

During the last year the planning appeal for the large development of houses in Offton has been denied and I am sure we all hope that this will not need to be revisited. Some small scale development does seem to have been allowed in the Villages under the emerging Mid Suffolk Local plan. The Parish Council supported the development of the Willisham Barns site and this application has now been passed by MSDC. This development will bring many benefits to Willisham it is anticipated that a path will join the development to the village allowing safer access to the Church. A green space is planned and it will also deliver affordable housing. All these things were requested by residents in the Parish Plan.

The Council has met and responded to all relevant planning applications during the last year.

Despite the restrictions both the Willisham notice boards have been refurbished, the Council would like to convey their thanks to Cllr Cox for undertaking this; he has done a superb job.

The bench on Tye Lane needed to be replaced, Cllrs Cox and Pinson-Roxburgh removed the bench and will re install the new one in due course. Council would like to thank Hitchcock Farms for continuing to let us site the bench on their land. The replacement bench has very kindly been provided by Mid Suffolk Cllr Pratt from his locality budget, I am sure Council would wish to convey our gratitude for this grant.

The annual litter pick was delayed due to the Covid crisis. It took place in September. Many residents from Offton responded to clean their village under the leadership of Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh. Cllr Gilson and I litter picked Willisham. Council would like to convey their thanks to Cllr Oakes for providing some hoops to add to our litter picking equipment .

Cllrs met to discuss the provision computer equipment for two families with children attending Claydon High School. The pandemic has seen all the schools closed to the majority of children. Most children needed to undertake their learning online. This has been a real difficulty for those children whose parents were not able to provide the IT equipment. With funds from a Mid Suffolk District Council grant for Covid emergencies the Parish Council was able to help with this. I am again impressed by the support and goodwill of all Councillors to enable this to take place.

Cllr Bye and Cllr Bunton both volunteered to support vulnerable residents under SCC home but not alone scheme and took shopping ect. to those in need. Thankfully the residents of both villages pulled together and helped each other and for the most part took care of themselves. I think it says something for the community spirit in this area that this took place organically.

I would like to thank both our County and District Councillors for the work undertaken of behalf of our villages. I am aware that there are many demands on their time and it is appreciated that you attend our meetings.

I am sure that there have been things I have not mentioned and people I have not thanked, I have tried to give a mere snapshot of Council business.

I would like to single out our Clerk for special thanks. The Clerk has had a very difficult time this year. In the beginning of the crisis it was as if someone had ripped the rule book up made some new ones and then continued to change them every other day. The Clerk not only coped with these changes but excelled at negotiating and understanding the changing laws to allow Council to operate effectively. I know that she took telephone calls and coordinated volunteers at weekends and outside normal working hours. The Clerk worked all over the Christmas period. In the midst of all of the changing circumstances she has also managed to obtain the professional CILCA qualification, this was achieved in three months instead of a

year. An achievement I am sure we all applaud. I would like to convey my thanks and the thanks of this Council to our Clerk for her unwavering commitment to this Council and our residents.

During the last year Cllr M Bolton has stood down as Councillor. Cllr Bolton served the Council for many years. He was a past Chairman and latterly part of the Affordable Homes working party. The knowledge and insight he brought to our meetings will be sadly missed. It takes a lot of commitment to serve your community for this amount of time and so the Parish Council convey their gratitude to Cllr Bolton for his many years of service, and wish him well for the future.

I would just like to finish by offering my sincerest thanks to all Councillors for your hard work and support during these unprecedented times. Even in the most difficult circumstances this Council has continued to operate effectively, this has only happened due to the goodwill and integrity of the members of this Council.

PARISH COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REPORT – 2020/2021

The balance in hand at the start of the financial year 2020/2021 was £9014. This year's income totalled £11,721 and expenditure was £10,148 after rounding, which after accounting for uncleared cheques totalling £1529, leaves a balance in hand of £12,115.88 in the Bank as of 31st March 2021.

There were large donations this year of £700 each to the Village Hall, Offton Church and Willisham Church, details of which can be found in the Parish Council meeting minutes, as well as a donation to Claydon High School for the purchase of two laptops for residents of the parish for the whole of their time at school.

The precept for 2021/2022 has been set at £9,239.

The bulk of budgeted expenditure for 2021/2022 will be of a similar nature, Staff wages, Donations to Grass Cutting & maintenance of the grounds of the Church, Composting Toilet and Village Hall Playground Maintenance & Insurance, SALC membership, Dog Waste and Litter Bin collection, and General maintenance and replacement of assets.

