Parish will be held during either April or May 2017 – date not yet agreed.	
	<i>Meeting closed at 8.40pm</i>	

Chairman


Date

MID SUFFOLK – Highlights and Achievements for 2015/16

Financial/Organisational

- **Devolution** - Following weeks of negotiation between Government and local councils and LEPs a deal worth over £1bn for East Anglia was announced in the budget on the 16th March by George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer. As part of the deal East Anglia would receive:
 - £900m (£30m a year for the next 30 years) to invest in infrastructure
 - £175m to invest in housingThe Deal, which sets out a fundamentally different relationship between Government and local public services, was negotiated by Leaders from councils across Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the New Anglia and Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnerships. However it is important to note, it's not a 'done deal' it requires ratification by each of the local councils and the LEP boards. The Deal requires the creation of a Combined Authority and directly elected Mayor and it is proposed that the first mayoral elections would be in May 2017 alongside county council elections.
- **2016/17 Council budgets see small Council Tax rises.**
- **Elections.**
- **The Council's Joint Strategic Plan** is being refreshed following the election in May last year as the two new administrations wanted to review and update the strategies of the two Councils, in light of key local, regional and national factors that have changed since the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) was developed in 2013/14. It will set out how the Councils aim to provide services to deliver positive, sustainable change in our individual and business communities over the next five years. A focused management review has been undertaken to ensure that we make the best use of our resources and direct them to the activities and interventions needed to secure delivery of our new Strategic Plan.
- **Capital Investment Strategy** – In July, both Council's approved a plan to invest the Councils' cash and capital resources to generate revenue income, achieve an increase in capital value in the longer term and stimulate local economic growth.

Housing

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- **New Homes** - We have planning consent to build circa. 38 new council homes supported by Homes and Communities Agency grant funding. These are the first houses to be built in a generation and will be completed by the end of 2016/17.
 - **A revised tenancy agreement** was approved for Mid Suffolk's Council tenants
 - **Decent Homes Standard** - A targeted campaign has been launched to encourage landlords and homeowners to take up grants and loans to bring their homes up to the Decent Home Standard, that were made available under the Housing Renewal Policy approved by both councils in February 2015.
 - **Empty Homes** - The private sector housing team's work to return empty homes to occupation has now expanded to include empty commercial buildings.
 - **New Housing Allocations Policy** adopted.
 - **Trusted Partner Pilot** - Babergh and Mid Suffolk have been chosen by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to participate in a Trusted Partner pilot scheme to identify tenants who may struggle to pay their rent, following the introduction of Universal Credit. The pilot will allow us to make appropriate recommendations for a payment of housing costs direct to the landlord, (known as an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA)). The pilot will last between six and nine months and started in January 2016.

- **Help to Buy** - Council tenants who want to buy their own homes are being urged to apply for £20k grants to help them onto the property ladder. Both councils were successful in apply for funding from the Government's £84m Right-To-Buy social Mobility Fund which was launched last year.
- **Right to Buy** - We are using our Right to Buy receipts to acquire 4 properties with a further 6 in the pipeline. A total of £1,580,495 of RTB receipts committed.
- **Houses in Multiple Occupation** - The Private Sector Housing Team has begun a programme of identifying and inspecting Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) across the two councils. A HMO is a property that is shared by three or more tenants who are not members of the same family.
- **Sheltered Housing Review** - It has been some five years since this service was last reviewed. People are living longer and we need to make sure that the service we offer meets the needs of residents now and in the future, whilst also providing value for money. As part of the review, we consulted residents to get their views on the service, what they like, what they don't like, what we could do better etc. We conducted 25 separate tenant involvement events with our Sheltered Residents at 22 different locations across the two districts.

