

**NAYLAND WITH WISSINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2019 - APRIL 2021**

**COVID-19 issues**

Unfortunately, the past year of restrictions has necessitated drastic changes in the work and administration of the Parish Council. There have been difficult challenges for all our residents and community organisations. I would like to start this report by thanking all those volunteers who immediately stepped up to help the wider community with shopping, collecting prescriptions, at vaccination centres and checking on neighbours who became isolated. The Parish Council would also like to thank our local businesses. The team at Kerridge's and Rachel at Forget Me Not worked hard to keep us supplied with food during the lockdown periods when some were unable to visit or get deliveries from supermarkets. The Post Office stayed open every morning even though it was under threat of closure. We hope that residents will continue to give village shops their full support and 'stay local'. We would also like to express gratitude to all those members of our community who work in the NHS, the carers and other keyworkers who have been enduring stressful situations while striving to keep the population safe.

Parish Councillors were obliged to adapt to using virtual conference council meetings. Some residents continued to attend meetings as observers. Some projects have been delayed and we were unable to hold an Annual Assembly or hold an allotment competition. We have tried to keep residents up-to-date with the ever-changing forms of government and council support and assistance by circulating the regular Covid Resilience Bulletins to organisations for distribution to their membership.

**Finance**

All areas of Parish Council expenditure are reviewed in December when the budget for the following financial year is set and approved. End of year accounts are scrutinised by official external auditors. The 2019-2020 accounts were published last year. End of year accounts for 2020-2021 are being prepared. The predicted carryforward of £51,882 includes funds and grants already committed for delayed projects and capital investment projects such as the hall roof and streetlighting that should have been installed and paid for by now. The 2021-2022 Parish Council Precept element of Council Tax was increased by 1.9%, lower than County and District. The small income from allotment rents and cemetery fees is spent on administering and managing those areas. These rents and fees have been frozen. Bank interest is almost non-existent. However, during the past year the Parish Council has received new income from the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy, a payment based on new development within the parish. This must be spent on new infrastructure and we have decided to spend some of this grant on providing additional litter and dog waste bins, plus information boards. We received a grant of £750 towards the cost of repairing the wooden revetment at Caley Green to be spent by the end of 2021. There was major expenditure on safety surfacing and other repairs at the Fairfield Playpark in 2020 undertaken during the playground closure plus COVID signage required by Government guidance.

## Streetlighting

The Parish Council is the lighting authority for the lighting in the oldest part of the village and pays for the streetlighting there and in Wiston Road. Frustratingly, we are still waiting for the installation of the last phase of the LED streetlighting scheme i.e. four replacement streetlights in Mill Street, at the Birch Street T junction, Court Street and Church Lane/Newlands Lane junction that were ordered in 2017 and 2019. Despite complaints, the outstanding installation was delayed further by COVID restrictions. This distorts the end of year balances as the budget has had to be carried forward yet again. The Suffolk County is responsible for the cost of streetlighting on the Heights, Harpers Estate and Parkers Way and these are being replaced by County.

## Village Hall and Playing Field

Loans Board repayments by Parish Council for Webbs Meadow, the Village Hall and the 1999 extension will end in 2025 and 2030 and the outstanding debt is £7,808.87. The Parish Council had earmarked £10,000 from the capital investment fund towards the replacement roof but there have been difficulties in raising other grants towards the cost so this is carried forward. The Hall is an asset for the benefit of all residents in Nayland and Wiston. Costs continue despite being closed for past year. Fortunately, a COVID support grant has covered some of these costs. The Village Hall Management Team continue to carry out essential work and security checks at the Hall while it is closed. It cannot re-open unless compliant with any future COVID restrictions and the full support of the hall users.

## Planning since April 2019

This Parish Council have been consulted by Babergh on 91 applications for planning and listed building consent or amendments since April 2019, most of them since the pandemic started. There were 23 applications for tree work in the Conservation Area. The Parish Council had no objections to most of these applications, although sometimes conditions were requested, particularly in respect of annexes or heritage materials. We have objected to developments that are built very close to boundaries affecting the amenity of neighbours and have asked why so little regard is paid to this when permission is granted. This Council does not believe that it is always possible to make an informed judgement about detrimental impact on neighbours, Conservation Area or AONB just by looking at drawings and photographs, particularly if those at County or District level who are making that judgement have little personal knowledge of the location.

The Parish Council carried out a Local Needs Housing Survey in 2018 as a first step in creating a Neighbourhood Plan. At the Parish Assembly In 2019 there were presentations from experts and other Parish Councils about the work involved in setting up a Neighbourhood Plan. We appealed for volunteers to help set up a Neighbourhood Plan committee so that Nayland and Wiston would be entitled to more say in any future developments. Unfortunately, no volunteers came forward so this ambition has not been achieved, although it has been in most surrounding parishes.

