**Report for Cotton Parish Council, Wednesday 22nd May 2019**

At the local elections held on May 2nd I was elected to represent the village of Cotton on Mid-Suffolk District Council. As you are probably aware, the changed ward boundaries mean that Cotton is now together with Bacton, Finningham, Westhorpe and Wyverstone in the Bacton ward.

I am extremely pleased to be representing Cotton because of longstanding links between my mother’s family and the village.

The overall result in the elections has resulted in a Council with no overall control: There are 16 Conservative councillors, 12 Green, 4 Liberal Democrats and 1 Independent. As you may have seen in the press, the first full meeting of the new Council on Monday night resulted in the Conservatives taking control by using the outgoing chairman’s casting vote. This highly partisan strategy is very disappointing when we had expected the formation of a joint administration based on the balanced number of Councillors. So although you have voted me in as a Green Councillor, we are in the opposition group and therefore will struggle to get our proposals and policies accepted. I will, however, do my best to represent residents and the village at the Council. I have been selected to sit on the scrutiny and oversight committee.

I have so far attended an induction day at Endeavour House and will have various training sessions, briefings etc over the next few weeks. Please bear with me as I learn the ropes and get a feel for the role, however please do not hesitate to get in touch if I can help. My contact details are at the bottom of this report.

Having already been round to Parish Council meetings in the other four villages, there has been two emerging themes: Firstly, the problems of traffic and in particular speeding/road safety are a concern across our villages. Secondly, there is interest in better liaison between the various Parish Councils on matters of common concern, where working together could achieve a better result.

On road safety – this is largely a County Council and Police matter rather than a District Council issue; however, I will be working closely with your County Councillor Andrew Stringer on this and adding my support to his efforts. I’m aware that each village has a different approach – some have speed activated signs and speed monitoring, Wyverstone and Finningham have Speedwatch groups. Sharing best practice between these various efforts seems to be a good starting point. I have already received one complaint from a resident on Station Road about the hedge on the railway line obscuring the road signs when approaching the railway bridge from the Finningham direction – I have reported this to Network Rail and I expect the hedge to be cut back shortly.

On coordination between the Parish Councils – I’m aware that this has happened in the past on some issues – the proposed redevelopment of the Bacton Middle School site is one example. Whilst there is no formal procedure for working together, I am happy to facilitate or assist any informal efforts to work together across the ward.

I look forward to working with you, and I expect to be able to attend and report to your meetings regularly.

Andy Mellen, District Councillor

Phone 01449 782971 or mobile 07790 992619 Email: Andrew.Mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk