

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Wednesday 22nd March 2023, in the Village Hall at 7.45 pm

Councillors Present

Cllr Irene Mitchell, Chairman.
Cllrs Lizzie Falconer, Iain Lamont, Mary Morrey, Rob Macro and Janice Muckian.
District Councillor Margaret Maybury. 18 members of the public.

Apologies received from Parish Councillors Matt Chick and Michael Sherman.
Cllr Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Council, Cllr Clive Arthey, Babergh District Councillor.

CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Mitchell welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced the Councillors.

THE MINUTES of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 25th May 2022 were agreed as a true record of those proceedings.

MATTERS ARISING: No matters arising from the previous minutes.

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S ANNUAL REPORTS

Councillors Lindsay (Suffolk County Council) and Arthey (Babergh District Council) had sent written reports See Appendices 1 and 2. Any questions should to be directed to them.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT LAVENHAM WARD – COUNCILLOR MARGARET MAYBURY

See Appendix 1. There were no questions from the meeting. Cllr Maybury gave a reminder for the meeting she had set up with a representative of Anglian Water.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL BY THE CHAIRMAN - CLLR IRENE MITCHELL

The final year of this Council started with the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. These were held over 3 days in June, with the Lavenham Big Lunch in the Market Place being selected for national broadcast by the BBC. This lunch was a high spot, complementing other activities organised by the Community Council and the Church. Organising a public event of this size takes incredible commitment, stamina and costs. The celebrations were funded through a grant from the Council, private donations and resources from the Events Fund that we inherited from the former Street Fair Committee. The Lavenham public, however, were very generous and a collection on the day of almost £700 for the Street Fund mitigated some of the costs.

All of this was made possible through the tremendous voluntary effort of residents who deserve a special mention, so our sincere thanks go to: John Perkins, Freddie Tatum, Karen Gough, John Raines, Mary Jackson, Lienne Birch, Sally Reynolds, Bryan Panton, Joy Baker, Mike Hodges, Graham Naylor. And, of course, many others, who toiled for hours sewing what seemed liked miles of bunting.

Just a few months after this celebration the nation mourned the loss of Her Majesty in September, and on that sad occasion, in conjunction with the Church, the Parish Council was ready to conduct our official role with decorum and respect. Trees donated in honour of her late Majesty's Jubilee have now been planted as a group at the southern edge of First Meadow and plaques will be mounted nearby in the forthcoming weeks. This lengthy delay was due to the original proposed sites being found to be unsuitable.

Back to June, the Water Street Car Park and renovation of the Gas Holder were completed on time, and I am delighted to report that National Grid have entered the Gas Holder into National Award Competitions, the results of which will be announced later this year.

In the Autumn Council resolved to address Civic Pride. Whilst this term has a wider meaning than cosmetic changes as to how a place looks, in this context it is being used to bring together a range of small but nonetheless important initiatives to improve the appearance of the village. Refurbishment or replacement of some street furniture throughout the village is one aspect and seasonal planting in the public realm is another. But it's also about encouraging residents to take ownership of problems which are easily solved. For example weed control on property boundaries. An audit has been conducted, and improvements to the most needed areas will commence as soon as the weather allows.

In December, following consultation with hospitality providers in the village, Council decided to switch off street lights overnight, - to avoid the high costs of energy. Although this action was taken to lower the costs there is some evidence that residents appreciate the lights being off overnight.

The first of what we hope will be many examples of greening the village, for our benefit and that of future generations, was completed in February, with a new 350m hedge on the boundary of the Recreation Ground in Bridge Street Road.

Plans to develop the play area at Harwood are underway and we hope to hear in early May on the outcome of an enquiry bid to the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Following County Council approval of the Water Street Traffic Management Scheme, a trial has recently been conducted by Highways to assess whether the scheme can operate safely with reduced signage. The results will be available in the next few weeks. However, it cannot be ignored, this has not been a smooth, slick operation. Road closures elsewhere have occurred during the trial, with diverted traffic using Water Street. The problem is that this part of Suffolk does not have many roads, so when roadworks appear in one area there is inevitably an impact on the others. By observation, this is a fairly frequent occurrence, so perhaps measurements of traffic flows during roadworks elsewhere is a good thing, because it will reflect intermittent reality.

