

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2022

Present: Charlotte Britton - Chair (CB)
Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC)
John Curran (JDC)
Sue Keeble (SK)
Steve Laing (SL)
Sheila Roberts (SR)
Michael Woods - Vice Chair (MW)

Apologies: David Pratt (DP)

In attendance: Georgia Hall - Suffolk CC (GH)
John Ward - Babergh DC (JW)
Parishioners

23.4.1 INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

23.4.2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by Christine Hempstead, seconded by John Curran and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2022 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly. There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

23.4.3 REPORTS *(full reports are held on file with the minutes)*

23.4.3.1 Suffolk County Council

Cllr Hall highlighted some of the key items from the previous twelve months. A new wave of funding had been agreed by Cabinet to continue its programme to provide places for children and young people with SEND (special educational needs); the Council was currently looking for suitable new premises. A devolution deal was signed in December 2022, which would give leaders in Suffolk control over building, regeneration and skills. The deal would see SCC handed control over a £480m investment fund guaranteed for the next thirty years. Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, had been awarded Suffolk's new highways service contract with effect from 1 October 2023. The ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) scheme was under way and would be rotated around various sites in the county, including Layham.

23.4.3.2 Babergh District Council

JW's report summarising the past 4 years was noted. Following COVID, the Economic Development Team had put together a comprehensive Economic Recovery Plan covering town centre regeneration, business support and skills development. The Joint Local Plan was now out for consultation following modifications required by the inspectors. Babergh now had a 7.13 year land supply, meeting the statutory housing requirement of at least 5 years. The Carbon Reduction Management Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan were starting to have an impact on improving the environment, and a Tree Canopy Service had been completed to identify where new trees and hedgerows should be planted for maximum impact. Some other highlights included the Virtual High Street, new customer access points, a local cycling and walking infrastructure plan, the new Hadleigh swimming pool and the Cost of Living action plan. In response to a question concerning sewage, Cllr Ward said Babergh was encouraging Anglian Water to take a more active role; however, there was no statutory requirement for them to engage fully. It was unlikely that devolution would help, as this was more about transport, skills development and housing.

23.4.3.3 Budget & Finance

The Clerk was in the process of finalising the accounts for 2022/23, which would then go to SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils) for internal audit before being formally approved by the Parish Council at its June meeting. All smaller authorities, regardless of size, were required to comply with proper practices, ie complete and approve an Annual Governance & Accountability Return and provide for public rights to view the accounts. Councillors had agreed that the precept for 2022/23 should be increased to £11,500 and it would remain at this

level for 2023/24. The Parish Council continued to receive recycling credits and this money was used for the benefit of the community; the total earned since 2012 was just over £3660. Apart from insurance and the Clerk's salary and tax, the main items of routine expenditure during the year were the grants to the Village Hall, the Playing Field and the PCC. It had been agreed that the three organisations would be asked to submit a brief business plan outlining and justifying their grants each September, to aid the PC's budget discussions. Other items of expenditure included a fifth defibrillator, to be located in Stoke Road on the wall of Warwick Cottage, by kind permission of Charles Partridge.

23.4.3.4 Emergency Planning

Cllr Curran reported that there had been 15 yellow weather warnings issued by the Met Office during the year - 1 wind-related, 8 thunderstorms, 3 fog warnings and 3 for snow and ice. All of these were followed up with warnings to Parish Council members to make them aware that there could be problems and to be ready to escalate if the situation worsened. One of these warnings (thunderstorms) moved on in seriousness from yellow to amber with the result that all Emergency Link Volunteers (ELVs) were informed so they could warn their parishioners to ensure they had adequate provisions and medications; those who were vulnerable were checked on. There were two separate amber warnings for high temperatures and excessive heat which were also reported down the line. All warnings were less severe than expected and no serious difficulties were experienced. The communications tree, the mainstay of the Emergency Plan, was a live document with changes needed whenever ELVs moved away or stepped down and would always need maintenance. A review identified some gaps; John asked anyone wishing to become an ELV to contact him. He thanked all the ELVs and his fellow Council members, who made the emergency plan communications tree work. A desktop exercise was being organised by Babergh to test the robustness of the Layham Emergency Plan.