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County Councillor's Annual Report, Cllr K Oakes

Here is a selection of news items from Suffolk County Council that featured over the last 12 months. For further details on any of these stories, and more, visit <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/>.

March 2021

[Suffolk County Council secures £3.1M for building decarbonisation initiative.](#)

Suffolk County Council (SCC), working in conjunction with property specialists Concertus, has been successful in gaining over £3M of funding from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to promote capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within buildings used to provide frontline public services.

Working with Concertus, the council has been preparing a range of packages to support the decarbonising of various buildings in the Council's estate including applications for the council's headquarters at Endeavour House in Ipswich, four rural fire stations, Beacon House, Waterloo Centre and Leiston Children's Centre.

The council's Children and Young People service also reviewed their portfolio of school buildings along with Concertus. This review resulted in the submission of grant applications for nine schools across the county, all of which were successful.

This grant scheme aligns with BEIS' new mission and priorities: fighting coronavirus, backing business, unleashing innovation, and tackling climate change. Through this scheme, it is supporting the council's own commitment to be net zero by 2030 along with the Government's own net zero goals and encouraging further green investment within the UK.

Packages of work vary from building to building, but many include the fitting of solar panels and battery storage, as well as improvements to wall or roof insulation and installation of Air Source Heat Pumps to move away from the use of fossil fuels for source of heating.

February 2021

[Suffolk County Council's cabinet confirms its support for Freeport East](#)

On February 23, the cabinet of the county council confirmed its support for the creation of a new Freeport (Freeport East).

The Freeport would cover both the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich as part of the Government's aim to create a number of Freeports across the country to drive job creation, investment and international trade post Brexit.

A Freeport includes secure customs zones and tax sites where business can be carried out inside a country's land border, but where different tax and customs rules apply. These rules mean Freeports can potentially reduce administrative burdens and tariff controls, provide relief from duties, import taxes, and ease tax and planning regulations.

Freeport East has several unique aspects which make its bid for Freeport status particularly strong. This includes global and regional connectivity, with 36% of all the UK's container traffic passing through the Port of Felixstowe, unrivalled international connections, particularly with Asia, strong connectivity to the Midlands and the North, thereby supporting the government's "levelling up agenda" in these areas. The bid also stands out as supporting other national objectives such as the development of new technology and the push for clean energy. The Port of Felixstowe has recently won funding to trial a pilot 5G network and has strong research and development links with Cambridge and Essex Universities. There are also strong links with the energy sector and the emerging hydrogen economy.

[Highways doubles drainage budget following £27.2m announcement](#)

On February 17 it was announced that Suffolk Highways allocated an extra £2m to support the fight against flooding.

Drainage and flooding, Rights of Way bridges and resurfacing of roads in Suffolk have been allocated extra funds for the 2021/22 financial year following Department for Transport's funding announcement.

Keen to progress more drainage schemes across Suffolk to support the fight against flooding, Suffolk Highways has allocated an extra £2m – double its current budget allocation – in order to help tackle the worsening flood problems being experienced across the county.

Suffolk Highways also looks set to bolster its resource to support in the repairing or replacement of seven Rights of Way bridges across the county with an additional £800k, whilst committing a further £3.4m to

the county's surface dressing programme. Although the budget is less than the 2020/21 allocation, Suffolk Highways prudently prepared for a decrease and allocated a tentative £21m for the 2021/22 financial year.
January 2021

[Suffolk 2020 fund project embraces love of the great outdoors – Discovering Suffolk](#)

The Discovering Suffolk project was launched in January 2021. The aim of the project is to raise further awareness of the range of great walking routes, areas of interest and the variety of landscapes that form Suffolk's beautiful countryside through public rights of way and points of access.

Given the experiences many people have faced over the last year living through the pandemic, it was recognised that exercise and wellbeing is a fundamental element in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, Suffolk's countryside offers a freely accessible means for many of us to experience nature and stay healthy. The key element of the Discovering Suffolk project is the development of a smartphone app alongside a range of supporting QR codes fixed to rights of way signposts located along different routes to promote walking, cycling and exploring in Suffolk's countryside.

Discovering Suffolk builds on our changing behaviours when visiting the countryside, as people become ever more interested in local exploration and taking short walks and cycling exercises during the pandemic. The project will continue to promote the Discover Suffolk website as new content, information and advice continues to be added to the current offer, promoting walking routes and cycle rides through local communities. The project seeks to actively engage new audiences who are not aware of the options available on their doorstep or have perhaps only begun to explore the local countryside beyond their neighbourhood.

