

LAXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Due to the current circumstances, it has proved impossible to hold the usual Annual Parish Meeting in the village hall. The Parish Council agreed that the information should still be disseminated to all the residents of Laxfield – this year in two different ways. The first is through the Parish Newsletter and also the information will be posted on the village website – www.laxfield.online

If you have any questions resulting from the information, please don't hesitate to contact the Parish Clerk, Karen Gregory on laxfieldparishclerk@gmail.com or 01728 638061 or the relevant contact from the report.

CHAIR'S REPORT

It would be impossible to summarise all that has happened since our last Annual Parish Meeting in a brief report, so I hope you'll forgive me if I mention only some of the key features!

This year has been a dramatic one in many ways, most of all of course because of the pandemic which has affected us all over the last few weeks. However, our Parish has responded magnificently to the crisis, with local organisations and businesses as well as individuals offering support in so many ways to anyone who needs it – from cooked meals to telephone calls, every offer of help has been appreciated. This wonderful work will continue in the long term too, through the establishment of a formal 'Good Neighbour' scheme.

In addition to our normal monthly meetings, the Parish Council has called several public meetings over the last twelve months to discuss issues of serious concern, so we can properly reflect and put forward the views of Parish residents. Some of these issues have yet to be resolved: we are, for example, still waiting to find out whether the Secretary of State will 'call in' the Framlingham Road planning application which so many people responded to.

Other meetings have led to more positive outcomes: the successful establishment of the Laxfield Community Land Trust, for example, which has been set up to ensure we can have development here that the Parish wants and needs, including low cost housing that local people can actually afford to live in. We are also working with Mid Suffolk District Council to deliver new council housing in Laxfield.

One of our successes this year has been the replacement community bus service to Halesworth on Wednesdays and Fridays, which was arranged last autumn after the withdrawal of council funding to the original commercial contract. This was an important service for a number of Parish residents, and we felt very strongly that it should be continued.

We'd like to encourage more people to put forward their concerns to us, and to come along to the Parish Council meetings – although we can't meet in person at the moment, we are holding virtual meetings every month and people can still participate. Better still, why not put yourself forward to join us?

Sue Innes – Chair, Laxfield Parish Council

LAXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE

The Parish Council finished the financial year with bank balances showing a decrease of £7 683.00 against last year (NB: figure rectified from the one shown in the Parish Newsletter).

The precept is the main income source at £41,800, while Cllr Flatman gave £755 from her Locality Award which paid for a new bench near the allotments at Bickers Hill and thatching exhibition materials at the Low House and Cllr McGregor gave £500 to the Neighbourhood Plan budget for exhibition materials. The rebate from the Rix oil syndicate enabled the Parish Council to provide the village hall with funding towards replacement lighting and Laxfield pre-school with a trampoline. The Parish Council also agreed to pay for legal advice and to give temporary funding to the newly established Laxfield Community Land Trust Ltd (details outlined below). The Parish Council also gave substantial funding to the Laxitude Festival and the Litfest. Two new litter bins were also purchased to replace old ones.

See end sheet for accounts summary.

SNOOK BEQUEST

This is a charity run by the parish council. Its objective is to help the needs of the elderly but for a number of years has funded only the annual Christmas dinner. The balance at April 1 2019 was £15,339 (plus interest).

LAXFIELD PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION

This is a registered charity that has the parish council as its custodian trustee. All its expenses are met by the precept so the only figure supplied to the Charities Commission is a cost. During the 2019 – 2020 financial year the expenditure was £6 267.00.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Obviously the present crisis is on everyone's minds but I think that Suffolk County Council has much to be proud of; in particular the Fire & Rescue Service has visited every vulnerable person and ensured that their needs are met.

Over the past year we have managed to get some Highway work done including the 30 mph signs and progress is being made on "Gateway Treatment" to the village.

The reduction in support for public transport is disappointing but the performance of our local school is stunning.

I have attended most of the Parish Council Meetings and I express my thanks for the warm welcome I have received.

Guy McGregor, County Councillor, Suffolk County Council

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

I have just completed my first year of my second term as your district councillor and I would thank you for your kind support. I have had the pleasure of representing your views, queries and even complaints. The villages that make up the ward include Brundish, Stradbroke, Tannington, Wiby and of course Laxfield

In these unprecedented times Mid Suffolk District Council has continued to support local charities, foodbanks and businesses. We have so far processed grants for local charities and organisations helping the vulnerable for £46,000 and more are in the system. We have so far processed grants to support small businesses for £14.3 million. There are also more in the system. We have set up with our partners **Home, But Not Alone** phonenumber and our communities' staff have been answering these calls and making sure help is deployed as quickly as possible. Everyone should now have a card with the emergency number **0800 876 6926**.