Defibrillators

There were currently 4 defibrillators in the parish, one in each of the old telephone boxes, one on Brett Green and one at the Marquis - due to the extensive building works being carried out at the Marquis, the defibrillator had been moved from the outside cabinet into the reception area but was still available 24/7. One defibrillator had been taken to a resident who was thought to be having a heart attack but had not needed to be used. All of the defibrillators had been in service for a number of years and two had had software problems requiring them to be re-programmed during the year. The internal batteries and electrode pads all had shelf lives and two sets were changed, costing over £300. Upper Layham had 3 defibrillators positioned so that virtually all homes were within the recommended 5 minute travelling time. Lower Layham currently had one defibrillator and, due to the less dense residential environment in Lower Layham it had been difficult to provide the same 5 minute travelling time; the PC had approved the purchase of a second defibrillator for Lower Layham, which did not require an electricity supply, making it cheaper to install but costing around £2500. Most of this sum would be paid from the PC's reserves; John thanked Georgia Hall for contributing £500 from her SCC Locality Budget.

23.4.3.5 Green Team

Cllr Roberts explained that, as leader of the Green Team, her main role was to organise village tidy up sessions in the Spring and the Autumn. Other green initiatives were supported, such as development of the conservation area at the end of the Playing Field, sowing wildflower seeds and planting bulbs on the verges, and planting trees. For both the Autumn tidy up in October 2022 and the Spring Clean in March 2023, over 20 volunteers helped to carry out tasks on or close to the day. As well as collecting litter, tree debris on the playing field was collected; grass edges on Brett Green were trimmed; the Upper Layham bus shelter and phone box were cleaned; signs were cleared and cleaned; hedges tidied; the grass around the defibrillator on Brett Green cut if necessary. Some redundant tree guards were collected from hedges in Lower Layham. In most parts of the village there was less litter - Sheila thanked those who took their waste home or routinely picked up other people's rubbish. It was, however, disappointing to see more litter on the verges of roads leading in and out of Layham, to have to pick up dog waste from the playing field and to sometimes report fly-tipping. She thanked all the volunteers who helped keep the village tidy and Babergh DC for providing brown bins and removing the rubbish collected.

23.4.3.6 Speeding

Cllr Curran reported that speeding through Layham along the B1070 remained a major concern. A Speed Indication Device (SID) had been successful in reminding considerate drivers of the 30mph speed limit and causing them to adhere to it; however, some drivers continued to travel at excessive speeds with speeds in excess of 60mph being recorded. The original intention had been to pass the data onto Suffolk Highways for them to initiate police speed checks at times to cope with the data, but Suffolk Highways had informed the PC that they now had so many SIDs installed in Suffolk that they were unable to analyse the data; the SID was thus just a visual warning to drivers. A SCC initiative, the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) scheme, was running in parallel with the SIDs throughout the county. Whilst SIDs only recorded speeds, ANPR cameras recorded number plates and motorists caught speeding were formally contacted.

Moving the SID each week took time and effort, and thanks were due to the nine volunteers, without whose help this important job would not be possible. The volunteers were split into three teams of three, and worked one month in three. The spare batteries were charged each week and the SID moved from one end of the village to the other. The PC would be grateful if more residents living along the B1070 would volunteer to join the team. It was confirmed that the ANPR camera did not flash and was smaller than the SID device.

23.4.3.7 Highways & Footpaths

Cllr Woods explained that the funding available for highways work was very limited and, until recently, only minor repairs had been carried out during the year, eg pot hole repairs in Church Lane and on the Mill footpath, and a small repair to part of the bridge at the Mill. However, there had been a rush of activity in recent weeks; thanks to Georgia Hall for putting the case to Suffolk County Council Highways. A small team had been at work on the pavement between Upper Layham and the start of Benton Street, cutting back the growth over the asphalt - a process known as 'skirting'. Much of the ground level clearance had already been done by a volunteer from Hadleigh, making the job much less demanding for the Suffolk County Council team. Continuing appeals for work to be done on the kerbs and drainage on the road near Layham Road Playing Field had drawn a blank, as not being high enough priority. However, the drains had been unblocked in Church Lane. Participation in the county-wide Quiet Lanes project was completed during the year; in partnership with the Shelley Meeting signs were erected at the beginning, end and along the way of Shelley Road, Layham, Layham Road, Shelley, North Hill along the boundary of Layham and Shelley, and Water Lane / Mill Lane in Upper Layham. In response to a comment about the benefit of Quiet Lanes, some residents had been concerned that the PC was not doing enough; it was therefore agreed to participate in the scheme as an experiment initially. Another parishioner commented that she had seen more walkers and cyclists since the QL signs were erected, and drivers seemed to be taking more care. There was a suggestion that the lanes should be more joined up, to make a loop.

