

Chairman's Annual Report 2019-2020

1. Introduction.

I report on the twelve months up to and including April 2020. As everything is upside down at the moment, I will commence at the end by noting the effect the Covid-19 Pandemic has had on the parish. With a population profile significantly older than many areas we must hope our efforts at social distancing and self-isolation and supporting each other will be effective in saving lives. The work of the parish council has been severely affected, but we have continued our work, with staff and councillors working in new and flexible ways. We have co-operated with the county wide initiatives to support those in need and provided well received advice and information on noticeboards and using our Facebook presence, which has proved highly effective as a means of communication. We should also take a moment to thank the health, care and (often newly identified) key workers who have carried on at great personal risk in support of the rest of us. We would also like to thank the many local food businesses who have adapted to the crisis with new ways to supply those who are locked down.

Much was achieved before the close down by our staff, volunteers and councillors and the aspects I will report on are:

- a. Particular achievements for the year
- b. Planning matters
- c. Ongoing housekeeping matters
- d. Reshaping our work

2. Particular Achievements for the year. For further details go to (Appendix 1)

- a. Established a trim trail, and community orchard, named Bright's Orchard
- b. Made significant responses to consultations on nuclear and wind electricity projects which will affect the parish and on the now withdrawn Ipswich Northern Bypass proposals
- c. Successfully lobbied to have the 66A service introduced to supplement the reduced 66 service
- d. Supported local groups with grants
- e. Ran the village Fete and two successful conservation events on the Recreation Ground and Western Corridor
- f. Established an effective Facebook presence

3. Planning matters. For further details go to (Appendix 2)

- a. Made comprehensive representations to the planning inspectorate and East Suffolk Council regarding the proposed developments at the police headquarters
- b. Successfully lobbied for pedestrian crossings, improved design for proposed café in the square and resisted inappropriate infill developments
- c. Obtained funds from Travis Perkins to mitigate environmental damage their development will cause.
- d. Continued lobbying ESC and SCC to consider the adverse effect on transport and the environment developments have and to mitigate these. Working with Martlesham Traffic Watch we are establishing monitoring of speeds, noise and air pollution

4. Ongoing Housekeeping Matters For further details go to (Appendix 3)

- a. Organising land maintenance throughout the parish and further developing the Martlesham Common Local Nature Reserve
- b. Organising monitoring and remedial work needed on play and leisure equipment, footpaths, trees and street furniture
- c. Organising litter picking
- d. Supporting Portal Woodlands Conservation Group
- e. Liaising with the police
- f. Maintained our exemplary financial, regulatory and legal status

5. Reshaping our work

- a. A number of factors came together during the year to give us the opportunity to review our priorities and strategy
- b. Declaring a climate emergency
- c. Ongoing work consolidating the identified priorities of residents into a guiding action plan, which we call Neighbourhood Plan Plus (NP+)
- d. Crisis in public transport and the need for a sustainable alternative to more road building
- e. Finance becoming available from extra funding due to our Neighbourhood Plan and the careful management of reserves

6. Neighbourhood Plan Plus

The NP+ incorporating climate emergency measures has therefore become our guide to future strategy. Work on this has necessarily been forestalled by the current circumstances but we plan to prioritise this for the future. It involves:

- a. Monitoring and changing the way we carry out the above-mentioned housekeeping activities and special activities we undertake

- b. Identified the need for greater community involvement in this aspect of our work and allowed a budget to support such activity
- c. We have underway a noise, speed and pollution monitoring exercise to inform future actions and responses.
- d. We continue to work with 12 other parishes on a Local Bus Strategy, and will support the work of "Start" which is seeking sustainable transport solutions for the whole Ipswich area
- e. Other ongoing initiatives, the enhancement of the recreation ground, wildflower project, provision of further sports equipment and refurbishment of play equipment will take these priorities into account
- f. We have advocated 'Plastic action', 'Bike to School Week' and recycling.

7. Structure and ways of working of the Parish Council

Inevitably such changes will lead to a review of the structure, aims and mission and activities of the parish council and preliminary work has started on reviewing these. Two developments are however already noteworthy

- a) The launch our Facebook page to enhance our communication with all sections of the community
- b) Our volunteer project is re-invigorating and improving how we recruit new volunteers and look after our many longstanding volunteers

8. Personnel

We experienced major changes in council membership: Wally Welch, John Kelso, John Forbes and Leo Brome stood down from the Council all after many years of dedicated service. The May election brought us two new councillors, Ros Jones and Mike Williamson, which left vacancies and since then we recruited Helen Davey, Sarah-Joy Maddeaux and Chris Prime (since resigned). A further resignation by long standing and much valued councillor Jackie Bear leaves us with a complement of twelve out of fifteen councillors. A significant change is that the new members more accurately reflect the geographical spread of the parish, with membership from the Red Lion, Black Tiles, Mill Heath and Martlesham Heath areas.

Finally we must record our thanks to Susan Robertson (Clerk) Diane Linsley (Deputy Clerk) Debbie Chappell (Officer) and Linda Woodhouse (Administrative assistant) for their hard work and dedication without which we could not function.

