



LAXFIELD **ANNUAL** **PARISH MEETING**

Monday 24 May 2021

At 7 30 pm

In Laxfield Village Hall

These continue to be uncertain times, with Parish Council meetings conducted via zoom for over a year now. However, a directive from central government has recently indicated that, from 17 May 2021, all meetings (other than working groups) must be held in person. The annual Parish meeting is therefore Laxfield's first foray back into physical meetings. It is appreciated that some people may not feel ready to attend in person and therefore zoom will also be available for members of the public to attend. The reports have also been compiled into this booklet which will be distributed to all households in the parish.

If you have any questions resulting from the information in the booklet, 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.

LAXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - CHAIR'S REPORT

What a year we've had since the last annual report I wrote, back in May 2020! A difficult year for all of us, in different ways: but another year perhaps best characterised here by the strength of community support in this parish. I'd like to thank all those who put so much of their time, effort and skills into the voluntary activities that make Laxfield such a great place to live: from the farmers who worked so hard to keep our roads open in the heavy snow this year, to those who run our wide variety of community organisations.

Many of our activities as a Parish Council have had to be curtailed, of course, but despite that we have moved forward with many of our plans. All our meetings up to 17th May have been held remotely, but we have held all our full Parish Council meetings and a good number of Working Group meetings too.

There have been some significant developments this year that I'd like to highlight here. Firstly, the offer to donate the Tank Pond to the Parish Council: the legal transfer of ownership is not yet complete, but this area of land is a part of Laxfield's history (and part of the childhood of many of those who still live in the Parish). It will be a long-term project to restore it, but a hugely worthwhile one.

We were also delighted to be able to support the Community Market in re-establishing itself as a regular event run by the community, for the community; and you'll hear more about this later.

Our parish Quiet Lanes initiative is a response to the feedback we've received about how important it is to people to be able to walk and ride safely around the Parish, and we hope to be able to designate three routes around the area. Whilst this does not mean that we can impose legally enforceable speed restrictions beyond national requirements, the intention is to remind vehicle users that roads are used for a wide variety of purposes and by a wide range of people, and all of these should be respected.

We have undertaken a comprehensive survey of the trees in the churchyard and the old cemetery; the Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of these important spaces. Some careful pruning is needed, and sadly we will

have to remove one or two trees which have the potential to be dangerous – but we will replant new saplings which will eventually grow to take their place. We hope to use at least some of the branches to create valuable new habitats for a wide variety of species. We also plan to hold a weekend working party event (probably in late June) to clear ivy and encroaching sucker growth around some of the trees, so please do volunteer to join us!

We have also moved forward in our strategic planning. We've taken the Neighbourhood Plan as our starting point, as this sets out what people have told us is important to them, and have developed a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP). This sets out our financial priorities for the next few years, setting timescales and approximate budget allocations for each of the actions. This is, of course, a living document and any hard copy that you see will only be a snapshot in time: each of the working groups will use this as the basis for developing their plans, and priorities will inevitably shift over time. We believe that it is important for everyone to be able to see how we plan to deliver our responsibilities across the Parish, and of course to contribute and comment too.

Over the next year, we'd like to try to encourage people to become more engaged in what the Parish Council does, and to make it easier for people to raise concerns or just to ask questions or comment on what we are doing – do let us know if you have any thoughts about how we can try to do this.

Sue Innes – Chair, Laxfield Parish Council

LAXFIELD PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE

The Parish Council ended the financial year with bank balances as follows:

Current account:	£ 6 380.59
Saver account:	£21 942.11
Reserve account:	£48 532.68
TOTAL:	£76 855.38

This indicates a very healthy bank balance; however much of this is reserved (CIL money) or earmarked to fund a number of projects during 2021 – 22 as identified in the PIIP (Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan).

