

Little Blakenham Annual Parish Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall on Tuesday, 16th May 2023 at 7pm

PRESENT: Cllr W Binder (PC), S Wright (PC), L Keen (PC), B Palmer (PC), J Latham (PC), A Browne (PC), M Kenningale (PCC) and three members of the Public

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs J Blackburn (Clerk), County Cllr Chambers and District Cllr Marriott.

LB01/23/24 - CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman of Little Blakenham Parish Council, Cllr Wally Binder, welcomed those present.

LB02/23/24 - APOLOGIES

No apologies had been received.

LB03/23/24 - MINUTES 17th MAY 2022

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 17th May 2022, were approved as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

LB04/23/24 - REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH

Representatives of the following organisations were invited to speak and answer any questions. Where received, their reports are attached to the Minutes.

- a) **Little Blakenham Parish Council** – *Cllr Wally Binder*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Binder expressed his thanks to the Clerk and she was given a round of applause for her help and expertise in taking over the role.

- b) **Suffolk County Council** – *Cllr Chris Chambers*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Chambers reported on the following subjects:

- 99% of pupils were successful in getting their first choice of school
- Devolution deal
- Draft Budget had been approved
- Additional funds available for services
- Solar Panels
- £3 million funding for the SEND (Special Education Needs) Capital Programme

- c) **Mid-Suffolk District Council** – *Cllr Adrienne Marriott*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Marriott reported on the following items:

- Cycling and Footpaths Infrastructure Plan
- CiL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money
- 1,000 empty homes across Suffolk – scheme to bring them back into use

- d) **Little Blakenham Parochial Church Council** – *Michele Kenningale*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Mrs Kenningale briefly went through her report.
Mrs Kenningale also went through the Village Report (as attached).

LB05/23/24 - PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

Chairman Date

Draft

Chairmans Report 2022

It is good to report that although our Parish clerk left us in November 2021 we were very lucky to obtain the services of our new clerk and our thanks must go to Stephen for his help in this matter

Jenny joined us in January and we thank her for the extra work she had to put in so that we caught up with the outstanding matters

Although the council had a change of clerk we have held all of our regular meetings plus two emergency meetings for finance and planning

Having now got a new lease on the village hall we decided that a new upgrade could be undertaken with the help of the SUEZ Community Fund, they require a set of accounts and three letters from local users these have been forwarded to Hollins who are getting the quotes for us

Your council approved a new dog litter bin in valley road and I can report that it is being well used by our many dog walkers, and it is great to see our footpaths being used by people from the village and from further away

I can report that our water meter has been located and we have secured a credit from wave for an overcharge on our meter readings

We have also looked into a New Village Sign and a location has been suggested at the end of valley road and Mid Suffolk have confirmed that they have no objection to that

The light on leather bottle hill broke in the last storm we had and we have been contacted and a bill for several hundred pounds has been suggested, like many other organisations we have said we have no money as our budget this year is very tight

Finally the only large planning project in the village is the development at Elm Farm your council approved the first set of plans but have said we are not happy with the second set as we thought it was over developed

Cllr Chris Chambers 2022 Annual Report for Gipping Valley

Children's Services & Adult Care at the heart of Suffolk County Council's new budget plans

In December 2021, Suffolk County Council outlined how it plans to spend money on public services in 2022/23.

- More money to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Extra resources for adults in need of care
- Additional funds to prevent flooding and fix footpaths

Under the proposals, the council's budget for 2022-23 would rise by 4.5% (from £598.2 to £625.4m). This additional money is generated by a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in grants received from the Government. We worked with colleagues to propose a budget which will not see any reductions in our services, and invests further where it is most needed. Our aim is always to provide the best possible services for everyone in Suffolk and provide value for money. This has been a difficult budget to consider, particularly as Covid continues to make life challenging on every level, including our finances. We also continue to face rising costs and hugely increasing demands on our services year on year, particularly our adult care and children's services. But this is a budget which helps us to respond to these demands, and meets our priorities for next year. For example increasing our family services budget by £1.1m from next year, to specifically to address the recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review – this is in addition to our previous commitment of £45m to develop SEND provision."

Some of the detail of the budget proposals, includes:

- £1.1m increase for the family services budget, specifically to address recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review
- £1m additional funding for Suffolk Highways over the next four years, for example to fund road signs and responsible verge cutting
- £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes (over the next three years)
- £10m to improve footpath quality and access (over the next three years)
- £12.8m to decarbonise the buildings that we own (by 2030)
- Investments this year to set up future borrowing for bigger schemes, such as SEND and carbon reduction

Regarding Council Tax, the proposed 2.99% increase would be made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 1.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

Proposing an increase in council tax is not a decision we take lightly, particularly when our costs of living are going up too. However, I think there is increasing recognition of the pressure our services are under. In our public consultation, there were more people who agreed that council tax would need to go up next year, compared to those that didn't. This was especially true for funding adult care.