Michael Irwin, Chairman 2019-20

Appendix 1

1. Martlesham trim trail was completed and opened for all in the parish to enjoy in November 2019, this links Mill and Martlesham Heaths with shared exercise facilities and an enhanced footway network
2. We have comprehensively researched and submitted substantial responses to the Sizewell C and the Ipswich Northern Route consultations, proposing how the parish can be protected from the environmental damage caused by these projects.
3. Community Orchard - the planning phase migrated to the action phase. We had Gorseland Primary School enthusiastically respond to our call for volunteers to undertake the first planting phase. We hope this will be continued with phases 2 and 3, hopefully with other schools and young persons' groups joining in. The Martlesham Pre-School children presented pictures of fruit tree and sang at the naming and opening ceremony
4. We rallied an effective and very prompt response to the major cuts to local bus services. As a result, we managed a temporary reprieve to the service around Eagle Way, which will be carried forward if the Parish supports and uses the service to prove its need and viability
5. Another successful Village Fete in July was delivered by our Fete team, with a wider range of activities for family and sporting fun, and of course the planning was in place for the 2020 event which was cancelled due to the pandemic
6. We hosted 2 very successful conservation events which were supported by many volunteers - the Recreation Ground work party in October with the invaluable help of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB Project and also ESC (Norse) for cutting the sedgebed before the event; and the Megabash on the Western Corridor in January led by Greenways Project.
7. Launched our Facebook page to enhance our communication with all sections of the community - and which proved very timely with the Coronavirus pandemic. It allowed us to get information out quickly to the community, promoting the local Government pandemic response as well as informing the public of forthcoming road closures, footpath works, tree works and general putting the 'local' into local government for the Parish
8. We are awarded £3496 in grants to the Greenways Project, Martlesham Conservation Group, Martlesham in Bloom, The Saplings., Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, Citizens Advice Felixstowe & District

Appendix 2

1. We made strong representations before and in front of the Planning Inspectorate at the August and September 2019 Suffolk Local Plan Hearings, making strenuous representations against proposed developments at the Woodbridge Town Football Club site, at the Suffolk Police HQ for 300 houses, and to resist attempts to override the MNP. We also objected to the Police HQ planning application on the grounds that decisions should be made locally within the terms of the neighbourhood plan, proper consultation had not taken place with ourselves and district councillors and the coronavirus situation made effective decision making impossible in this case; and that the plans were too vague and incomplete to safely give approval to. This matter is still ongoing.
2. We made a comprehensive response to the plans for retirement homes to be built on the eastern car park. Although not opposed to these in principle we seek safeguards to protect the Green, neighbouring land protected from development and existing residents from detriment and to ensure adequate car parking is provided
3. After years of lobbying pedestrian crossings on Anson & Felixstowe Roads were installed
4. We challenged the Travis Perkins planning permission on Hilton Road supporting local objection, and whilst we did not defeat the application, we were able to get some mitigation funding to finance maintaining the adjacent County Wildlife Site/Common.
5. We maintained our efforts to have a positive input into the Brightwell Lakes (BT) development for the benefit of existing and new residents. This has been delayed, as no suitable builders have come forward and the ongoing confusion regarding highways issues. We still don't know when detailed plans allowing the development to begin will be published and consulted upon.
6. With Martlesham Traffic Watch, there is a programme to monitor traffic movements, speeds and air and noise pollution. The data will provide hard evidence to strengthen our responses to consultations and planning applications to ensure concerns about environmental quality and amenity to residents are not overlooked
7. As a result of our input, improved more eco - friendly café proposals in The Square.
8. We successfully resisted infill housing development on Martlesham Heath; with the support of East Suffolk Council, this was rejected on appeal.
9. Represented the needs of the parish at community planning events, county-wide planning events and planning road shows
10. Over the year, we commented on 59 planning applications, mostly for local extensions but we also opposed an application for a major housing development

near the Seven Hills roundabout 'Orwell Green' which, although outside our parish, would affect us in terms of increased pressure on local infrastructure.

Appendix 3

1. Land Maintenance contract extended for two more years and updated, this covers grass cutting and other maintenance work on land for which the PC is responsible plus the village green on the Heath, churchyard, old village hall, community centre and Pavilion
2. Martlesham Common Local Nature Reserve: we erected framed entrances and improved footpaths, and carried out tree work, gorse clearance, works to encourage heather and native fauna (which would otherwise be overwhelmed by the gorse if not kept in balance)
3. Organised our annual community litter picks but quietly in the background we get on with litter picking in the Parish all year round, particularly in the playgrounds and community centre car park.
4. Running a programme of inspections and carrying out remedial and enhancement work identified by these:
 - a. trim trail inspections,
 - b. play equipment, 4 new volunteer playground inspectors appointed.
 - c. footpath inspections, completed survey of Martlesham rights of Way and report submitted to SCC Highways, with remedial actions needed
 - d. tree surveys, Appointed a new Tree Warden for the parish
 - e. noticeboards,
 - f. flora and fauna surveys undertaken in Martlesham Common Local Nature Reserve
5. Portal Woodlands Group celebrated their 20th anniversary this last year as an action group, quietly and with a high degree of effectiveness looking after the Portal Woods and at the same time, teaching our young people to understand and respect our environment for the future
6. Meeting regularly with the police to ensure the needs of Martlesham are not overlooked
7. Maintained effective budgeting and financial control procedures, risk management policies and compliance with standards of governance to receive unqualified satisfactory reports from internal and external auditors
8. Maintained compliance with changing legislation on such matters as employment and data protection
9. Renewed a lease at peppercorn rent which allows Martlesham Academy to use a corner of the Jubilee Playspace for outdoor learning
10. Brief Financial Summary: Total income for the year - £195,067, including £35,072 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); Total expenditure - £159,248. Therefore, excluding CIL, income very nearly matched expenditure. The CIL funds will be spent in the next five years on projects to benefit the parish.