The precept is the main income source at £42 430.00, while Cllr Flatman gave £2 455.60 to Laxfield from her Locality Award. This went to the community market to support the purchase of a new shed; Laxfield Locomotives towards a new container, two benches for the children's playground (delivery set for May 2021) and Laxfield Pre-school. The rebate from the Rix oil syndicate enabled the Parish Council to provide the community market and Laxfield pre-school with funds for various projects. The Parish Council, on behalf of the Playing field, received a £10 000 government Covid-19 grant and this will be spent on the development of the pavilion. MSDC CIL (community infrastructure levy) monies were greater than expected at £19 332 as was the VAT reclaim due to the extensive amount of machinery bought as a result of a burglary at the playing field.

See next page for Parish Council accounts summary for 2020 – 2021 which includes an explanation of any overspends. If further detail is needed, please contact Karen Gregory, the Parish Clerk.

SNOOK BEQUEST

This is a charity run by the parish council. Its objective is to help the needs of the older members of the community. During this financial year, the fund has provided a Christmas lunch for the over 60s and also weekly meals for the over 60s during the last lockdown period. The balance at April 1 2021 was £14 456.61.

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 2020 – 2021 financial year the expenditure was £21 119.99 which is a substantial increase from the previous year due to the purchase of replacement machinery following a burglary from the playing field shed.

BANK ACCOUNTS YEAR BEGINNING APRIL 2020		
Current	£ 455.38	31/03/2020
Saver	£ 5,303.05	31/03/2020
Reserve	£ 48,471.97	31/03/2020
Opening Balance To	£ 54,230.40	31/03/2020

RECEIPTS	BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE	% v Bud
RECEIPTS		2020-21		
Cemetery Fees	£ 900.00	£ 876.00	-£ 24.00	97.33%
Grants	£ 2,100.00	£ 13,362.48	£ 11,262.48	636.31%
Groundworks Nbhd P	£ 1,850.00	£ -	-£ 1,850.00	0.00%
MSDC CIL	£ 4,400.00	£ 19,331.52	£ 14,931.52	439.35%
Miscellaneous	£ 300.00	£ 7,931.01	£ 7,631.01	2643.67%
Bank Interest	£ 150.00	£ 75.77	-£ 74.23	50.51%
Precept	£ 42,430.00	£ 42,430.00	£ -	100.00%
VAT Reclaim	£ 1,400.00	£ 4,492.57	£ 3,092.57	320.90%
Total	£ 53,530.00	£ 88,499.35	£ 34,969.35	165.33%
PAYMENTS	BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE	% V Bud
Clerk's Salary	£ 7,000.00	£ 7,229.93	£ 229.93	103.28%
Expenses/Stationery	£ 600.00	£ 296.72	-£ 303.28	49.45%
Chair's Allowance	£ 500.00	£ 500.00	£ -	100.00%
Parish Room Cleaner	£ 300.00	£ 290.00	-£ 10.00	96.67%
Street Lighting	£ 2,200.00	£ 1,938.55	-£ 261.45	88.12%
Pond/Vill Hall/Paths	£ 2,500.00	£ 1,913.50	-£ 586.50	76.54%
Street Cleaning	£ 900.00	£ 876.00	-£ 24.00	97.33%
Parish Room Lighting	£ 130.00	£ 164.50	£ 34.50	126.54%*
PWLB	£ 11,290.00	£ 11,289.18	-£ 0.82	99.99%
Neighbourhood Plan	£ 1,850.00	£ 1,424.90	-£ 425.10	77.02%
Cemetery Caretaker	£ 900.00	£ 891.28	-£ 8.72	99.03%
Subscriptions	£ 700.00	£ 820.52	£ 120.52	117.22%**
Insurance	£ 1,200.00	£ 1,606.59	£ 406.59	133.88%***
Churchyard/War Men	£ 1,860.00	£ 2,274.00	£ 414.00	122.26%****
Section 137	£ 3,500.00	£ 3,281.76	-£ 218.24	93.76%
Bin emptying	£ 700.00	£ 696.43	-£ 3.57	99.49%
Rental fees	£ 350.00	£ 300.00	-£ 50.00	85.71%
Training	£ 500.00	£ 516.00	£ 16.00	103.20%
Cemetery Expenses	£ 4,500.00	£ 4,558.61	£ 58.61	101.30%
Repairs & Maintenance	£ 2,000.00	£ 488.08	-£ 1,511.92	24.40%
Playing Field	£ 7,000.00	£ 21,119.99	£ 14,119.99	301.71%****
Village Hall	£ 800.00	£ 615.49	-£ 184.51	76.94%
Church clock	£ 200.00	£ -	-£ 200.00	0.00%
Miscellaneous	£ 500.00	£ 1,924.34	£ 1,424.34	384.87%*****
Audit	£ 700.00	£ 696.00	-£ 4.00	99.43%
PAYE	£ 150.00	£ 162.00	£ 12.00	108.00%
Election	£ 700.00	£ -	-£ 700.00	0.00%
Total	£ 53,530.00	£ 65,874.37	£ 12,344.37	123.06%