Growth/Business

- **CIL** - In January both councils voted to adopt CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) charging in the districts. Charging will start on 11th April meaning that any planning permission granted on or after this date may be liable to pay CIL. The Infrastructure Team will be providing further information over the coming months and at Parish Liaison meetings with further details on what CIL charging means for communities and how you can take advantage of the opportunities it presents.
- **Neighbourhood Plan** - 15 parishes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have expressed interest in developing neighbourhood plans.
- **Tourism Strategy** - Suffolk Economic Portfolio Holders have agreed the Suffolk Tourism Strategy. The Strategy aims to support a county wide brand (Visit Suffolk) and support creating Destination Management Organisations.
- **Business Awards** - 3 Mid Suffolk and 1 Babergh business received awards at the EADT Business Awards on Thursday evening 9 July.
- **MyGo Stowmarket** was launched in December to engage and support young people to improve their skills and training opportunities.
- **Schools Project** - Mid Suffolk has provided funding for a Schools Project, which is aimed at adding value to the existing career programmes and work experience opportunities in our schools. The project will engage with year 8 (age 12) and provide support and evaluation through to work experience in year 10 (age 15).
- **Food Enterprise Zones** - Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have each been awarded a grant to set up two new Food Enterprise Zones – one in Wherstead called the **Orwell Food Enterprise Zone** and the other at the Mill Lane Business Park in Stowmarket called the **Gipping Food Enterprise Zone**.
- **Enterprise Zones** - Last November the chancellor announced that Babergh and Mid Suffolk, together with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership secured two of the Government's prestigious Enterprise Zones. One in Sproughton, and another one in Stowmarket.
- **Joint Local Plan** - We are seeking to develop a Joint Local Plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk (both Councils currently have separate policies) and have briefed Councillors on our intended approach. We have started a detailed conversation with Councillors (the cluster meetings) on how the district wide housing targets may resonate at a local level. This includes a conversation about the impact of growth on infrastructure, facilities and the service improvement opportunities that arise. There will be an ongoing dialogue with Councillors as the plan progresses.

- **Planning** - The Development Management team has changed and now forms three officer teams to serve specific areas within both Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The teams will over time establish improved local connections with the areas they cover with the support of their dedicated officers. A new fourth start up team has also been formed to ensure much faster registering and validation of applications and enquiries. This is the first step of a number of planned improvements for Development Management in the next year to ensure clear routes of communication for consultees, members, parish councils, residents and developers.

Communities

- The **Women's Cycling Tour** passed through the district on the 17th June.
- **Crucial Crew** was delivered with a number of partners at MEAL during 15 to 23 June. 32 Schools, 896 children took part in a number of scenarios to improve personal safety and promote responsible and safe behaviour.
- **Joint Community Achievement Awards.** We will be delivering a single event for both Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils this year. This is due to be held on 21st April 2016 at Wherstead Park and will celebrate the achievements of 29 unsung heroes who have worked tirelessly to make a difference within our communities.
- **Capital Grants** are provided to the community to support village halls, community centres, sports clubs, community shops and events. In 2015/16 £141,224 was allocated across Mid Suffolk. Against a total project cost of £1,178,811, our support of 12% grant allocation levered in a further 88% funding for our communities.
- **Health and Housing Pilot** - A key aspect of our contribution to improving health and wellbeing within our district is our collaborative approach with partners. With funding from Public Health, we are in the process of designing an innovative and unique new health and wellbeing offer to a sample of tenants in Hadleigh and Needham Market. The pilot project will provide different levels of support and a range of community-based health and wellbeing interventions that we expect will address the council's rent and council tax arrears, improve self-reported wellbeing and in addition, to contribute to reduced demand on local health and care services.

