

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARIH MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 5th MAY 2022 AT 7:20 PM AT YOXFORD VILLAGE HALL**

1. Attendance and Apologies

Attendees:

Cllr. Russell Pearce – Chair
Cllr. Paul Ashton – Vice-Chair
Cllr. Ian Shaw
Cllr. Janet Gardner
Cllr. David Tower
Cllr. David Childs
Cllr. Nicoll McCallum

Apologies for absence:

Cllr. John Sutherell – written and accepted
Cllr. Stephen Siddall – written and accepted
Cllr. Sarah Barrett – written and accepted
Cllr. Laura Greenberg – written and accepted
County Cllr. Richard Smith

In attendance:

Sharon Smith - Clerk/RFO
District Cllr. Stephen Burroughes (via Zoom)
10 members of the public

2. Annual Reports:

- a) **Parish Council** – Cllr. Russell Pearce read out his report - Appendix A.
- b) **Suffolk County Council** – written report was taken as read - Appendix B.
- c) **East Suffolk Council** – no report submitted.
- d) **Yoxwood Community Woodland** – written report taken as read – Appendix C.
- e) **Yoxford Allotment Association** – the Secretary read out her report – Appendix D.
- f) **Yoxford History Group** – written report taken as read – Appendix E.
- g) **St Peter’s Church, Yoxford** - written report taken as read – Appendix F.
- h) **Yoxford Bowls Club** – the Secretary read out her report – Appendix G.
- i) **Yoxford Cricket Club** – no report submitted.
- j) **Yoxford Open Gardens** – no report submitted.
- k) **Meet Up Tuesday Group** – written report taken as read - Appendix H.
- l) **Carpet Bowls Group** – no report submitted.
- m) **Yoxford Yapper** - written report taken as read - Appendix I.
- n) **Sing Out Yoxford Community Choir** - written report taken as read - Appendix J.

3. Annual Reports from any other groups

No further reports were received.

4. Date and time of the next meeting

The date and time of the next Annual Parish Meeting is scheduled for Thursday 11th May 2023 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 7:15 pm.

Appendix A - Parish Council

It is good to be back to normality following COVID. Over the last couple of years I have noticed that village life has improved and the community is working together to make Yoxford a better place. Refurbishment of the village hall is underway, a new boules court has been put in, a new sign has been installed at Mulberry Park, a youth club is up and running, and the youth shelter at Yoxwood will be completed soon. Thank you to all the Councillors and the Clerk for their hard work.

Cllr. Russell Pearce
Chairman

Appendix B – Suffolk County Council

The last year has been the second consecutive year severely affected by the Covid-19 virus, from which I suffered during November and December 2021.

In the main, County Council staff have been encouraged to work from home and to hold meetings via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This edict has also applied to Councillors who have been discouraged from going into the County Council's headquarters, Endeavour House in Ipswich.

These restrictions are gradually being lifted and life is to some extent resuming some of its former character, with Councillors having unrestricted access to County buildings and staff being encouraged to come to the offices "two or three days a week". It seems to me, among other Councillors, that many staff are very reluctant to come back at all, as they have become used to the advantages of home working. I have criticised this reluctance, and wonder what is really happening to productivity levels. But politicians lack the power and authority to ask staff to work more often from the office as the decision lies with the Chief Executive, acting as 'Head of Paid Service'.

We have all become used to on-line meetings and, to be frank, sometimes they are useful, especially for short meetings which for participants avoids the need to travel. But I do not enjoy them because I prefer face-to-face contact, and especially looking Officers who are giving me advice straight in the eye. It may be shocking but Officers have been known not always to tell Councillors the whole truth! On-line meetings also lack a spontaneity, the ability to spark ideas off one another and to have conversations to one side of the meeting.

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste I do try to have my briefing sessions each month with Officers with all of us in the room at Endeavour House. This has been happening as much as it can, but has been somewhat scuppered by the large incidence of staff becoming infected by the Omicron variation of Covid. Even though their infection has usually resulted in mild symptoms, often little more than a nagging cough, they take a week or so before two consecutive negative test results can enable them to return to work. This is all frustrating, but totally necessary, of course.