BANK ACCOUNT TO END March 2021	
Current	£ 6,380.59
Saver	£ 21,942.11
Reserve	£ 48,532.68
Total	£ 76,855.38

*	Parish Room Lighting	Slight increase in the cost of electricity
**	Subscriptions	This is entirely due to the cost of zoom subscription require for meetings
***	Insurance	Insurance costs increased after the playing field 'shed' was burgled
****	Playing field	Cost of new machinery and new shed following burglary. This is offset by the insurance claim and locality award
*****	Miscellaneous	This includes payments to pre school, community market and pensioners' lunches. This is offset by payments from Rix rebate, locality award and Snook Bequest

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

What a year we have all had and how well we have supported each other. I think local businesses have been absolutely marvellous staying open where possible to provide essential services. Volunteer groups have rallied to deliver medicines, provisions and vital transport, dog walking and even a friendly phone call. Life slowed down for some, you had time to actually speak to one another in the queues. Some of us got fit and some of us spent far too much time in front of a screen working.

Some communities slowed down and didn't do a lot to warrant a locality grant. I'm pleased to say this did not happen with my wards. I spent every penny.

Laxfield locality awards:

- Parish Council £600.00 for two benches.
- Community Market £655.60
- Laxfield Locomotives £1,200.00
- Laxfield pre-school £2,125.00

Covid-19 and Grants - how council adopted over-night work-from-home and distributed grants as soon as they came through from Government. Many businesses received grants and yes, they did come from central Government, but it was left to the district council to administer which was time consuming to say the least.

The housing team worked around the clock to get all the homeless off the streets and into accommodation we worked closely with hotels that were shut.

Mid Suffolk Communities team worked closely with the County Council to provide The Home but not alone line. Offices dealt with many complex cases that really were more suited to qualified health specialists. We also deployed staff from other departments to help with the volume of calls.

Hot off the press!

Mid Suffolk District Council awarded community grants close to a 1 million in the 2020/21 financial year – supporting the district's Covid response and enabling improvements to local community venues and sports and leisure facilities.

During the year, council officers have worked with clubs and organisations in the district to identify need and ensure that vital grant funding has made a real difference to Mid Suffolk's communities.

The council has also acknowledged the key role of community groups, along with town and parish councils, in easing the challenges faced by residents during coronavirus, and a new dedicated Covid-19 Emerging Needs Grant opened last May to help the district through the peak of the pandemic. More than 60 organisations benefitted from over £100,000 in funding, including good neighbour schemes, foodbanks and community outreach projects.

A new Covid-19 Recovery Grant, set to be launched next month, will allow this crucial support to continue and enable communities to safely return to normality following the further easing of restrictions.