Environment & Environmental Health

- **Improved Joint Working** across the whole waste system in Suffolk with a joint project being developed across all Suffolk local authorities through the Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP).
- **New waste contracts** - Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils undertook two successful tendering processes with the Suffolk Waste Partnership. One for the servicing of all of the recycling bring sites across the County, which was awarded to Indigo Waste Services Ltd (IWS), and one for all garden waste, awarded to Material Change based in Cretingham St Mary.
- **The Open for Business project** (OfB) will improve the experience of businesses working with the Councils' regulatory services by changing organisational culture; putting business customers' experiences at the heart of our ways of working and; ensuring businesses understand what their responsibilities are. A business account manager pilot has established a single point of contact to a business enquiry.
- **Open for Business - Better Business Event.** A successful business engagement event was held. The business facing services of the councils along with representatives of the New Anglia Growth Hub and chambers of commerce were available for businesses based in the Mid Suffolk area to talk to. This was intended to be the first of these events with a view to perhaps making future ones more sector-specific.
- **Photovoltaic Panels** (PV) have been installed across almost 2000 properties in Mid Suffolk and Babergh.
- **Energy Efficiency** - £6m helping businesses in Norfolk and Suffolk to become more energy efficient.

- **Healthier Catering Award** - The Suffolk Healthier Catering Award 'Eat Out Eat Well (EOEW)' was launched. Catering businesses can apply for three levels of award, gold, silver and bronze. The gold award will generally require a member of the catering business staff to have a formal qualification in nutrition; training that the Food and Safety team at BMSDC are now offering. The motivation behind initiating this award in Suffolk is twofold. With obesity a significant problem, there was a mandate from the Health and Wellbeing Board with the public health driver clear. The award also gives catering food businesses an opportunity to differentiate themselves and potentially create a recognised additional ethical selling point whether to employees in the case of staff canteens or to the public if a café or restaurant.

**Great Bricett Annual Parish Meeting
Chairman's Report Great Bricett Parish Council 2015 - 2016**

The **Local Elections** took place on 7th May 2015, after which, there were still three Councilor vacancies. Cllr Brian James, Cllr Charles Horne, Cllr David Payne and Cllr Ray Craddock continued in service.

This made for a very difficult period where unless all Members attended meetings, democratic decisions were difficult to effect, until the Council could co-opt members to bring it up to the full complement of seven.

We were fortunate to welcome back both Cllr Avril Triggs and Cllr Susan Burnet during the course of the year. Cllr Steve Hines was co-opted in January 2016.

Our long standing and valued Parish Clerk, Rosemary Cochrane, stood down after some six years of service. Following that blow, we were very lucky to welcome Viv Pratt to the office, who came with considerable business experience and soon assimilated the role of Parish Clerk.

The Budget for 2016 and 2017 has been set at a level to meet current standards. The precept has been substantially increased after being frozen some four years. The proposed use of any savings is now allocated to specific earmarked funds, one of which recommended is reserves of at least 50-150% of the precept received.

An annual requirement of the Auditor is that the Council undertakes a full **Financial Risk Assessment** and a **Review of the Internal Audit Process**. These were both completed.

Gt Bricett 5 Year Improvement Plan – The Parish Council has identified key objectives for the Improvement Plan. These are based on the issues raised that matter to our villagers and will guide activity over the next five years. We have already seen some early successes:-

- New Dog Bin Chestnut Avenue installed and now maintained by the Parish Council;
- Funding raised/equipment received for two defibrillators;
- The Community Speed Watch Scheme is now undertaken every month. Many thanks to those involved, Sue Burnet and Bill Dewick
- Village Hall Improvements – Grey Water pump, Cesspit and pipping improvements.

Transparency Fund Grant Application – Our Clerk successfully obtained the grant applied of £649. Well done Viv!

Our Clerk has attended numerous training sessions at the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and updated website material to ensure our successful application for the **New Foundation Award**.

The Parish Website - Our thanks to Richard Morley for managing the site.

The Future...

- Continue along the journey of our Gt Bricett Five Year Improvement Plan.
- Achieve gaining the New Foundation Award for Parish Councils

**Brian James
Chairman, Great Bricett Parish Council, April 2015**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH - April 2016

As usual I would like to record our appreciation for the on the ground presence from the Police Neighbourhood Watch Team during the year.

