

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held at 7.30pm on
Wednesday 29 September 2021 in the Village Hall

Present:	Charlotte Britton (CB) Graham Coleman (GC) Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC) John Curran (JDC) David Pratt (DP) Sheila Roberts (SR) Michael Woods - (MW)
In attendance:	Georgia Hall, Suffolk CC (GC) John Ward, Babergh DC (JW) 3 Parishioners
Apologies:	None

21.9.1 APOLOGIES

See above.

21.9.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

MW and DP both declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 21.9.6.3.

21.9.3 PUBLIC FORUM

The parishioners present were attending for agenda item 21.9.6.3 and did not wish to raise any other issues.

21.9.4 CASUAL VACANCY

There had been four applications for the casual vacancy. The applications had been reviewed by all councillors and the candidates interviewed by the working party; a summary of the questions and responses had been circulated to all councillors. Following a vote by show of hands, Sue Keeble was duly co-opted. JC would ask her to complete the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Register of Interests forms.

21.9.5 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE WRITTEN REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

21.9.5.1 District Council report

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. Babergh had already helped a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families to resettle in Suffolk. The former Angel Court care home in Hadleigh had been converted into 21 new homes, a mix of one and two-bedroom flats offering affordable rent and shared ownership options. Babergh and Mid Suffolk DCs had received national recognition at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards held in London on 8 September, including an award for the Virtual High Street. JW said that Hadleigh Town Councillor Mick Fraser was leading a proposal for new parking arrangements in Benton Street. In response to a question from JDC, he said options for off-street parking were being considered; however, the plan had not yet been published.

21.9.5.2 County Council report

Written reports for August and September had been circulated prior to the meeting, copies of which are filed with these minutes. With regard to the ANPR trial, two sites had now been registered for Layham; the trial was due to start at the end of the year. GH confirmed that Highways were considering ways in which the pavement between Upper Layham and Hadleigh could be widened; councillors stressed how narrow it had become, making it extremely dangerous for pedestrians and people using mobility scooters.

JW confirmed that Babergh would continue to work with the county to achieve a result. The independent report into Suffolk's SEND provision had been published and had highlighted several weaknesses, which SCC would work to address. It was noted that the deadline for nominations for the Creating the Greenest County Awards was 14 October (www.greensuffolk.org/awards). In response to a comment from SR that the deadline for registering interest in the Solar Together Suffolk group-buying scheme had already passed, GH said the scheme had been very successful and could be repeated next year; she would find out how this would be communicated to residents. With regard to the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, SR requested that this be an agenda item for the next meeting; she would carry out some research.

21.9.6 FINANCIAL MATTERS

21.9.6.1 RFO's report

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by MW and agreed unanimously that the finance report for 29 September 2021 should be approved and payments of £684.63 were authorised. It was noted that the second tranche of the precept had been received, together with recycling credits of £136.49.

21.9.6.2 Clerk's additional hours

It was proposed by SR, seconded by GC and agreed unanimously that the Clerk should be paid for an additional ten hours worked during September.

21.9.6.3 Budget 2022-23

CB explained that the draft budget for the coming year would be discussed at the November meeting following recommendations from the working group, which would comprise CB, JDC, DP and JC. Currently, the PCC, Village Hall and Playing Field received annual grants from the PC of £1000. Representatives from the three organisations had been invited to speak in order to help inform the PC's discussions.

Playing Field

MW explained that the Playing Field had been purchased by the Parish Council in 1982 with an interest free loan of £10,000 from the National Playing Fields Association, to be repaid over ten years. Funds to repay the loan were raised through the precept, so every household contributed. Several fundraising events took place in order to pay for fence repairs, hedge trimming etc; a grant from the BBC's Children in Need campaign paid for the first climbing frame and football goals. It was agreed, once the loan had been repaid, that the PC should continue to give an annual grant - initially £600, increased in 2016/17 to £1000. Costs for the year ended 31.3.21 had amounted to £2020, covering insurance, mower maintenance, petrol for grass cutting, equipment inspection and repairs. The mower would soon need to be replaced at a cost of at least £4000, as would one of the larger items of play equipment at around £10,000. Tree surgery and felling was another ongoing major expense. Income of £6000 had been received for the cricket bat willows, but it would be 18-20 years before there would be another substantial sale. MW noted that grants were increasingly difficult to access, as 'demonstrated deprivation' was now a key criterion; he said that volunteers carried out most of the tasks required to keep the playing field going and they deserved support.