The Council has adapted its way of working and all meetings are now conducted remotely with our first planning meeting streamed to the public on 28/4/2020.

As community's Cabinet member, I have secured funding for various improvements to local amenities within my ward and assisted parishes by sign posting to appropriate funding.

I sit on licensing, Gypsy and traveller steering board, Health and Wellbeing board for Suffolk and Cabinet member for Communities and Housing which takes me across the district.

I have supported the village halls with new equipment, helped buy state of the art playground equipment, etc., supported reading Clubs, purchase village sign, Village clock restoration, Stradbroke young musician's festival and many more projects with my Locality Award. This year I supported Laxfield Bowls club with planned re-development works £2,000, Oak bench £255.00, supporting thatch project at Low House £500 and £500 for projector for the village hall.

In the past year, the communities' team have been successful in delivering the following:

- Free swims for all children 16years and under in the school holidays at Stradbroke and Stowmarket.
- Social subscribing (activity opposed to pills) at Stradbroke and Fressingfield surgeries rolling out to Debenham and Eye.
- Safeguarding, mental health awareness, Dementia awareness and supporting activities and setting up clubs.
- Funding two PCSO's for two years and addressing County Lines and training staff.
- Arts and music- across the district.
- Town and parish liaison, Community liaison throughout the district,
- Grants for improvements to shop fronts across the district any many more projects.
- Three-year secured funding for Stowmarket CAB.
- Helping villages with securing Assets of Community value.

The Council have invested in major developments such as Needham Lake development, The Regal Theatre, our leisure centres and funding many more projects across the district.

If you need my help, email Julie.flatman@midsuffolk.gov.uk or 01986 798661

Julie Flatman, District Councillor, Mid Suffolk District Council

LAXFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This year has seen a huge amount of work and consultation, and we have been delighted by the response from the Parish to the Plan as it has developed. We've valued all the input, which has truly shaped the Plan into a document we can be proud of.

We have now reached the Pre-Submission Consultation Stage. A consultation launch event was held at the Village Hall on Saturday 22nd February, and the formal consultation on the Draft

Neighbourhood Plan ran from then until Monday 6th April. We are now reviewing comments received and will make any necessary amendments to the Plan before submitting it to Mid Suffolk District Council.

They will carry out their own consultation on the amended Plan so that it can proceed to examination and Village Referendum. This final stage will, unfortunately, be delayed, as all Referenda (along with elections and other similar public meetings) have been formally postponed until May 2021. However, Government has issued instructions that Local Planning Authorities must give weight to Neighbourhood Plans which would under normal circumstances have reached the stage of being 'made' (ie carrying weight as a material consideration in reaching planning decisions).

The Plan is about more than just planning applications, and the Community Actions are as important to the way we live and work together as the Planning Policies are. Several of these Community Actions are already under way, and we very much look forward to seeing all of them unfold over the next few months and years.

The current version of the Plan and supporting documents will remain available on the Parish Council website for everyone to view and/or download.

Sue Innes on behalf of Laxfield Neighbourhood Plan Group

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH REPORT

Laxfield Church stands in the centre of the village as a symbol of the accumulated faith of centuries of Christians. But as well as being a place of worship, it must also remain relevant as a public building. The PCC is resolved to improve and to upgrade the building as far as possible within all the restraints of its heritage and its Grade 1 listing. 2019 saw completion of three projects – an upgraded LED lighting scheme, a handrail up the steps at the back of the nave, and wonderful new glass panelling above the oak screen. The afternoon sunlight floods through the new glass onto the font and down the aisle to the altar. We are so grateful to Steve and Sandra Holmes for their vision for, and generous funding of this project to improve and to upgrade the building.

As usual, most of our fund-raising events have been held in the church, as well as the monthly Community Market. Our hard-working and enthusiastic team of bell-ringers have now raised the necessary funds for an ambitious plan to restore and improve the church bells, and once the required permission is secured, it is hoped that this project will be completed in 2020.

Work from All Saints' Primary School is regularly displayed in church and our link with the school most definitely enriches the life of the church. We continue with the sale of second-hand books at the back of the church, and the amount of goods collected at the back of the church, for distribution by the Waveney Foodbank, has increased exponentially. Laxfield is such a generous village.

Responsibility for the care of our exceptional church building can seem daunting and onerous at times, and the occasional mess and minor incidents of vandalism are disheartening. But comments left in the visitors' book, appreciating the fact that the church is always open, more than compensate for the minor nuisances and more than justify our open-door policy.