New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system improvements

It was announced in September 2021 that SCC had developed a new, more user-friendly booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling. For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required. The system is also able to advise customers on which sites accept specific materials, such as plasterboard to ensure the correct type of booking is made to save customers' time, and it can also be used to share real time messages with customers, for example if any site needs to close due to adverse weather or emergency situations. The new booking system is connected to automated numberplate recognition to allow for a trial of automatic entry gates.

Customer survey results show overwhelming support for the use of a booking system and the Council has gathered feedback from customers and site staff on how the booking system can be further improved, which have shaped the design of this new system. Through the use of bookings the council

can avoid the frustration of long queues at peak times and increase the overall throughput and efficiency of the service for residents. During the pandemic, it was important that we managed access to Suffolk's Recycling Centres in a safe and organised fashion to ensure the safety of residents visiting to recycle their waste as well as that of our staff and contractors working on site. I am very pleased that sites are now back to full capacity and the new booking system will allow us to make adjustments to the system to make best use of all available slots at every site. The system has been developed with our customers in mind, with staff taking on board the views and comments received through regular customer feedback and interactions over the past year. Our site teams have done a great job in maintaining high levels of customer service during such difficult circumstances and as we begin to recover from Covid as a county. I am pleased to launch this new online service to help people access the services they need, when and how they want to."

To make your booking, visit www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk.

Suffolk County Council's leaving care service receives high praise from Ofsted

In March 2022, SCC's leaving care service received high praise from Ofsted. Ofsted inspectors assessed the local authority's arrangement for care leavers as part of a focused visit to the service. The visit follows on from the Outstanding rating received by SCC's Children's Services department in 2019. The services for children in care and care leavers was the only area at the time to be rated 'Good' and therefore was an area of priority for the council. At the recent visit inspectors concluded that care leavers are successfully helped to transition to independence and reach their full potential. The service was seen to have a culture that is "determined, ambitious and creative" with practitioners who build trusting relationships with care leavers. Practitioners were seen accessing a wide range of specialist expertise to provide services to care leavers that are individualised and responsive. Inspectors also said that "Many care leavers achieve well, exceeding their own expectations. All are valued and their achievements are celebrated. Persistent efforts are made to reach out to those who are difficult to engage." I am absolutely delighted to receive such high praise from Ofsted. This report really demonstrates the hard work that staff in the leaving care service deliver day in, day out. I would like to thank them for the great work that they do for our care leavers. We are committed to delivering the highest quality service for our care leavers in Suffolk. All young people have the right to the appropriate level of support they need to aspire and achieve. I am committed to ensuring that this is the reality for all of Suffolk's young people, including our most vulnerable.

The full report can be found here: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50178373>

Halfway mark reached as over 20,000 Suffolk streetlights replaced

In February 2022 SCC's programme to replace 43,400 streetlights with new energy-efficient LEDs reached the halfway mark and to date, the teams have replaced 21,215 new streetlights with the new lanterns. These LED lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights. They are extremely long-lasting products and have an expected lifetime of up to 100,000 hours. This is approximately two times longer than a typical conventional street lighting lamp. As a result, SCC is expecting to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year. This is 16% more than what was originally anticipated. The programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of May 2022, with all heritage-style lanterns being upgraded towards the end of the programme. Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the end of the project. This is one of the many pieces of work we're doing to become a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. The project will see a reduction in carbon emissions by saving energy, reducing light pollution as well as providing clearer images on CCTV, traffic cameras and dashcam footage for the benefit of public safety. A big thank you to all involved so far, and I wish the team continued success as the project progresses towards completion. Keep a look out for signs in your area to see where the teams are working next and follow [@Suff_highways](https://twitter.com/Suff_highways) on Twitter for regular updates.

