

Chairman's report to Annual Parish Meeting,

May 2026

This past year has been quite eventful by the standards of this Parish Council and I am grateful to the Councillors and Clerk for their efforts on behalf of the Parish. We are also grateful to Martin Hill, who resigned from the Council this year, for his service. I am delighted to welcome Councillors Lynne Dawes and Eileen Stennett, who joined over the course of the year and we are hopeful that we will be back to our full number of seven in the near future.

This past year feels like it has been one of trying to work out how best to represent Playford's interests in the face of big projects. The first is Westerfield Quarry, the planning decision for which is yet to be finalised, but which has seen the mobilisation of mass opposition across the nearby parishes and may affect traffic flows through Playford. The northern bypass again reared its head, with Jack Abbott (MP for Ipswich) calling for it to be discussed again, although currently it remains just an idea.

The Parish Council have also been responding to the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) processes. We had many residents who were very worried about the implications of LGR, as were many from neighbouring parishes. Of particular concern was the Three Councils proposal, which unfortunately was selected by central Government to go ahead a couple of months ago. This means that Playford will become part of an Ipswich and South Suffolk Unitary Authority that combines the powers of District and County Councils. We, and residents, made strong representations against this choice through the consultation process and directly to the Minister making the decision because of fears that our rural identities and priorities will not be adequately represented within the new Authority structure, which will be dominated by Ipswich. Sadly these objections (along with many others from other parishes) were disregarded and we wait and see what the new Unitary Authority means for Playford in 2028. On the plus side, the combined discussions around the northern bypass and LGR produced what might be a record turnout of 20 members of the public for a Parish Council meeting in September.

On a more positive note, we all have extra bins! The long-awaited traffic priority works on the C324 have also been funded by Cllr Elaine Bryce this year, and new white lines suggest they may have commenced, at least in part. There has also been quite a lot of work done on potholes along Butt's Road this year, which is welcome. Meanwhile, other highways issues persist, as do the usual issues with footpaths. As ever, please report such things on the East Suffolk website and send the Clerk an email to let them know you have done so.

Finally, please do let us know if you have concerns, ideas or things you would like to happen in the village and we will do our best to help.

Thanks for listening.