Work will shortly start on developing the Discovering Suffolk App and setting the sites for the QR code points around the county. After development, the new, free App will provide access to the full range of Discover Suffolk outdoor guides with over 100 walks across the county. The App and QR codes will include audio, video, imagery and fun activities to further enhance people's enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of Suffolk's natural and built environment.

December 2020

[Suffolk wins the Most Innovative Family Information Service award](#)

On December 16th, Suffolk won the Most Innovative Family Information Service award at the National Association of Family Information Service Awards (NAFIS), 2020.

The award highlights the work undertaken to adapt Suffolk's online Community Services Directory, Suffolk InfoLink (www.suffolk.gov.uk/infolink), to meet the public's rapidly changing needs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Community Information Team and teams across the children and young people's directorate worked together with thousands of community partners to collate and provide information to support to the public. Many service providers in the voluntary and community sector were quick to adapt their offer and were supported to use Suffolk InfoLink to promote these opportunities to the public.

There are 7000 community organisation records provided on InfoLink allowing teams to communicate information quickly to thousands of sector partners, and the voluntary sector, and report progress to

relevant government departments. On a week-by-week basis Suffolk InfoLink was updated to highlight which childcare providers were open for vulnerable children, and key workers such as NHS staff during the first National Lockdown which was an essential element of the Covid rapid response.

As well as helping key workers to find childcare, these developments also supported Suffolk's Track and Trace, Home but Not Alone and the Suffolk Advice and Support Service and provided 'easy to use' access to essential information including financial help and food banks.

October 2020

[Adopt East launches](#)

14 October marked the launch of Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England.

Adopt East will work across local authorities in Southend, Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Bedford and Luton to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. Adoptionplus, Barnardo's, and Adoption UK are also part of the partnership.

The Adopt East alliance will deliver the highest quality adoption service to children and families throughout the region by bringing together the expertise and skills of all its partners.

The scale of the organisation means that adopters will have access to a larger number of children waiting for adoption. This will help partners to match children with the right family for them, at the earliest opportunity.

Adopt East is committed to providing good quality adoption support services to support all families with their adoption journey.

[Council announces £228,000 for tree-planting, protecting hedgerows and verges across Suffolk](#)

In October, it was announced Suffolk's natural environment will receive investment for tree-planting, restoring hedgerows, and improving roadside verges for wildlife.

£228,000 from the Suffolk 2020 Fund will enable Suffolk County Council to enhance its work to protect and encourage biodiversity in the county. The authority will do this through a number of new schemes, as well as building on existing work.

Working with The Woodland Trust, Suffolk Tree Wardens, landowners, and county farm tenants, the funding will support the planting of around 100,000 trees, including replanting hedgerows in suitable locations across Suffolk over the next 18 months. It will also help establish around 10 community tree nurseries, which will support more planting in years to come. Local volunteers will be supported to collect seeds, set up nursery beds and grow trees in their communities.

The funding will also be used to trial better ways to manage roadside verges for wildlife. This includes exploring the use of new technology and cutting techniques, as well as developing new partnerships with parishes and landowners. The funding will help expand the existing Roadside Nature Reserve network managed by the council with the help of volunteers, seeing a 25% increase in the overall length of verges managed for wildlife.

September 2020

[The Hold welcomes first visitors and opens inaugural exhibition](#)

Monday 28 September saw the public able to access The Hold, Suffolk's flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront.

This versatile new building will be the permanent home of the Suffolk Archives Ipswich branch and is shared with the University of Suffolk, who have dedicated teaching spaces within the building.

The creation of The Hold, and its associated countywide programme of events and activities, has been made possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further funding support from other national organisations and local Suffolk heritage groups.

The public are currently able to access 'front of house' areas, including archive inspired displays, the café, shop, and toilets, including a new Changing Places facility.

First year History students were some of the first to try out the new facilities, with lectures and seminars beginning in the new facilities. The main area, known as 'The Street', as well as the café and shop, enjoyed a steady trickle of curious visitors and passers-by.

On 2 October, the long-awaited Exhibition Gallery also opened to visitors. The inaugural exhibition, *Global Events: Suffolk Stories*, examines how Suffolk has responded as a community to key global events over the past 100 years.

It focuses on the arrival of American service people during the 'Friendly Invasion' of World War Two, as well as the rising tensions and public messaging of the Cold War period, and the collective community response to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020.

Through original archival documents, photos, music, and film, visitors will be able to explore the similarities and differences between these three global events and understand how Suffolk has changed as a result.

