

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL 2024

Present: Gillie Cranfield
Jane Cryer - Clerk
John Curran - Vice Chair (JDC)
Will Dunn
Steve Laing - Chair
Sheila Roberts
Julie Thickpenny

Apologies: Richard Cranfield
Sue Keeble

In attendance: Georgia Hall - Suffolk CC
John Ward - Babergh DC
Parishioners

24.4.1 INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Richard Cranfield and Sue Keeble.

24.4.2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by John Curran, seconded by Will Dunn and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 26 April 2023 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly. There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

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

24.4.3.1 Suffolk County Council

Councillor Hall highlighted some of the key items from the previous twelve months. There had been an increase in the number of pupils being offered their preferred primary school places. Councillor Hall said that parents would need to reapply for funded home to school transport. Adult social care was a priority for SCC. A new director had been appointed to oversee SEND. In response to a question from a parishioner, Councillor Hall said there was some funding in place for bus services; she would find out whether the bus service through Upper Layham could be reinstated and report back. A new contractor - Milestone Infrastructure - had taken over responsibility for highways service from Kier. Cabinet had approved an extra £10m to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk, and the Government had confirmed funding for a package of improvements to the A12 in Suffolk. A parishioner asked whether Water Lane could be designated a lane or bridleway, which would prevent vehicles from using it. A working party from the village had spent some time clearing the lane, but further work was needed; Councillor Hall would look into the possibility of funding a contractor from the Highways budget.

24.4.3.2 Babergh District Council

Councillor Ward's report summarising the past year was noted; he was pleased to report that Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils had been named UK Council of the Year at a local government awards ceremony. The election in May 2023 had resulted in a coalition at Babergh, with a power share for the next four years. Councillor Ward was currently acting Leader and would hand over to Deborah Saw (Green party) in June. Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan had been adopted, and gave clear guidance to developers, including appeals when planning decisions were challenged. There were now 28 new electric vehicle charging points across Babergh and Mid Suffolk; however, some of the spaces could be returned to general parking if demand was lower than expected. Babergh and Mid Suffolk continued to oppose the National Grid's proposals for more pylons above ground. A major programme of repairs to council houses was under way. With regard to the plans to introduce short term car parking charges in Babergh's car parks, Councillor Ward said the council was facing a £6.7m deficit and savings needed to be made; it was not sustainable to continue to use reserves. The proposed hourly charge for short term car parking was £1; the charges would come into effect in the autumn. There would be no need for new ticket machines as the existing ones would be reprogrammed.

In response to comments that people would park in side streets in order to avoid the charge, and that businesses would suffer, Councillor Ward said most towns did now charge for car parking and this had not caused problems so far. He did not believe businesses would suffer because it was more about what they had to offer. Following a question from the Chairman concerning the calling-in of the decision, Councillor Ward said the council would look again at the financial data. There had been a debate and a separate vote about whether to have an initial period of free parking; this would also be revisited. In response to a question about when the grass at Brett Green might be cut, he said he was hoping to bring the person responsible to have a look. A parishioner commented on the inconsistency of the contractors used and asked whether anyone monitored them; Councillor Ward would look into this.

24.4.3.3 Budget & Finance

The Clerk was in the process of finalising the accounts for 2023/24 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. The internal audit continued to be carried out remotely with documents being scanned and emailed to SALC, apart from those already on the website. The income held for the Playing Field was repaid during the year and the only funds held for other organisations were now relatively small amounts for the Events Group and the Local History Group. Following the elections in May 2023, two new councillors (Gillie Cranfield and Julie Thickpenney) had been co-opted, making a total of 7 councillors. The PC continued to receive recycling credits; approximately £3,800 had been received since 2012 and was used for the benefit of the community. The main items of routine expenditure during the year were grants to the Village Hall, Playing Field and PCC, insurance, Clerk's salary and tax. Other expenditure included the conversion of the SID from battery to solar power.

