

MINUTES of the 70th ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT LEAVENHEATH on 21st May 2024 held at The Village Hall, Leavenheath.

PRESENT: Around 15 people present including Councillors (Cllrs) and Clerk. Cllr Paul Mortlock opened the meeting as the Parish Council (PC) Chair for the past year by welcoming everyone to the 70th Annual Parish Meeting.

APOLOGIES: Were received from Cllr P Breary.

MINUTES OF 15th March 2023: Were accepted as a true record.

GUEST SPEAKER: Graham Walker attended to explain about Lady Anne Windsor Chairity. He explained about the alms houses being genuinely affordable, typically around 50% of the market rent. The Charity must maintain the local connection in view of their objectives and there is no right to buy. He shared the ambition of the Charity to build further alms houses on their field on Plough Lane. Community support is required to build on a rural exceptions site. He, together with the Chair of the Charity, attended a development in Cambridge which was a good example of what could be achieved locally. They maintain that further alms houses would be an asset to the community. Questioning related to the potential mix of housing and whether open market housing would help finance the new alms houses and whether the applicants are means tested for an alms house.

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT: District Cllr Lee Parker attended and reported on the local elections last year leaving the District Council (DC) Administration under no overall control politically. Therefore, the leadership would be shared. The DC had objected to the pylons. They have supported the Citizens Advice Bureau in view of the increased need due to the cost-of-living situation. He outlined progress with the Joint Local Plan. They are calling for land for further tree coverage. Parking charges were being considered to offset their cost. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council were named the UK Council of the Year. Finally, he thanked the Chair and Councillors for their support.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT: County Cllr James Finch attended and reported on National Grid Projects confirming they have secured underground lines in the AONB. Traffic flows anticipated at the local compound were of concern. The library service was being run by a Charity which enabled the provision to continue without closures. The collaboration in relation to the Fire Service with Cambridgeshire fell apart, so Suffolk is continuing independently. Improvements to Broadband particularly in rural areas continue. The demand for highway repair is high and further budget has been secured. Storm Babet caused significant flooding in Suffolk. Adult Care Services were rated Good. Council Tax was to increase by 4.99% for the amount for the County Council. There was questioning about the expected traffic increase due to the Pylons and littering highways verges with advertising banners. Cllr James Finch thanked everyone for their support and confirmed this was due to be his last Annual Parish Meeting as our County Cllr.

CHAIRMANS REPORT: Cllr Paul Mortlock delivered his report as the Chair of the PC. Firstly, he thanked all the councillors that have supported the village in the last year. Without them we wouldn't have had the 2 most important things the village needed, and the villagers wanted - 1 - our neighbourhood plan and 2 - a shop. Thanks go to retired Cllr Dean Kingham whose guidance on that plan, adopted last year, helped stop the developments that in November last year we had over a hundred people voice their objections to. Thanks to retired Cllr Rachel Bellenie, whose knowledge helped on all planning issues, including the

shop; and speed awareness signs, that she is still helping pursue even though she is no longer a councillor. Their input at meetings will be missed. Now thanks go to the new councillors who have stepped into the breach to help without whom we wouldn't be quorate, that is, enough members to do anything and control would have passed back to Babergh District Council. We are currently still two away from a full council. We have managed to get the village sign repainted and is currently in the way, languishing in my garage waiting for the plinth and pole to be replaced, which I am still struggling to get people to quote for the work. That was one of the assets that needed a makeover as does the noticeboard on the High Road. The village green, still our biggest asset but still our biggest drain on finances with continuous maintenance. The village Fete last year helped but unfortunately not going ahead this year. As with the shop, this council and all committees in the village needs support, without which it becomes obvious, and they will close. If you would like to know more about what the council does, an insight into the village, we are keen to fill the vacancies we have. We would like new input, new views to help split the tasks that are presented to us. Thanks to the present councillors for their support this year and the unsung heroes that help in the village, for the village – including litter pickers. We need more people to be involved.....

REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS: Reports were given from the Village Hall (VH), Village Green, Community Pantry, Friends of St Matthews and Parish Council Finances. There had been another busy year for VH hirings, however, with sadness the forthcoming closure of Ladybirds was reported. Community Action Suffolk has significantly supported the Community Pantry, which is well used by people who are struggling to make ends meet. Warm Space at the VH was successfully held over the winter period. Rural Coffee Caravan visits were planned providing free hot drinks and cakes and information on local support groups in Suffolk. The Chair of Friends of St Matthews explained their on-going projects. The Responsible Finance Officer for the PC then reported on End of Year balances, earmarked reserves, CIL funds. The forthcoming increase to the PC part of Council Tax was to be 5%. This PC continues to maintain healthy reserves of which some are earmarked for specific purposes including the Playground project. We continue to support Village Green with on-going maintenance and Leavenheath Events to enhance Village Life. The PC is audited annually, and financial decisions are made at PC Meetings held in public and full details can be found on the PC website.

LEAVENHEATH EVENTS: The Events Sub Committee reported on the June 23 Fete, October 23 Big Breakfast and the December 23 Santa Sleigh Run with support from the Scout Group. March 24 saw the Annual Fun and Games night which was well attended and enjoyed by all. The next planned event was Bingo and Buffet for July, and the proceeds would go to the new Play Area. A New Years Eve party was also being planned. There was insufficient support for a Fete in 2024. Further support was needed to help arrange future Events.

ELECTOR'S QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS: The PC was questioned about the display of the PC Accounts on our Website which the Elector was having difficulty accessing and had concerns about the Staffing Cost element. The information was to be checked again and was fully accessible. An update on the Playground project was requested. This is proceeding well with quotes being obtained. The PC had reserved significant sums, and the DC CIL grant was to be sought among others. More people are needed to help on the Playground Committee and with other organisations in the Village. The meeting ended at **9.05 pm**.