[Council announces £300,000 for electric vehicle charging points in rural Suffolk](#)

On September 23, it was announced that 100 fast charging points for electric vehicles will be installed in rural parts of the county by Suffolk County Council.

The council will be reaching out to interested parish and town councils and non-profit organisations to put in fast chargers where there are currently none. The funding will cover the installation and set-up costs, meaning very little expense for the hosts and possibly creating a source of income for them.

This project is the first to benefit from the council's Suffolk 2020 Fund, which was announced earlier this year. This is a £3m fund for the council's own projects to bid into. Projects must help address the council's climate emergency declaration and must improve Suffolk for all residents in years to come.

The £300,000 award will link into the council's existing Plug In Suffolk project, which was launched in February 2019. It is the UK's first 'fully open' public fast charging network for electric vehicles, meaning drivers simply pay by contactless payment with no need to register their details.

August 2020

[Suffolk celebrates 1,000 miles of newly surfaced roads](#)

On the 5 August, it was announced that Suffolk Highways completed its 1,000th resurfaced mile, following the Council's commitment to relay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's road network.

In 2017, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet committed to resurfacing 1,000 miles of road across Suffolk over a four-year period; in a bid to improve the quality of roads, reduce the number of potholes and to help stop potholes from forming in the first place.

The commitment also makes sound financial sense, as preventing the deterioration of road surfaces by machine surfacing or surface dressing helps reduce the need to spend more money on reactive maintenance repairing potholes now, and in future years.

The 1,000th mile was laid at Horham Road in Eye.

July 2020

[Council proposes unprecedented environmental plans in response to climate emergency](#)

In response to its declaration of a climate emergency, Suffolk County Council aims to lead the way with an unparalleled range of activities and policy changes to support its ambition of being a 'net zero' authority by 2030.

At its meeting on 14 July 2020, the council's Cabinet reviewed and agreed an extensive programme of recommendations to achieve this ambition.

The plans include dozens of changes and new ways of working, from making its pool car fleet all-electric, to making it mandatory for all future committee decisions to consider the net zero ambition.

Being 'net zero' means that the council will remove its carbon emissions where it can; if it is unable to do so, it will compensate for those emissions. The council will adopt a more detailed method to measure its carbon emissions output, so that it can more accurately track its progress on an annual basis.

June 2020

[Better Broadband for Suffolk reaches 100,000th customer as 3rd phase contract is agreed](#)

By June 3, more than 100,000 households across Suffolk were using faster broadband, thanks to the council-led Better Broadband for Suffolk programme.

The partnership - between Suffolk County Council, Openreach, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and local councils – has made faster broadband available to around 150,000 premises so far, since being launched in 2010.

It means the current total superfast broadband coverage in Suffolk stands at more than 96 per cent, with plans currently in place to reach 98 per cent coverage before the end of the year.

The team has plans to go even further, after today announcing an additional phase of work, to provide connectivity to approximately 5,000 more premises, including over 550 businesses, in some of the most rural parts of Suffolk.

The work will be carried out by Openreach – operator of the UK's largest phone and broadband network, used by the likes of BT, Sky, Plusnet and TalkTalk – and is set to start as soon as deployment under the current contract ends. Work will continue until September 2022.

Faster broadband provides many benefits including staying in contact with friends and family through video conferencing services, easier web browsing and online shopping, the ability to stream high-definition video and work from home. Covid-19 has led to many of these benefits becoming even more crucial during times of social distancing and will have a large part to play during the recovery phase.

May 2020

[Discover Suffolk's history with new Suffolk Heritage Explorer website](#)

On 20 May, Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service announced the launch of its new Suffolk Heritage Explorer website at heritage.suffolk.gov.uk. This offers users a completely free resource of interesting, up-to-date information on the archaeology and history of Suffolk.

The new website includes an upgraded searchable interactive map and a database of known archaeological sites, which can be used to discover more about Suffolk's history from the comfort of your home.

Alongside free downloadable publications and resources, there is updated guidance and best practice advice on finds recording and access to the county's archaeological archives.

The website features key archaeological sites and projects, such as Suffolk's World War II heritage. You can find out more about the internationally significant Anglo-Saxon site at Rendlesham, its 12 years of ongoing archaeological research and results, with podcasts and archaeological reports.

A dedicated section on Ipswich also summarises the town's development through the ages, featuring the recently completed 'Urban Archaeological Database' with useful archive and planning guidance. There are also lots of downloadable activities for families and children.

April 2020

[More than 98% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day](#)

On 16 April, it was reported that over 98.57% of Suffolk children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of the schools preferred by their parents.

Suffolk County Council received 7,602 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2020.