24.4.3.4 Emergency Planning

John Curran said 2023/24 had been a poor year weather wise with 28 Met Office weather warnings, compared with 18 in 2022/23. All of the warnings for 2023/24 were yellow ones (ie be aware), with no requirement to implement the Emergency Plan; John ensured that all council members were aware of possible problems and were ready to escalate if the situation worsened. Due to high rainfall, the River Brett had overflowed onto the playing field and Water Lane; for the first time, one house in Overbury Hall Road experienced flooding in January when the brook behind overflowed due to water coming off the sodden fields. Layham Emergency Plan, written in 2014, would be tested by a desktop exercise; all Parish Council members would be involved, following which the Emergency Plan would be updated. The communications tree was a live document updated whenever Emergency Link Volunteers (ELVs) moved away or stepped down. John asked anyone who interested in becoming an ELV to contact him. He thanked all the ELVs and fellow Council members.

Defibrillators.

Layham now had five defibrillators: three in Upper Layham (at the Marquis, in the telephone box, and on Brett Green) and two in Lower Layham (in the telephone box outside the Queen's Head and a new one located on the wall of Warwick Cottage, Cobblers Corner). The cost of this new one and its cabinet was over £2500, mainly funded by the Parish Council from reserves, but John thanked County Councillor Georgia Hall for her donation of £500 towards the cost. All the cabinets in Layham were unlocked and therefore did not need a code to open them, thus providing easy access. Due to the continuing extensive building works being carried out at the Marquis, that defibrillator had been moved from the outside cabinet into the reception area. Defibrillators used batteries, and electrode pads which required replacing every two to three years, at a cost of more than £200.

24.4.3.5 Green Team

Sheila Roberts, Leader of the Green Team, reported on the village tidy up sessions. In October 2023 and March 2024, 20 and 15 volunteers respectively helped to carry out tasks on the day; other parishioners regularly worked as needed throughout the year. She was pleased to report that, apart from the main roads leading out of Layham, there continued to be less litter. Teams also worked hard on the Playing Field and the Community Orchard; signs and village property were cleared, cleaned and/or painted; mud on Water Lane dug out; 'head height' vegetation growing over the pavement on the B1070 cut back; greens and verges cut by residents; other people's dog waste picked up along lanes and footpaths. Parishioners and visitors enjoyed the spring flowers and containers of plants in Lower Layham, and it was good to see children developing their love of nature through St Andrews 'Bug Club'. Babergh's Grounds Maintenance team had delayed cutting the grass on Brett Green, making it impossible for residents to cut the edges. Sheila thanked Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils for removing the bags of rubbish collected, and also everyone who helped to make Layham a pleasant place for residents and visitors.

24.4.3.6 Speeding

John Curran reported that speeding through Layham along the B1070 was still THE major concern of residents in Upper Layham. The Speed Indication Device (SID) continued to be used to remind and educate drivers to reduce speed. However, some drivers continued to travel at excessive speeds, some recorded at more than 60mph.

Suffolk County Council had installed an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera for a short period in October 2023. This device not only recorded the speed vehicles were travelling but also captured registration numbers; out of the 756 photos taken, 256 drivers were caught travelling at over 35mph in the 30mph zone and all of them received a formal letter from SCC. It was hoped that the ANPR camera would return to Layham several times during 2024. Also as a result of the SID data, the Police Safety Camera Team had been out capturing speeding vehicles near the centre of the village, from where they could monitor vehicle speeds in both directions; as a result, a number of drivers would be receiving speeding fines or given the option of attending a Speed Awareness course. It was hoped that the Police Speed Camera Team would be in Layham each month. Moving the SID each week, and recharging the batteries, took time and effort, and John thanked the nine volunteers. Following a meeting with Suffolk Highways, it had been agreed to purchase a second SID - both devices could be left in situ as long as the display was turned off for one week in every four; data could still be recorded when the display was switched off. The existing SID was currently being modified to operate on solar panels and a second SID, also operating on solar power, would be ordered. The costs for these changes were in the region of £1070 in the 2023/24 financial year, and approx £2340 in 2024/25 and would be met from LPC reserves. Again, the PC was grateful to SCC's Georgia Hall for a donation of £500. Once all these changes were in place, data could be obtained from both ends of the village and passed to Suffolk Highways and the Police.