PCC

The grant to the PCC was for maintenance of the churchyards. Christine Hempstead, Church Warden of St Andrew's, explained that there were two to maintain, which involved not only mowing the grass but also maintaining the surrounding walls and fences, pathways and headstones. Due to the pandemic, the Community Payback team had not been able to work and it was unlikely that they would return. During the current year the mowers and strimmers had been serviced at a cost of £500. A contractor had been employed to ensure weddings and a funeral could go ahead; ongoing costs for mowing the grass would amount to approximately £400 for the remainder of the current year. Other tasks which needed to be done included removing the branch of a tree resting on the roof of a neighbouring property, and cutting back two yew trees. Christine pointed out that the main churchyard was used by the Playgroup, as well as passing walkers and cyclists; the smaller burial ground was regularly visited by family members, and the annual Remembrance Day service was held around the War Memorial.

Village Hall

Richard Cranfield, who had taken over as Chairman of the VH Committee, said he would like to thank DP, Richard Cromwell and Richard Groom for their hard work over the past thirty years. He said the Village Hall was a valuable asset for the village, but would continue to cost money as it was an old building. Currently, costs exceeded income by around £1000 per year, and income had been reduced over the last 18 months due to the pandemic. Some improvements had been made, but there was a schedule of things that needed doing, amounting to between £3-5000; some of the work could be done by volunteers, but some tasks would require professional help. Reserves stood at just over £12,000, £4,600 of which were held by the Parish Council. The PC's annual grant of £1000 allowed for a sinking fund, which was needed in order to meet future expenditure. A source of regular income was the use of the hall by the Playgroup, but there were fewer children now and therefore no guarantee that it would continue.

21.9.7 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by MW, seconded by JDC and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 August 2021 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

21.9.8 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Most of the actions were either ongoing or were on the agenda. There were updates on the following:

21.9.8.1 Flooding in Layham Road

JC said there was no evidence that Suffolk Highways had carried out remedial work near the Rugby Club by 9 September 2021, as planned. She had asked the Hadleigh Town Clerk for clarification.

21.9.8.2 Website

JC would bring a paper to the October meeting.

21.9.8.3 Textile bank

JC had requested a larger bin at the Recycling Centre; this was not possible, but the existing bin would be emptied more frequently.

21.9.8.4 Parking

JW had confirmed that car parking charges would be introduced in Hadleigh during 2022; the first hour would be free of charge. In response to a question about the machines currently out of order, JW said new machines had been ordered; it would not be cost-effective to repair the old ones.

21.9.8.5 Planning application DC/21/03730

Councillors had raised no objections to this application at the August meeting. However, they had asked JC to seek clarification on one point. To date she had received no response from Babergh's planning team; JW would follow up.

21.9.8.6 Suffolk Care Services Directory

JC had ordered 100 of these, which would be offered to parishioners.

21.9.8.7 Risk assessment

As agreed at the last meeting, JDC had added looking after the SID devices to the risk assessment.

21.9.9 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

21.9.9.1 Speeding

The working party's report was noted. JDC explained that moving the device regularly was not an easy task and required at least two people; the intention was to move it every seven days, so that traffic could be monitored entering the village from both directions. It was agreed to try and recruit some volunteers via the community email, HCN and word of mouth. JDC had downloaded the first set of data using his own laptop but it was agreed that a separate laptop should be purchased for this purpose; JDC would research costs and report back to the next meeting. He said he had some concerns about the location of the device, as vehicles turning out of and into Mill Lane could be affecting the average speeds recorded; he would take this up with Suffolk Highways.

It was agreed that there should be a photocall to publicise the SID, and that Tony Stenning and Bill Paton should be invited as they had been on the original working party. CB would draft some text to accompany the photo.

21.9.10 REMEMBRANCE DAY

It was agreed to purchase a wreath as usual; GC would lay this at the ceremony on Sunday 14 November. SR would check whether the War Memorial required cleaning.

21.9.11 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

21.9.11.1 Quiet Lanes Suffolk

JC had circulated the latest update from the QLS team; MW would liaise with them regarding signage.

21.9.11.2 Queen's Green Canopy

This tree planting and preservation campaign aimed to leave a lasting legacy to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 - more information was available at:

<https://suffolk-lieutenancy.org.uk/queens-green-canopy/>

21.9.12 CLERK'S REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING

None.

21.9.13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.30pm on Wednesday 20 October 2021, in the Village Hall.

NB: *change of date from the 27th*

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