The police are continuing to issue regular emails under the “Police Connect” program giving information about local crime incidents and other advice in particular relating to the increasing number of scams (phone, credit card, roadside etc). This is an invaluable service with a real opportunity to increase our community’s crime awareness. It is available to everyone and if you have not already done so I recommend that you subscribe via the Suffolk Constabulary website.

As ever there have been thefts and other criminal activities in several of our neighbouring villages and this year including two in Great Bricett so please don’t forget the importance of secure locks on doors and windows and of marking valuable items with postcodes as well as noting serial numbers. If you would like additional individual advice this is available free from the police via the Mid Suffolk Crime Reduction Officer.

Arland Shawe-Taylor, Neighbourhood Watch Chairman



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT - April 2016

As in previous years I would first like to record our thanks for the support from the Parish Council with churchyard mowing during the year and for providing the church illumination during the winter months.

As reported last year the 5 yearly surveys of the church building have highlighted the need for significant repairs to the roof. The cost of the work will be about £65,000. We have so far applied for grant support for this to the governments Listed Places of Worship (LPoW) Roof Fund and to Heritage Lottery unfortunately in both cases without success. We currently have a further application being considered by this year's LPoW fund. If we are successful this time it is likely that works will take place early next year probably with support from additional local fund raising.

Our Priest in Charge, Bernard Rose, retired at the end of August last year (see farewell photo below with present and past Churchwardens from his eight parishes). The vacancy has been advertised but to date we have had no applications. We have so far been able to maintain our one regular monthly service in Bricett (2nd Sunday at 9-30am) thanks to support from local retired clergy and we are hopeful that this will continue.



Arland Shawe-Taylor
Churchwarden

School Report for Great Bricett Parish Council Meeting.

Date report prepared: 27/04/16

Report presented by: Fiona Parker (KS1 Teacher/SLT/SMSC Lead) on Tuesday 24/05/16

At the start of the academic Year 2015-2016, we welcomed for the first time our Year 6. In order to recognise that the Year 6s should be preparing for more independence and responsibility in their last year of Primary, Prefects were elected by Staff members based on their attitude to school and being part of the school community. Ms Gibbs, our Head Teacher, also selected two of these Prefects to be Head Boy and Head Girl. As we also have some very responsible Year 5 students, they also had the opportunity to be Prefects. They support staff in ensuring Ringshall is a good environment to learn in. Other Year 6s have also been given the roles of being 'Sports Ambassadors' and recently helped to organise and run activities for Sports Relief Day. Our School Council is now led by Miss Homer and on a fortnightly basis meets with different class representatives to contribute to ideas about how to make our school an even better place and think of future events we'd like to do in school. At the moment the focus is on updating our school Rainbow Skills for Learning. As we move into June, the School Council will be taking on the role of making sure the school's contribution to the Queen's Birthday Celebrations are organised!

The school has continued to support wider community events, for example running a Macmillan Coffee Morning in the Autumn term, Reception (our youngest children) made 'Christmas Boxes' for the Samaritans in December, whole school Sports Relief where children gave money to take part in different Keep fit events and obstacle course including buying 'Healthy snacks' made by Key Stage 2. During November, the children contributed to the Royal British Legions Poppy Collection. KS2 will also be doing a performance as part of Armed Forces Day in June. For more local community events and links, Years 3 and 4 ran a stall at Ringshall Village Christmas Fair, while the rest of the school ran a Christmas Enterprise week to provide activities and things to sell at the school Christmas Fair. Mrs Norman has developed links with Barking Hall Nursing Home and while she visits on a regular basis, the Home has also been entertained with the School Choir this year and last year, Music club sang a rendition of 'Yellow Submarine' with instruments! As the school has strong links with the Gipping Valley Schools Sport Partnership based at Stowmarket, we have already taken part in a Gymnastics competition for Year 2. Other competitions are Netball, Multi Sports Festival and Kwik Cricket for KS2 and KS1 Multi Skills.

