

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Thursday 27th May 2021, in the Guildhall at 7.30 pm

Councillors Present

Mr I Lamont, Chairman.

Mr J O'Mahony, Ms I Mitchell, Mrs M Morrey, Mr R Macro, Mr C Poole, Mr M Chick, Mr T Ranzetta.

Mr C Arthey, Babergh District Councillor.

20 members of the public.

Apologies received from Mr T Sheppard (Parish Councillor), Mr R Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor.
Mrs M Maybury Babergh District Councillor.

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman introduced himself and the Councillors attending and welcomed all the parishioners to the meeting. The purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting is to receive reports from the Parish Council and Local Organisations and act as a public forum for parishioners to raise any matters of concern that relate to the community.

He thought that everybody was now aware that the Sharing Space consultation initiated by the Parish Council has been suspended. There had been a phenomenal amount of feedback and the Parish Council has decided how to respond to the letters and emails received. Many ideas and issues had come to light and there is a need to see what can be learnt from them. Some Councillors, especially those attending one of the drop in events, had been shocked at the strength of feeling shown.

THE MINUTES of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 8th May 2019 were agreed as a true record of those proceedings, proposed by Mr Ranzetta, seconded by Mr Macro. There had been no meeting in 2020 due to Covid restrictions.

MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising from the previous minutes.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S ANNUAL REPORT BY MR ROBERT LINDSAY (Mr Lindsay had forwarded his report in absence)

Looking back over the year two of the key themes throughout the year, alongside the pandemic, were the continuing desire of residents for safer streets and the need for buses.

Weight restriction Water Street - In Lavenham the weight restriction on Water Street came into official force and early discussions with officers have recently begun on design work.

20mph limits Lavenham - Although I applied for this a few months ago, I have finally got the results from the speed survey which is the first stage in the process. If speeds are low enough it makes obtaining one a bit more likely. I will send this under separate cover. Discussions have also begun about the design of 20mph limits in Bildeston.

Other highlights of the year include:

GoStart rescues 112 bus route to Sudbury - In March 2020, the then operator of the 112 bus pulled out because the county had withdrawn its subsidy. Despite pleas and negotiations with me, the County refused to provide any more funding but luckily GoStart Community bus from Sudbury was able to step in. I contributed £1k at their launch in March 2020 and another £1k last month March 2021 from my locality funds from Babergh and Suffolk.

Budget amendments - Being a group allowed us both at the County and Babergh to put together a series of budget amendments and several motions over the year which although they were voted down by the Conservative administration, will have flagged up areas that need attention and some of which were later adopted by the administration.

Group Budget Amendment – floods

One of many amendments our group at Suffolk County Council proposed in February was to fund an extra officer for the flooding team to help bid for funding and manage projects. At the end of March the flood risk scrutiny committee recommended to cabinet that the council hire extra staff to the floods team to help tackle the flooding backlog.

20mph motion Suffolk - My feeling is that there would be enormous health and other benefits if residential areas in Suffolk were allowed 20mph limits by default rather than being forced to go through the hoops that Bildeston and Lavenham have to. As a result I proposed earlier the year a motion that called for a scheme to reduce speed limits in all suitable residential areas from 30mph to 20mph, for a price of £4m. Communities would have been able to opt out. This was rejected with the administration saying that 20mph could not be enforced without expensive measures.

Biodiversity - I also seconded a biodiversity motion for Suffolk that will implement a new biodiversity strategy. This was passed unanimously.

Pension committee - I sat on the pension committee and during the past financial year the committee agreed, after much pushing from me, to move its entire passive equity fund into a low carbon fund. It represents about 10% of the total fund.

Cabinet approves 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk - In June 2020 Suffolk's Cabinet approved a 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk, which identified 148 potential routes to be prioritised. This is as a result of a motion proposed by me in July 2018, which called on the council to produce a strategic costed 5-year cycling plan.

Funding has not yet been secured for these routes, but the cycling plan will provide a strong basis to bid for funding as and when it becomes available.

Climate emergency recommendations published - In July 2020, Suffolk's Cabinet approved the recommendations of a cross-party policy development panel outlining how the council should respond to the climate emergency and reduce emissions. This followed a motion from myself and my Green colleague in March 2019, which declared a climate emergency and committed the council to be carbon neutral by 2030.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' JOINT ANNUAL REPORT

The joint report from Mr Arthey and Mrs Maybury was displayed on the screen. Mr Arthey explained points from the report.

The past year has been dominated by Covid 19, its restrictions, its implications, its financial impact, and its effect on parish life. Despite the restrictions occurring in "lockdowns" of which the country has had three, both of us have been uplifted by the stories of voluntary work undertaken to keep the more vulnerable amongst us safe. From us both, thank you, you know who you are.

The District Council has received monies from Government which has allowed business grants to be distributed to those businesses who qualified. Over £30 million has been paid to nearly 4000 eligible businesses.

The vaccination roll-out has been administered mainly within Lavenham for the Ward, with other GP surgeries through patient visits also "getting the jabs into arms". Those residents who have helped at Lavenham surgery in particular need a special mention. We both thank you.

