

Lavenham Parish Council NEWSLETTER



FREE

December 2020

Merry Christmas

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Following the Covid-19 epidemic being classified as a pandemic and with lock-down on the horizon, the Parish Council decided to produce and deliver a Newsletter to every household and business in the village. This was aimed at informing residents and helping them cope with the dramatic changes that we were all facing and to highlight the help that was on hand. We also made a call for volunteers and were overwhelmed by the 100 or so people who came forward. This first Newsletter was followed by a further five.

At the outset of lock-down the doctors' surgery was closed without any prior warning. At the same time paper prescriptions were no longer acceptable to the practice and again without warning. The Parish Council subsequently filed a formal letter of complaint to the Long Melford Practice. The current situation regarding the practice is reported elsewhere see page 9.

Thankfully, our essential shops stayed open, including Heeks, Sparling & Faiers, Lavenham Butchers, Lavenham Pharmacy , both Co-ops and, for our wild furry friends, Alan Fayers. When they were allowed our other shops, eateries and hostelleries followed suit. For which we owe them all our thanks.

An acknowledgement here too for all the volunteers who have helped to keep the community safe and functioning during the past few months. Whether through our valued Good Neighbour Scheme or on a more informal basis by helping out a neighbour, we are thankful for the wonderful community spirit which exists in Lavenham.

Continued...

...continued

During this time the Parish Council continued to operate and help residents with day to day issues as they arose. Moreover, we continued with our monthly meeting regime by holding virtual meetings via Zoom. Our finance working group recently met: parish finances are in a good state of repair and it is doubtful that we will seek an increase in next year's Precept.

The District Council opted for home working and this continues until today. Its finances are fragile to say the least. A decision on their future level of Precept has yet to be fully addressed. The County is in a similar position. Service levels at both councils were already under stress and the next few years are likely to be bumpy. Lessons learned from the pandemic should help to drive efficiencies.

The Parish Council has sought to undertake a number of projects, including enhancing local infrastructure and these are mentioned on pages 4 & 5. Some of these are now coming to fruition after many years. A great frustration is that our counterparts in the district, county councils and other agencies forget that parish councillors are volunteers and that we have limited powers and resources at our disposal.

We should also thank our Parish Clerk, Jane Bellward for all her hard work and especially this year as she celebrated her 40th anniversary in this role.

Our Chairman, Carroll Reeve intends to stand down over the next few months. Should you wish to stand for the Parish Council please contact the Clerk, Mrs Jane Bellward.

Water Street

Lavenham Parish Council worked in collaboration with Suffolk County Council Highways to introduce a traffic scheme in Water Street that would make walking safer for pedestrians and prevent the frequent damage that was being caused to listed buildings by large vehicles. Surprisingly, Water Street and High Street are part of the A1141 so when drivers are plotting their route through this area, with or without satnav, Water Street and High Street feature.

As with all highways issues, other than the Trunk Roads such as the A12 and A14, the responsibility rests with the SCC. For years LPC has lobbied for the introduction of a scheme that would address the concerns of increasingly large HGVs passing through our medieval streets. At the same time, we must accept that the days of our shops and business premises being restocked by small vans are long gone. So, a balance had to be struck and this has taken the form of a 7.5 tonne weight restriction for vehicles travelling east along Water Street, unless they are delivering or collecting to premises in or adjacent to Water Street. The scheme



was introduced in January 2019.

There is no restriction for vehicles travelling west along Water Street as there is no alternative route available.

Initially this was to be a temporary, experimental scheme so if it were found to be unsuitable for permanent use the signs could be removed at minimal cost and interruption. In the event the scheme has proven to be effective and in July of this year it was made a permanent scheme.

We were never entirely happy with the aesthetics of the scheme, so we asked SCC for a review of them to have something more in keeping with the medieval street scene in Water Street.

We have begun a review in conjunction with Highways Officers and we are keen to include the views of residents and businesses in Water Street and across the village. Ideally, we would hold a public meeting where this and other issues could be raised but this is not likely to be possible for the foreseeable future. We want to progress this as we currently have access to a funding source but that is time limited.



Speeding Traffic

One of the most frequent complaints that we receive is of vehicles speeding through the village. Enforcement of the law on speeding is of course the responsibility of the police. We do pass on those complaints to the police, but they cannot be in Lavenham all

the time and when they are there can be many other duties for them to perform.

The parish council has purchased a Speed Indicator



Device (SID). This does not have any enforcement role. What it does do is alert drivers who may have drifted above the 30mph limit that they need to be alert and slow down. There are many such devices available but the one that we chose to buy does collect valuable data that can support our requests for police action.

