

Annual Report (Hopton) – April 2022

I was honoured to be re-elected in May 2021 as your County Councillor. Many of the concerns discussed with parish councils when I was first elected in 1989 have now been resolved, but worryingly some big challenges still remain and new ones have come along ! There is still the difficulty of managing demand for new houses with the quality of life in our villages that we hold dear. New developments, whatever the scale, should bring with them added value for a village such as green space, rights of way, play equipment or road safety improvements. This should be in addition to the provision of adequate school places and environmental gains.

Over the last year Covid19 has continued to disrupt much of our lives and furthermore had a devastating effect on children/s education as well as family loss and illness. I am proud that the County Council has led the public sector partnerships in both response and recovery. The funding from Government has been considerable (over £150 million) and now it is important that it is all accounted for. I am playing a significant role in all the governance and expenditure review of Covid19 as I am continuing to be the Chairman of the County Council Audit Committee.

In addition to our Covid response the county council has had to adapt to the implications of Brexit and now we are responding as best we can to the crisis in Ukraine. We have increased our refugee support service and additionally, we were the first council in the country to cancel our contract for gas with Russia.

In parish council meetings I am sometimes asked for more information about the bigger issues facing Suffolk as a county. These include major infrastructure projects (like Sizewell C, solar and wind farms and off shore energy issues) environmental matters including our policies relating to climate change and carbon reduction, strategic transport links, the proposed Freeport of Felixstowe. I could fill several pages of annual report on these issues but prefer to liaise with constituents or parish councils on issues that they are interested in.

Without doubt this has been a significant year for Hopton and I am pleased that the County Council has been able to play a part in that. Your healing wood is one of only four in Suffolk to be sponsored by the County Council. My warm congratulations and thanks go to Andrea Hanks, Caroline Davis and all the enthusiastic and hard working volunteers. It was a pleasure to arrange a visit from Matt Hancock MP before Christmas and for him to plant a tree.

This year we have also hopefully made some progress sorting out ditch problems around Olive's Throat and related flooding worries. There will be more improvements in connection with the forthcoming housing development.

I am pleased for the village that the final stages towards the new houses on "Sarson's Field" have been concluded and I look forward to building being completed before long. Hopefully there will be new residents moving in within a year that will strengthen the village facilities including the school.

The continuing worry for many residents of Hopton is speeding along the B1111. I am pleased the parish council have now located and sorted out speeding equipment that is available and what needs to be done to get it all working again and hope I can help with any further actions that are agreed.

I would like to thank Parish Council members and Loreen very much for making me welcome at your meetings and my thanks also to your excellent new clerk Nicholas. I am fortunate to have an effective working partnership with Carol Bull as District Councillor and together we try and navigate the complexities of our different local authority responsibilities !

Joanna Spicer

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