## Allotments

There are tenants on all plots and there is a waiting list so we are considering opening up extra allotments on the field. We hope to be able to hold an allotment competition during 2021. The Allotment Association was unable to provide judges during 2020 because of COVID guidance. It is always good to see sheep grazing on the field but we need to remind dogwalkers that it is a legal requirement to keep dogs on leads whenever they are walking near livestock.

## Highways and Transport

In 2019 we reported the need to find a way to limit the number of lorries directed onto unsuitable roads by sat nav causing impact damage to houses, destroying grass verges and obstructing narrow lanes and junctions. After years of requests, and with pressure from County Cllr James Finch, "Unsuitable for HGVs" signs were installed at both A134 junctions this month.

Years of complaints from Parish Council and residents about hazardous parking before and after Abel Bridge in Horkesley Road has resulted in an experimental order for a parking restriction. This has been in place for a few months. Another is in the pipeline for the Caley Green area of Bear Street, where visitors were double parking close to the A134 junction in 2020. As yet we have no starting date. Unauthorised parking in the turning circle of the vicarage driveway, which is *not* part of the highway, has continued to cause damage at Fairfield, especially during the extremely wet Winter.

The ancient drainage system in the centre of the village has caused recurrent severe flooding at the Mill Street T junction with Birch Street and Bear Street. The Parish Council has been working with Suffolk County Council to remedy this and to ensure that the drainage ditch in Gravel Hill is cleared regularly. This is a complicated problem that needed extensive engineering surveys during past two years. Plans are ready for the installation of new drainage structure this year. Frequent flooding on A134 is also a problem that must be addressed. There are potholes everywhere and these are always reported to Suffolk Highways.

Early in 2020 Nayland-with-Wissington, Leavenheath and Stoke Parish Councils met with Chambers Bus Company and Suffolk County Council. We hoped to reach a compromise regarding the proposed reduction in bus services. Unfortunately, the pandemic started soon after. This had a major impact on public transport generally and we now have a minimal daily service.

The Parish Council objected to the changes to Suffolk School Transport Policy whereby Nayland was split in half. Free transport to Thomas Gainsborough Academy was removed for pupils living east of the Fire Station as Hadleigh High School is now deemed to be the nearest school although historically Hadleigh was never part of the local school pyramid.

## Litterpicking

Our own contractors collect litter for two hours each week, including some verges on main roads that are really Babergh District's responsibility. It is now unsafe to collect litter on some A134 verges because of

overgrown bushes. Suffolk Highwayshave been asked several times to cut these back.Community Litterpicks had to be cancelled in 2020 but the Conservation Society and Parish Council organised one this month.We are grateful to many volunteers who collect litter regularly, especially on Caley Green and on local footpaths. We are not so happy with those dogwalkers who never clear up after their dogs or litter the countryside with bags of excrement instead of disposing of them in a bin.Discarded facemasks seem to be more recent items of unhygienic antisocial litter.

### Caley Green and Popp's Piece

Although Suffolk County Council are the landowners, these areas are managed under licence by the Parish Council. Villages all along the River Stour have had to contend with unprecedented numbers of visitors for the past year. Caley Green and the River Stour have suffered the associated difficulties of car parking, unlicensed craft, additional litter and dog waste, damage to riverbank and ecology and disturbance of some river wildlife. The Parish Council has been meeting with the Environment Agency, the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB Team, Suffolk County Council and the River Stour Trust to try to mitigate some of these problems including the severe erosion of the riverbank. There is a proposal to remedy this by rebuilding the lost bank with coir rolls and stabilise with low riverside planting that will not affect the view of the river. ***(See separate report and photographs)***. The photographs supplied by the Environment Agency show the level of erosion in recent years, plus the area to be repaired and protected. We are working on a grant application and need specialist quotations before making final decisions about this scheme. The Environment Agency will be installing direction arrows and a cul-de-sac sign at the entrance to the Mill Lade behind Bear Street and the Parish Council will pay for information signs for the Green to give guidance to visitors about river licences and the Countryside Code of Respect, Protect and Enjoy.

### Membership of Council since Elections in May 2019

It has been difficult to cover all aspects of council work in recent years without a full membership. Unfortunately, only five candidates stood for election for nine seats in 2019. Since then, we have co-opted two more councillors, but we still have one vacancy and need an extra person to share the workload for the next two years. We now have four Parish Councillors from Nayland, four from Wiston.

Despite lobbying by the National Association of Local Councils, the Government has not extended the emergency legislation for virtual meetings beyond May 7<sup>th</sup>, which puts all councils in difficulties. Statutory requirements for meetings will be at odds with Covid restrictions at a time when venues for meetings are not available.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their commitment and support during the past two years. We all thank our Parish Clerk, Debbie Hattrell, for her diligence and hard work dealing with meetings, finance, admin, contractors and keeping us within the legal bounds of a local authority. We all hope for a speedy end to the pandemic so that we can get back to being an active and sociable community.

Mary George : Chair of Nayland with Wissington Parish Council  
19th April, 2021