

## LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting  
held at 7.30pm on Thursday 27 April 2017 in the Village Hall

**Present:** John Curran (JDC)  
Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC)  
Ron Gunn (RG)  
David Pratt (DP)  
Sheila Roberts (SR)  
Michael Woods - Chairman (MW)

**Apologies:** Steve Laing - Vice Chairman  
Doreen Sillett

**In attendance:** Gordon Jones, Suffolk CC (GJ)  
John Ward, Babergh DC (JW)  
Parishioners

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### 17.4.1 INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 17.4.2 PRESENTATION - THE STOUR VALLEY PROJECT

The Chairman explained that unfortunately the guest speaker was unable to attend, but he hoped to welcome him to a future meeting to talk about the River Stour Project.

### 17.4.3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by David Pratt, seconded by Ron Gunn and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 27 April 2016 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly. There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

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

#### Suffolk County Council

Councillor Gordon Jones said this would be his last report under the current administration, prior to the local elections on 4 May. He highlighted some of the key points of his report:

- The basic council tax had been frozen for the seventh year in a row; however, the council had decided to implement the 3% National Adult Social Care Levy
- online reporting tool for potholes
- great east run
- energy from waste
- children's services

Councillor Jones said it had been a pleasure to work with the Parish Council during the past year and he had been pleased to be able to support the PC from his Locality Budget. In response to a question from a parishioner, Councillor Jones said around 90% of the county was now covered by faster Broadband.

## **Babergh District Council**

Councillor John Ward said it was a time of great change for local authorities in a challenging new environment where central government funding was being reduced significantly. He highlighted some of the key points of his report:

- 27 new council homes being built in Babergh
- DCLG grant of £189,741 secured for Babergh to promote community-led housing
- £460,000 generated by solar panels installed under the Solar PV project
- Enterprise parks established at Stowmarket and Sproughton, and a Food Enterprise Zone in Wherstead
- Over £725,000 provided in grants to community groups in Babergh and Mid Suffolk

Babergh was due to start a programme of building affordable homes, in addition to the current council house building programme, in order to provide homes for letting at affordable rents and for low-cost ownership. In September 2016, Babergh and Mid Suffolk voted overwhelmingly in favour of a new Public Access Strategy aimed at improving access and contact, as well as modernised local services for residents. The website had been improved to make it easier to use. However, Councillor Ward said Babergh remained committed to ensuring that any resident requiring face-to-face contact would continue to receive it and customer service points would be established in Sudbury and Stowmarket. At the council meeting held in December 2016, members agreed to change the council's governance to a leader-cabinet model, to take effect from the annual council meeting in May 2017. Babergh and Mid Suffolk had submitted their proposals for council sizes to the Boundary Commission as part of the current boundary review. Babergh had proposed a reduction to 31 councillors and Mid Suffolk a reduction to 34 councillors. In response to a question from Sallie Jervois, Councillor Ward said all staff worked between Babergh and Mid Suffolk, rather than being permanently based at one council. He agreed that the move to Endeavour House would inevitably have an impact on Hadleigh's economy.

## **Budget & Finance**

The Clerk said she was in the process of finalising the accounts for 2016/17 which would then go for internal audit, before being formally approved by the Parish Council. As usual, they would then be sent to BDO for external audit; however, this was the last year that there would be an automatic external audit, although parish councils would still be required to have an internal audit before filing an Annual Return. The Parish Council was currently employing a 'Village Keeper' on a trial basis. If parishioners agreed that the experiment was working and improving the overall look of the village, they would be asked to agree a small increase to the precept for next year in order that this work could continue. The main items of routine expenditure continued to be things like grants to the Village Hall, the Playing Field and the PC; insurance - and, of course, the Clerk's salary. During the last year the PC had been successful in accessing a Section 106 grant from Babergh which enabled the Playing Field Committee to lay artificial turf in front of each goal area. The Parish Council continued to receive recycling credits in respect of glass and textile, and this money was used for the benefit of the community

## **Publicly owned land and property**

Ron Gunn reported that the War Memorial had been cleaned in time for the 2016 Remembrance Day service and thanked Neil Luxton for carrying out this work free of charge. He also thanked those parishioners who regularly monitored the grit bins, and Bob Barbiaux for refurbishing an old noticeboard which had now been installed at the Recycling Centre. The bus shelter had also been cleaned during the past year. Ron said the litter bins on the Playing Field would soon require repair or replacement. Dog bins were used regularly by dog owners - the PC had to pay to have these emptied, so Ron urged everyone to make use of them. All six allotments were occupied, one of which was split into two. The telephone box in Upper Layham had been cleaned and refurbished and now housed a defibrillator. In response to a question from Lesley Garnett about the Village Keeper, Ron explained that the PC would ask him to carry out specific jobs and would monitor progress - MW said the person in question was self-employed and charged very low rates as he was keen to give something back to the village.