The work of the County Council has continued despite everything. In February we approved a 3% increase in Council Tax at the budget-setting Council Meeting. The fact that the increase is considerably less than inflation is down to two main reasons – first, the County Council's careful financial monitoring and second, that we received more in grants from Central Government than we expected. In this financial year the County Council will spend £625 million. Yes, that is a large sum of money but three-quarters of it, that is £3 in every £4 that we spend, goes on our care services to a relatively small number of people in Suffolk such as those elderly people in care homes who cannot pay their own fees, individual care packages to help adults with disabilities and other mobility needs and to safeguard children against the ever-present risk of harm and abuse. None of this comes cheap, and I am pleased that when we are judged by external assessment bodies, we do score well. A baby 'P' or suchlike in Suffolk would necessitate spending on a huge scale to correct failings and I hope we never have to face such a dreadful scenario.

All other Council services have to be funded from the remaining 25%, and that is the main reason why available spending on our roads is so constrained. Almost all of us use our roads and we all know that they are not in the state that we would wish them to be. We do urgent maintenance, but the more routine tasks have to wait ever longer. That is one reason why we have borrowed £20 million which is now starting to be spent on two specific targeted areas – improving our pavements and tackling roadside and property flooding. This extra money will not solve all the problems, but it will make a considerable dent in the backlog of cases awaiting attention and action.

It is an honour for me to represent Blything Division – Saxmundham and the twelve parishes of Blythburgh, Bramfield, Darsham, Dunwich, Kelsale-cum-Carlton, Middleton, Theberton, Thorington, Walberswick, Wenhaston, Westleton and Yoxford. I try to attend as many Parish Council meetings as I can to give a report and to allow Parish Councillors and any parishioners present the opportunity to ask me questions. My contact details are widely disseminated and I always try to reply to emails as quickly as I can. I can't

always promise to fix every person's problems, but I do try, and I feel I work well as part of a team with my Town and Parish Councils, and their Clerks, who are a first-rate body of people.

My elected mandate was renewed a year ago and I have three further years to serve as your County Councillor, until May 2025. I will continue to try to serve you well and to do the best for you all, both individually and collectively.

County Cllr. Richard Smith, MVO May 2022

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Appendix C – Yoxwood Community Woodland

Yoxwood continues to flourish. The small yet dedicated band of volunteers who maintain it have been active throughout the year. Recent projects include the planting of dozens of trees and bushes along the northern edge of the parcel, bordering the River Yox. A new “dry hedge,” made up of pruned and fallen branches held in place by stakes, has been started along the same border and is planned to extend westward as far as the pedestrian bridge.

The pizza oven has been repaired and appears to get regular use. The ride-on mower has been serviced and is used to define and mow paths through the wood and also to trim grass paths in the Allotments. A generous donation of wood chips is being used as mulch around the bases of newly planted trees. Yoxwood continues to source additional trees and shrubs from local nurseries and grant organisations, often at a deep discount or free. A sketch map of Yoxwood indicating the location of many of the trees and shrubs has been created and is occasionally updated.

The Yoxwood Music Event was a great success last June and planning for a similar event this year is now underway. Based on feedback, there will be more food and drink available. However, we need to recruit a few more volunteers to help with food services and site management. Any help from the PC would be much appreciated.

Appendix D – Yoxford Allotment Association

This year has seen us getting back to more of a normal life at the allotments. With restrictions lifting we were able to have work parties and tackle some of the jobs that had been postponed. Also, people felt more confident to work their plots and chat!

We have had various changes over the year and welcomed six new members. Sadly, we have also said goodbye to six members.

Our new treasurer and secretary moved back to the U.S. in the Autumn and has decided to make this a permanent decision. At the same time, I have been out of action when waiting for, and recovering from, open-heart surgery. Therefore, I have been so grateful for Diane Humphrey stepping-in to help. She quickly sprang into action and organised work parties, new members, rent payment etc with great efficiency.

A major job that needed tackling was a vigorous cut back of our boundary hedge. This had grown beyond the simple pruning height and had been neglected with the lockdowns. We hired Russell Pearce to do this, and he has done a superb job. Helen Barrett most kindly offered to use the trimmings for dead hedging and provided a solution for the very prickly Blackthorn. We should be able to maintain the hedge at this new height each winter.

Our A.G.M.s have got out of sync with Covid, therefore we hope that this Summer we will be able to meet-up in person and agree any changes needed.

However, it was nice to have our small annual BBQ and raffle.

I would like to thank members who have regularly turned up to help at work parties.

Special thanks are due to:

Michael Greenberg for shed and site maintenance.

Alastair Northcote-Green for restoring our bench.

Deborah Thompson for organising a manure delivery (and Oak Tree Farm for the manure).

Yoxwood for the use of the sit-on mower.

Chris Michie for mowing our large grass areas.

In April Diane Humphrey was co-opted as Secretary and Deborah Lakis was co-opted as Treasurer. When we hold our AGM in July everyone will be able to vote to elect to these positions.