The pandemic also highlighted the importance of securing bright and healthy futures for Mid Suffolk residents, with grant funding approved for walking routes, leisure equipment and local sports clubs over the past twelve months. This includes over £50,000 in Section 106 funding – collected from developers when they build new homes in the district – towards new play areas in Badwell Ash and Elmswell, along with capital grants of £36,500 for Mid Suffolk tennis clubs and a £2,000 discretionary grant to establish a new ParkRun at Chilton Fields.

Elmswell also benefitted from Section 106 funding of £76,585 to facilitate the extension of the village's Blackbourne Centre– providing five different spaces for community use to accommodate a wide range of needs.

Numerous other community venues across Mid Suffolk received funding for much-needed improvement works, with £28,000 in capital grants approved for Haughley's Ron Craswell Pavilion – forming a key part of the project to regenerate and revitalise King George's Field.

The Museum of East Anglian Life – Suffolk's largest independent museum, set in 75 acres of beautiful Stowmarket countryside – also received a capital grant of £18,400 towards various improvement works to support its community-focused initiatives, whilst the town's community centre secured £17,340 in Section 106 grants to fund accessibility improvements.

In addition to grants to improve facilities, the council allocated over £229,000 in revenue funding to support charities serving Mid Suffolk residents, including Community Action Suffolk, Homestart, Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice, Rural Coffee Caravan and Lighthouse Womens Aid, among others.

We have seen growth through lock down; The Regal theatre being re-built, our leisure centres being re-furbished, Needham Lake visitor centre hopefully commencing shortly we know that steel will be a wait.

Delivery of the joint local plan. Neighbourhood plans coming through, I alone have had Wilby and Laxfield.

Local Planning Applications – not everyone's favourite topic but Laxfield continues to grow and deliver their fair share of new housing of all shapes and sizes hopefully creating homes for all. Mid Suffolk have worked closely with the Parish Council and individuals to create a Land Trust which is to be commended.

CIFCO Completion - we reached full investment (£50mIn each) by end of year - secure, diverse, long-term income stream from outside the district now coming into the district. I acknowledge some find investing with cheap borrowed money from main Government controversial, but we truly believe it is a real legacy for the future. This enables us to spend in our district without putting up council tax significantly. Surely good business sense.

Climate emergency / Biodiversity - cross-party work continues with 'proper' money to back it up. We are the first council to change their refuse fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). Should roll out Summer 21.

Council Finances - remain strong despite Covid-19. Generous government assistance and now money put aside for future rebuilding of 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

It has been in many ways a frustrating year for the Neighbourhood Plan, as it has now been through all the stages in its development except the Referendum which will allow it to be formally adopted. It has been ready for some time to cross this final hurdle, but there has been a national embargo on this stage in the process.

We hope that Mid Suffolk Council will inform us very soon of when this can take place, and we will of course do our best to make sure that everyone on the Parish knows how they can see the final document and vote on bringing it into full force.

Just to remind you all, once a parish has a Neighbourhood Plan which is deemed 'made' (ie it has been through all the legally-required stages in its development, and has been formally adopted), it has legal force in the planning process: it will be the first ever statutory planning document specifically written for the parish of Laxfield.

Beyond this, though, the Plan is a living document which will be reviewed annually to make sure it meets the needs of the people in the parish. It will continue to set the strategic direction for what the Parish Council delivers, and will give people a broad view of what we hope to achieve over the Plan period – this current Plan takes us through to 2036. It is not just about the statutory planning process, but also very much about what we can do as a community working together, and about the kind of place that we want Laxfield to be.

We must achieve a majority 'Yes' vote in the Referendum for the Plan to be adopted, so please do make the effort to come out and vote when Mid Suffolk District Council is able to hold this long-awaited event!