The children have also had the opportunities to go on school visits to places like Foxburrow Farm to look at Minibeasts (Reception theme), Ipswich Museum to start learning about travelling in a time and space machine and later Framlingham Castle (KS1 theme). For KS 2, Year 3 & 4 went to the Museum of East Anglian Life when learning about plant growth and farming and Year 5 & 6 went to West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village to find out more about how Anglo-saxons lived and the conflict between the Vikings. Year 3 & 4 will also be visiting there this term for the theme Anglo-Saxons along with having a chick incubator in school! After Year 5&6 return from their residential this week at 'African Adventure', Sizewell Hall, thoughts will be turning to May and SATs weeks for Year 6. Year 2 will also be working hard to put all their yearlong learning to the test. Year 1 have their Phonics tests in June and then we can all focus again on end of year drama production from KS2 along with the Leavers Assembly for Year 6 in July. As part of the Queen's Birthday Celebrations, we are hoping to have Friday 10th June as a presentation to Parents of the children's work about the Queen for each significant part of her 90 years in a special assembly with a coffee morning for Parents. In the afternoon after great preparation from the children, we will have a special 'Tea Party' with school made sandwiches and treats. Forest School learning continues in school and currently KS1 and KS 2 Nurture Group have sessions every Wednesday. So far we have made a 'mini' zip wire and some amazing dens! Year 2 also took part in the RSPB School's Bird watch in February this year. Starting this Summer term, Reception joins Forest Schools. Gardening club also starts again this term and along with KS2 Nurture Group on Tuesday, will hopefully start our School Garden growing again!

As July is our transition month for the new children from pre-schools to come into Reception for their visits and for Year 6 to visit their chosen high school, we start to look towards the next academic year and one of our future projects will be with Great Bricett council and the 'Wear Something Bright' initiative in the Autumn term.

Village's Veteran Oak Tree is Matter of Life and Death

ONE OF NATURE'S oldest living things in Great Bricett village is a veteran oak tree growing incongruously beside a metal skip at Base Garage in Lower Farm Road, a road that once echoed to the marching of Roman soldiers. Surrounded by tarmac and concrete at the nearby busy T-junction with The Street, this gnarled veteran tree is 200 to 250 years old. What mind-boggling changes this veteran oak will have lived through, just one of thousands of sentinal saplings that silently take root in England's beautiful patchwork-quilt tapestry of fields: all from an acorn no bigger than a thimble.

This slowly-dying splendid old oak looks deceptively healthy with a dense, symmetrical mop of foilage, owing its attractive appearance to being regularly pollarded rather than left to grow tall. Had the tree not been pollarded, this old oak would be approaching death with bare, sun-bleached, staghorn dead upper branches – not a pretty sight and fraught with the danger of falling branches. Mid Suffolk District Council has kept a tree preservation order on this veteran oak for the past ten years, dating back to building works at the garage, when the council insisted on three-metre deep footings to prevent its roots causing damage or subsidence to a new garage extension. The tree grows on land owned by garage proprietor Mike Arnold, who was recently granted consent by MSDC to re-pollard the tree after statutory consultation with Great Bricett's tree warden and the parish council.

Mark is vicariously liable for any damage or injury caused by a negligently-maintained tree on his land and has to pay the circa £500 cost of pollarding. He is manifestly a tree lover and something of an expert on oaks, emphasising that he has several old specimens growing where he lives elsewhere in Suffolk. The landmark Base Garage Oak has a hollow trunk and bracket fungus growing on its lower trunk – two classic signs of a veteran oak. All veteran trees are vital to bio-diversity because, quite apart from birdlife, they are hosts to hundreds of insects, bugs, beetles, grubs and fungi that uniquely rely on living on dying, decaying wood, acting as a bridge in the life-and-death cycle of the natural world. We should not forget we ourselves are part and parcel of the natural world, humbly realising that there are more living creatures surviving in this veteran oak at Base Garage than there is human life in our whole village.