Joan Steel (Chair)

Appendix E – Yoxford History Group

Compared with last year, there is not so much to report. However, now we are able to meet again we can continue preparing for our next Exhibition on Trades & Occupations which we hope to hold later in the year. Cataloguing has continued through the warmer months when it is more comfortable in the Village Hall and we are making good progress on the Horner and Clarke material.

As the updated Village Website is now completed, the articles written during the past couple of years are now there to be read. It is being considered that we could print these out as booklets on the various topics, for people to purchase. These would be available at G & T's café and add to our funds.

We have not had many enquiries but they will probably increase again particularly via the Village Website.

We have received a copy of a photograph of a Quoits team at Rookery Park from Benhall & Sternfield History Group. It is not known why their donor had this, nor can they identify anyone. We could, periodically or even regularly, post such a photo on our Village Website, to see whether anyone recognises any of the people featured. B & S H G have invited a few of us to meet them, yet to be arranged, to share experiences & knowledge.

We are considering possibilities for fund-raising events now that Covid is less of a threat. We have had no outings during the past 12 months.

Appendix F – St Peter’s Church

National lockdown resumed after a rise in infections at Christmas, and our church building did not reopen for worship until Palm Sunday. Later in the year a new variant of coronavirus, omicron, emerged and restrictions stayed in place until Christmas 21. PCC meetings continued on zoom.

Ministry

Tim held a Lent course for the benefice on zoom, and we were glad to be together again on Palm Sunday, singing outside. Tim re-started family@church, with outdoor singing. In October we had a special ‘Caring for our Planet’ theme. We are very grateful to the benefice team, especially the music group, who support this service with such generosity. Brian continued to hold a weekly service of night prayer on zoom. Harvest service was held at Theberton. Lynn arranged for Jubilate to sing at a special concert of Evensong in October, and we were delighted to hold our Carol service again; no choir, but we asked the community to suggest which carols they wanted, which had a great response.

We are sorry to lose Brian Jolley as he moves to Hllesley and Wilford Benefice, but we wish he and Maureen happiness in their new home.

Events

We held our APCM on 17th May, and were able once again to hold the Flower Festival at the end of May. The theme was Thanksgiving. We were glad to welcome many new flower arrangers, and we raised about £1,000. We joined Eco church in March and have started to complete the various sections to achieve bronze status. In September the PCC conducted a Giving Review and a Vision Day January 2022. In October we were delighted to host the Phoenix project in church: a day for our school to show its creative talent.

Church Fabric and 2019 Quinquennial Review

The Quinquennial Review in August - September 2019 identified a number of issues with the lead roof and spire and also the drainage system. Arrangements made with our architect, Ruth Blackman, to address these issues were disrupted by the COVID pandemic and lockdowns from March 2020. We carried out minor work in 2020, but it was not until May 2021 that we were able, following a planning meeting with our architect, to seek quotations from those required to do the work, not least because of the availability of those concerned. Once quotations were received and availability synchronized, a detailed joint inspection of both roof and drainage was carried out on Tuesday 14th December by our architect and lead experts using a ‘cherry picker’ to provide comprehensive access to the spire and the roof. This allowed not only a thorough examination but also immediate and effective corrective same day repairs to the lead on the spire and roof which has secured it for both the winter and the foreseeable future. This positive outcome more than justified the costs of hiring the equipment and experts. The inspection of the drainage allowed some immediate action to be taken but identified that further, more elaborate, work would be required in spring 2022. (John Sutherland, Churchwarden, March 2022)

Safe-guarding Report 2021

There have again been no reported safeguarding concerns in the parish of Yoxford during 2021. All relevant safeguarding information, and contact details are up to date, and clearly displayed on the notice board just inside the church door. Although 2021 has been a somewhat unusual year, Yoxford, together with other churches within benefice, is now making progress with ongoing safeguarding course demands.

Bell Tower

Bell ringing practices have returned to Thursday evenings at Yoxford. However due to reduced number of available ringers at Yoxford, Theberton and Benhall we have decided to change the first practice of the month (which coincides with Yoxford Parish council meeting) to a Tuesday evening at Theberton when possible. This is to keep all good bells at these towers in good working order. We have a few weddings this year in the three churches mentioned and also will be ringing over the Queens jubilee weekend.

Our thanks to Michelle Pearce- Tower Captain .

Churchyard wildflower meadow

Last autumn, October 2021, the final grass cut was quite late and the usual raking by volunteers did not take place. However other work pruning trees and shrubs has taken place since and the new Oak behind the church, which did not survive, has been replaced with a larger specimen. The pruning of the large Holly trees to improve the sight lines through the churchyard is ongoing.