Sue Innes on behalf of Laxfield Neighbourhood Plan Group

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH REPORT - CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

It seemed counter intuitive to close the church at a time of national need and crisis, but Covid regulations required that we all should stay at home, and the building was completely closed from March 20th until we were allowed in July to gradually open up an area of the building for private worship. There were no Easter services in the church, but some Mothering Sunday posies were delivered in the village. Many worshipped online via Zoom, and services recommenced in church with a special service at the end of July and continued through the year apart from the November lockdown. It was strange to be wearing masks, to be unable to sing, to be physically spread out in alternate pews, and to be restricted in so many of the ways that normally enrich our gatherings. It was particularly disappointing to be unable to hold a Christingle Service, or a Christmas Eve Carol Service, because of restricted space, but we will hope for normality in December 2021.

As most of our fundraising takes place in and around the church, opportunities were limited by being unable to use the building for much of the year, and by the unpredictability of the Covid restrictions. The porch became a new focus, often enhanced by fresh flowers, by prayers on the noticeboard, the foodbank collecting point, and by the hugely successful Lockdown Library of second-hand books organised by Freddie Dunkley, that raised thousands of pounds for the local foodbank. It was great to have a stall at the Christmas Community Market, and to begin to believe that things would return to normal one day!

The church clock was removed in September to prepare for the installation of a new bell frame. The bell installation should have taken place in the autumn, but because of Covid it was delayed until 2021. The new frame with 8 beautiful bells was installed in March. Huge credit is due to the team, led by Fiona Shuttle, who tirelessly fund-raised and assisted with the installation.

The main areas of concern about the church building are the gradual separation of the vestry from the south wall of the chancel, and the substantial cracks in the chancel walls especially round the east window. Under the guidance of the church architect, the PCC is consulting a structural engineer about how to manage these problems.

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. Rev'd Chrissie Smart established regular Zoom services, and with the assistance of Rev'd Ron Orams, and various others across the benefice, these services became part of our church life. 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 give their time to help in a huge variety of ways. We are very grateful to everyone who works so hard to look after the building - to clean it, to open and close it, to decorate with flowers and to organise and support such fund-raising as we were able to do.

Liz Hammond and Richard Simmonds, Churchwardens

LAXFIELD COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (LCLT)



Laxfield CLT

The past year having passed by quickly or slowly, depending on your perspective, has never the less seen some progress. Government funding via Homes England is not available and our application to the Charity Commission has stalled, which we have not pursued until we see some potential advantage from the status.

However, there are recent signs of other potential funds which appear now to be being distributed to local authorities and other bodies for onward gifting to the CLTs. Our main focus remains the provision of housing at affordable rent to persons with local connections, in perpetuity. Rented accommodation by other sectors, either local authority or housing association, is subject to various schemes of “right to buy” which can ultimately reduce the rental stock. This we wish to avoid.

As part of the S106 agreement signed between Jordan Developments and Babergh Mid Suffolk DC (BMSDC) for phase 2 of the Bickers Hill development (Felgate Close), we have been gifted a 25% stake, by way of a legal charge, in the freehold interest of 3 new properties. The purchasers of the properties, all with local connections, initially have a 75% interest and will be able to acquire the 25% balance at some future time should they wish to do so. At this stage we are looking to secure the funding for further development in line with our objectives.

From recent discussions with BMSDC we feel they are supporting our initiatives and are currently giving us good advice.

We remain currently a group of 5 persons, but the recent call for interest from other parties, in the Parish Magazine, has prompted conversations with other potential members.

David Alchin on behalf of LCLT

LAXFIELD AND DISTRICT MUSEUM

Despite the continuing challenges of a third lockdown, the Museum Committee is happy to report that the new gallery and the new displays are on schedule to be ready for this season's opening, which we have advertised as May Bank Holiday – 29th May. This date is a couple of weeks after the Government's recommended 17th May for museums to reopen. The Committee and their partners are stewarding for the first month so that we can minimise contact between stewards, who are not in a bubble and we can test out any safety measures we put in place.