The Community and Parish Councils have worked together to seek external funds to install a hook-up for an emergency external generator for the Village Hall we hope to learn in May that this bid has been successful.

In the last weeks of this Council we'll be considering proposals to replace the kissing gate at the Church.

During each year, your Council scrutinises many Planning Applications and every so often one or two of these generate substantial public interest. A proposal to develop a retirement-living complex on most of the Lavenham Press site in Water Street was not supported by many residents and the Parish Council. This application was eventually refused in October 2022. In the past few weeks I have met with the owner of the Lavenham Press and have been advised the company now intends to remain at the Water Street site. This helpful meeting is viewed as an important step to establishing a positive relationship between the company and the community.

Throughout the year Council has been kept informed of the development of the revised Neighbourhood Plan for our Village, and I want to spend a few moments of your time this evening to stress how important Neighbourhood Plans are. Without them communities such as Lavenham have very little say in what is developed or changed in our built environment and the adjacent countryside. The most obvious example of how important this is – is our close neighbouring village of Long Melford which did not adopt a Plan until very recently. Consequently the Long Melford community was unable to convince the Secretary of State that a very substantial housing development was not supported by large numbers of residents.

Plans for communities, setting out a vision for their future, are not a new invention. The Romans certainly developed their settlements with blueprint plans, to ensure the needs of citizens were catered for in a manageable way. But as needs change so do plans and as we approach the 2nd quarter of the 21st Century plans for this village needed updating. So in 2020 the Parish Council set up LNP2, a Working Group to review the 2016 Neighbourhood Plan. The LNP2 team are a combination of Volunteers and Councillors. Their work started during lockdown in 2020 and they have met pretty much every week, either virtually or face to face, since being established.

In December 2022, the Parish Council approved for public consultation, a draft revision of Lavenham's Neighbourhood Plan. The consultation period ended in February of this year. There was a good response to this consultation exercise, and many comments were received. Each of these comments is being carefully considered to see whether it means that changes should be made to the current draft Plan. New information from the 2021 Census and other sources, which was not available last year, is also being reviewed and will lead to further changes to the current draft. The next draft of the Plan will then be prepared. It will be discussed by the Parish Council at its meeting on 27th April and if approved it will be submitted to Babergh District Council. After the District Council receives the submission version of our Plan, Babergh will organise public consultation on this draft. Details of what happens from May onwards will be set out during the April meeting.

The Council is grateful to the current team of committed Volunteers who have worked tirelessly on behalf of the village for the past 3 years and we pay tribute to: Lyndsey Ramsay, Deborah Sullivan, John Ramsay, Tom Butler, James Soane and Roy Mawford.

At Parish Council meetings there is regularly an audience of residents who observe and question Council, and I want to thank them for their diligence in drawing matters to our attention. Maintaining a village of this size requires a range of tasks to be done on a regular basis, and many of these routine everyday jobs are undertaken by residents who take pride in our village; whether this is litter-picking or reporting road defects, and our thanks go to them. But sometimes it is right to make particular mention of voluntary service and this year, special thanks go to Tina Lamont who has diligently planted, watered and maintained parish planters for some years. Thanks also go to Janey Auchincloss who not only looked after the Jubilee Trees until they were planted, but in conjunction with Jane our Clerk - organised the planting.

The centre of our village in Market Place is often used for events and this requires preparation at the location to allow timely set-up. John Heeks has been the advance party in this process for many years and, as ever, our thanks go to him for his continued support and by way of appreciation to John, I am pleased to report that this year we bought him a brand new set of Parish cones!

The Council started this municipal year with 10 Councillors – one below the maximum number. Along the way Charles Posner and Paul Thompson stood down and we thank them both for their service. We co-opted Janice Muckian in June and Michael Sherman in July. Parish Councils as you know form part of Local Government and, as such, have a Statutory role. But they are also a team of people who offer their service voluntarily for the benefit of the whole community. Despite being understrength we have made significant progress with the programme of Transformational Change I spoke about last year.