The choice of locations for the deployment of SID was overseen by the County Highways Department and they provided and erected the posts along with signs to display when the post is not being used for SID. There is a requirement to rotate the SID deployment monthly, as if it is left in situ for longer then it ceases to have as much effect.

Infrastructure projects

Much of the village infrastructure does not belong to the parish. Due to a variety of reasons, including the reduction of central government funding to district and county councils, these assets have fallen into a poor state of repair and efficiency. In recent times, the Parish Council has sought, where possible, to revamp and modernise our local infrastructure without putting a strain on parish finances.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced by central government a few years ago and adopted by Babergh District Council. CIL is aimed at simplifying the system of collecting from developers their contribution towards the cost of local infrastructure. It is based on a fixed charging system and technically arises as and when a development commences on-site.

Lavenham can benefit from this in two ways. Firstly, as Lavenham has a Neighbourhood Plan it enjoys 25% of the CIL, arising from developments in the village. Secondly, it can apply to the District Council for part of the CIL retained by them.

In our case, we have sought to use CIL to update and extend our local infrastructure. This includes projects either completed or in hand to include;

- The acquisition of 2 Lady Street that has become the Village Information Centre, and contains the village post office. The operation of the VIP is commented on page 5.
- Acquiring the old gas works site for a car park, with electric charging

points and securing public access to the remaining gas holder, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

- Extending and revamping of the common room at Tenter Piece.
- Replacing the toilet block at the Prentice Street car park and refurbishing the site, including providing electric charging points.
- Revamping the Church Street toilet block and installing a parish office.

Two further projects that are in hand relate to revamping the play area behind Harwood Place and making a new direct footpath from Green Willows to Harwood Place.

All the above have been the subject of consultation with the village.

Harwood play area

A specific consultation with neighbours in this area was carried out more than two years ago. The aim is to re-lay the surface and install a goal with a basket ball hoop similar to that on First Meadow. This work has now been sanctioned by Babergh DC and a new funding bid is in hand.

Gas works site

Our proposal to acquire the former gas works site in Water Street for use as a carpark is gradually clearing the various hurdles. Planning permission has been granted and CIL funding to level and lay a firm surface along with other necessary works has been agreed. Hopefully the final pieces of the jigsaw with National Grid will be in place and we can bring this project to completion.

Tenter Piece

The Tenter Piece sheltered housing scheme has been in place for over sixty years. Since then standards have moved on. The proposal is to extend the common room proper and to provide a toilet and an enlarged kitchen. This will aim to make the space more versatile and to meet today's standards and address and meet the needs of our older residents. All the necessary permissions are now in place and work should get underway in the New Year.

Prentice St carpark

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for public toilets to be upgraded to avoid shared spaces within them. It is proposed to demolish the existing block and erect a smaller unit of two gender neutral disability compliant units, allowing direct access from the outside. At the same time remedial works will be carried out to the hard surfaces and a more economic use of the space to provide further parking bays and two electric car charging points. Work on this is scheduled for the New Year.

Church St carpark

As is the case with the Prentice Street toilets, the Church Street block will be revamped to provide four external accessed cabins. Each will be gender neutral and disability compliant. By redesigning the internal layout of the building provision will also be made to install a parish office. Once planning permission has been granted work should get underway in February.

Both this project and that for Prentice Street should also materially reduce our running costs.

Information Point

In line with the new lockdown regulations, as a non-essential business, the Community and Visitor Information section of the building will be closed until these have been lifted.

The Volunteers of the Trust remain committed to supporting Post Office personnel allowing them to continue providing an essential service to the village. The hours remain: 11am to 2pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Local residents and businesses continue to make good use of the post office and all the services it has to offer.

Any alterations to the Post Office service will be announced on both the Facebook and Instagram pages - Lavenham VIP.

We finally have a name over the door

New footpath

Pedestrian access to and from Green Willows is directly off the Melford Road. Since Green Willows was built more than 40 years ago the volume and speed of traffic has increased substantially. This is primarily a road safety issue to link Green Willows with the village footpath system. The issue we are trying to resolve relates to the ownership of the strip of land to the corner of Green Willows facing the front of Harwood Place. Again, funding would be sought through the CIL structure mentioned elsewhere. A timeframe has yet to be determined.

Neighbourhood plan

In 2016 Lavenham adopted a Neighbourhood Plan after a referendum. For various reasons this plan needs to be revised and a steering group has been formed to carry this out.

The plan sets out local planning policies and must be in line with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.

Changes to planning regulations are currently being considered in a government White Paper and Babergh District Council's Joint Local Plan. These draft documents are at a consultative stage but can be viewed on the Internet. Additionally, things have not stood still in Lavenham so local updates are also needed.