Some 7,116 children received offers for their first preference school and 7,493 children received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

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District Councillor's Annual Report, Cllr D Pratt

Governance

Due to the Covid 19 emergency, there were no Council meetings from 23 March 2020 until the new Government legislation to allow virtual meetings was approved in May. Council staff have been working from home where possible and all Council and committee meetings are currently being conducted virtually using the Teams platform.

The Annual Council meeting was deferred until September. The Green Party councillors formed a political group with the Liberal Democrat councillors, so we now form 50% of the total number of councillors. The chair of the Council is from the Conservative and Independent group.

Budget and investments

The COVID pandemic is continuing to have a financial impact on the Council's budget. There are already losses of approximately £1M with projected losses of a further £1M during 2021/22. The Government has provided support but not sufficient to cover all the losses.

Despite having about £10M in reserves the Council increased Council Tax by 1.66%. It has been agreed that £4M of the reserves are to be allocated to the following departments Communities, Housing, Economy and Well-being.

The new rules about PWLB loans for the ‘invest to save’ scheme, have not halted the current round of acquisitions, but in future the Council will have to fund such activities in other ways.

Climate Change and Biodiversity

The Climate Change working group made a number of proposals to Council, including projects such as Solar Carport at the Mid Suffolk Leisure centre site. Work is also underway at the leisure centres to reduce the carbon footprint. The waste fleet are to be converted to use biodiesel fuel. There is to be a biodiversity mapping project across the district and the public realm team are hoping to work with parish councils to promote more tree and hedgerow planting.

Housing

Council housing rents are set to increase by CPI+1%, which is on average £1.25 increase per week. Garage rents are to remain the same. Sheltered housing service charges are to increase by £1 per week, and sheltered housing are to remain the same as last year. In principle ‘right-to-buy’ receipts are to be retained for use to develop and acquire new council dwellings.

There is a programme of decarbonising Council dwellings. This year (20/21) 62 Air Source Heat pumps, 169 boilers have been installed in Council properties and there are a further 200 planned boiler installations over next year at a cost of £1.8m. A pilot project in Harleston is underway to test various schemes to find out the most suitable approach for our housing stock.

Planning

The Regulation 19 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was agreed by both Councils and is now awaiting a response from the Planning Inspectorate.

Supporting the community

Many community groups have struggled during the pandemic, but I was pleased to support the following organisations in the ward with CIL and Locality Fund this year.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds of £16,651 were secured to fund a new sewerage system for Ringshall Village Hall.

Offton and Willisham Village Hall was awarded £542 towards the costs of a planting scheme to improve

the car park. The Locality Fund provided a further £612 to support the LED lighting system upgrade for the village hall.

Great Bricett Parish Council received £800.00 towards the costs of refurbishing the village hall floor.

Barking Parish Council received funds towards an ecological survey and management plan for Barking Tye.

Orchard Barn, the community-run environmental education centre based in Ringshall was awarded funds towards a solar energy scheme.

Community grants of over £150k have been awarded to community projects throughout the district as well as £100k specifically targeted at COVID related support groups.

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone 0300 123 4000

We would like to thank the Parish Council for all their work done throughout the year.

7 **Offton Village Recorder Annual Report**
The Offton Village Recorder gave their report, which can be found below.

8 **Offton Church Annual Report given by the Church Warden**

People may have heard a lack of Bells over the year and this is due to the Bell tower chamber not being wide enough to be covid-19 safe for 8 bell ringers. Services are still continuing at 3 a month. The opening hours of the Church has been a difficult one to solve with valuable assets held in the church. A key pad has been installed where people from the village can have the code to use the church whenever they want to.

The machinery and grass are being maintained, following Monty Don's advice we are 'No Mow in May'. Wild flowers are due to be sown among some of the gravestones.

Starlings and Jackdaws can now been seen at the Church and an owl looks to be in residence.

The Wyard memorial is in need of repair to the plinth.

The Rev Dan covers 8 churches and comes to Offton around once a month. A weekly sermon is sent to 28 households and there is evensong every other month.

Finances are low and we are hoping to provide another quiz, possibly a fete in July or August and hold a Bric-a-brac sale or plant sale over the year.

We are still here and looking forward to seeing everyone.

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Willisham Church Annual Report given by the Treasurer

St Mary's Church, Willisham, Financial Report for the O&WPC Annual Meeting

Thanks to two generous donations from Offton & Willisham Parish Council (£700.00) and from Jessica Tappenden (£570.00 from plant sales) we were able to increase our compost toilet fund to £1970.00.

