

**LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**  
**held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 24 April 2013 in the Village Hall**

**Present:** Louise Allen - Vice Chairman (LA)  
John Curran (JDC)  
Jane Cryer - Parish Clerk (JC)  
Lesley Garnett (LG)  
Ron Gunn (RG)  
Steve Laing (SL)  
Michael Woods - Chairman (MW)

**In attendance:** Sue Wigglesworth, Babergh DC (SW)  
Members of the Public: Colin Brown, Maureen Brown, Dee Byham, John Byham, Richard Cromwell, John Crook, Sue Curran, Peter Garnett, Sonia Groom, Noel Herring, Anne Mayhew, David Pearce, John Ruiz

**Apologies:** Amanda Coleman, PCSO (AC)  
David Pratt (DP)  
David Yorke-Edwards, Suffolk CC (DYE)

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**13.04.1 APOLOGIES**  
See above.

**13.04.2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was proposed by Noel Herring, seconded by David Pearce and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 25 April 2012 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly. There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

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

**13.04.3.1 Chairman's Report**

MW gave an overview of activity during the past year. He had been sorry to lose the services of David Cooper, but welcomed John Curran who had been co-opted to take Cllr Cooper's place, and who brought with him a wealth of experience in health & safety and emergency planning. An evening workshop had taken place in June 2012, when the Parish Plan had been reviewed and a number of issues confirmed for continuing attention, including traffic and speeding problems. A luncheon club had been set up following the workshop, and had met twice to date. A new social club had been formed by Ann Mayhew and was now meeting every two weeks. A great deal of time had been spent on participation in the campaign to have the National Grid underground a new power line through the Brett Valley (see minute 13.04.3.xxx). The PC had held a drinks party in January to thank parishioners who worked on a voluntary basis for the village. David Pratt had been nominated for a Babergh DC Community Service Award; David was recognised at an awards ceremony at Stoke by Nayland Hotel & Golf Club in March, and was the third person from Layham to receive a Community Award. Around 20% of homes in Layham were now subscribing to the Layham Community Email initiative and it was hoped that more would do so in the coming months.

**13.04.3.2 Babergh District Council**

SW reported on the many changes being made and the on-going savings being made by Babergh and Mid Suffolk working more closely together and sharing some services. Babergh's new core strategy was now at the final stage before approval by the Secretary of State. Referring to the government's agenda for growth, SW said that she believed that, with Polstead, Layham and Raydon retaining their village envelopes and status as 'hinterland villages', and Higham and Shelley remaining designated as 'countryside', this should provide overall protection from inappropriate development.

In response to a comment from SL about the amount of money that had been spent on consultants working on the merger of some of Babergh and Mid Suffolk services, SW said that specific skills had been required such as specialist legal expertise.

In response to a question from David Pearce, SW confirmed that Morrison's had not been required to have planning permission for their new store as it was outside the town centre. She agreed that the initial impact had been detrimental to Hadleigh High Street.

In response to a question from John Byham, SW confirmed that Babergh was interviewing for 400 posts, 200 of which were part-time. However, existing employees were being interviewed for these posts, in order to assist with cost saving.

**13.04.3.3 Police**

AC was unable to attend the meeting, but had sent a report stating that 12 crimes had been reported during the year, compared to 13 during the previous year. However, burglaries involving houses and outbuildings had increased in the Layham area, mostly targeting jewellery, electrical goods and power tools; additional police patrols had been introduced. There had

also been a high level of thefts from catalytic converters across the county. A new Chief Constable - Douglas Paxton - had been appointed in March, when his predecessor retired. In November 2012 the first Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Suffolk had been appointed - Tim Passmore would be a voice for the people and would lead the fight against crime. The new PCCs would set the direction and budget for policing. Locally, Sgt Gary Milbourne now headed the team in Babergh East, and a new team member was PCSO Georgi Hawkes, who would help to cover Hadleigh. A drop-in session had recently been held in the village when police gave advice to parishioners on home security issues.

MW regretted the absence of a police representative at the Annual Parish Meeting, which he felt was the fault of the system and not any individual.

#### **13.04.3.4 Emergency Planning**

JDC explained the need to have an Emergency Plan for the village; together with RG and DP, he was working with Babergh to develop procedures to deal with any emergencies that might arise. A team of volunteers had monitored grit bin levels over the winter, and helped to shovel the grit and clear the snow; each volunteer was registered and covered by County Council third party insurance.

#### **13.04.3.5 Friends of St Andrew's**

David Pearce said there were now around 60 Friends drawn from 28 households. The aim was to raise funds for the maintenance of the fabric of the church by holding one event each year. To date, two concerts had been held, both attended by 60-70 people. He said suggestions for future events would be welcomed. The Friends of St Andrew's was now seen as a credible body, and the PCC had been successful in securing grant money. Mr Pearce said thanks were due to Robert Keeble, who had worked hard on preparing grant applications.

#### **13.04.3.4 Green Team**

LG said that the Green Team was a working group of the Parish Council. The new Recycling Centre had proved very successful, helping to meet Parish Plan targets. There was a steady income from recycling credits, particularly from textile collection, and some of the income had been spent on new grit bins for the village. A second textile bank was on order and would be located in the Queen's Head car park. The annual Spring Clean had taken place in March and more people than ever had taken part - this was partly due to the community email system making communication easier.

