

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL 2025

Present: Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC)
John Curran - Vice Chair (JDC)
Sue Keeble (SK)
Steve Laing - Chair (SL)
Sheila Roberts (SR)
Julie Thickpenny (JT)

Apologies: Gillie Cranfield
Richard Cranfield

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

25.4.1 INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced PC Niall Johnson from Suffolk Police.

25.4.2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by SK and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 24 April 2024 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly. There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

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

25.4.3.1 Suffolk County Council

GH highlighted some of the key items from the previous twelve months. SCC was investing more money in SEND provision: there were 200 more spaces for specialist schools. In order to balance the budget, council tax had been increased by the maximum amount possible. With regard to devolution and local government reorganisation, there would certainly be some redundancies. However, there would continue to be a representative at parish council meetings; it was possible that this could become a full time job. Richard Rout, the Cabinet member for Devolution, would be inviting parish council chairs to a meeting.

25.4.3.2 Babergh District Council

JW said this was a time of huge change and county and district councils would not exist in their present form in three years' time following devolution and local government reorganisation. Reforms to the planning system included the government increasing the target for new homes across the county to 775 new homes over the next 20 years. There would be an election in May 2026 for a Mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk. The government was keen to see unitary authorities across the country. SCC was in favour of one for the whole of Suffolk; Babergh would prefer to see three authorities, but would accept two. Council tax would

increase by the maximum amount, due in part to government grants being reduced and the increased cost of delivering services to sparsely populated rural areas; any shortfall would be met from reserves. Arrangements for waste collection would be changing, with households having an additional recycling bin for glass and another bin for paper and cardboard; there would also be a weekly food waste collection. Data would be available later in the year on the impact of the car parking charges introduced in Hadleigh. JW was pleased to have allocated Locality funding for Layham's emergency plan.

25.4.3.3 Budget & Finance

JC was in the process of finalising the accounts for 2024/25 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. All smaller authorities, regardless of size, had to comply with proper practices, complete and approve an Annual Governance & Accountability Return, and provide for public rights to view the accounts. The precept for 2024/25 had remained at £11,500 and the main items of routine expenditure during the year were grants to the Village Hall, the Playing Field and the PCC, insurance and the Clerk's salary and tax. Other expenditure during the year had included a second SID (Speed Indication Device). Recycling credits since 2012 totalled £4000. The PC had received approximately £1800 in CIL (community infrastructure levy) funding in respect of new builds in the village. The only funds now held for other organisations were small amounts for the Events Group and the Local History Group.

25.4.3.4 Emergency Planning

JDC said 2024/25 had been a better year weatherwise for Layham than 2023/24, with only seven yellow weather warnings and no amber or red ones. An emergency plan desk top exercise had been carried out in June 2024, organised by Freddie Gulliver, Suffolk's Emergency Planning Officer. The scenario used for the desktop exercise had involved heavy snow and flooding cutting the village off from other areas, and a total loss of power. The Emergency Plan had been written in 2014 and this exercise, as expected, had highlighted areas to be updated. The equipment necessary to operate a control centre was now in place; JDC thanked JW for his locality funding, and also the Emergency Link Volunteers (ELVs) and Council members. The skills and equipment register was currently being reviewed and a survey would be circulated to all homes.

25.4.3.5 Green Team

Sheila Roberts, Leader of the Green Team thanked residents who worked throughout the year to help improve the environment, especially the Playing Field, St Andrew's Churchyard and the burial ground. It was good to see the attractive mini roundabout in Lower Layham and the green on Blacksmith's Corner, as well as the spring flowers on verges; a team worked regularly to edge the grass on Brett Green. Layham children were developing their love of nature through St Andrews 'Bug Club'. SR organised annual autumn and spring tidy up sessions - as well as collecting litter, tasks included cleaning village property and signs and cutting back vegetation. Apart from the main roads out of Layham, and Rands Road in particular, there continued to be less litter. SR thanked all the volunteers, and Babergh District Council for removing the bags of rubbish collected.

25.4.3.6 Speeding

JDC said that speeding through Layham remained a major concern for residents, especially in Upper Layham. During the year a second solar-powered SID was purchased, and the existing SID was converted to solar power however, to comply with Suffolk Highways' regulations, the SIDs had to be switched off for one week each month. These two devices monitored traffic

coming into and out of Upper Layham from both directions. The maximum average percentage recorded above 30mph for the Hadleigh end was 19% and for the Raydon end 48%, meaning that nearly 50% of drivers were exceeding the speed limit driving towards Raydon. PC Johnson explained how Community Speedwatch worked, emphasising that a pool of volunteers was necessary to make it effective.

25.4.3.7 Allotments

Ron Gunn explained that, when the houses along Upper Street and Mill Lane were built in the 1950s, the residents used the land behind them as an extension to their gardens. In 2006 the bungalows in Gardeners Close were built and the remaining area was divided into six allotments - at the time everyone wanted one and there was a waiting list. However, Covid changed things and there were now two spare plots, one of which had unfortunately been used as a temporary building site, but this was being addressed. Ron emphasised the pleasure of growing fruit and vegetables in season, and hoped the vacant allotments would soon be occupied.