As Covid 19 raised its ugly head, there was little opportunity, in 2020, to meet together in church and/or fundraising events so, inevitably, funds were depleted. The plus side was that individuals generously added to their usual donations so, because they were straightforward donations as opposed to money raised from events, we were able to claim more than usual through the Gift Aid Scheme.

We can only assume that, in 2021, things can only get better, and we'll be able to fundraise again. We may even be able to afford to spend a penny!

Our thanks, as always, go to the Offton & Willisham Parish Council for its continued support.

Annual Report of Willisham St. Mary's Church, Year Ending December 2020

Willisham is one of eight parishes in a group which includes Offton, Barking, Somersham, Flowton, Ringshall, Great Bricett and Battsford.

Priest-in-Charge

The Reverend Daniel Harrison (since 2016)

Parochial Church Council

The following were elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2020, held 26 October 2020. This meeting was held much later in the year than usually acceptable due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Rosemary Cage Churchwarden

Lynn Cornforth Secretary

Jean Hardman Treasurer

Jacqui Somerville Gift Aid Secretary

The PCC met on 2 occasions during 2020.

Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll stands at 9 (non-resident 1)

Church Services

A 9.30am Holy Communion service was held on the first Sunday of each month up until March 2020 and was able to resume in September 2020, as soon as COVID-19 restrictions allowed and numbers attending have been similar to pre COVID-19 levels.

A Harvest Festival service was held just as we came out of lockdown and the numbers attending this were very much down on previous years.

Carol services were not allowed to take place this year; Rev. Harrison incorporated Christmas themes into our normal services.

Social and Fundraising Events

	<p>All social and fundraising events were very much curtailed during 2020 because of the pandemic, apart from Jessica Tappenden, who kindly made a generous donation from money raised at her plant sales. The PCC were very grateful for this donation.</p> <p>Details of our funds are available in the Annual Financial Report.</p> <p>The Gift Aid Scheme continues to provide a vital source of income and we fully appreciate the significant workload of our treasurer, Jean, in carrying out the demanding administrative requirements of the scheme.</p> <p><u>Risk Assessment</u></p> <p>This is a regular item on the Agenda of our PCC meetings and our activities are carefully monitored to ensure that we carry out our statutory obligations.</p> <p><u>Improvements</u></p> <p>Work was completed on the boundary hedge around the churchyard and once again, the PCC are most appreciative of those who carried out this work.</p> <p><u>Review of the Year</u></p> <p>The past year has been a very difficult year for everyone, but we have still made the effort to maintain our beautiful church and to also continue with services when possible.</p> <p>Throughout the year the Church was kept clean by a small and reliable group of cleaners and flower arrangers. The churchyard was similarly well maintained by a very small number of dedicated supporters and we are extremely grateful to all of them.</p>
10	<p><u>Claydon High School Annual Report</u></p> <p>The Claydon report is found below.</p>
11	<p><u>Village Hall Annual Report</u></p> <p>We all know what a difficult year we have been through and for the Hall committee it was, at times, very trying and worrying.</p> <p>During the first lockdown the hall was made Covid-19 compliant ready for the day we would be allowed to reopen, which we did for a short period .</p> <p>During the subsequent lockdowns we could not relax, there was always something to be done to keep the building in a good state and visiting regularly to comply with the terms of our insurance.</p> <p>In recent months we have renewed the lighting in the main Hall, lobby and committee room to low energy lamps.</p> <p>Outside the hall we also made changes to the lighting to improve the parking area visibility, this work is still ongoing. The help given to the hall with these projects over the past 12 months by our district councillor has been much appreciated.</p> <p>The borders adjacent to the parking areas were planted in October by a team of volunteers and needed to be cared for till they had taken hold. The current dry weather means regular watering is required.</p> <p>During the current lockdown maintenance work continues in a Covid 19 secure fashion.</p> <p>Looking ahead the hall will reopen on May 17th with a number groups keen to resume their activities, of course these will have to take place under the Covid 19 restrictions but the design of the hall and the planning that has taken place will enable this to happen safely.</p> <p>Let us hope we can get back to normal later in the year.</p> <p>We remain financially resilient and look forward to the future.</p>
12	<p><u>Parishioners' questions</u> -</p> <p>It was noted by a resident that the footpath between School House to Middlewood cottages is never clean. Are villagers allowed to clean the footpath? This will be an agenda item at the next Parish Council meeting to formalise a proper response.</p>
	<p>The meeting concluded at 9:25pm</p>