23.4.3.8 Allotments

Ron Gunn explained the background: when the council houses were built, a spare piece of land was left over and residents received permission to use it as an extension of their gardens. In 2006 the bungalows in Gardeners Close were built and the remaining area was divided into six plots - these officially became allotments, controlled by the Parish Council. The allotment holders paid an annual rent and contributed equally to the water bills. Since 2006, four of the plots still had the same tenants. Tending an allotment could be hard work and frustrating when the weather was not so good, but rewarding when all was going well. Most of the plots were very productive and the allotment holders worked well together, sometimes sharing surplus produce and plants.

23.4.3.9 Local History

There were currently ten members of the Layham Local History Group, with a new member being recruited during the exhibition celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. About 100 annotated photographs of life in the village during the 70 years 1953 - 2022 were exhibited in the church for part of the holiday weekend (3-4 June 2022). The exhibition had attracted a steady stream of visitors. The group had met to discuss possible areas of future research and a list of topics had been recorded from which individuals or small groups could work. A donation from the Layham Events Group, following the Jubilee Fete, was used to purchase more units for the display stands. For the first six years, the archive had been stored in a cupboard in St Andrew's Church; the group was grateful to the PCC for having allowed that facility. However, in April 2023 it had been moved to the Village Hall.

23.4.3.10 Friends of St Andrew's

The Friends had held one event last year, the Late Summer Fair in September, which raised c£1,000. Richard Cranfield said the membership remained stable at 20, and funds available to the Church currently totalled approximately £8,000; no funds were disbursed during the year. The Church had several expensive projects to fund: part of the Nave ceiling had collapsed, there was damp in the west facing wall by the porch; the flagpole had had to be removed as it became dangerous through rot. Richard Cranfield said it was frustrating that more parishioners had not joined the Friends, whose purpose was to give everyone, religious or not, an opportunity to support the Church. A refresh / relaunch was planned in 2023.

23.4.3.11 PCC

The regular service pattern had been maintained during the year; the third Sunday in every month had reverted to morning worship. Services continued to be alternated on every fourth Sunday with All Saints, Shelley. Three Coffee, Cake and Chat sessions were held. In 2022 the annual Remembrance Service was held, as well as the Hunt Carol Service. The annual plant sale in May took place in tandem with the Village Hall book sale; both were well attended and the same is planned for 2023. In May 2022 Charlie Haylock gave a very interesting talk on his involvement in the film 'The Dig'. Playschool children were once again given Real Easter Eggs and Advent Calendars, but sadly the Playgroup had closed at Christmas due to low numbers.

The PCC had booked the services of Total Gardens to regularly cut the grass in the active churchyard, across the road from the church, at a cost of £130 per cut. Christine Hempstead thanked Richard Cranfield and several volunteers who had who have done a sterling job tidying, clearing and generally maintaining the main churchyard. The Yew tree by the tower was cut back due to being diseased; the flagpole was removed from the tower roof; a damp patch in the corner of the church had been caused by a problem with the church roof and guttering. Christine thanked John English for continuing to provide car parking facilities, Steve Laing for the loan of his flagpole for Remembrance Sunday and John Cryer for continuing to raise the flag when possible. She also thanked the Parish Council for its annual grant of £1000, enabling the active churchyard to be maintained. In 2022 the Parish Share was paid in full. Christine referred to the 2022 APM, when a parishioner questioned why the PCC could not fund this by its own fundraising activities; she explained that the bill would be £73,074 divided across the three parishes of Hadleigh, Layham, and Shelley and covered:

- Full-time priest who received a living - not a salary - and accommodation;
- Archdeacons;
- Training costs of existing clergy and lay ministers;
- Development of future clergy and lay ministers;
- Provision of mission-based resources;
- Church based advice
- Safeguarding case work and training
- Diocesan office, including admin of Diocesan Synod and the charity;
- Diocesan registrar, looking after the legal aspects;
- Contributions to the national church, as required by the General Synod.

Father Jo Delfgou thanked Christine for all her hard work as the only Church Warden.

23.4.3.12 Playing Field Management Committee

The Committee had dealt with a modest programme of essential activities and maintenance, including grass cutting (only needed a few times due to the unusually dry summer); keeping the hedges and willow dome in good order; £600 worth of maintenance of play apparatus following the annual inspection; helpful tidying-up sessions done by volunteers on village clean-up days. There was a drama during the summer when several of the piles of wood left to rot as insect, bird and small-mammal habitats caught fire - or were set on fire - necessitating the attendance of two fire engines to halt the spread of the blaze. Evidence suggests that a small fire was kindled before it was spread due to the dryness of vegetation. The Committee continued to save its financial reserves for repairing or replacing play apparatus, replacing the ride-on mower or employing a contractor to cut the grass; as an experiment for one year, a local contractor had been employed and the situation would be reviewed in the autumn. The 120 Club was fully subscribed.