Thank you to Rev'd David Burrell and his team for all that they do for us and to those who help with the services in so many ways. A big thank you to Chris Cliff for her most dedicated organ playing. Rev'd Ron Orams retired at the end of March, but in October we welcomed him back from his six months sabbatical. We are so pleased that he is back taking some of our services again. It is the people

of the parish and their contributions who make All Saints' a living church and we are very blessed to have such a large band of people who help in a huge variety of ways. Thank you to everyone who works so hard to look after the building - to clean it, to decorate with flowers and to organise and support our fundraising. It was wonderful to end the year with such a large congregation, including Maisie the dog masquerading as a lamb, for the Christmas Eve Carol Service!

Liz Hammond and Richard Simmonds, Churchwardens

LAXFIELD COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (LCLT)

The LCLT actions, in common with so many of the usual community tasks, have been superseded by the massive efforts of the Parish to deal with the current situation. Apart from the distractions of maintaining health and well being, the lack of opportunity to engage at close quarters for the Group has stalled some of our actions. Plus of course, engagement with government and other statutory bodies has been impossible; we are awaiting approval of our application to the Charity Commission for charitable status. This is essential for progression.

However, we have outlined our objectives and have drafted guidelines for tenancy in readiness for the future when we intend being able to offer property for affordable rent to satisfy local needs.

The future is uncertain but the basic needs of both young and old for housing commensurate with their income, aspirations, and circumstances, will remain.

For fuller detail and to keep abreast of changes as they occur, please refer to the Parish Council website.

David Alchin on behalf of LCLT

LAXFIELD VILLAGE HALL

Laxfield Village Hall Management Committee:

Committee members Bill Shuttle (Chair), Caroline Emeny (bookings and Finance) and Becky Winn (Marketing and communication) have been in place all year and were saddened by the sudden death of committee member Barry Cable last year. They would like to thank former members Simon Cox and John Iveson for their support and commitment while they were on the committee. The committee is pleased to have been joined by Colin Hamilton, who recently moved into the village.

Regular events and clubs using the hall

Pilates, Yoga, Table Tennis, Zumba, Laxfield Light Feet and Film Club have continued throughout the year. A new weekly activity, Carpet Bowls was started in September and was proving very popular - the committee would like to thank Jack Sherman for organising the weekly sessions.

One-off events

There have been several well-attended plays performed by local touring theatre companies including "Two" by the Open Space Theatre, "A Sidecar Named Despair" by the Common Ground Company and "Bloody Poetry" by the Rough Cast theatre group.

A very successful music quiz organised by Caroline Emeny in May raised £670 for the Pear Tree Fund.

The "Ted and Lil" comedy night was very well attended and a great success, as was the Christmas dance with music by Vix and the Kicks.

The Robin Hood pantomime in January was sold out for 3 of its 4 performances and raised over £2,000 for village hall funds.

Bookings by members of the community and local organisations

The hall has been booked for events related to births, christenings, birthday parties, wedding anniversaries funeral receptions and memorials.

Other events include the horticultural society annual show, Joy's Charity Rummage sale, the museum end of year event, All Saints' primary school disco, a dementia awareness workshop, a charity clairvoyant event and the over 60's Christmas lunch.

The hall has been used as the village polling station for European and General elections and also for various neighbourhood planning consultation events and a Parish Council meeting.

Hall maintenance and plans for upgrades

Routine maintenance and checking of fire safety equipment and systems have been carried out.

The committee is working on two significant projects (1) to upgrade the lighting systems by converting to LEDs to reduce power consumption and make more flexible by installing dimmer switches; and (2) to upgrade the audio-visual systems to enhance quality, improve connectivity and enable a broader range of uses including showing streamed theatre and music performances.

Finance

The hall's finances are in a good position to withstand the closure caused by the pandemic having benefited from pantomime revenue, winning several grants, including the recent grant from Babergh/Mid Suffolk council obtained by the Parish Clerk.

Looking Ahead

As a result of the pandemic closure the committee has had to postpone until further notice all regular bookings plus many special events including "Stars In Their Eyes", Kelly Bayfield music night, Caroline's Charity quiz, a wedding reception and three touring company play performances. We are currently rescheduling some of the postponed events with dates as far ahead as November 2021.