Independent review highlights failings in some of Suffolk's SEND services

An independent report into parts of Suffolk's special educational needs (SEND) provision was published on September 20th. This report has been written by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and parent carer network. The review looked at processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of SEND provision and was commissioned by SCC in June. The report lists

strengths and weaknesses of the service and includes nine recommendations for improvement. These recommendations are now being worked through and implemented by SCC and other partners who help deliver SEND services. The review has found that we must change what we are doing in a number of areas. I would like to say sorry to any child or young person, and their families, who we may have failed. Our priority now is to implement these recommendations with pace, efficiency and impact. We have begun to make these changes, but it will take time before the impact of the changes are felt. We are grateful to the team at Lincolnshire for their findings and recommendations, which we accept wholeheartedly, and for their support and advice. SCC commissioned this review after the May elections because of concerns that our SEND services were not performing well. As we anticipated, the report has shown that SEND services in Suffolk are not good enough, and I want to apologise to those children and young people we have let down. I want to be clear that this report does not cover all SEND services and many children or young people who have specialist educational needs in Suffolk are very well served, but significant changes must be made following this hard-hitting report. We must learn from this report and implement fundamental change as quickly as we can. The review was commissioned following a significant increase in correspondence from parents and carers earlier this year. An Action Plan based on the recommendations is now being implemented. One of the recommendations made in the review was to work with a third-party organisation to deliver improvements. The council has since secured Impower as a strategic partner, who will bring capacity and extensive experience of working on SEND systems across the country. Other recommendations include staff training, reviewing the process for allocating specialist placements and working with education leaders and parents and carers to understand the demand for specialist provision and use data and local intelligence to inform sufficient planning.

District Councillor – John Field’s Annual Report – May 2022

Overview

The most significant issue for Mid Suffolk for the second year has of course been COVID 19. When the pandemic started numbers of staff were transferred to Covid related duties, particularly organising the distribution of Government grants to businesses. Staff have worked from home virtually 100% until the last few weeks and still in significant numbers. Information Technology, particularly applications such as Microsoft Teams have allowed that to be done efficiently, in fact people tend to be more productive, with the time that would be spent travelling to work and to meetings used productively. I have certainly received reports back at 20:00 for questions raised during the working day.

Deployment of people to Government funded work without back filling of positions has reduced core spend and helped the council reach a very good financial position.

This home working will be an on-going feature of our way forward and has allowed the council to reduce its workspace at Endeavour house and save £675k over the next five years.

Priorities

The Council’s six priorities are: the environment, the economy, housing, wellbeing, our customers, and our communities. To deliver on these it has produced an “Outcomes Framework” of 18 long term and 66 short term outcomes. The Cabinet has agreed additional funding of 5.1 million for these. Details of the framework are on the www site.

Planning

It’s been a difficult year as we have dealt with the conflict between the need to increase the number of houses built to meet population growth and people’s natural desire to have their “place” remain unchanged, as they have always known it. This has not been made easier by the delays that the Council’s Joint Local Plan has suffered. In addition a number of policies in the MSDC 1989 plan and later reviews do not conform to the requirements of the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Government inspectors have asked that the Local Plan is split into two parts: the main policies and the site allocation plan, a process that will take to the end of the year for the first part and perhaps 18 months to complete. The Government’s significant changes to the overall process appear to have been kicked into the long grass in the Queen’s Speech so it is possible this schedule will hold. Neighbourhood plans are vital to guide planning the way communities want and it’s a pity there is not one for Great Blakenham.

At the moment Mid Suffolk has almost a ten-year pipeline of development proposals at various stages of approval.

Planning Reviews

I am on the working parties set up to respond to the recent planning peer review, the Local Plan and the review of Planning Enforcement. The processes should lead to: up-to-date policies in the Local Plan, to much shorter, clearer and more consistent officer reports to planning committees, and to more rapid and effective enforcement. Better reports should mean that decisions are easier to understand and accept.

Building Improvements

We all believe that building environmental performance must be improved and the planning committees have been trying to push developers in that direction. Revised building regulations dated June 2022 and enforced for new build after June 2023 will help. However, the fabric-first methodology being adopted is now only for a minimum 30% improvement in insulation. More dramatic action, a 70% improvement, will come in 2025 when the future homes standard comes into force.

Unfortunately the major builders are still resisting changes to heat generation techniques claiming that gas boilers capable of burning 20% Hydrogen now and 80% after a retrofit are a solution. That is despite the problems of delivering that gas mixture over the current network of iron pipes. The fitting of air or ground source pumps is something only some are undertaking. A

frequently cited reason is that the way the Government SAP calculations work drives builders to a gas boiler installation which will need retrofit.

The Environment

Climate change and biodiversity

To reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and protect and strengthen the district biodiversity we have, transferred our waste fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) reducing its emissions by 90% and the councils CO2 by 25% and reached halfway investment a £2.8m Government grant in 604 solar panels at Stowmarket and Stradbroke leisure centres to generate 235.6kW

Net Zero for Housing Guidance

The Green and Lib Dem group proposed, and Council accepted, adoption and promotion of a “Net Zero Carbon Toolkit” document. It is a useful guide for small developers and individuals to the actions necessary to move to net zero for housing and industrial premises.