To continue with the subject of volunteering within the Ward, it was a pleasure to congratulate Cllr Doreen Twitchett on her New Year's Honours Award of a BEM. Nominated for her outstanding volunteering position within Lavenham as she initiated the Good Neighbour Scheme and then also the Lavenham Dementia Alliance,

Finance:

2020-21 has been badly affected by Covid, but Government support should help achieve a favourable year end.

Council Tax has been raised by 3% for 2021-2022, rents increased by 1.5%, sheltered housing charges by £0.69 per week, but garage costs stayed the same as have utility costs for sheltered housing.

Car Parking:

The contentious issue of introducing car parking charges over the District arrived at Cabinet; a decision was deferred, debated at Overview and Scrutiny Committee, brought to full council by a petition, and then returned to Cabinet. Charges will not be implemented before 1st Oct 2021 and one hour will still be free. We will see what impact it will have on Sudbury and Hadleigh. Lavenham, where the parish council have a management agreement with Babergh, were excluded from this decision as the Parish Council were already negotiating to lease the car parks and toilets.

Belle Vue House:

A decision on the future of Belle Vue house in Sudbury has been made, with Cabinet agreeing to the sale of the house for conversion and new build to provide retirement accommodation. The proceeds of the sale will be used to fund improvements to the frontage and entrance to the park.

Sudbury Customer Access point:

An access point for residents, which had been provided at the Town Hall, has now moved to the library in the Old Corn Exchange building.

Planning.

In November the new Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was approved for submission to the Secretary of State for an Independent Examination this year. It followed consultation periods in 2017 and 2019. The Plan provides for 416 dwellings per year, or 7900 dwellings by 2037, but around 4000 of those already have permission, so the plan allocates sites to meet the remaining need. The only site identified for Lavenham is LA069 north of Melford Road. Policies in the Plan seek to balance growth requirements with the need to protect our rural landscape and rich heritage. They recognise the importance of Affordable Housing, Employment, Town Centres, Tourism, Infrastructure, The Environment and Climate Change.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Lavenham Parish Council have been successful with a series of CIL bids at the Prentice Street car park, Church Street car park, and at Tenterpiece.

Climate Change:

Following the work in 2019-20 to identify areas where the Council could have an impact, we are starting to see some of those initiatives implemented. The refuse collection fleet was identified as the largest element of the Council's

carbon emissions, so we are moving to using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) for all refuse freighters. We are using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to increase the number of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points and planning policies will require new development to facilitate householder chargers.

Waste and Recycling:

Covid presented huge challenges, affecting collection crews and Household Waste Recycling Centre staffing. It was necessary to suspend some services during the year, but residual (black bin) waste collection was maintained throughout. Collections, including garden waste, are now back to normal cycle, but HWRCs remain on an appointment system. Unfortunately, we have seen a rise in fly tipping incidents and recycling (blue) bin 'contamination'. The Suffolk Waste Partnership embarked on an awareness campaign to improve the quality of our recyclables by reminding householders what should, and should not, be in the recycling bin.

Council Tax:

Council Tax has increased for the coming year, making a band D property annual council tax total of £1900.02 which BDC collects and forwards, with 73.5% going to SCC, 12.5% to Suffolk Police, 9.2% to BDC and 4.8% to Lavenham PC. This is made up by the following figures and percentage of increase: Suffolk County Council £1397.16 (+4%); Suffolk Police £237.69 (+6.7%); Babergh District Council £173.86 (+3%); and Lavenham Parish Council £91.31 (+3%).

Chilton Woods:

The strategic planning site at Chilton Woods was sold to Taylor Wimpey for £35m by Suffolk County Council. TW bought the residential area only and currently a working party is convened to bring the site into build out. The working party has been meeting bi-monthly and is constantly challenging, checking and suggesting ideas, alterations and improvements to what TW have put forward. The latest information that the build out will last 10-11 years with TW proposing to build a minimum of 100 houses annually. Initially construction traffic is proposed using a one-way system from the A134 to access via Acton Lane and exit via Aubrey Drive, with full washing facilities for all HGVs leaving the site.

Mrs Maybury had written that she was delighted to be able to award all of her locality budget to Lavenham Parish Council for works associated with the public right of way between the High Street and Lower Road, Lavenham. Residents may be aware that this PRoW was blocked for many years by vegetation and succumbed to frequent flooding making navigation impossible. In my opinion being able to open up this PRoW which provides a short cut for residents and tourists alike, plus the benefits to all for health and wellbeing initiatives with healthy exercise at its core, was an ideal choice of use for a locality budget totalling £2,000. I do hope the parish as a whole enjoys the benefits of the improved public right of way.

My very best wishes to all.

Questions: What is the ratio of EV spaces to car parking spaces? Mr Arthey said there is no actual requirement, Babergh has provided two in Sudbury and two in Hadleigh, though at the moment they are not particularly well used. There is a responsibility to plan for the future however. The main charging will take place at the workplace and home.