The revision process will take time and there will be various opportunities for you to contribute to the process. details of which will be on the Parish Council website. If you wish to help contact the Parish Council clerk, details on the back page.

A questionnaire is currently being prepared which will give you an opportunity to express your views. It was initially planned to circulate it before Christmas, but this will now happen early in the New Year.

LED street lights

The scheme to update the street lights began in 2014. The then existing lighting units were no longer serviceable and could no longer be supported by SCC Highways. Two units remain to be replaced and a further three require some ancillary works. Completion is scheduled for December.

Draft Joint Local Plan

In November, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils published a draft Joint Local Plan (JLP). This is an important document which will provide the strategy for the growth of Babergh and Mid Suffolk. It will set out the strategy for development up to 2037, including land allocations. Once adopted, the Plan will replace the existing local planning policies for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The national approach to planning policy matters is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) and Planning Practice Guidance, but also within documents covering specific topics.

The NPPF 2019 sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development, requiring that local planning authorities plan positively to meet the development needs of their area. The Plan policies for Babergh and Mid Suffolk will sit alongside the NPPF 2019, and where appropriate, supplement policies based upon local circumstances.

Neighbourhood Plans will continue to be recognised and enjoy the same level of competence as before.

This latest draft is known as the Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission – November 2020 and can be found at - <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/JLPReg19/FullCouncil/BMSDC-Joint-Local-Plan-Pre-Submission-Nov-2020-FINAL.pdf> - with instructions on how to comment thereon.

It could be argued that the lack of a current Local Plan has lead to opportunistic and therefore unplanned and locally inappropriate development throughout the two districts.

Community Land Trust

In late 2019 Lavenham CLT, in partnership with Hastoe Housing, delivered 18 homes for local people at Peek Close.

On the site adjacent to Howlett's Garage we are currently acquiring four homes; one single bedroom and three 2 bedroom. Handover is scheduled for next spring and all will be for affordable rent. Applications for these tenancies should be made through Gateway to Homechoice - <https://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/> and will require pre-registration.

Letting policy will be similar to that for Peek Close and prioritises people with a local connection - born, work, live, family connection, etc.

For at least the first three years the properties will be managed and administered by Babergh District Council.

We are looking for other opportunities for not only homes for local people but also for key workers.

If you would like to help please go to <http://lavenhamclt.onesuffolk.net/>



Peek Close, off Melford |Road

Lavenham Forum

From: Sarah Rands

We find ourselves in unprecedented times and this second lockdown, though necessary, has been a big blow to the local businesses. We look forward to reopening and encourage everyone to THINK BIG and shop small this



Christmas. Keep up to date with what your local businesses are up to on the Love Lavenham website. Every little purchase really does make a big difference!

For your convenience, the shops, cafes and restaurants will be staying open a little later, until 8pm, on Friday evenings from the lifting of lockdown up to Christmas Eve.

The Forum have been working hard to support the businesses of Lavenham during this pandemic, and have offered free website listing to all the businesses, signposting the public to the services that have been on offer during the lockdown.

We hope you enjoy the twinkly lights, the festive windows, and fabulous shopping and dining opportunities in the run up to a very different Christmas. Together we are stronger, and the business community of Lavenham wish you all a very peaceful and safe Christmas.

[www.lovelavenham.com](http://lovelavenham.com)

Good Neighbour

It will be 7 years in March since the launch of the Good Neighbour Scheme. During this time, we have helped many local residents, with lifts to appointments, shopping, prescription collection, minor household tasks and other small requests, where we have been able to. All this by those in the Village who have given their time to volunteer on the Scheme, we thank them all so very much.

During lockdown we were very lucky to have many more come forward and volunteer, to help out residents who were having to stay at home, or finding things difficult at that time. Many of those volunteers continue to help.

After receiving a grant for Covid-19 compliant travel, we were able to continue lifts for those needing to get to appointments.

In 2014 we also started our monthly Teas in Tenter Piece common room, which have been very popular with our older residents. Incorporating visiting speakers, demonstrations, trips out, garden parties and our highlight The Christmas Party at the Village Hall. We have had to cancel all of this for now, but we do hope to start again in 2021.

If all goes to plan we hope to hold our monthly Teas in an updated Tenter Piece common room.

And a belated celebration for our older residents in the Village Hall.

New public defibrillator

A new public access defibrillator is to be installed outside Marshbeck Interiors in the High Street. The defibrillator and cabinet have been kindly donated by long established local business W A Deacon Funeral Directors. This will be the second public defibrillator to be installed in Lavenham, the first being located outside the butchers' shop in the High Street.