Bill Shuttle – Chair, Laxfield Village Hall Management Committee

LAXFIELD PRE-SCHOOL

Laxfield Pre school has had another outstanding year with numbers continually rising and the demand for places growing. This year we have opened the new baby room which has proven very popular with just a few spaces remaining. This year we have welcomed three new members of staff and the manager has returned from maternity leave. Staff have continued to complete a number of courses increasing their already in depth knowledge of the Early Years Curriculum and maintaining high knowledge and understanding of safeguarding .

We have recently introduced a new intervention programme, Early Talk Boost, that will narrow the gap of our children with speech and language needs so that they are fully prepared for transition into their primary education. With the introduction of the new Ofsted inspection framework, we have continued to develop our curriculum to reflect these changes. Earlier in the academic year we were very lucky to receive a donation from the Heveningham hall charity trust. This amazing donation allowed us to purchase an interactive TV that has opened up the wide and exciting world for our children.

There is still one area in which we would love to develop and that is to include members from the local community within our Pre-school. This could range from joining our committee, bringing new

ideas and support or just sharing a story, playing an instrument or sharing a hobby with our amazing inquisitive children.

Samantha Campbell – Chairperson, Laxfield Pre-school

FRESSINGFIELD SCOUT GROUP

Thank you for the opportunity to share the great work of the 1st Fressingfield Scout Group. 1st Fressingfield Scout Group membership increased slightly from the previous year, at the census at the end of February we had membership of 141, this is a slight increase from 139 last year there are also 27 leaders and the Executive committee of 14 parents and supporters.

For much of 2018 and 2019 1st Fressingfield Scout Group has been sponsoring a new venture to deliver Scouting to a whole primary school as part of the school timetable. Our new Yoxford and Peasehall School Scouting sections were trialled over the summer term and after a review by our Group Executive and school leaders have become a permanent part of the school weekly timetable. Consequently 50 young people from Yoxford and Peasehall Primary School Scouting Section have been welcomed into the Group. This is a national trial monitored by The Scout Association and the Department for Education.

Thank you to everyone that has saved empty crisp packets for us, we have recently found that it is possible to buy a kayak made from recycled plastic retrieved from the sea, and we plan to raise the funding for this from the empty crisp packet collections. We have 30% of target. Please continue to keep them for us, you just need to simply save the bags and then hand them to one of our members or take them to any of the following locations:

Fressingfield Mace, Stradbroke Swimming Pool, Stradbroke Community Centre, Goodwin Hall (Scout Hut), The Carrot Shed – The Paddocks IP21 5TR, Wingfield and Syleham Village Hall Car Park. If you want to support our campaign by becoming a collection point, please let us know!

Our current headquarters is rented from the Goodwin Hall Trust, the is a wooden building behind the Fressingfield Methodist Chapel. This building is around 100 years old with structural problems, in fact it is slowly slipping into the ditch. There is no plumbing in the building and the only toilet and tap are in the chapel. For several years we have been striving to get our own premises and 3 years ago we were gifted .8 acre in Fressingfield with planning permission for a new headquarters. We have raised many thousands of pounds to fund the planning applications, legal fees and initial work to secure the site. We have launched our 'Building on Community Foundations' campaign and invite organisations and individuals to support us. Put simply this is our take on the "buy a brick" style of fund raising. We are looking for sponsors for each metre square of the foundations. We have identified a secondhand sectional building that will be ideal, unfortunately grants for capital expenditure of this size are extremely hard to obtain and it seems we may need to review our plans.

Thanks to a grant from the National Lottery an assault course is now in use at our new HQ site. This is an exciting development and our young members are getting lots of use from it already.

The highlight of our year was at Easter last year, when 11 members of the Explorer Unit headed off to Kenya to work with our partners and friends at Mothers' Mercy Home. The orphanage offers shelter, support and education to over a hundred young people many rescued from the streets of Kenya. The Explorers immersed in African culture for over two weeks, If you asked each member how they would describe the trip, you'd get responses of "amazing", "beautiful scenery" or most likely "hot". These responses would be describing the "touristy" activities they did. However, phrases like "life changing and a real eye opener" are also in the mix. These opinions come from all

the things they did and experienced outside of what you would do on a family holiday to Kenya. For most of the Young People visiting the Kibera slums was a life changing experience and staying at an orphanage and interacting with the children made the trip fulfilling. The views at Lake Naivasha were breathtaking but working on the farm with no machinery, pulling a loaded cart six kilometers in 30°C, is what changed so many of their views on how lucky we are to live the lives we do here back in England. It truly was an experience that everyone involved will remember for the rest of their lives.

The Scout Group continues to provide exceptional opportunities to our young people from five year old Beavers to 17 year old Explorers and to our growing team of volunteer adult leaders, to whom I pay a sincere vote of thanks. We have recently extended our youth provision by having a Network based at Fressingfield, these are young adults aged between 18 and 25 years of age. They run their own programme, as far as I can tell most activities end in a pub, in fact a few start in a pub as well.

