

MINUTES of the 68th ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT LEAVENHEATH on 31st May 2022 held at The Village Hall, Leavenheath.

PRESENT: Around 20 people were present including Councillors and Clerk. Paul Mortlock opened the meeting as the Chairman for the past year by welcoming everyone to the 68th Annual Parish Meeting in Leavenheath and confirming this was the first Annual Parish Meeting since before Covid.

APOLOGIES: County Cllr J Finch.

MINUTES OF 28th May 2019: Were accepted as a true record.

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT: The District Cllr Lee Parker confirmed the 2022-23 budget process was helped by a rise of over 4% in the Council Tax Base and a better than expected Government settlement. Council Tax has been raised by 2% for the 2022-23 year with council house rents increasing by 4.1% in line with Government guidance. Sheltered housing charges and garage rents remain at 2021-22 levels. Whilst the decision to introduce revised car parking charges still stands, the implementation date had been deferred indefinitely. A planning application had been submitted for conversion of the house and also a new construction to provide retirement accommodation at Bell Vue, Sudbury. The new entrance proposals were also at the planning stage and both decisions were expected soon. The new Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for an Independent Examination last year. Following the Inspector's suggestion, the Plan will now progress in two parts. Part one will concentrate on the various Development Control policies and was expected to be completed by the end of 2022. Part 2 was to address Settlement Hierarchy and allocations and they were hopeful it would be ready for adoption late in 2023. Over the years Right-to-Buy has reduced the District Council housing stock. The Affordable Housing Programme looks to increase that with acquisitions and new builds. During 2021-22 the overall total District Council housing stock increased by 82 to 3677. In order to reduce the District Council's carbon footprint, the refuse collection fleet now runs on hydro-treated vegetable oil. A project to recover backwash water at Kingfisher Pool was completed reducing energy and water consumption. Work has also started on solar carports in Sudbury's Kingfisher car park. The Suffolk Waste Partnership had embarked on an awareness campaign to reduce the amount of glass in the blue and black bins. The one-off energy rebate of £150 was being paid to occupiers of Council Tax A-D properties. He concluded by stating he was delighted that both Newton and Assington now have formally adopted Neighbourhood Plans. Leavenheath and Little Cornard were in the finishing stages and when completed the Assington Ward was to be the first Ward in the District to have all Parishes within it covered by Neighbourhood Plans.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT: The Chairman read the County Council Report in the absence of County Cllr J Finch.

The County Council budget increase of which some was to be generated by a 2.99% increase in their proportion of Council Tax. Children's Services and Adult Care remained at the heart of their budget. Various plans were out-lined following a review carried out by a team from Lincolnshire in relation to supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities. New technology was launched - the Cassius service - improving home care service. Additionally extra funds were introduced to prevent flooding and fix footpaths. He urged people to embrace the easing Covid restrictions whilst still remaining aware of the risks.

Whilst the pandemic has been extremely challenging he felt some good had come out of it resulting in increased collaboration, savings in travelling time and greater use of technology. Most children had been offered a place at their preferred school. HRH The Duke of Gloucester officially opened the Hold - Suffolk's new Archive centre on Ipswich waterfront. Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex were united to protect the countryside and communities from the worst impacts of new planned pylons and cables. The Annual Public Health Report focused on the mental health impact of Covid-19.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Paul Mortlock delivered his report as the Chairman of the Parish Council. Before we had completed our first year from 2019 as a new committee, new chairman, new members - covid struck. We actually did not meet in April/May of 2020, under government advice. That was the first time that he could remember not meeting, but so that things didn't grind to a halt, there was a lot of activity behind the scenes, with emails and phone calls. Then a breakthrough, the government allowed meetings via Zoom. It allowed members to stay in the comfort of their own homes and make decisions that counted. This only lasted for 12 months when the government told us we had to meet in person, face to face, to make those decisions. So, in June 2021, we located a place in Great Cornard, where they had a meeting room, big enough for social distancing, that the minimum number of councillors could pass resolutions with others that could take part (but not vote) via the centre's zoom conference facilities. However, by August of that year the Village Hall had invested in their own WiFi and we could meet in the Committee Room. A cold winter with doors and windows open, still the social distancing and zoom for those that wanted it, for both councillors and public alike. He thanked all who have supported Leavenheath through those times where we managed to keep up with payments, regulations and statutes required throughout covid. He confirmed we fought and lost against the plans for the Lion Pub development, even though they tempted us by paying for electronic speeding signs. He praised the progress made on the Neighbourhood Plan and that we worked in alliance with other Parishes, District and County Councils, to protect from the invasion of new pylons over the Parish. Now we are once again supporting the Village Green Committee in their efforts to renew the playground area and supporting the Platinum Jubilee Committee in their efforts to put on a good show for the village. He thanked all Councillors for their support in the roles that they do.

FINANCE REPORT: The Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer delivered a report on the Parish Council Finances. The Precept had decreased slightly to £19105. Some Community Infrastructure Levy amounts around £7500 had been received and added to the previous balance totals around £11500. A grant of just below £7000 was received towards the Neighbourhood Plan of which just below £1700 was returned as surplus from the year. During the last financial year over £1000 was received in donations towards the Jubilee Celebrations. Under Expenditure general administration came to around 94% of budget. Overall general expenditure came within budget if you take into consideration the grant received to cover the Neighbourhood Planning Expenditure. There was some investment last year in Village Assets including a new notice board and litter picking equipment. Finance Committee did some budget work on the reserves for future renewal of Village Assets dividing the £25,000 over the following: Playground, street lights, village sign, notice boards and bus shelter. All our assets were inspected to assess their general condition. A healthy end of year balance was reported including outstanding billing, the future renewal of Village Assets and £11.5K in Parish Council CIL monies are to be allocated.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: On behalf of the steering group, the Chairman John Simpson delivered an update. The assessments were completed by the District Council and the Leavenheath plan was submitted on 10th February. A full Strategic Environmental Assessment was required which was provided. D Kingham confirmed meetings were held to address concerns raised. L Parker apologised for delays at the District Council. He confirmed he was happy to listen to any representations from residents following the meeting.

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS: Parish Cllr Trevor Smith explained he joined the organising of the celebrations once things were underway and agreed to take the lead. The Parish Council had taken ownership and confirmed insurance arrangements. He spoke of the exciting bookings and what a fantastic event was planned. Programs had gone out and he gave a massive thank you to the Committee for working so hard. A family disco was to be held in the evening.

REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS: Reports were given from the Village Hall, Village Green, Tree Warden, Footpath Warden, Community Speedwatch, the playground project and the Community Woodland. All Committee members were thanked for all their hard work. As part of the playground project investigations were being made into what children want and funding bids would be made from September 2022.

ELECTOR'S QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS: The Parish Council was questioned as to whether they were helping to fund the new playground. It was confirmed that they most certainly were.

The meeting closed at **8.41 pm**.