## **Emergency Planning**

John Curran reported that two defibrillators had now been fitted in Upper Layham, one in the old telephone box next to the bus stop and the other on the wall of the Marquis. The PC was currently looking at getting another defibrillator for Brett Green. He thanked Peter Tampion for giving his time and expertise in fitting the Defibrillator power supply in the old telephone box. Having acquired the kit and instructions, members of the PC had undergone CPR training during 2016. There were now two parishioners in the village who had been trained in

CPR and who had kindly agreed to help with rolling out training to parishioners. The Layham Emergency Plan had now been formally adopted by the PC but remained a work in progress. John thanked all the Emergency Link Volunteers (ELVs) for their continued support.

### **Green Team**

Sheila Roberts explained that this was the second year that she and Doreen Sillett had led the green team. There had been another successful Village Spring Clean at the end of February, and Sheila thanked the 22 volunteers who helped on the day, and Babergh District Council for their continued support. Layham was very fortunate to have the Conservation Area at the end of the playing field and the green team was aiming to maintain and develop this for the benefit of wildlife and the community. Wild flowers grew better in nutrient depleted soil; knowing this, the team earmarked an area, raked away vegetation after it was cut and removed timber from the undergrowth. They also made habitat stacks with old logs and branches and created more space under some of the trees by pruning and clearing. Sheila thanked those volunteers who worked very hard in September and October 2016 to get those jobs done - and in particular Michael Woods for his continued encouragement and support.

### **Footpaths & Highways**

Steve Laing was unable to attend the meeting, but had submitted a report. He was delighted with the new speed restriction between Upper Layham and Hadleigh, as well as the extension of the 30mph limit from near Mason's Bridge approaching the Marquis. He wished to thank Councillor Gordon Jones for his help in achieving this. During the coming year the PC intended to pursue a 30mph speed limit along Stoke Road in Lower Layham, and hoped to see shared speed camera equipment used along Upper Street. He reminded parishioners that any problems, eg potholes etc, should be reported to SCC via their website.

### **Local History Recorder**

Mike Woods said the inaugural meeting of the Local History Group had been held on Saturday 7 May 2016, although the group had been working informally since March 2015. There were currently nine members: Chairman/Secretary - Michael Woods; Vice-Chairman/Treasurer - Jonathan Oldham; Archivist - Charlotte Britton; committee members - Mary Pain and Noel Herring. A 'kick-start' grant of £300 had been received from the Hadleigh Thrift Shop. After negotiation with the Parochial Church Council it was agreed that the group could lodge an archive cupboard in the church, the advantage being that archive materials would be available to members of LLHG at all times as the church was never locked. The first public activity was a presentation on Newspaper Reports featuring Layham 1740-1940 at the 2016 Annual Parish Meeting. The group then decided to build upon a project started by Dee Byham when she was Layham Local History Recorder - collecting photographs of marriages that have taken place in Layham Parish Church over the last 100 years. These photographs would be stored in the archive alongside a copy of the Marriage Register and would also be used for an exhibition in the church at the end of May, working in partnership with members of the PCC. The group had made a successful application to the Suffolk Rural Fund of the Suffolk Foundation for the sum of £722 to purchase twelve display screens and funds to print enlarged photographs both of Layham marriages and for a future exhibition yet to be decided.

### **Community Lunch**

Sue Curran reported that there had been three Community Lunches during the year, in July, October and March. Demand continued to be high and a waiting list was usually required, so the format seemed to work well. The cost of the meal had been kept at £5 for the July and October lunches but unfortunately, due to rising costs, this had now been increased to £6, still amazing value for a two-course meal with tea/coffee. As far as possible, all the lunches were made from fresh local produce, so local businesses had also benefited. Sue thanked Steve and Tanith at the Queen's Head for continuing to host the lunches and for all their hard work for what was for them a non-profit making event. She also thanked Lesley Garnett, Sonia Groom, and Shelia Roberts for their hard work preparing, serving, and washing up. The next Community Lunch would be on Wednesday 26 July 2017.