The new gallery is in the former office downstairs in the museum. Hopefully, this location will address some of the mobility challenges which exist in the old Guildhall. The Museum Committee took over the old doctor's surgery just as lockdown started and have managed (with the help of many Laxfield friends) to move all the filing cabinets and cupboards etc to the new admin block (once the surgery) and to create the new gallery. It is taking shape and the Stationmaster's Office, which was at the foot of the stairs has been relocated in the main gallery upstairs. The move has opened a small corridor, linking the new gallery with the Parish Room and the door at the far end of the new gallery has been removed. This means there is a better flow downstairs and the possibility of small wheelchair/pushchair access. We still need to address wheelchair entry to the building.

New displays downstairs include the thatching exhibition, which has been kindly donated by the Low House; a display of the old bell wheels etc from the church and a record of the history of the bells and their recent restoration; wildlife on a local farm; local ponds; the old doctor's desk now with the drawers holding displays of small artefacts. Upstairs is the newly displayed railway office; more farm wildlife and another chance to see the witchcraft exhibition.

The Museum Trustees and Committee are very grateful to the many people who have made this possible.

Management Committee – Laxfield & District Museum

LAXFIELD VILLAGE HALL

Laxfield Village Hall, The Link, Laxfield, IP13 8DY

Charity No. 304781



Laxfield Village Hall

Laxfield Village Hall Management Committee:

Current committee members are Bill Shuttle (Chair), Caroline Emeny, Becky Winn and Colin Hamilton. Two volunteers attended a recent meeting of the committee and will decide whether they wish to join and in what role. The next election of management committee members will take place at the annual general meeting of the village hall charity later this year (date to be decided).

Activities and events at the hall:

The pandemic has caused the majority of activities to be cancelled or postponed. Nevertheless the following Covid-compliant activities were successfully run after the hall had been fitted out with sanitising stations and social distancing put in place:

- Film night with 2 showings of “Judy”
- Community choir rehearsals
- Suffolk Artslink meeting
- Use of kitchen on two occasions to prepare meals for the over-60’s

Hall maintenance and plans for upgrades

Routine maintenance and checking of fire safety equipment has been carried out. The heating/air-conditioning system has required routine servicing and repairs to electrical systems. The lighting systems project to convert main hall lights to dimmable LEDs continues. The project to upgrade the audio-visual systems is part complete, the remaining equipment will not be purchased until there is absolute certainty about the hall reopening.

Finance

The hall’s finances are stable but in the longer term the routine running costs and lack of revenue could jeopardise financial position.

Looking Ahead

The current plan, subject to government pandemic guidelines, includes:

- Village hall “Open day” on 26 th June to make people aware of what the hall has to offer
- Restart weekly table tennis and carpet bowls starting on 5th July
- Cinema nights, monthly starting 1 st July
- “Joy’s Junk” sale on 10th July
- Horticultural Society show on 17th July
- Music Quiz 24th September
- Music night 9th October
- Theatre night 12th November
- Christmas dance 18th December
- Pantomime performances 20th - 22nd January 2022
- Youth Theatre Group (Fridays starting September)

Other potential events include ballroom dancing, and a repeat of the very successful “Ted & Lil” comedy night.

Laxfield Village Hall Management Committee

FRESSINGFIELD SCOUT GROUP

In this extraordinary year we have continued to provide Scouting to our YoungPeople and support to our members and communities through virtual meetings using Zoom, activities and online resources. There have been quizzes, mini raft building and testing, conversations about various hobbies, unusual Scavenger Hunts, games of bingo and kahoot, a whole Group virtual visit to the Army Air Museum a Cub and Beaver visit to Wye Valley Alpacas, escape room challenges, Virtual Hikes to Snowdonia and the Lake District and lots of cooking evenings for all sections.

Norfolk Scouts have run three Virtual Jamborees called BOXJAM with many activities and events which several of our members enjoyed. Some of our members joined Northumberland Scouts in a World Record Camp at Home; over 84,000 members of Scouting and Guiding from 67 countries took part. The “Main Event” in our Virtual Scouting programme has been a Virtual Camp. This took place from Friday evening May 1st to Sunday lunchtime May 3rd and replaced our normal Group Camp. 70 members camped at their home, either in a tent in the garden or a homemade den in the house. Early in the first lockdown 19 members of the Group got involved in a “Hike to the Moon”. This was in support of BBC Children in Need and Comic Relief. This raised an incredible £328,000 which provided vital support to people and communities affected by COVID-19. Our contribution was £170.