Councillors and the Clerk participated in a training programme in May 2022, offered by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils. Through this training it became clear the hybrid style of operating, which depended upon a perpetual pool of Councillors being in a personal position to continually give much more than their statutory role, was becoming extremely difficult to sustain. Not only amongst current Councillors, but also in attracting residents to become Councillors.

Council was also told by residents, sometimes in Public Time at Council meetings, that insufficient attention was being given to issues that matter to them. Other comments shared by Parishioners were their Council 're-invents the wheel' or 'isn't a finisher' or 'takes too long to make decisions'. Council heard this loud and clear and decided to appoint a full-time Clerk for many reasons. These included relieving Councillors of roles that fall within the remit of the Clerk in order to release Councillors to devote more time to Parishioner needs and concerns. But Council also recognised that this would be a major change for the village to absorb and I will make further reference to this in the Finance Report.

Some Transformational changes have already taken place:

- All topics for major discussion and decision- **including spending your money**, are notified in advance to the public on the website. This was commenced in 2021 and with a few hiccups became firmly established in 2022.

- The Council and therefore the public are kept informed of our financial performance on a quarterly basis.
- The website has been refreshed and although there is more to do, it is now regularly updated and we hope Parishioners will find it easier to navigate.
- The forward plan of capital investment requirements has been prepared, drawing together all the schemes and ideas which will make it easier for future Councils to reference.
- A new Clerk has been appointed and I am pleased to announce that Andrew Smith will be joining us on 27th March.

In drawing the Annual Report to a close, the Chairman thanked Mrs Bellward, Clerk to the Council who will retire in May after 43 years of continuous service to Lavenham.

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT ON THE ACCOUNTS

Each year Parish Councils review their financial position, consider spending plans and set a precept for the forthcoming municipal year. This routine exercise must take place in December in order for a precept to be set in January, to meet the deadline set by District Councils. This means that decisions are based on a combination of what is known and what might be expected in the final quarter of the year.

In preparation for this municipal year, 2022-23, Council did not allocate any resources to the Public Realm because of financial uncertainty. Grant-giving to local charities was also paused. The uncertainty arose from the very low level of donation income in 2021-22 & on the expenditure side and inflation, particularly relating to energy. So, throughout the year, Council kept a close eye on spending & made operational adjustments to ensure we remained within budget.

We were not the only organisation in the village reviewing our finances at the end of 2022. The Community Hub assessed that they might have difficulties in 2023 and approached the Council for support, and in December Council agreed to earmark £3000 to reserves for the Hub to call on as needed.

Our spending review for 2022-23 revealed our financial position was such that an under-spending was expected. This provided sufficient confidence to decide to devote £5,000 to the Public Realm, and to earmark sufficient funds to pay for a ballot in May 2023, or at some point in the future, and also a referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan. We also hoped to be able to carry forward a sum and add a little to reserves. This is a good position to be in. See Appendix 4.

On income, the Parish Council receives income from 4 principal sources:

- A grant from Babergh
- Income from Burials
- The Precept and
- Donations through the public car parks

Of these four main sources, only two are fixed and therefore predictable: The Babergh Grant and the Precept. Income from Burials and Car Park donations is variable. Regarding donations, I am very pleased to report we have seen an increase from £3,500 last year to £13,400 this year but this is still some £7,000 below the level we received in 2019-20, prior to the pandemic, and that does not take into account the inflation we have all experienced over this period. For almost two years this source of income disappeared. During that time some of our fixed spending also disappeared, which enabled Council to successfully manage with this reduction. I thought it would be helpful to demonstrate what would have happened this year if the donations were not at the level we have enjoyed. See Appendix 5.

This is an example only of what could have happened within the revenue account if donations and refunds has not been received. We would have had to leave the website in the poor state it was in, ask the new clerk to return to the world of Dickens, the Jubilee would not have been supported by the Council and Lavenham would have been very bleak throughout the Festive period. We would still have kept our heads above water but only by luck and not by judgement.