### **PCC**

Sally Jervois, one of Layham's Churchwardens, reported that the PCC had been able to pay its annual quota due to fund raising events, including the Hot Sunday Lunches and the Christmas concert. Some gravestones had been repaired during the year, by Neil Luxton. The nine pews removed from the church would be sold to raise further funds. Sallie thanked the PC for its annual grant towards the maintenance of the churchyard. Forthcoming

events included the Hadleigh Community Choir concert on 13 May, the annual Plant Sale on 21 May and the Marriages in Layham exhibition (see above). In response to a question, Sallie said the plan was to auction the pews, which were expected to fetch around £150 each.

### **Friends of St Andrew's**

Richard Cranfield reported that the Friends had given £9000 to cover the cost of necessary electrical work in the church. A fund raising event planned for January had been cancelled due to lack of support, but a similar event was planned for late summer / early autumn; Richard explained that the most effective way for parishioners to support the Friends was to donate via direct debit. In response to his request for ideas to publicise the Friends, Lesley Garnett suggested that the committee should have a presence at the Marriages in Layham event.

### **Playing Field Management Committee**

Mike Woods, Chairman of the Committee, said the major improvement of the year had been the installation of artificial grass surfacing in the football goal mouths. This was done in July 2016, just in time for the summer holidays. The funding was covered by Babergh District Council's Recreation Contribution Fund (Section 106). The annual inspection of the play apparatus had been carried out by a qualified safety expert and there were no major issues to report. During the winter months Paul Batram felled all the branches from the ash tree in the Mill Lane border hedge. A substantial stump was left which would rot back slowly, providing a habitat for wildlife over several years. Roy Richardson was employed to cut the field twice, at the beginning and end of the season. John Willis-Betts volunteered to cull the burgeoning rabbit population, which was necessary due to the large number of dangerous scrapes appearing on the playing surface. He would continue until he estimated the rabbit population had been halved. An oak tree had been planted in the field by the family of John Wood to commemorate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mike thanked those members of the committee who found time to attend the two committee meetings held during the year, check the safety of the apparatus regularly, paint an experimental hop scotch grid on the hard standing and cricket stumps on the ball wall, trim the grass around the apparatus, flatten mole hills, cut the grass, strip the willows, re-model the willow dome, repair the climbing frame, clean the goal posts and renew the goal net. He also thanked other volunteers who had contributed during the year - the Green Team members led by Sheila Roberts and Doreen Sillett for their work on the Conservation Area; Ron Gunn; Graham Coleman and Dave Martin.

### **Village Hall Management Committee**

David Pratt said events held during the year included a BBQ, a film show and a quiz. The committee was currently considering installing a hearing loop. David thanked the PC for its annual grant of £1000; the PC no longer paid hire charges for its meetings. He also thanked the committee members and volunteers and said new members would be welcomed.

### **Layham Social Club**

The Social Club met monthly in the Village Hall on a Tuesday at 2.30pm and was open to all. Anne Tracy and Bob Davey were at the helm, and members took turns to provide refreshments and help with the organisation. Activities to date included bingo, darts, indoor golf, board games and a quiz. In the summer members enjoyed a boat trip on the River Stour, and a Christmas meal was held at the Queen's Head. Currently there were around 14 members, and new members would be welcome, both for their company and their ideas.

## **17.4.5 MATTERS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS**

Councillor John Ward said he currently covered five parishes and Layham was one of the more active parish councils; Councillor Jones echoed his remarks and said it was a pleasure to attend the meetings.

Concern was expressed about the state of the footpath between Upper Layham and Hadleigh, which was getting narrower and more overgrown, although some growth had been cleared during the annual village spring clean. The Chairman said the PC had a list of things to concentrate on and this issue was included; he had recently met two HTC councillors on site.

**17.4.6 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS**

Mike Woods thanked everyone who had helped during the past year with activities such as the Community Lunches, the Emergency Plan, the website, litter collection etc, and Steve O'Leary for providing the oak frame for the new village sign. He also thanked his fellow councillors and the clerk for their continued support.

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**Chairman**

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**Date**