Mr Arthey and Mrs Maybury were thanked for their report.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL BY THE CHAIRMAN & FINANCIAL REPORT

The Chairman began by thanking everybody who had worked to keep the community safe and functioning in the last year. NHS and key workers, volunteers who had helped the community with vaccinations, transport, shopping, food parcels and much more. The staff of shops and business which have remained open and provided special support for the vulnerable. It was hoped that the newsletters produced and delivered by the Parish Council to keep the community informed and provide Covid guidance had helped. Feedback was welcomed.

Village initiatives supported in 2020/21 included the Children's Library donation towards the Literary Festival and a bookcase, Forest School summer sessions, the Good Neighbours Scheme, Lavenham Woodland Project, the Exhibition Endowment to support students in further education and a grant to the Community Land Trust to support the purchase of affordable housing.

The replacement of street lights is complete except for 3 units and we are already getting the full benefit of greatly reduced energy costs to offset loan repayments. The trial of the Water Street scheme has been approved by Suffolk Highways for permanent implementation, Highways design commissioned with a grant from Robert Lindsay. Bridge Street weight limit signage implemented by Suffolk Highways.

Mr Lamont continued by describing the Tenter Piece, Church Street, Prentice Street and the former Gas Works site projects in detail with the help of slides and explained the CIL system which was covering a large proportion of the costs.

Lastly Mr Lamont thanked all his colleagues for the work they have put in to support the community, the Clerk who does so much behind the scenes. Thanks to those who have moved on, Jack Norman, Doreen Twitchett, Bryan Panton, Phil Grindley, Charles Posner, Amanda Mortimer, Joy Baker and of course special thanks to Carroll

Reeve for guiding us as Chairman for many years. And we must remember Andrew Searle whose loss was of great sadness – instrumental in many projects in the village such as No 2 Lady Street and the Chapel renovations. His wisdom and experience are truly missed.

The meeting was reminded that at present there are two vacancies on the Parish Council, it was hoped that people would come forward to fill these.

Copies of the accounts year ending 31/03/2021 had been circulated to the meeting.

The Precept for 2020/21 had been £80,000, other income came from burial fees, car park voluntary payments (much reduced due to Covid restrictions), VAT refunds, District Council grant towards street cleaning and donations.

There were no questions.

Mr Twitchett asked if Mr Arthey could look into parking problems at Tenter Piece and the possibility of creating additional parking spaces.

Caroline Eves asked how many spaces were in the Prentice Street car park previously and how many after the renovations. There were 20 before and 26 after. When it was pointed out that the Parish Council website said an additional 12 Mr Arthey replied that the parking spaces were now slightly bigger to reflect the increase in vehicle size since the 1960s.

Mr Ranzetta reminded the meeting that comments in respect of the Joint Local Plan should be sent to Babergh by 4th June. People were also urged to complete the Neighbourhood Plan response and encourage others to do so.

REPORTS BY LOCAL GROUPS

Reports were given by Roy Mawford, Chairman of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Development Plan revision group; Jane Gosling for the Lavenham Society and Community Council; Colin Rockall for the Friends of Lavenham Library; Doreen Twitchett for the Lavenham Good Neighbours Scheme and Alzheimers Alliance; John Knight, Lavenham Woodland Project.

Written reports had been submitted for Lavenham Community Hub CBS and Lavenham CLT.

PUBLIC MATTERS OF INTEREST

The Sharing Spaces consultation had been suspended and the Parish Council is considering how to respond, what to do with the feedback. The matter will come back to the Parish Council meeting on 3rd June, there is no interim report.

There had been much anger, passion and frustration as people had turned up to the drop in sessions, had asked questions but could not get answers. One drop in session had taken place but the second had been cancelled at very short notice, Mr Ranzetta had attended and talked to people who did not realise the session had been cancelled. Mr Twitchett did not accept that this session could have been cancelled with giving a reason. Mr Anslow supported Mr Twitchett's questions but said he appreciated the Councillors who had attended the first consultation meeting.

Mr Heeks said that there had been many mistakes in the consultation document which he had pointed out but the first session had still gone ahead, why? The second had been cancelled with only 24 hours notice and word did not get around.

Roy Mawford said that having suspended the consultation adjustments must be made so that a conclusion can be reached, so it can be understood. Advantage must be taken of the valuable input already received. Mr Ranzetta commented that it was a very difficult situation, the consultation was suspended and needed to go back to the Parish Council for discussion. He was conscious of the car parking situation, are there any other priorities the Council should be looking at.

A residents' petition was handed to the Parish Council.

Mr Lamont mention CIL money, feedback would be welcome on possible future projects

Mrs Norman said the Parish Council should be looking at the state of the roads and lobbying Suffolk C C to improve them, we need to get our County Councillor to take action. It was frustrating to submit reports for nothing then to happen.

Mr Heeks asked if the Parish Council was involved with the SSSI – no this was a Suffolk C C responsibility.

Mr Lamont thanked everybody for attending and reminded them to think of other projects which could be CIL funded.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.