To give our members a reason to camp, if only in the garden, we have challenged every member, including Leaders, with the Camp and Cook Mission, which involves camping and cooking at home in every month of the year. We started a camp cooking equipment appeal which has had a fantastic response, thank you, with metal pots, pans and utensils, frying pans, cooking pots, dishes and trays and things like ladles and spatulas and even redundant grids from barbeques and grills. We are sure that much use will be made of it when we are allowed to camp again. If anyone has anymore, or small axes and logging or pruning saws please get in touch with Michael on 07761827053.

For a period last Summer and Autumn we were allowed limited Face to Face meetings for small groups outdoors with Social Distancing and other COVID safe precautions; there were scavenger hunts, hikes and night hikes, archery sessions, pumpkin carving and activities on our new Headquarters field but by November we were back to Virtual Scouting on Zoom.

We hope that after securing a loan for the final amount by September we will have a new and much needed building at our Priory Road site.

We have been doing as much fundraising as lockdown and COVID safe restrictions allow. A Virtual Auction of donated items has raised a significant contribution towards our new HQ fund, many thanks to all that donated items and supported this and a CrowdFunder campaign raised £6000.

The chair of our Executive Committee, with one of the Scout Leaders, undertook a sponsored parachute jump which also raised around a thousand pounds.

Laxfield Village Coop were good enough to host a collection box for us and approaching £100 was raised towards our new HQ fund.

We are grateful to Fressingfield Parish Council for the donation of £350 and to a couple who have donated their Winter Fuel Allowance to the New HQ project.

We have a video review of the year available to view on Youtube 1st Fressingfield Scouting Year 2020' <https://youtu.be/Pr3y9JaXWYM>. For more information visit our website <http://www.1stfressingfieldscouts.org.uk>
I am immensely proud of the work that the volunteer adults have done this year to keep Scouting providing an outlet for the young people of the area.

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

LAXFIELD COMMUNITY MARKET



Laxfield Community Market has evolved over the past 15 years or so from just a handful of stalls instigated & organised by Trudy Moorhouse through the very capable hands of Wendy Sayer & Catherine Cawood who both expanded the market and raised its profile in the local area. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the market was closed for more than 12 months (2 adhoc markets were organised in August and December 2020 by a group of local people) and during this time Catherine chose to step down and pass the baton on.

We now have a committee of 12 people headed by Adrian Heard who organise and run the market. Several changes have been made (in some part due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19) and at present the market is held fully in the open air under gazeboes. In time the market will expand into the Church again when regulations allow. Mike Downer at the Royal Oak after many years of hosting stalls in his dining room has decided to step down from this element of the market but continues to support the team in many other ways.

The ethos of the market is summed up by our tag line “run by the community for the community”. Each month, the home baked stall will be run by a different village or local organisation for their fund-raising efforts (this year this will include Laxfield’s All Saints Church, Laxfield Primary School, Laxfield Pre School, Laxfield Community Market, The Laxfield & District Museum, The Pear Tree Fund and Waveney Foodbank), these organisations are not charged a pitch fee. The monthly pitch fees from approximately 30 stalls are shared 1/3 All Saints Church 1/3 Laxfield Community Market and the remaining 1/3 will be split at the end of the year between the bakery stall organisations. Under 16’s can have a pitch once a year for no fee and we employ up to 3 young people each market day to assist with setting up and closing down the market itself and for helping the stallholders unload and load their stock. This initiative helps build confidence and social skills, enables them to add this activity to their CV and acts as a reference contact when applying for jobs, college & training schemes and of course earns them some well deserved cash.