Appendix G – Yoxford Bowls Club

After the COVID lockdown, we had the bad news that our Chairman, Mac Herrievan, who was also the Greensman and our Secretary, Lyn Pring, have left the club and all their positions. We thanked them for all their past work in the club. Barrie Davis stepped in as Acting Chair, Margie Robinson as Acting Secretary and John Childs came back as the Greensman. After an Extraordinary meeting, these places were voted in and a new committee formed.

Although we were then down to just 20 playing members everyone pulled together and in 2021 we played in the four leagues and also held the Suffolk ladies semi and finals weekend for the county competitions. This was very successful with players from all over Suffolk commenting on our wonderful green.

We purchased a log cabin for a visitors' changing room with money for helping clubs to start up again after being closed down. We lost one log cabin in the latest storm. A replacement will be going up this week thanks to our insurance company.

This year's season has just started and again although low in numbers (21) we have entered the four local leagues.

Our club is run entirely by volunteer members who keep the buildings and grounds in excellent condition, a credit to the village.

Our annual tournament, which is our main fundraising event, is to be held this Sunday 8th May with 24 teams competing.

Three new people joined us on our opening Saturday and we would welcome anyone who would like to come and try this wonderful game.

Margie Robinson
Secretary

Appendix H – Meet Up Tuesday Group

Meet Up Tuesday originally ran in The Griffin pub until the Covid Pandemic hit in March 2020 when it had to stop. It was reintroduced at Yoxford Village Hall in June 2020 (outside) when we had about 8 attendees. This was funded by the ladies themselves, £2.50 a week. This fee was set with the thought that it would cover costs plus pay for a Christmas meal.

Due to Covid figures increasing and further lockdowns we had to stop the Meet Up Tuesday get togethers again. We restarted in April 2021 when we again had about 8 attendees. We have been able to continue since April 2021 and through advertising and word of mouth we now have approximately 15-18 attendees weekly. We also started to offer a meal once a month at a cost of £5 per person (recently increased to £6 per person) which was provided by Hazel Wheeler.

Recently the Parish Council have secured a grant for the group which has resulted in the attendees not having to pay each week and only having to pay £2 each for their meal. It has also been used towards a fish and chip lunch and will further support other special treats – day at the beach, Christmas dinner.

We are planning to have a talk from Connected Communities, Suffolk family carers in the near future. This project aims to support over 65s with things like improving health and wellbeing and tackling loneliness.

I asked the ladies for some comments as to why they enjoy coming to the group and some comments were:

“I love being part of a group and knowing that I will see my friends every week.”

“I feel supported by my friends and know I can call them or speak to them if I have a problem.”

“During Covid we still called each other every Tuesday to keep in touch.”

“It stops me being on my own which I am a lot when I’m at home.”

“It’s given me confidence to go to other groups too. I love coming and seeing everyone.”

“It makes me get up, get dressed and get out.”

“It’s amazing. I love seeing my friends every week and having a chat.”

Ann Lambert and Sheena Tower

May 2022

Appendix I – Yoxford Yapper

The Yapper is gradually getting back to its monthly format after just being the ad hoc “Yappa Extra” for almost two years. It has been a struggle to keep it going but as we move into spring I am making sure there is a monthly edition sent within the first week of the month. There is a good system now for collecting new names as people move into the village with G&T’s being important in passing on email addresses so that new people are immediately able to find out what is going on. With an email list of over 300 we are now capturing a high percentage of the village.

Appendix J - Sing Out Yoxford

After two years our choir has begun to meet again regularly. We are depleted in numbers following the worst of the pandemic but have a committed choir membership who are determined to rebuild. Beyond Covid we have also faced a number of other challenges. Firstly we were unable to continue using the school hall owing to changes in their staffing. We were determined to keep the choir in Yoxford so the Village Hall was our first choice, but owing to clashing times with other groups and a tricky acoustic it was decided that this wasn't a viable space. We approached the church who were more than happy to let us use the space for our rehearsals, so St Peter's is now our new permanent home. We are very happy to be based there in the same space where we do our concerts.

We also faced the challenge of our Musical Director, Gretel having changed her work pattern which meant she could no longer do Monday evenings. This was very difficult as we knew that changing the evening would have consequences. We have changed to a Wednesday which unfortunately has also had an impact on our membership.

However we are still going, still rehearsing, getting our voices back and preparing for a short summer concert. We are seeking to attract new members for the start of our new season in September...covid permitting!