

District Councillor's Annual Report 2021/22

In the year 2021/22, it has been gratifying to see past efforts and projects starting to take off and new ones take root.

In February 2021, I visited the small orchard at Ringshall village hall with our tree warden Lucy to spread mulch around the 16 trees planted by the community in 2020. The trees were purchased using my councillor's locality budget from Apples and Orchards East, a charity that promotes the preservation of orchards in the East of England. Whilst it is a small aspect of my work here, it has been very satisfying to see the trees establish and flourish. I have included a snapshot of other work I have been involved:

Barking Tye Common – There are ongoing efforts to establish the Tye as a County Wildlife Site that would offer non-statutory protection and recognition of its value to biodiversity. In April and June of 2021 I organised two citizen-led surveys to record flora and insect species present on the site. This was intended to support data from a Suffolk Wildlife Trust survey funded from my locality budget.

Great Bricett Community Woodland – I was very pleased that our officers at MSDC were able to provide 20 large trees and that the locality budget was used for the creation of the pond.

Offton Village Green – MSDC owned land in St Mary's Close in Offton was proposed as a site for wildflower planting. I carried out a public consultation but did not receive enough positive support for the project to go ahead. In August last year we worked with residents and the parish council to come up with a new design which will go out for re-consultation this year.

Verge management – MSDC have finally acquired a 'cut and collect' mower which will be instrumental in better managing our roadside verges for wildlife. We are one of the first districts in Suffolk to do this and was one a key idea put forward in the Biodiversity Task Force group.

Streetlighting – In September 2021 I proposed a motion to reduce the impact of artificial lighting at night which is detrimental to wildlife and known to impact human health. With huge support from Jessica Fleming, the Conservative portfolio holder for the Environment, the motion was almost unanimously accepted by the council. We are working on this with our officers from Planning and partners at SCC Highways, and it will form a major issue to be discussed at our next Task Force meeting.

Parish Decarbonisation Forum – The Local Energy Showcase in October 2021 provided an opportunity to meet representatives of the organisations supporting renewables projects for parishes, communities, and small enterprises. I am in the process of organising a cross-parish meeting. Alex Templeton from UK Community Works and Chris Musset from Eastern New Energy and Suffolk County Council will speak on a range of projects, funding opportunities and support available for community energy schemes. It will be hosted at Offton and Willisham village hall, May 24, starting at 07:00 pm.

Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan – A new LCWIP has been created much to the thanks of a dedicated officer and brilliant public engagement in our public consultation. I was pleased to see six route improvements within our ward add to our wish list, including a proposal to introduce pavements connect Wixfield Park to the church and the village hall in Great Bricett.

Planning: Great Bricett Red Lion – In January 2021 we successfully applied for an Asset of Community Value listing on the pub and have helped defended the pub against the application to

convert the pub to a dwelling. I have been working with planning officers to dispute the claim of poor business viability.

Planning: Great Bricett Business Park – The planning committee finally came to the decision to refuse the application for the siting of 69 mobile homes in the business park. This case had been re-scheduled numerous times over the year, meaning the decision was painfully dragged-out. After some conversations with the planning officer, he agreed that the concurrent application DC/21/06987 for 51 dwellings provided a better outcome of 18 affordable homes.

Other Planning Matters – I actively supported the planning application for 4 dwellings on Pound Hill after it was endorsed by the parish council for its exemplary design and sustainability aspects. The ‘barn’ on the site opposite the brambles has now received planning permission to be converted into a dwelling which I also supported.