Defibrillators are life saving devices that can restart a person's heart following a cardiac arrest by delivering a high voltage electric shock. The quicker it can be deployed the better the chances of recovery for the patient so, thanks to Deacon's, there will soon be one located in the north of the village. The equipment has been sourced by the First Responder group in liaison with the Parish Council.

Dementia Alliance

The Lavenham Dementia Alliance started in 2018 with Dementia Training for Local Business's interested in becoming Dementia Friendly. Several training sessions for residents wishing to become Dementia Friends, were also held.

Dementia Friendly Coffee Mornings are held in the Tenter Piece common room for those living with, or those caring for someone with Dementia. These have been cancelled this year but we plan to restart them in the New Year.

For more information on the Good Neighbour and Dementia Alliance:

TELEPHONE: 07922 850082 For information and help

Bildeston Health Centre

We continue to be extremely busy here at the surgery! We are still offering a full initial telephone triage service but wish to assure all our patients that if a face to face appointment is required you will be called into the surgery. Contrary to what you may have seen in the media we have continued to see patients throughout the Covid-19 crisis. We do however ask that patients call the surgery before coming in. This allows us to manage footfall to keep you and staff safe. Throughout October in addition to our routine services, with a brilliant team effort we have managed to vaccinate 80% of our over 65 year old patients. We are still working through our register of "at risk" patients as supply of these vaccines has been sporadic but please be assured we will be in contact.

www.bildestonhealthcentre.co.uk

Covid-19

The welcome announcement in early November that one vaccine has been developed and, following statutory safety checks, will be available very soon. This will have given us all some relief from the uncertainty. Local General Practices report that it is too early to give details about how a vaccination programme will be delivered but keep checking on the Practice websites. In the meantime it is critical that we all remain vigilant by observing Government rules on mixing with other people, frequent handwashing, wearing masks were required and maintaining social distance. The further you are away from other people the greater chance of remaining safe.

Long Melford Practice

This year our Flu Clinics have changed due to the huge impact of Covid-19. Flu is a highly infectious virus that infects the nose, throat and lungs. It can cause serious illness and even death in vulnerable groups. Some people with pre-existing conditions are more likely to develop potential serious complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia. If you are eligible for a flu vaccination you will receive an invitation by letter or text message to book an appointment by telephone when the clinics become available.

www.thelongmelfordpractice.co.uk

Flu vaccine eligibility

- Aged 65 or over
- Aged under 65 and have a medical condition
- Pregnant
- Living in a residential or nursing home
- Caring for an older or disabled person
- A household contact of anyone on the NHS Shielded Patient List
- Frontline health and social care workers
- Aged 2-3 years (for most children, the vaccine will be given as a spray in each nostril)
- In primary school (provided by the School Nurse)
- In Year 7 secondary school students (provided by the School Nurse)
- Aged 50-64 – Please note those in this new eligible group will be offered the vaccine later in the season as we will be vaccinating the very vulnerable first.

Ready, steady, census

Households across Lavenham will soon be asked to take part in the nationwide survey of housing and the population. It has been conducted every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

Information from the digital-first census will help decide how services are planned and funded locally. This includes doctors' surgeries, housing, new bus routes and many other services.

Households will receive a letter with a unique access code in the post, allowing them to complete their questionnaire online. Paper questionnaires will be available on request. Census day is March 21.

For more information,
[visit census.gov.uk](https://census.gov.uk).

Sewer blockage

You are reminded that disposing of inappropriate material down drains and toilets causes blockages. Toilet wipes do not dissolve, and fats that are liquid when hot must not be put into the sewer system.

Lavenham sewers are over 80 years old and will continue to service us well if we respect the advice given by Anglian Water.

On Monday 16th November works had to be carried out to clear a large blockage from the sewer which runs from Water Street into Brent Eleigh Road. This was an expensive and disruptive clean up operation.

20 mph speed limit

In July the Parish Council put forward a proposal to Suffolk County Council to introduce a 20 mph zone across the village to replace the existing 30 mph limit. This is necessary due to the prevalence of an older local population and a regular and growing influx of tourists moving around this medieval village with its narrow footpaths and roads. In addition, the centre of the village with its retail core and host of eateries and hostelries is bisected by the A1141, with concomitant pedestrian movements across this main road.



Such a speed limit is aimed at pedestrian safety and would also help with the growth of cycle traffic throughout the village.

The proposal was sponsored by our County Councillor with the support of our two district Ward members.