Sustainable travel

We have produced and agreed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan an LCWIP. This works with the County’s plans and uses Government funding to improve the walking and cycling facilities in the district. There are short-, medium-, and long-term proposals for improvements. The footpath along Blue Barn Lane from Great to Little Blakenham is a local example.

Freeport East Port 1 and Gateway 14

Freeport East

The full business case for Freeport East has been submitted to Government. The council is a core partner and a member of the Shadow Supervisory Board. Once approval has been gained the Freeport will exist officially with all customs and tax powers for 25 years.

Both Port one at Great Blakenham and Gateway 14 at Stowmarket are incorporated in the freeport, so it is important to the district. Sites can opt to enjoy the Taxation or the Customs benefits

I want to see sound actions by Mid Suffolk to help create a range of high-quality local jobs in growing industries that have high value add. The hope is that these can pay salaries significantly above the living wage while providing good working conditions and sound careers. Clearly not all jobs can meet those criteria, but the freeport gives an opportunity for progress providing we push beyond the restrictions of the leisure, tourist, and logistics industries.

However I am concerned at the possible impacts on existing businesses of competitors in the freeport who, exempt business rates, national insurance and import duty, have a cost advantage. If those exemptions attract new investment in industries that we currently do not have then that’s largely good. If they just succeed in moving businesses from one site to another, then we have a problem.

Gateway 14

Work at Gateway 14 has commenced with a ground-breaking ceremony last week and we are told that the first deal is nearing completion.

Little Blakenham developments

The Valley Ridge issues are yet to be resolved although the proposal for a solar farm within view of the proposed leisure development has been dropped.

If you have queries, please phone me on 07756292320 or email me at: john.field@mid.suffolk.gov.uk

Michele Kenningale – PCC – Annual Report – May 2022

Firstly, I would like to thank the Parish Clerk and council members for inviting me to talk at this meeting regarding the PCC's achievements over the last year.

The Covid pandemic and being in vacancy from September 2019 until April 2021 has had a major impact on our church and our ability to serve the community, pay our parish share, fundraise and perform maintenance and urgent restoration work.

As you may or not be, St Mary's Church is a Grade I listed building which has served the village in excess of 700 years. The last major refurbishment was by Rev. John Jackson in 1868. Since this time it appears that little attention to maintaining its fabric has happened and it is now time for urgent maintenance and possible major intervention to the East Wall if the church is to survive for future generations.

The PCC is actively reviewing the churches profile to the village and keen for the community to use the church outside of religious services. Therefore, we are looking at opportunities for the church's use to raise much needed revenue to support the continued maintenance and urgent restoration work needed.

Church Services

Services resumed on 16th June 2021 with Morning Worship which is held the 3rd Wednesday in the month at 08.30am

Sunday Worship resumed on 27th June 2021 and held on the fourth Sunday in the month at 11am alongside all the festival services in the year.

Church Opening

We use a sandwich Board to advertise when the church is open and welcome everybody and are grateful for any donations, there is also a visitor's book inside for feedback.

We do however struggle for volunteers to open and lock the church and presently the Vicar and churchwarden manage this.

Churchyard

Our churchyard remains 'open' and welcomes everyone to visit or to just sit and reflect.

Our churchyards have escaped the intensification of agricultural development and are important places for the survival of flora and fauna. Churchyards are the very few remaining areas that have not been affected by farming practices, the use of pesticides, reseeding or fertilising and so are often rich in wildflowers that are scarce elsewhere, it is therefore important that our churchyard is managed correctly.

Maintaining the churchyard is an ongoing challenge due to its large size for such a small parish and lack of volunteers to help after the probation service withdrew their services. A single individual took on the role of cutting but after 2 years decided to look at other ways to manage the area whilst adhering to the Churchyard Rules.



In 2021 the PCC Secretary, following research and advice on both the Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trust website developed a zoned maintenance plan which adhered to both promoting biodiversity and to the churchyard rules.

This plan was passed by the PCC and following discussion with Rev Eric Falla the PCC Secretary, approached the PC to ask for assistance in the form of labour and submitted the agreed management plan. This plan required two full cuts a year, at the end of July and October. The PC agreed to perform three cuts a year and the first full cut was performed at the beginning of November 2021.

On Tuesday 10th May 2022 Suffolk Wildlife Trust came and visited the churchyard, to view/assess/advise and find out more about the zoned maintenance plan. The churchwarden received a full report on 12th May which gave general advice and recommendations, overall Suffolk Wildlife Trust are extremely pleased with the way the churchyard is managed presently.

