

## **Chair's Report to Annual Parish Meeting 9 April 2026**

The Precept has had to be raised to pay increases for two officers and provide a General Reserve for emergencies. Most councils have just one officer but at the time of appointments we were without either for a long time and a deal of work had to be done to get council compliance back into line. The precept is still small by comparison with other PCs but I'm aware that we have a very small council tax population. We will be looking at what can be done to minimise increases in the future.

CIL money was spent on refurbishment of what is now called the Pettistree Parish Church Room. This was agreed based on the understanding that the Room would be a community resource and the vicar is the person to contact about booking it. Our thanks go to all the people who also donated to the project: a typically generous response from Pettistree & Loudham.

Loudham Solar Site: I represented four PCs at two planning committee hearings on this. All four objected to the use of farmland for this exposed site. We were helped by the Loudham Hall estate forcing East Suffolk Council to re-run its planning decision. The planning committee was split down the middle but our case was lost on the chair's vote twice. Disturbing I think that residents' views are so often ignored now by district councillors though this was not true of Cllr Sally Noble who consistently backed up our objections at the committee meetings. Cllr Harrison was also a speaker at the committee.

Which leads me on to the new challenge from the district council. It has recently published a map showing the sites submitted as being ripe for development. If you have seen this then you will know that the field next to Wickham Gate is included. As is, the field between Rogues Lane and the Three Tuns. Land very much within the Pettistree boundary. Both are owned by the Hayward business but were submitted by a company called ESCO Prospect which is a land prospector. Cllr James Hayward can't be with us tonight but I have his assurance that the family does not intend to sell this land for housing. That said, he may not necessarily have a choice. If a council can make a case for sites being needed for housing – and include it in the next Local Plan -then they can compulsory purchase the land. They would have to have a cast iron case and the money but the political will is with them. The map is for information only and no commentary is being accepted at this time. We are promised full consultation regarding the next Local Plan. I suspect we will have to be on top of this: the proximity of Wickham Market may make us vulnerable.

Of course, East Suffolk Council will disappear in the new local government reorganisation so we will be dealing with a unitary authority with Lowestoft as its lead town. In one sense we will be back to Suffolk coastal as the authority will cover our coastal towns and villages. We hope that this authority will be considerate of Suffolk's special places and that removing a layer of local government will provide a more direct route to all council services.

What else? We have had a very peaceful few days in The Street because it has been closed. No trucks. We're in hope of the truck problem going away permanently when KindWater relocates to Parham Airfield in November. Thank you Julian. Large trucks using Rogues Lane – where is the

common sense? – but they do occasionally and we will be discussing a request for a ‘Not suitable for HGVs’ sign at the next PC meeting.

Pettistree People: paid for out of the council precept and I think useful but after several years of producing it I will be handing over to Sue and Darren Tansley in June. Everything needs a refresh from time to time. I hope they enjoy the challenge and your support.

And on to car parking in the village. I promised to review this and talk to people most affected. But I’ve not yet spoken to The Greyhound. I’ll send a report the PCC and the pub, place it on the website and add it to the PC AGM Agenda for May. This is what I found in brief:

The people I’ve spoken in the vicinity of the village centre do not think there is a parking problem in the village.

But the Church needs more car parking for members of its congregation who are unable through disability to use the Village Hall car park as an overflow. The current church car park is said to be insufficient for all those who need this and the PCC is considering an extension at the back of the Parish Church Room. Those living nearby object to parking on the edge of a wildflower meadow. Planning permission would be needed for an extension.

The Pub needs more car parking at times when it is busy. It has used the church car park for overflow but local residents object to cars being parked beyond the existing car park in the wildflower meadow. The Village Hall car park is still underused by pub goers who probably are unaware of it or don’t want to walk the short distance. Parking on the corners of Walnut Lane is not acceptable because it restricts the sight of cars emerging from the pub and the lane.

In sum both Church and Pub need to resolve some car parking issues.

A potential fix for the Church:

Parking spaces near the Church Gate and at the location of the PC Noticeboard are flattened to assist those with disabilities. The pub would also gain 1-3 spaces. The noticeboard would have to be moved.

The existing church car park is restricted to churchgoers with disability.

A potential fix for the pub

The pub removes its frontage fence to allow double parking which should also increase spaces for the Church on Sunday mornings. Plus an all-weather sign advising that the overflow car park is at the Village Hall. When the church is not using its car park 6 spaces in its existing car park could be made available to the pub staff. A boundary chain would be needed to prevent parking beyond the existing car park.

ends

