IN BRIEF

- Presented plans for 18 affordable homes at Village Hall open day
- Continued to welcome visitors with donations now covering the costs of public toilets
- Tidied up the village with new notice boards and waste bins
- Commented on 67 planning applications and made 7 site visits
- Re-fenced first meadow and installed new play equipment
- Good Neighbours have now carried out over 300 ‘helping-hand’ jobs
- Begun the installation of new LED street lights
- Formally submitted the Neighbourhood Development Plan to Babergh District Council
- Re-negotiated the lease for the Lavenham Railway Walk in preparation for taking it over
- Supported various local initiatives such as the proposed pre-school development, fencing of the recreation ground, voluntary litter picks, sponsored in-memoriam seating.

THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council meets in public on the first Thursday of every month at 7.30 p.m. in the Guildhall. Minutes of our meetings are published in Lavenham Life.

2015 has been a milestone year with the submission of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Development Plan to Babergh District Council. We are the first Parish in the area to reach this stage and it starts a legal process which should culminate in a village referendum in the spring/early summer of 2016. We are hugely grateful to all those that have contributed to and commented on the Plan.

We are already making progress with affordable housing for those that live and work in Lavenham with the plans for 18 houses on the former Melford Road County Council site. This, together with our support for Babergh’s re-development of the garages in Meadow Close, to provide 12 one bedroom flats, will go some way to meeting the immediate affordable and local housing needs of the village.

There is much still to do however and we hope that, having submitted our Neighbourhood Plan we can now begin to concentrate on some of the other issues that are of concern to the village. These include traffic and parking issues and improving the standards of village housekeeping. We are able to budget for modest expenditure in these projects because our financial position remains strong and we have not proposed any increase in our precept to Babergh District Council.

Although in theory the Parish Council is an elected body, there has not been an election for many years now and we have to assume that the village is therefore broadly supportive of our efforts. We are all volunteers and are united in our aim to do our best for Lavenham as a great place in which to live and work. We have been heartened by the many constructive comments of residents to the Neighbourhood Plan. We are confident that, if approved, it will provide a blueprint for future development that not only meets Lavenham’s needs but also respects the very special environment in which we are privileged to live.

The Annual Parish Meeting, to which all residents are invited, will be held in The Guildhall at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday 14th April
**Affordable Homes**

The Lavenham Community Land Trust (the CLT) has now acquired the County Council site in Melford Road and plans have been submitted for Hastoe Housing Association (a partner in the CLT) to build 18 affordable homes for local people. Affordable in this context means houses will either be rented at less that market value or available to part-buy with shared ownership.

Plans for the development were presented by Hastoe Housing at a well-attended open day in the Village Hall on January 12th. Further information can be obtained from Hastoe Housing at [www.hastoe.com](http://www.hastoe.com) or telephone 0300 123 2250

---

**First Meadow**

During the year a new fence has been erected around first meadow in Brent Eleigh Road and we have installed a new range of play equipment which is already proving popular. We express our grateful thanks to the anonymous donor whose generosity has helped towards the cost of this. We were also helped by Babergh District Council and Community Grant Aid. Our plans to re-inforce the entrance to enable its more reliable use for overflow parking have been on hold while the play equipment was being installed but we plan to still pursue this once the weather improves. A residual problem with first meadow remains the issue of dog-fouling. Several unfortunate instances have been reported and, whilst it is nice to think of a village amenity area such as first meadow being available for all users, the Parish Council regards it as unacceptable that there should be a few irresponsible dog owners that spoil things for the rest of us. As a result we are investigating the legal position on dog control and plan to employ the Sudbury town wardens on a trial basis to help with enforcement.

---

**Work in Progress**

Much work goes on in the background and we are conscious that in some areas it may seem as if little progress is being made. A few comments;

- Discussions have continued with Suffolk County Council during the year to try to get some action on highways maintenance matters. Potholes, renewal of white lines, re-surfacing Pump Court and the other entrances onto the High Street are some of the items on a list which doesn’t seem to get any shorter,
- We are also aware that very little progress has been made with some of the more strategic traffic matters such as parking, congestion and speeding. Now that the workload on the Neighbourhood Plan has subsided it will be possible to give more impetus to these issues,
- Village Cleaning and its responsibility have been under discussion with Babergh District Council for some time. We are making slow progress with this and meanwhile express our thanks for the voluntary litter-pick efforts which make a real difference,
- Discussions with the County Council and Babergh have continued on legal matters relating to the car parks and the railway walk so as to secure the future of both under the control of the Parish Council. These matters will hopefully be concluded during 2016,
- In addition to the above, members have taken individual responsibility for such things as development of an emergency plan for the village, Christmas lighting, a protocol for retailers ‘A’ boards, a tree survey, installation of the defibrillator, provision of road gritting bins etc.
**Street Lighting**

The Parish Council has entered into a contract with Suffolk County Council to replace all the street lamps with the LED units which were the subject of last years’ public consultation. This is a two year programme and the remainder of the old lamps should be replaced during 2016.