As a temporary interim measure, we purchased some bargain gazeboes last year to help see us through the early days of the markets and we are now fund raising to buy more substantial colourful gazeboes with branding to see us into the longer term and to provide the community with an asset for wider use. The Community Market team run a bacon rolls stall each month to help raise funds and will also be manning a bakery stall later this year, in the meantime we are seeking financial support from elsewhere including from Laxfield Parish Council to assist us with this investment. In 2020, with a grant from the locality fund of MSDC and the support of Laxfield Parish Council we purchased a storage shed for all the equipment, signage and other paraphernalia needed to run the market.

We are very optimistic that the market will go from strength to strength and will continue to prove itself an asset and attraction to the benefit of the wider community and thank everyone who has made this possible so far.

HIGHWAYS WORKING GROUP

Having been in existence for over one year we thought it time to highlight those matters which we have resolved, fully or partly, during that time.

Our main conduit for action is via the County Council Highways (Suffolk Highways), supported by our elected member, or to the Police for matters involving traffic speeds.

County funds remain very limited, and are primarily for maintenance, with improvements requiring elected member input. Although some funds are distributed via our elected members there remains a distinct shortfall which is often expected to be borne by the Parish or others. Our distinct impression is that District Council support for minor improvements or even maintenance of infrastructure via development is not fully appreciated or supported.

The police, via Suffolk and Norfolk SafeCam are now carrying out radar checks on the B1117 Station Road. The other main entry points into the village 30 mph zone are not regularly checked by mobile camera, mainly we believe due to lack of suitable areas to park a vehicle within their guidelines. We are pursuing this matter, initially with the County to provide additional positions for mounting our Speed Indicator Device (SID). We have to fund these actions from our budget.

Other maintenance matters are usually brought to the attention of the County via their online Reporting Tool, although we do have alternative means of communicating urgent or complicated matters. A reminder that anyone can access this Tool without reference to the PC, although in some circumstances it is useful if we are aware.

We hope to present via the Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP) our suggestions for local improvements, sometimes to restore street-scene and sometimes to make safety improvements. These will all require costing, including design, which is managed by Suffolk Highways, and shortfalls for funding not covered by our elected members will need to be from Parish reserves.

A small sample of our achievements and efforts, usually obtained by persistence, is as follows;

- Quiet Lanes. Due for legal status this Summer on three routes out of the village selected for their popularity for walking, cycling, and horse riding.
- Gorams Mill Lane, flooding outside the Low House. Although not fully resolved to date, investigatory works have been carried out by Highways and they have advised us that improvements to ensure quick discharge into the river are programmed for this financial year. We have expressed our desire to be involved in any future works as there will be an opportunity to make general improvements to the area.
- Station Rd. Railings and signs reinstated, and dangerous tree reduced in height.
- Station Rd. Flooding by cemetery being addressed by Highways.
- Potholes and other defects. Where reported they have been attended to, but some defects, especially on footways, fail to meet the Highways stringent criteria for repair.
- A couple of Public Right of Way signs have been repaired and reinstated but generally the visibility and condition of road signs and posts is very poor. We continue to report.
- Parking by vehicles with their wheels on the footway, obstructing passage by pedestrians continues, despite gentle efforts to dissuade drivers. We ask that drivers give fair consideration to others and follow the example of most drivers by keeping their vehicles on their drive or on the carriageway.

David Alchin – Highways Working Group

LAXFIELD RELIEF IN NEED

A number of requests for financial help were received and assessed over the past year which resulted in several payments to individuals who met the required criteria.

Urgent repair work to the Guildhall roof has been undertaken to ensure that the chimneys and tiles are now secure.

The museum have moved their office into the space previously occupied by Framlingham Surgery. The old office space is now being developed into new exhibition space.

All the Station Road allotments are allocated and are looking very well tendered.

In the next twelve months new trustees will be required to help develop a forward plan for this charity and its assets.

