

## Future!

As we know, Sue has done a remarkable job during her time in Office, as did Mick before her, so that means that I have a couple of hard acts to follow. However, with your help, and I need **all** of your help, I will do my best to keep Bungay Town Council being progressive and making Bungay a better place in which to live.

Already, we are making history as this is the first time ever that the Mayoral Election & Inauguration in Bungay have taken place electronically over the internet, with the help of our new friend 'Zoom' It is apt that we are acting futuristically, because now is the time to look to the future and what we hope to achieve going forward.

Just because Covid-19 has created this lock-down situation, doesn't mean that the world has stopped spinning on its axis or indeed Council business has been suspended. Simply because some of us may feel we're on holiday, doesn't mean that we are actually on holiday. Indeed, far from it. I doubt that there has been a busier time, and we need all Councillors to step up to the plate to help with existing projects, the new initiatives going forward and the take normal day-to-day decisions that have to be made.

I, the same as other Councillors, am in 'self-isolation' on the grounds of age and health, and will remain so until this crisis has eased. This doesn't mean that I haven't been fully involved. With all the computer aids available to me, particularly Zoom, business can not only carry on, but actually move forward, and with your help, move forward we will!

Oh, I have some bad news for Sue. She thought that she would be able a bit of a back seat, put her feet up and spend more time with Neil. Wrong!! I will certainly be calling on her for advice from time to time, but I know that she has some exciting Council projects of her own to pursue, so she will need volunteers, both Council and from the wider community, to help her with these. In addition, I will need her help and support, and indeed all Councillors, with the many other planned projects. I would also like to see all Councillors come up with fresh ideas of their own and have the courage to follow them through.

We are all volunteers but when we took up Office, we committed ourselves to work on behalf of the community and improve the lives of everyone.

We are in a fantastic position to make a real difference. Of course, we need to participate in all Full Council and Committee meetings, but we really should undertake to learn about the work of those Committees which we are not a member of, as the decisions they take impact on the things we are directly involved with.

Let's move on to the current projects:

I guess we must talk about BECS. With the tremendous involvement, sheer hard work and commitment of around 50 community volunteers. This Council initiative has been a brilliant success story. I am so proud to be able to play even a small part in this. There is no doubt that BECS will be needed for some time to come. Not all the volunteers are out driving, shopping or

delivering. Like myself, many answer phones and talk to the people who need our help, or maybe they are sitting in front of a computer screen making sure that the system operates smoothly and effectively.

BECS is expanding further, not in geographical terms as such (we already cover the nearby villages both sides of the river) but we are also looking to the next phase of recovery – manufacturing face masks! These will be distributed free to Bungay residents. Again, this operation is being coordinated by local volunteers, who recruited other community volunteers who are busily working from home. A real cottage industry is growing up here! These BECS volunteers are also deserving of a clap on Thursday evenings.

This leads me neatly onto the next project:

The Good Neighbour Scheme - we have been talking about this for some time, and Sue has been pretty involved in this project and I certainly hope that she continues with it. One of the issues was precisely how do we find who would be the beneficiaries of the scheme? Well, thanks to BECS we now have information about some of the people we could help. No information like this was available to us previously. We also have a bank of volunteers who I believe will help take this project forward once we're out of lock-down. Sue will also need help from Councillors to assist in the management and support of the project.

CCTV – As you know about 50% is up and running at present and the remainder should have been installed already. However, we did run into a few issues with the planning department and other things that have now largely been resolved. Then along came Coronavirus to add to the delay. However, I'm hoping that the rest will be installed in the summer.

ATM – We also hope this will be installed soon. Many thanks to our MP, Peter Aldous for his much-appreciated involvement.

We also thank Peter, for his help with the relocation of the Post Office. The result is not yet known, but we are hopeful that this will be resolved favourably soon.

Next, we turn to the massive project of adding to our assets with the addition of the Town Hall, which requires considerable investment for refurbishment, redecoration, making everywhere accessible (including the Chamber and toilets) and repairing the leaded windows. We will also be taking on 2 sets of Public Toilets, and a number of parcels of land including playing fields and the area near the Staithe.

John will lead on this given the vast amount of work he has undertaken to bring this project to fruition. However, I would like to think other Councillors will step up to help. This will include raising funds via grants in order to carry out the work.

Linked to this is the Riverside Centre, which we already own, and is in need of updating and reconfiguring to make it more usable and desirable to hirers. It will require around £60k, which will have to be financed by raising funds via grants. I have made a start on the business plan for raising grants, but John and I would be grateful for your input.

I promise you that this isn't about just sitting in more meetings, it's about physically getting the job done! Much of the work can be undertaken from the comfort of your own home. However, there is space in the Town Hall if you prefer to work from there.

There are also other projects and events in the planning stages such as VJ Day celebrations, and the acquisition of other recreational land and so on.

Two projects that came to an abrupt halt when coronavirus struck.

The Skate Park, which involves a temporary refurbishment, will happen as soon as we're out of lock-down. However, there is also a working party of talented, knowledgeable and enthusiastic young volunteers who were setting about raising the funds to replace the current set-up with a state-of-the-art new one estimated to be around £120k.

Whilst I appreciate that this may not be ideal launch as they had hoped for, I am eager that this group reassembles quickly, even before the restrictions are lifted .....Zoom! There is no reason why they cannot start applying for grants and planning for fund-raising events now. I would also like enthusiastic Councilors to get involved to support this project.

The Youth Project – to meet the modern-day requirements of the young people of Bungay. This is a wide-ranging project to care for their physical and mental needs. Much of the desk-top planning has been done, but it's difficult to see how we can progress much further during lock-down. However, I am keen to see this start again as soon as restrictions permit. The need for this will be even greater after the youngsters have been cooped up for weeks with their parents!!!!

I am determined that we are an inclusive Council and other volunteers and agencies will certainly be a part of this. In addition, I would like this to continue through the links Sue has worked so hard to develop and perhaps initiate monthly visits to a variety of establishments by Councillors, such as schools, nursing homes, All Hallows Hospital, businesses etc. so that they feel that we are there for them and may be able to help them in their endeavors.

In summary, it is the most exciting time to be a Town Councillor, probably in the history of Bungay with so much happening both inside and outside the Council. I'm thinking of things like the redevelopment of the King's Head and the building of the new Community Centre as well as all the aforementioned projects.

These things don't happen by themselves; they need all of us to pull together and I hope that I can count on your continued support for the year ahead.

I usually would say something like, "My door is always open", but that might not be appropriate at the moment. What I'm trying to say is that if you wish to talk to me, please don't hesitate to ring or email me.

Just one last thing. My nominated Charity for year is for both 1<sup>st</sup> Bungay Sea (School) Scouts and the Bungay District of Girl Guiding.