#### **13.04.3.6 Highways and Footpaths**

SL said that, following a 'walkabout' with representatives from Suffolk County Council in July 2012, 15 actions had been identified. Over the course of the year almost half of these had been carried out: signs replaced (for example, a sign in Lower Layham now showed horses rather than cows!), hedges trimmed etc. SL said the PC now had a good working relationship with Suffolk CC Highways team. Funding had been accessed from SCC's Locality Budget in order to purchase two new 'kissing gates' to replace the old stiles at each end of the field in Church Lane. The PC was in discussion with SCC about regarding the footpath to Shelley as a bridleway. SL said it was now possible for anyone to report potholes online, as well as by telephone. SL said Natural England had a budget of £2 million to spend on footpaths etc up until March 2014; the PC was in the early stage of negotiations.

In response to a question from John Byham, JC said that SCC were reluctant to erect signage at each end of Water Lane saying the lane was unsuitable for large/heavy vehicles as they did not want to see a proliferation of signs in the countryside. However, they had agreed to review the situation should there be another incident such as the one involving a B&Q lorry earlier in the year.

#### **13.04.3.7 Social Club**

Ann Mayhew said the first meeting had been held on 12 March and 14 people had attended. Suggested activities had included darts (a dartboard had now been installed by the Village Hall Committee), quizzes, scrabble, bingo - and a tea dance. The club met fortnightly, on a Tuesday afternoon.

#### **13.04.3.8 National Grid**

LA reported that since October 2009 National Grid had been consulting on proposals to build a new 400,000 volt electricity transmission connection between Bramford sub-station and Twinstead Tee, near Great Henny in Essex. Four potential routes were proposed, with two going through Layham - in July 2011, this corridor was confirmed as the preferred option. Following consultation with parishioners, the Parish Council stated a preference for the route to be undergrounded. National Grid had set up a number of community fora, with Layham being represented on the Hadleigh forum. In May 2012 National Grid released its Connections Options Report (COR), to which Layham responded. The COR recommended undergrounding the line across the Stour and the Box Valley, but not the Brett Valley; the Layham representatives on the forum felt strongly that the typography of the area, the cultural aspects of the Brett Valley, the effect of pylons on the movement of people and incremental change had not been taken into consideration. Later in 2013 National Grid was due to release their initial planning application to the Planning Inspectorate, with an opportunity to respond to their Preliminary Environmental Impact Study over the summer; LA urged parishioners to assist with gathering information on the potential impact of the proposals.

#### **13.04.3.9 PCC**

David Pearce reported that two grants had been obtained: £4000 from Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, and £33,000 from English Heritage, in order to repair the tower to make it waterproof and repoint the brickwork. The grant from English Heritage would be paid in two tranches - £2000 initially for preliminary work, with the second payment of £31,000 to finish the work. The total estimated cost of the project was £71,000, but Robert Keeble had very kindly waived his fees. In

addition, although EU regulations prevented the government from being able to exempt places of worship from paying VAT, it had been able to set up a fund for a separate grant equating to the VAT amount. However, Mr Pearce emphasised the need to continue with fundraising activities, and said the PCC was keen for the church to be used more as an asset. Some of the more dilapidated headstones would be repaired and made safe by Neil Luxton at an estimated cost of £1100. Mr Pearce thanked the Parish Council for its annual contribution to general maintenance of the churchyard.

#### **13.04.3.10 Playing Field Management Committee**

MW reported that there were now more members of the Committee, as well as some volunteer helpers. Routine maintenance had continued to be carried out, eg weeding out hedge lines, hedge trimming, grass cutting, repairs to play equipment. During the winter a new gate was installed at the Mill Lane entrance, with funding from Suffolk County Council's Locality Budget. John Gurr had very kindly paid for new goal nets. The 100 Club had generated the full profit of £500, with £700 being distributed in prizes.

#### **13.04.3.11 Publicly owned land and property**

RG reported that a new seat had been purchased for the burial ground to replace the one stolen during the previous year; the purchase had been made possible with Locality Budget funding from Suffolk County Council. Neil Luxton had very kindly cleaned the War Memorial free of charge. The noticeboard in Mill Lane had been repaired with new pinboard, and Brian Strutt had kindly supplied new Perspex for the one on Brett Green, which had been vandalised. The broken seat by the river had been replaced thanks to Pat Alderson, and the Colonel Hitchcock memorial bench on the playing field had been repaired. Some dead shrubs on the Green had been removed and some trees in Mill Lane and Upper Street had either been taken down, or pruned. The six allotments were all being used and the Clerk held a waiting list. RG said that some maintenance would need to be carried out on the two telephone boxes; it was planned to form a work party to clean and repaint them over the coming months and any offers of help would be gratefully received.

#### **13.04.3.12 Village Hall Management Committee**

In the absence of David Pratt, Chairman of the Committee, Richard Cromwell presented his report. A quiz held during 2012 had raised over £300; a regular income was received from Layham Playgroup which met several mornings each week. The ongoing refurbishment of the toilets was almost complete and the most recent task was to install a 'baby-changing facility'.

Earlier in the year a further £638 had been received from the estate of the late Arthur Vincent. It was the money from Mr Vincent's legacy that had funded the major project of 2012, which was to renovate the roof of the hall and update it with better ventilation etc. Following the completion of that work, the rear wall was re-clad and some rotten structural woodwork replaced. It was noted that the Committee was looking to recruit a Secretary.

#### **13.04.4 MATTERS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS**

There were no other matters raised.

It was decided that the planned presentation by Michael Woods - *The story behind the names on the village War Memorial* - would take place on a separate occasion, the event to be funded by Layham Leisure & Learning (date to be confirmed). The meeting closed at 9.05pm.