25.4.3.8 Layham Local History Group

Michael Woods, Chairman of the LLHG, said the committee comprised himself (Chairman), Jonathan Oldham (Vice-Chairman and Treasurer), Charlotte Britton (Archivist) and Jan McNelly (committee member). The group had met once during the year when three local detectorists showed some of their finds from field walking and metal detecting; the most interesting finds were photographed and the photographs would be displayed in Layham Mill on Monday 5 May as part of the Layham Events Group VE Day celebrations. Two members of the group had given talks at the Social Club, one about the men remembered on Layham War Memorial and another about the villagers who served in and survived WW2. Other members of the group were working on different aspects of local history.

25.4.3.9 Friends of St Andrew's

The Friends held two events in 2024 - a dog walk on 17 October around Layham and Shelley with more than twenty people taking part, some with dogs, finishing with drinks and some nibbles; this event raised over £500. The second event was St Andrew's day drinks in the Church on 30 November. Over 40 people attended and the event was done at zero cost as the drinks were donated and the food was provided by committee members and several others. A total of £462.50 was raised and two new annual members were recruited. Open gardens on Saturday 21 June would include teas at Water House Farm and Butterfly Hall. Total funds were around £13,000, which would be used to help pay for necessary repairs to the Church fabric highlighted by the Quinquennial report received in 2023.

25.4.3.10 PCC

Father Jo Delfgou welcomed the two new church wardens - Richard Cranfield and Nick Reid, assisted by Allison Dunn and Jonathan Benson. He thanked Richard Cranfield for cutting the grass in the churchyard. Excess soil in the burial ground had been removed and some trees cut back during the year. He thanked the Friends of St Andrew's for their help in raising funds to meet the work necessary to the church, both inside and out. Father Jo was delighted that Glenda Hall would be ordained in Bury St Edmunds Cathedral on 28 June.

25.4.3.11 Playing Field Management Committee

MW thanked the Parish Council for their annual contribution of £1000. The other source of income - the 120 Club - was fully subscribed; these two incomes just covered the cost of grass cutting. Any other expenditure was met by the sale of cricket bat willow trees and/or grants - the latter being more and more difficult to access.

The annual inspection of the play apparatus had revealed that substantial repairs were needed and these were undertaken at a cost of just under £5000. As a result, reserves were reduced to £10,000. Volunteers had helped with hedge cutting, repairing and painting the basketball post and painting one of the football goals. The condition of the ride-on mower was regularly monitored; there was a reserve fund to replace it when necessary.

25.4.3.12 Village Hall Management Committee

There were six committee meetings in 2024, plus the AGM; along with some *ad hoc* meetings. Regular activities included weekly dance classes for children, the fortnightly social club, winter warm hub café (over the winter), Parish Council meetings, Layham History Club, needlework group, Hadleigh Trefoil Guild meetings and LEG event as well as several bookings for private functions. A book sale held in May 2024 was well supported and raised approximately £500, including nearly £100 from the children's books donated to Ladybirds. 2024 was a year of 'business as usual' maintenance. Grants were received from Layham PC, SSE Business Support, Babergh DC and LEG - Richard thanked all donors. The surplus of £3,444 included £717.50 held for the Social Club.

25.4.3.13 Social Club

The Social Club - run by three parishioners: Teddy Goldby, quiz writer, Sue Keeble, secretary and Rob Keeble, treasurer - had been set up in October 2022. It was a small, friendly group which met in the Village Hall on the first and third Mondays of the month between 10 am and 12 noon, with ages ranging from 8 to 95. Meetings were fun and there was always a quiz and refreshments, including homemade cakes. For the past two years there had been a speaker programme highlighting different topics. SK thanked LEG for last year's £250 grant that had enabled the cost to be kept at £2 per person per meeting. During the past year, income was £803 from subscriptions; expenditure of £480 was paid for rental of the Village Hall and £409.50 for speakers, so the average expenditure per speaker was £31.50, due to 50% of speakers not charging. On 1 April 2024 the balance held by Layham Village Hall on behalf of the Social Club was £412 and on 31 March 2025 it was £575.50.

25.4.3.14 Events Group

The Layham Events Group (LEG) organised a Festive Fair again in December 2024. This event was very successful, especially as the weather was predicted to be stormy and several other local events were cancelled. A total of £623 was raised, meaning the group had once again been able to offer grants to local organisations, including the Village Hall, Friends of St Andrew's and the Bug Club.

25.4.3.15 Community Orchard

SL said the trees were growing well and the grass had been cut leaving pathways rather than short grass throughout. The orchard would be open for Open Gardens on 21 June. It was hoped to be able to harvest fruit in the autumn. SL thanked Ed and Glenda Hall for allowing their land to be used.

25.4.4 MATTERS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS

There were no matters not covered by the agenda.

25.4.5 CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

SL thanked councillors, who all played an active role. He said that clearly there would be some changes with the local government reorganisation; parish councils were the first line of defence, but could not do everything and would need residents to help deliver what they wanted.

Father Jo thanked SL and parish council members.

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