24.4.3.7 Allotments

Layham had six allotments situated at Gardener's Close; allotment holders paid an annual rent, plus an equal share of the water bills. Ron Gunn reported that two plots had become vacant during the past year, one of which had recently been re-let. He said the allotment holders were a small, friendly group who helped each other out by tending each other's plots when the holders were away, and sharing knowledge. A wide variety of fruit, vegetables and flowers were grown, with holders sharing seeds, plants and any surplus produce.

24.4.3.8 Layham Local History Group

There were eleven members of the group and officers remained the same as the previous year: Michael Woods (Chairman), Jonathan Oldham (Vice-Chairman and Treasurer), Charlotte Britton (Archivist) and Jan McNelly (Committee Member). A welcome donation of £200 from the Layham Events Group would be used to purchase a photo printer, inks and printing paper to help with the presentation of future exhibitions. Individual members of the group had worked during the year on matters of personal interest, some of which would be shared with the wider group and the community. A project that came to fruition during the year was a fascinating display of Layham childhood, based on interviews with older members of the community. It was set up in Layham Mill on the Coronation Bank Holiday and attracted 132 visitors. The group was preparing, with the help of local detectorists, to put together an exhibition of local archaeological 'finds'. A member of the group would be giving a talk to the Social Club about the activities of Layham parishioners during the Second World War.

24.4.3.9 Friends of St Andrew's

The Friends held one event in 2023 - Christmas drinks in the Church on 1 December. This was well attended by more than fifty people and the event was done at zero cost as the wine was donated and the food provided by Committee members and several others. Donations and raffle tickets raised a total of £110 on the evening and five new annual members signed up at an annual. Total funds held were around £11,500 and were earmarked to help pay for necessary repairs to the Church fabric highlighted by the Quinquennial report in December 2023.

24.4.3.10 PCC

Father Jo Delfgou thanked the PC for its grant of £1000. He said plans were in hand to rewild part of the churchyard, whilst paying due attention to the graves. Fundraising events held during the year had included a concert by Hexachordia and a talk on Commonwealth war graves. The Remembrance Day service had been well attended. Father Jo had attended the Christmas Carols on the green in Lower Layham. He thanked Glenda Hall, who had been recommended for training as a priest and who helped to bring Upper and Lower Layham together. St Andrew's Church was always open and Father Jo urged people to have a look at the tiles on the floor behind the altar. A new architect had been appointed and the Quinquennial Inspection had taken place; approval from the diocese was required for any repairs or alterations. Father Jo thanked Christine Hempstead, who was stepping down as Church Warden, for all her hard work over the past few years.

24.4.3.11 Playing Field Management Committee

The Committee was grateful to the Parish Council for the grant of £1000 towards maintenance work. The 120 Club was fully subscribed. Monies held by the Parish Council had been transferred to the main Playing Field bank account; the 120 Club account with the Suffolk Building Society had been closed and this balance also transferred to the main account. The grass had been cut by a contractor at a cost of £170 per cut; this arrangement would continue in the coming year. The hedges had been flailed by a different contractor at a cost of £300.

The annual safety inspection had revealed the need for a number of small repairs, none of which were urgent enough for action during 2023/24. A small group of volunteers had helped committee members to clean up overgrown corners of the field. A member of the committee and her husband had replaced the willow dome during the winter using whips provided free by the cricket bat willow contractor.

24.4.3.12 Village Hall Management Committee

Jan McNelly read out the Chairman's report. There had been seven committee meeting during the year, plus the AGM, along with several ad hoc meetings. Regular activities included dance classes, social club, winter warm cafe, Parish Council meetings and the Ladybirds toddler group. Yoga classes had started but then stopped in July, and there had been a trial period of Pilates classes. There were also several hire bookings for private functions. A book sale was held in May, at the same time as the Church held its plant sale, and it was planned to repeat this in May 2024. A Coronation tea party was also held; both events were well supported and the total raised was £559. 2023 was a year of 'business as usual' maintenance. Grants were received from Layham PC and LEG; the committee thanked all donors.