A key part of the annual financial review is to consider spending need for the following year. We approached this for 2023-24 by securing prices for services where possible, rather than waiting for providers to tell us what they intended to charge. In other words, we took control of the process. In some cases this meant changing contracts. As mentioned earlier, we have now recruited our new full-time clerk and provision for the additional costs have been included.

There can be no doubt that the Spending Plan for 2023-24 is very heavily influenced by the cost of a full-time clerk at a salary level set to attract a quality candidate. Many local Councils have vacancies for clerks for months, and sometimes years, and where this happens Councillors (usually Chairs) take on the role unpaid. That scenario is not appropriate, tenable or acceptable. Other additional costs going forward are increased Employers NI and Pension contributions, training costs for the new Clerk and new Council from May 2023 and rent and rates for an office.

Together, the additional cost of new management arrangements is around £18,000 bringing the amount needed for 2023-24 to around £128,000. So, we built our spending plan based on need and then considered the level of precept required to fit than need.

In setting a financial plan for 2023-24, following a rigorous debate, Council decided that depending on donation income to support regular spending is high risk, to continue to supplement the precept by relying upon donations at this time, given the financial climate of the past few months and the continuing uncertainty arising from world events. Accordingly a precept has been set assuming a zero contribution to income from donations for the forthcoming year and the precept has been set at £100,100. I and my fellow Councillors realise that this decision will attract varying opinion from the people we represent, but we have a responsibility to ensure a sound financial footing going forward, and the route to achieving this is to be certain the fixed income will cover the fixed costs.

Councillors are not fiscal experts and managing Council finances is sometimes challenging, but can also be surprising. We learned only this week of a fortuitous and significant saving on streetlighting costs. The Countywide managed system is only able to apply one of two options for charging, full-on or partial, and because Council decided to switch to partial night lighting mid-way through a year we have only been invoiced for partial night-lighting for the whole year. This means we avoided £2,200 costs this year. But we have been told, sadly, that this is a one-off !

Questions and Responses arising from the Chairman's reports:

As the predicted car park donations income had been £3,500 but actual had been £13,500, if the result was similar in the financial year 2023/24 would thought be given to a lower Council Tax increase?

With some still unknown costs in the coming financial year, ie Business Rates on the Water Street car park, it is difficult at this stage to anticipate what the position will be at 31 March 2024 but the expectation is that now we have set a baseline for known continuing costs, future adjustments to precept will hopefully reflect inflation.

What is the reason for purchasing a camera for The Hub?

The grant to the Hub had been made to cover the costs of a security camera following the robbery in July.

No further questions.

REPORTS BY LOCAL GROUPS

Reports were given by:

Roy Mawford, Chairman of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Development Plan revision group; Doreen Twitchett and Caroline Eves for the Lavenham Good Neighbours and Dementia Alliance; Phil Smith for Lavenham Community Council/Village Hall; Colin Rockall, Friends of Lavenham Library; Carroll Reeve Lavenham CLT; Jane Gosling, Lavenham Society; John Pawsey, Friends of Lavenham Airfield; Mary Morrey, the Church; David Jones, Dyehouse Field Wood; Janice Muckian, Civic Pride.

A written report had been received from Lee Morris for Lavenham Community Hub (2 Lady Street).

PUBLIC MATTERS OF INTEREST

The meeting was reminded of the threat to our bees from the Asian Hornet. These were already infesting Belgium, France and the Channel Islands and it was reported that they had been identified in Rayleigh in Essex.

Responsibility for clearing/cleaning roadways, gutters and pavements was being investigated. Different responsibilities were shared between the County and District Councils and the Parish Council. The street cleaning schedule for which the Parish Council's contractors is responsible will be put on the website.

In answer to another question; it is intended that, with the employment of the full-time Clerk, the up-to-date draft minutes will be available for the Lavenham Life deadline.

Cllr Maybury reminded the meeting of the High Sherriff Awards which she had omitted from her report. This gives out generous funding for projects. Also the Suffolk Community Foundation which can make grants to inclusion groups.

In conclusion, Cllr Mitchell noted that this was the final Annual Parish Meeting of this Council and thanked all her Councillor colleagues for their support over the last 12 months.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.