The Churchyard is registered with 'Caring for God's Acre' and the flora and fauna contained within it. This is regularly uploaded onto the site, which is then also transferred onto the National Biodiversity Network Atlas and Church Heritage Record data systems.

The churchwarden is also presently working on behalf of the PCC with 'Burial Grounds to Inspire' to produce a webpage on their site.

PCC Community Events 2021/2022

Carol Singing 17th December 2021

Rev Eric Falla, some members of the PCC and some residents reintroduced Carol Singing around the The Beeches. We met at the Village Hall and although a cold winter's night and spitting with rain, the event was received well by residents, some doors opening to listen, and two residents joined us on the way round.

There was chance to chat back at the village hall where Linda Keen had ensured there was some very welcomed warm mulled wine and mince pies on our return.

Christmas Bazaar 27th November 2021

This event was held in the church to promote the beauty it contains particularly at this time of year. As in 2019, prior to the Covid pandemic, we witnessed an amazing amount of support from helpers, to donations, and from residents and visitors.

Blakenham Woodland Garden Snowdrop Festival 12th January 2022

Both parishes of Little Blakenham and Nettlestead were kindly invited by Marcia Blakenham to organise and bake the refreshments for this event. This was the first time that both the parishes had worked in partnership on this event, and it was a truly wonderful day with us all pulling together and getting to know each other.

Marcia very generously, donated all the proceeds of the event between the two churches. We give many thanks to Marcia and others who independently also made donations to us.

Monthly Coffee Mornings - 10-12noon

The PCC decided to trial coffee mornings to meet our community and find out what they would like the church building to be used for outside of religious worship, alongside supporting the PC by using the village hall. So far we have held two on March 12th, April 16th and the third will be on May 21st. Attendance has been slow, but it is early days and the PCC discuss and review at each PCC meeting.

Jumble Sale - Saturday April 30th 2022

This was held 2pm until 4pm in the Village Hall, thanks go to everyone involved who helped set up, attended, and cleared up.

It was a bright sunny day, the Hall was full of items and we witnessed wonderful support from the community and beyond.

Next Event - 'A Night with Roy Tricker' June 10th 2022

Roy Tricker will perform a historical talk about our church and has invited Michele Kenningale, to support him with a short talk follow on talk about some previous Vicars from times past. Tickets will include refreshments at The Old Rectory. You will be guaranteed a thought provoking and humorous evening.

Social media platforms used: Church

A Church Near You (ACNY),

Eric posts each month in the 'In Touch' magazine

St Mary's Nextdoor App,

Little Blakenham Next door App

Benefice Facebook page and the

Little Blakenham Facebook Page

We also have a dedicated page on the 'British Express' Tourism website to St Mary's Church.

Churchyard

'Caring for God's Acre'

National Biodiversity Network Atlas

Church Heritage Record data systems.

Coming soon - 'Burial Grounds to Inspire'

Village Magazine

Councillor Linda Keen for the PC and Michele Kenningale for the PCC presented in July 2021 the idea of a Parish Magazine. This would be a joint venture between the PCC and PC to raise both council's profiles in the village and try to engage with the community.

The newsletter was delivered bi-monthly to 120 homes over 6 months as agreed at the meeting, feedback and engagement was disappointing.

With the personal cost of paper and printing, this has sadly now stopped due to lack of interest. However, it may be reintroduced at a later date.

Roadside Nature Reserve 119 Valley Road

14th May 2021 - Michele Kenningale liaised direct with the Natural Environment Team at Suffolk County Council regarding the rotten RNR posts on Valley Road and the risk of traffic mounting the verge and damaging the endangered 'Man Orchids'.

On 26th May, Holly Emmens Ecologist Suffolk Council visited the site and found we have 27 plants in 3 separate area. In August the new RNR posts were erected and on 12th May 2022 Suffolk Wildlife visited and have suggested gaining the green hay when cut and try to introduce the plants to the churchyard as the site is so near.

The Suffolk Local History Council

Finally, I would like to inform the council members that I have been accepted as the Local History recorder for Little Blakenham, by The Suffolk Local History Council.

I will be required to produce an annual report regarding all activities in the village which will then be deposited at 'The Hold', Suffolk Archives as a historical account of the village.

I am hoping that the parish council will support me in this role and would like to ask if I can be informed of any events, new building projects or any demolition to any building in the village, particularly listed buildings so that the original may be recorded before any adjustments or demolition occurs.

Thank you for your time
Michele Kenningale.