24.4.3.13 Social Club

The Social Club started in 2022 and met in the Village Hall on the first and third Mondays of the month from 10 am-12 noon. The club now averaged around 20 members, with ages ranging from 7 to 94, and was run by Sue Keeble, Rob Keeble (Treasurer) and Teddy Goldby. Monies were kept in the VH account. Peter Goldby provided a popular quiz at each meeting. In April 2023 a successful speaker programme was launched and some local members of the community were invited to speak on a topic or demonstrate a craft. There were many talented speakers willing to give up their time for free or for a small donation. Talks had been varied and ranged from Constable and his paintings to first aid for families. There had been several talks on local history by Roger Kennell, Margaret Woods, Richard Rigby and David Soanes. Demonstrations had included Christmas wreath making, chocolate sweet making and art activities. In the summer there was a trip to Flatford to explore Constable's vistas, and a visit to the island with a guide. Paul Seymour of TWAM inspired people to collect tools to send to Africa for start-up projects such as sewing and carpentry initiatives. As well as TWAM, the club had donated, on behalf of speakers, to St Andrew's Church, Dogs' Trust, Cancer UK and the National Trust. The Social Club was grateful to LEG for the grant of £250 that had meant the cost of attending could remain at £2.

24.4.3.14 Events Group

The Layham Events Group (LEG) was formed six years ago and organised events for the community to enjoy, as well as raising funds for local causes. The members of the Layham Events Group were Sheila Roberts (Chair), Sue Keeble (Secretary), Jane Cryer (Treasurer), Charlotte Britton, Glenda Hall, Ellie Gibbs and Rachel Bennett. In 2023 two events were held: in May a celebration of King Charles III's Coronation on the Playing Field which included a rounders match between Upper and Lower Layham. The first innings was won by Upper Layham, but Lower Layham succeeded in winning the trophy. Lower Layham's success was partly due to two players defecting to their side and to the arrival of the ice cream van catching the eye of several fielders! The event was well attended; extra beer, burgers and buns had to be shipped in and a great deal of tea and cakes were consumed. The committee thanked everyone who supported this event and Babergh District Council for the grant that funded the Coronation Water Bottles given to the children. In December a Festive Fair was held, with a fantastic array of raffle prizes including donations from the Marquis, the Queen's Head, DC Tree Services and Morrisons. The committee was grateful to the Hadleigh Co-op for helping to fill Santa's sack, and to Santa himself; Father Jo on the Water to Wine stall and for his efficient distribution of raffle prizes; and most of all the residents of Layham who volunteered to help, made donations, ran stalls, and spent their money. Local causes supported using proceeds from these two events included Layham Village Hall, the Local History Group, Layham Social Club, St Andrew's Bug Club, the Village sign project, Layham Community Orchard, and Ladybirds Toddler Group.

24.4.3.15 Community Orchard

Steve Laing thanked LEG for the grant towards the annual insurance premium and the purchase of a couple of trees, making a total of 35. He thanked Ed and Glenda Hall for the use of the land, Ian Dodson for installing an irrigation system and Robert Keeble for the water supply. There was space for a teaching area and it was hoped that the Bug Club would be able to use the orchard; it was also hoped to have some beehives eventually. Unfortunately, the Apple Day in September 2023 had had to be cancelled due to flooding.

24.4.4 MATTERS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS

The clock in the Village Hall had been repaired and was now working for the first time in years. The work had been carried out by Peter Goldby and members of the Hadleigh Men's Shed.

24.4.5 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

Steve Laing thanked his fellow councillors and Councillors Ward and Hall, as well as the parishioners of Layham for trusting the Parish Council to do a good job. He said member of the PC were always happy to be approached.

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