The Parish Council agreed to proceed with the replacement of the lamps because the existing lamps were obsolete and because of the much lower electricity costs when using LED lamps. The installation has been paid for out of Parish Council reserves and a 10 year loan from the Government.

**Good Neighbours**

The Good Neighbours scheme goes from strength to strength and has now completed over 300 ‘missions’ since its formation. If you would like to help as a volunteer (particularly if you are a driver) or you would like some temporary help in or around the home then the number to ring is 07922 850082.

Our thanks go to Doreen Twitchett, the committee and all our volunteers for a very successful initiative which is a boon to Lavenham.

**Events**

Lavenham thrives on events and 2015 was no exception with a record number of visitors to events which included the Hidden Gardens, a ‘Help for Heroes’ cricket match which raised over £10,000, the Carnival (in which the spirit of ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ was truly demonstrated in some awful weather) the Literary Festival and, last, but not least, the Christmas Fair.

Whilst the Parish Council is not responsible for making or enforcing parking regulations we are mindful that there is considerable scope for improving visitor management. We shall therefore be taking the initiative to discuss with the organisers of events how we can best help to ensure that we continue to have successful events that do not impinge too much on the safety and wellbeing of the village.

**Welcoming Visitors**

Our ‘welcoming visitors’ programme is a package that includes the year-round availability of the public toilets, free maps and village guides, the Wi-Fi phone box and the Lavenham phone app. To help pay for this the Parish Council has provided secure boxes in the main car parks for visitors to make donations when parking and it looks as if this will at least cover the cost of keeping the toilets open. This has given us the confidence and the resources to make other improvements such as notice boards and smarter litter bins as well as more dog bins. We have also recently installed road grit bins in place of the rather untidy heaps of sand and grit that used to be dotted around the village.

Our thanks to the donors who have contributed towards the additional memorial seats. This is a lovely idea and provides a welcome opportunity for a rest and watch the Lavenham world go by.

**Some 2016 dates**

- June 11th/12th Art Festival
- June 19th Hidden Gardens
- June 23rd/25th VW Rally
- August 29th Carnival
- December 2nd-4th Christmas Fair

**HM the Queen’s 90th Birthday**

Is being celebrated on the weekend of the 11th/12th June.

The Parish Council has nothing planned at the moment and has made no arrangements for any road closures.

We would support individual parties however and If you think we may be able to help then please contact us.
**Planning**

The Parish Council is invited to comment on planning applications received by Babergh District Council. During 2015 some 67 were considered. Many of these are relatively minor matters such as tree surgery but, where an application is thought to be sensitive, a site visit is arranged and Councillors are encouraged to attend so as to be fully informed. 7 site visits were made during the year. Once the Neighbourhood Development Plan is approved then planning applications will need to be in accordance with its policies. It is apparent that the Plan is already carrying some ‘weight’ with the planning authorities and the Parish Council finds it useful in its consideration of current applications to test out how the Plan’s policies would apply in practice.

In particular the Plan;

- Limits future housing to developments of less than 24 dwellings on individual sites
- Puts the emphasis on smaller homes for families and those who wish to downsize
- Gives affordable homes priority to those that already live or work in the village
- Defines landscape sensitive areas which should be protected from development
- Requires that limitations of the village infrastructure are taken into account

We are grateful for all the Lavenham residents who have helped towards the Plan and who have taken the trouble to comment during the consultation stages. The Plan and its supporting documentation is available to view on line at **www.lavenhamneighbourhoodplan.co.uk** and on the Babergh District Council website. A paper copy of the Plan in also available in the Library at the Village Hall.

---

**Your Parish Councillors**

Carroll Reeve – Chairman  
Roy Whitworth – Vice Chairman  
Joy Baker  
Gail Banks  
Mike Beech  
Merriel Gardiner  
Philip Gibson  
Carole Holland  
Bryan Panton  
Tony Sheppard  
Doreen Twitchett

Any of the Parish Councillors can be contacted via the Clerk to the Council Jane Bellward on 01787 247041 or Lavenhampc@yahoo.co.uk

We said goodbye during the year to Neil Warden and Jane Ranzetta and thank them for their contributions to our work over the previous four years. Whilst it would be too grand to describe individual Parish Council members as ‘Portfolio Holders’ there are nevertheless some areas of our work in which members take a particular interest. These are;

- Planning Matters – Philip Gibson  
- Good Neighbours Group – Doreen Twitchett  
- Christmas lights – Gail Banks  
- New equipment within village – Carole Holland  
- Traffic Matters – Tony Sheppard  
- Emergency Plan development – Bryan Panton  
- Open spaces – Merriel Gardiner  
- Web sites – Mike Beech  
- Library – Joy Baker  
- Tourism – Roy Whitworth  
- Housing and environment – Carroll Reeve

We are helped enormously by our Clerk Jane Bellward who keeps tabs on the finances as well as keeping all of our administration in order. Thanks also to Jenny Antill and William Shropshire, our County and District Councillors for their active and much appreciated support.