Offton Village Recorder's Report for the year 2020

The year 2020 was, of course, dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic. It became clear in early March that many people were becoming ill and dying from a new type of flu. It had apparently come from Wuhan in China and spread very rapidly from just one person visiting Europe and infecting people who were in close contact. As it was skiing season the outbreak was most noticeable in Austria with many Italian skiers on the slopes. Hence in Italy the pandemic caused many deaths straight away. Germany was also affected, but did not suffer many deaths. When the virus arrived in Britain it came into the country from several sources and could not be contained. Even after 7 weeks of the virus being detected we had recorded over 28000 deaths, as did Italy, Spain, and France respectively, whilst Germany was on 6600. We were all put into lockdown at the end of March and remained so until the number of cases reduced to below the r-rate of 1, meaning the virus was no longer passed on to more than 2 people. However, every time we were allowed to go about a bit more the number of cases increased and by the beginning of autumn various areas of the country were put under restrictions again. And from Christmas onwards the whole country was again in lockdown. At the end of the year the UK had the highest death rate in Europe. 89,243 people had died of covid-19 in the UK (ONS data) and it now (as of beginning of April) stands at 127,000. In the Mid Suffolk area there had been 103 deaths to the end of December 2020, but since then there have been a further 76 up to the beginning of April 2021. In our own village I know of one person, Terry Roberts, who died of Covid-19. He had moto-neuron disease and was particularly susceptible to becoming ill from the virus.

Thankfully as of the beginning of December 2020 vaccinations have started and it is hoped that this will stop serious illness from this virus and stem the circulation, too.

General:

In February the hedge trees between the School House and Middlewood Cottages were cut out by farmer Hitchcock. This has created a lot more light on the road at that point.

In March the Planning Appeal re 32 houses to be built in Offton at the back of Castle Lane Bungalows as applied for by Mr. S. Phillips was to be decided. The inspectors came amidst the lockdown period, so no one could attend, and she viewed the site on 18 March (AP/19/00142). The decision was announced in June that the inspectorate had dismissed the appeal and the refusal of the application remains.

During the early spring the weather was extremely dry and warm and as people were not allowed to go beyond their own village. It was an opportunity for everyone to get to know their own parish and footpaths which was noticeable later on in the year when all the paths were well trodden and muddy throughout the winter. It was, however, a great chance to appreciate the wildlife around us. The wood anemones, bluebells, orchids, and Herb Paris in Middlewood, as well as the birds and butterflies were admired by not just the dog walkers.

The villagers took part in the 'Clap for the NHS' each Thursday evening from March to May in appreciation for the dedication of all the keyworkers working tirelessly during the pandemic.

In August, on a very hot day, workmen from Vodafone were making good part of the road just before the S-bend as you leave the village using hot tar for the repair. This became very hot and burst into flames. The workers were worried that it would spread to the ripe crop field next to the road and called the fire brigade to deal with the blaze. This caused the road to be shut for a while.

In December there were 2 occasions of flooding of the road at Offton between the telephone exchange and the bend by Bridge Cottage.

The weather data for this year was 672 mm rain for the year with the 1st 3 months at 160 mm, the 2nd 3 months were very dry with just 91 mm, the 3rd quarter at 160 mm again, and then a very wet winter quarter of 261 mm.

Village Hall:

At the beginning of the year the village hall car park had been upgraded at a cost of about £35,000 and completed at the end of February. The new layout has a gravel surface within plastic matting. An electric vehicle charging point has also been installed and a boules court was created next to the exercising equipment.

In February the Flicks in the Sticks showing was 'Downton Abbey', but by March the hall had to be shut down due to Covid restrictions. For a short while in the summer the hall could be used again under strict hygiene rules for the art group, but there were no functions or carpet bowls for the rest of the year. The October film 'Judy' could be shown by using a new booking system via ticketsource.co.uk, so people could be traced, but then the use of the hall was restricted again.

The Carpet Bowls tournament winners were: Jeremy Brown who won the singles, as well as the pairs with Carol S., and also the triples together with Vera Mayes and Gordon. These games had taken place before the lockdown in March. And sadly Vera Mayes died later in March. The carpet bowls club had lost their longstanding members Maurice & Valerie Lankester due to them moving to Kent the previous year, but since then Valerie has also died.