Home But Not Alone

This phoneline, which supports vulnerable people in our communities who may be struggling with the impact of Coronavirus, is now live again. The telephone number is freephone **0800 876 6926** and will be staffed from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. It helps people, who often do not have a network of family or friends to call upon, to access emergency support such as food and medicine deliveries and befriending schemes.

Free School Meals

A group of people in Lavenham decided to help provide free school meals during the October half term for those children that needed them.

The community really pulled together and there was genuine concern about this cause so a crowd funding site was set up to raise funds. Now that the government has confirmed it will provide free school meals during the holidays, the group will work closely with the Parish Council and the Church to ensure that the funds raised so far will be used to help those in need during the Christmas holidays

All enquiries please contact Sam on hollibels@btinternet.com or call on 07767 615839

Church Services

St Peter & St Paul Lavenham

Subject to any further changes to guidance

Please bring your own mask and observe 2m social distancing

- 19 & 20 Dec @4pm
Carol Service
- 24 Dec @ 2pm
Crib Service (All age)
- 24 Dec @ 9pm & 11pm
“Midnight” Mass
- 25 Dec @10.15am
Christmas Communion

Please book in advance 247564 or Call 07768 283636 for Zoom codes

All the above on Zoom

Community Council

From: Phil Smith

During the Covid-19 pandemic we have tried to keep as much as possible open or being utilised.

Whilst all major events and groups in the Hall were cancelled, we took advantage of the time to perform some maintenance and redecorating work.

We ran another successful “Classic Car” show, worked with a local music producer to put on the “Drive in Music Theatre” in the sports fields, and, with the Farmers Market, to use the outside space at the Village Hall so they could continue to trade when allowed.

We have tried to ensure that the Library can remain open whenever possible and that our regular groups were able, when allowed, to continue to use the facilities in a safe and secure manner even re-starting our popular Thursday morning “breakfast and a chat” for a few weeks.

At the time of writing, unfortunately we are back into another lockdown but, by the time you read this we will hopefully be able to start re-opening again and look forward to seeing you soon.

Wishing you a Happy and Healthy Christmas and New Year.

Cemetery Chapel

The Cemetery Chapel was refurbished in 2018 by the Parish Council to provide a place of sanctity and reflection. Since then a band of volunteers, lead by Bob Burchi, open and close it on a daily basis and Marian Searle provides seasonal fresh flowers.

The Parish Council would like to thank them all.

CHRISTMAS DAY 1944

Finally we share this entry from the log of an American Airman, based at Lavenham Airfield.

We didn't fly today but Christmas Day deserves to be remembered here. We were awakened at 5am to brief for a mission. Briefing was crowded with all the crews from another field here, who had to land and stay last night because bad weather had closed in their own field. After we were briefed the mission was scrubbed – there was a note of cheer but I don't believe any one of the flyers would have minded sacrificing Christmas Dinner to help the boys on the ground up front. However, the weather on our time of arrival back at our base would have made landing too dangerous. Other Groups went out.

I went to church this morning. In spite of everything there definitely is a 'feeling' of Christmas in the air. On my way back from Church I could feel something – the country looked different – there was a thick beautiful white frost over everything and little crystallized frost blowing in gusts. A little way off you could see the outlines of the trees but

the ground was covered by a hazy fog. It looked like a big beautiful Christmas card and out of the quiet morning the public address began to play Christmas church music – and to make us know there was still a war on, there came the determined drone of our fighter planes on their way to cover our bombers over the Reich. There was a sound of revenge in those engines for yesterday they got a lot of our pals.

Many of the ground and flying officers from Majors down did K.P. ('Kitchen Patrol') with the regular mess personnel. We had a fine turkey dinner with all the 'fixens'. The radio programs today are right in the mode of the season – a darn nice piece of work on the part of the Armed Forces Network over here.

*Tech. Sgt. Charles Mattson. Radio Operator.
B-17G 44-8332 'Nov-Shmoz-Ka-Pop'.
837th Bomb Squadron.
487th Bomb Group. 8th Air Force.*

Lavenham Parish Council would welcome any comments or suggestions relating to any village issues that you may have. The Council are looking for new councillors to join them in helping to improve all aspects of village life. In the first instance, please contact the Parish Clerk for further details.

Clerk to the Lavenham Parish Council,
13 Weavers Close, Lavenham. CO10 9QN
e-mail: lavenhampc@yahoo.co.uk
telephone: 247041

We recognise that there are a number of references to websites and e-mail addresses in this newsletter which some will not be able to access. Computers are available in the library but please call first (247729). Alternatively, contact the Parish Clerk details below.

Further detailed information can also be found on the Parish Council website:
lavenham.onesuffolk.net