As ever I am immensely proud of the sterling work that the young people and all the volunteer adults do to make your Scout Group the best by far in the area. I trust that the community shares my passion to deliver effective, safe and exciting youth provision for our young people.

We have lots of information on our website including a 3minute video showing our recent activities, and a short film about the new headquarters project.

Michael Knights - Assistant Group Scout Leader, 1st Fressingfield Scout Group

**LAXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS –
2019 – 20**

**NB: PLEASE SEE THE PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE FOR
DETAILS OF VARIANCES**

Bank accounts year beginning 1 April 2019			
Current	£	5,101.08	01/04/2019
Saver	£	5,501.56	01/04/2019
Reserve	£	51,310.33	01/04/2019
Opening Balance Total	£	61,912.97	01/04/2019

	Budget	Actual	Variance	% v Bud
RECEIPTS		2019-20		
Cemetery Fees	£ 800.00	£ 834.50	£ 34.50	104%
Grants	£ 2,600.00	£ 853.84	-£ 1,746.16	32.84%
Groundworks Nbhd Plan		£ 1,255.00	£ 1,255.00	-
MSDC CIL	£ 4,400.00	£ 7,769.72	£ 3,369.72	-
Miscellaneous	£ 330.00	£ 358.76	£ 28.76	109%
Bank Interest	£ 175.00	£ 204.57	£ 29.57	117%
Precept	£ 41,880.00	£ 41,880.00	£ -	100%
VAT Reclaim	£ 1,500.00	£ 1,917.45	£ 417.45	128%
Total	£ 51,685.00	£ 55,073.84	£ 3,388.84	107%
PAYMENTS				
Clerk's Salary	£ 6,477.00	£ 6,204.67	-£ 272.33	95.80%
Expenses/Stationery	£ 300.00	£ 521.37	£ 221.37	173.79%
Chairman's Allowance	£ 500.00	£ 461.00	-£ 39.00	92.20%
Parish Room Cleaner	£ 280.00	£ 280.00	£ -	100.00%
Street Lighting	£ 2,100.00	£ 1,961.93	-£ 138.07	93.43%
Pond/Vill Hall/Paths	£ 600.00	£ 850.75	£ 250.75	141.79%
Street Cleaning	£ 848.00	£ 848.00	£ -	100.00%
Parish Room Lighting	£ 120.00	£ 120.44	£ 0.44	100.37%
PWLB	£ 11,290.00	£ 11,289.18	-£ 0.82	99.99%
Neighbourhood Plan	£ 4,850.00	£ 5,507.51	£ 657.51	113.56%
Cemetery Caretaker	£ 800.00	£ 674.35	-£ 125.65	84.29%
Subscriptions	£ 600.00	£ 635.60	£ 35.60	105.93%
Insurance	£ 1,100.00	£ 1,082.04	-£ 17.96	98.37%
Churchyard/War Mem	£ 1,800.00	£ 1,886.20	£ 86.20	104.79%
Section 137	£ 3,000.00	£ 4,521.19	£ 1,521.19	150.71%
Bin emptying	£ 600.00	£ 638.40	£ 38.40	106.40%
Rental fees	£ 350.00	£ 600.00	£ 250.00	171.43%
Training	£ 400.00	£ 501.60	£ 101.60	125.40%
Cemetery Expenses	£ 4,500.00	£ 3,680.33	-£ 819.67	81.79%
Repairs & Maintenance	£ 1,000.00	£ 2,051.34	£ 1,051.34	205.13%
Playing Field	£ 7,000.00	£ 6,266.77	-£ 733.23	89.53%
Village Hall	£ 1,000.00	£ 957.17	-£ 42.83	95.72%
Church clock	£ 200.00	£ 1,150.80	£ 950.80	575.40%

Miscellaneous	£ 500.00	£ 9,166.49	£ 8,666.49	1833.30%
Audit	£ 650.00	£ 680.40	£ 30.40	104.68%
PAYE	£ 120.00	£ 108.00	-£ 12.00	90.00%
Election	£ 700.00	£ 110.78	-£ 589.22	15.83%
Total	£ 51,685.00	£ 62,756.31	£ 11,071.31	121.42%

BANK ACCOUNT TO END MARCH 2020	
Current	£ 455.38
Saver	£ 5,303.05
Reserve	£ 48,471.97
Total	£ 54,230.40

£ 54,230.50

£ 0.10