Parish Council:

The parish council had two new parish councillors: Nigel Bunton for Willisham after the resignation of Keith Earl, and Andrew Chaplin for Offton as Michael Bolton stood down. The council has been conducting their business via zoom meetings throughout the year. Examples of their debates are:

- Volunteers had come forward to the PC offering their help for those who cannot get their own food or medicine, etc.
- The Chaplins of Rook Hill Farm are planning to plant a wood behind The Limeburners Pub.
- The PC discussed whether Holly Lane from Offton to Ringshall could be made into a 'Quiet Lane' which would give preference to users of the road on foot or bicycle or horses.
- No Xmas lunch for the over 60s could be offered this year.
- The Telephone box on the Green now has books in it, but cannot be used at the moment.
- The Parish Council had several complaints from residents in the Castle Meadow area about a sudden increase in police call-outs concerning disputes and various nuisances.
- Rather than having one big litter picking event there are now at least 8 separate parties (individuals, couples, or families) that go out litter picking on a regular basis. The PC has provided them with the appropriate equipment and high visibility vests.

Neighbourhood Watch Report:

Total crimes reported for each village from April 2020 – March 2021

Somersham 26. Offton 17. Willisham 6. Flowton 6.

In Offton this included public order offences, Anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, violence (this covers domestics, GBH, assaults, and crimes of a sexual nature), vehicle crimes, burglary, and drugs.

Link Magazine:

The Link newsletter for April was produced and printed, but could not go out to people as the lockdown was announced starting from 23 March 2020. It was available at the community shop or churches for anyone to pick up if they wanted it. No issues were in print for May, June, and July, but could be viewed online.

On the whole several events were advertised, such as the films, coffee mornings, church fete, and car boot sale at Limeburners, VE day 1945 commemorations, but could not happen. The autumn issues were in print again, but contained church news, general info, and commercial adverts only.

Church:

- A churchyard bric-a-brac sale could be held in the churchyard and it raised £200.
- The September Harvest Festival took place with the congregation only allowed to use every other row of pews and wearing masks, singing was not allowed. However, the Church was decorated as usual.
- The Church cycle ride also earned the church £85 and an earlier plant sale raised £120.
- Remembrance services could only go ahead outdoors, but there was no service in Offton.

On November, 24th Paul Chapman died at the age of 92. He had been a resident of Offton from 1956 to 2003. During that time Paul & Anne lived at Castle Farm and farmed from there giving employment to many locals. He was on the parish council for 39 years and was also an elected member of the district council standing as an independent. He was church treasurer for all that time and played the organ at most services and celebrations. He was a great person and much valued by all who knew him.

During the year we also lost Irene Potten, Christopher Collins, Margaret Laflin of Gunn Farm, Somersham, widow of Dennis Laflin, but had previously been married to Reverend Francis, deceased, vicar of Somersham & Offton from 1974 to 1981, Stella Dickerson of Derrick Hill, Terry Roberts, and Barbara Stockings.

In December the carol service could be held, but again with people wearing masks and no singing. The last hymn was sung outside.

For the first time in memory there was a Christmas tree outside the church this year decorated with stars which had messages on them from visitors to the church. It was a lovely sight, both day and night.

In my capacity as village recorder I have over several years compiled a report of all the gravestones still standing in the churchyard. This booklet consists of photographs of the headstones with details of the person or persons buried there. Additionally, where I have been able to find more information about the persons I have added those details to enhance the records to aid family researchers.

This report I have deposited in Offton Church where it is accessible to all.

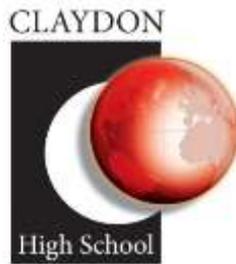
I have also compiled booklets about the houses in the village and their inhabitants over the years. This is an ongoing project.

May I thank the parish council for their continued financial support which does enable me to pay for fees at the record office and produce these records.

Village Recorder for Offton

Some of the moments captured in 2020 during lengthy walks around the parish.





PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

APRIL 2021

As so many others, the school has been impacted by lockdown restrictions from March 2020–July 2020 and January 2021–March 2021. Remote learning has been in place for the majority of students whilst the school has remained open for vulnerable students and children of keyworkers. Our students have worked really well remotely and we are hugely proud of them. In addition, many have undertaken many challenges for school, charity and wellbeing.

The school has been grateful for the kind offers from members of the local community to support our students during this time including offers to help implement mass testing in March. The staff at school have supervised and processed hundreds of tests, in addition to their 'day' jobs and this collegiate spirit has been excellent.

In addition we would like to publicly thank the Parish Council for supplying two laptops for vulnerable families in the area. This, alongside similar offers from other local councils, and the donation of other devices from businesses and residents, has made a huge difference to the learning experience of students this Spring and will continue to support their out of hours learning in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'M. Taylor'.

Maéve Taylor
Headteacher