▶ POLLARDING reinvigorates an oak tree and also prevents large branches developing which, says Mark, could split a hollow trunk from top to bottom. And so this familiar veteran oak was re-pollarded during the past winter and is fast sprouting back to form what hopefully will become a new Beatle-headed mop of foilage that will soon be teeming with new life. Differentiating veteran trees from ancient specimens depends on the species of tree, including the type of site where it is growing. A birch tree may be considered ancient at 150 years old, but an oak tree would not be defined as ancient until 400 years, while a yew tree becomes a Methuselah after 800 years. Ash dieback continues to infect woodlands managed by local landowner Oliver Cooper, who recently drove me on a guided tour of his thousand acre farm, revealing how much he cares about our local landscape. As well as ash dieback, Oliver showed me his secret wild-flower meadow, saying it is a sight to behold when fluttering with butterflies in summer. Which brings me back to the life and death cycle of old trees, reminding we humans, now frequently living to be 100, that a tree emerging from an acorn often lives for 200 or even 500-plus years. When we hear the wind rustling leaves in woodland, is nature secretly whispering a mystical message in an age of life-changing technology? To me -- and many others -- trees really *are* full of wonder . . .

The above May-April 2015-16 report composed by Great Bricett tree warden and parish councillor David Payne. Telephone 01449 740 329. Email: davidpayne1815@btinternet.com

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 BOSMERE DIVISION

County Councillor Julia Truelove

BUDGET SETTING

The revenue Budget 2016-2017 and the Capital Program for 20016-20019 is now in place. The level of savings being targeted over the next two years totals £73 million. Major issues which have to be addressed include the implementation of the single state pension from 2016, the cost of the new demand in adult care services, due to the increasing complexity of care needs and the new, 'National Living Wage' .

Suffolk County Council's 2% increase in council tax is specifically to fund increased social care costs.

The freeze on general Council tax rates has been maintained. The County Council input into the council tax is £17-50 a year for a band B property.

DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS

Suffolk C.C., is part of devolution proposals covering Suffolk and Norfolk, then extended into Cambridgeshire and Cambridge city. The joint plan was subsequently rejected by Cambridgeshire and Cambridge. Another deadline in June has now been set for agreement to be reached.

Areas to be addressed include transport and infrastructure, flooding, utilities, digital, planning and development.

NEW MODEL OF POLICING LAUNCHED

From April 1st, key changes have taken place, among them staff reductions:

- Inspectors 4, Sergeants 6, Constables 16, Police staff 17, PCSO's 68
- Reorganisation of policing areas from 15 to 9
- Reduction in police bases from 33 to 18
- Roles and work of the operational teams to function within Safer Neighbourhood Teams

Amongst the benefits envisaged are those resulting from closer working with partners, a flexible workforce and a focus on increased prevention. Planning is under way for further joint facilities in Stowmarket. The future role of Neighbourhood Watch teams has not been determined.

COUNTY COUNCIL DEBATES

Recent motions debated include those relating to the proposed cuts in the Fire Service and the consequences of changes in Community Bus Transport. The proposed closure of the two remaining park and ride facilities has also been questioned. However, a consultation process is now under way with Ipswich Buses, so they might be saved.

ROAD CLOSURES

Road closures across the Division have caused much prolonged concern for road users over many months. Starting with Broadband works and swiftly followed by much needed improvements in

Barking by Anglia Water have created overlong difficulties for drivers and public transport users. I have asked for more effective communication by S.C.C. with utilities and the public in order that projects are timed with better regard to the needs of all road users.

EDUCATION ISSUES

For the first time in several years, G.C.S.E., A level academic and vocational qualifications though still low, are above the national average, an increase of 2.08% from last year. The rise in the overall league tables out of 151 local authorities is from 125 up to 106.

LOCALITY BUDGET GRANT

Great Bricett

I have been very pleased to award £2,000 for a defibrillator 'package' for Barking. The project has been fully supported by the Parish Council. I have also granted £200 towards a planned event to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I wish to thank the Parish Council for their work on behalf of their community and for their support towards resolving issues in which I have become involved.

Dr