23.4.3.13 Village Hall Management Committee

Richard Cranfield reported that, as at 31 December 2022, the members and trustees were Richard Cranfield (Chairman), Jan McNelly (Secretary), Judith Hermite (Treasurer), Rosey & Laurence Nicholls, Colin Brown, Sue Keeble, Christine Hempstead and David Pratt. There were five meetings in 2022, plus the AGM and several *ad hoc* meetings. Regular activities included dance classes, yoga classes, social club, winter warmth club and parish council meetings; sadly the Playgroup had to close through lack of support, which made it unviable. There were also a number of one-off bookings. A book sale was held in May 2022, at the same time as the Church held its plant sale; there was also a gardening talk. Both events were well supported and the total amount raised was £1,117. Aside from 'business as usual' maintenance, the major maintenance expenditure during the year was the insulation of the east facing wall; the west facing wall had already been insulated. The cost of the project was £6,740, funded by grants of £4,500 from BDC and £500 from Layham Events Group, with the balance coming from reserves; Richard thanked both bodies. £971 was spent on thoroughly checking and updating the electrics. Grants were also received from BDC (£2,667), Layham PC (£1,000 annual grant), LEG (£250 for the social club) and BDC (£1000 for the warm rooms initiative); again, Richard thanked all grant donors. End of year accounts showed a surplus of £1,309, which was added to reserves. The Playgroup owed c£1500 in back rent, which was written off against some cupboards and other furniture they had at the Hall. Looking forward to 2023, the social club would be combined with the winter warmth meetings, which were planned to cease shortly. A Coronation tea party was planned for Sunday 7 May and a repeat book sale on Sunday 14 May (to coincide with the Church plant sale). Richard was pleased to report that Ladybirds had restarted on 11 April.

23.4.3.14 Social Club

Sue Keeble explained that the Layham Social Club was formed in autumn 2022 with the aim of giving villagers from both Upper and Lower Layham the opportunity to meet up in a social atmosphere. A previous club had lapsed and the village survey carried out in 2021 had revealed residents' wishes for a new club to be formed. A grant was successfully applied for from the Layham Events Group as a start-up fund and to cover shortfalls from

month to month as the group became established. Teddy and Peter Goldby and Sue and Rob Keeble formed a management group and planned the meetings. To date, six meetings had been held, including a Christmas shared meal and a talk by a local historian. There had been on average an attendance of 10-12 per month. In order to meet the needs of those who wished the Breakfast Hub to continue beyond March, both groups merged to form the new Social Club. The initial meeting took place on 17 April and over 20 attendees enjoyed a talk by Roger Kennell about a possible ancient path through Layham. Subsequent meetings would be on the first and third Mondays of each month from 10am to 12 noon. All meetings were advertised on the noticeboards, through the HCN and the new launch was also publicised by flyers to every home in Layham. The aim was for alternate meetings to involve a guest speaker. Most speakers requested a donation to a charity, plus expenses. Events planned to date included a talk about Constable and his paintings, a pottery demonstration, a door wreath making demonstration and a talk about servant life in Ickworth House.

23.4.3.15 Community Orchard

Steve Laing explained that he had had the idea of looking for some land to start a Community Orchard; he was grateful to Ed and Glenda Hall, who had agreed to lease some land for this purpose. Steve had applied for some grants and the Woodland Trust had given 135 saplings; the British Tree Council had promised grant funding for some bare root trees. The initial planting had taken place on 18 March, with around 50 people helping, some donating trees. A constitution had been drawn up and Steve confirmed insurance was in place; a bank account was in the process of being opened. Charlotte thanked Steve for getting the initiative off the ground. In response to a question, John Ward said any CIL funding paid to the Parish Council would not be eligible to be used, but said Babergh's grants team would be happy to advise on other grant opportunities.

23.4.4 MATTERS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS

A resident raised a planning issue, which would be dealt with outside the meeting.

23.4.5 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

CB thanked everyone who had attended the meeting, and those who had presented reports. She was sad to be standing down in May, along with Michael Woods and David Pratt, two of the longest serving Parish Councillors. David was first elected in May 1995 - and for a while during that time had also acted as Clerk. Mike had served 24 years, being elected Chairman in May 2011 and then becoming Vice-Chairman in 2019. Charlotte thanked both of them for their commitment to the parish of Layham and wished them both a happy, restful and well earned retirement. She also thanked her fellow Councillors and the Clerk for her support, and wished the new Council well.

The Clerk then presented each of the retiring Councillors with a card and a photographic print of Layham.

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