Appendix 1: Annual report to Lavenham Annual Parish Meeting on 22 March 2023 by Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor

Safer Speed Limits

In both Bildeston and Lavenham I have obtained in principle agreement for moving most roads to 20mph limit from 30mph. Both are progressing though very slowly.

A year and a half ago, the county's Conservative administration rejected my motion to move to a default 20mph limit in all residential areas. Since then, two Conservative run councils – Cornwall and Oxfordshire - have begun to do just this and I am convinced that safer speeds in Suffolk will happen eventually.

Meanwhile there are many roads – including in Hitcham – which are national speed limit but where a safe speed would be no more than 40mph. Again, it will require a change of policy from the County Council before this can be altered.

Water Street

With the HGV one way system on Water Street now in place for more than a year, and widely deemed a success, I hope the sign free trial will also be a success and that funds can be raised to make the already-designed permanent improvements to the street furniture on that street so that it is in keeping with the village.

Floods and drainage backlog

In December 2021 after news of a 10 year drainage work backlog, the County Council decided to allocate £10 million to tackle it over the next 3.5 years. But the impact of climate change plus a long running dearth of investment in drainage and enforcement means that the backlog has grown as fast or faster than it can be fixed. There are a number of long-running flood issues in the Cosford division of which Lavenham is a part.

In December, I requested details of what jobs had actually been done since the extra funding was agreed. Just 17 of the nearly 1000 flood and drain problems on Suffolk county council's list have been completed. The extra £10m that was allocated in Dec 2021 to be spent over 3.5 years is being used for "low hanging fruit" – minor civil works – that are not in this list, and that work has indeed been speeded up.

Food Bank

The Bildeston Food Bank, sadly, continues to be of essential service to local residents, with the cost of heating and food rising. There is now a record high of 30 plus families being supported by it, and the Food Bank has moved into providing heating oil for a few families who simply do not have enough cash to fill their oil tank.

Roundabout

I was pleased during the year to be able to help this community magazine continue in existence by contributing to a new printer.

County Council budget

For the 2023/24 budget the County Council has now formally voted to increase the Council Tax precept by 4%, below the 5% cap they are allowed. An amendment by our political group (Green, LibDem, Independent) to raise it to just below the 5% cap to help fund social care and public transport was voted down. Within that alternative budget, we also asked for £2m for a trial of reducing 30mph speed limits to 20mph in the most dangerous areas of the county, as both Oxfordshire and Cornwall are doing.

£1bn Highways contract awarded to Milestone Infrastructure

The county's Highways maintenance contract with Kier Group is due to expire on October 1st. Kier failed to make the three-strong shortlist for the re-tendered contract which has now been awarded to Milestone, part of venture capital-owned M Group Services. Milestone's road maintenance business was created by buying Swedish group Skanska's UK facilities management arm. It will be responsible for maintenance of roads, pavements, rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

Carbon budget – County not on track

This year's carbon budget shows that the County Council is not on track to reach Net Zero by 2030. Current forecasts show that SCC will still be producing 10,000 tonnes of CO₂ in 2030 – that's still half of what we are emitting now. In addition, the Council's calculations are not accurate enough to develop the full assessment of carbon impact our services have on the environment.

In March the Council reaffirmed its commitment to net zero by 2030, approving a motion put forward by my political group, but only after removing reference to the fact that it was not on track.

Report into SEND Provision: Review & Recommendations

Back in 2021, an independent review of the county's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision found severe problems and recommended a string of measures to improve things.

In January 2023, our Group was informed that all recommendations outlined in the review are now fully completed. Their priorities moving forward continue to be the timeliness of EHC plans, the number of school exclusions, availability of provision, and the rise in demand for SEND services.

Suffolk “Devolution”: Big Deal?

In December 2022, government met with Suffolk County Council to sign an initial county deal. Suffolk will get £16m extra a year (less than has been cut by the Government from the county's funding over the years) but in return must have a directly elected “leader”, to be elected by all the voting public in May 2024.

A public consultation will now follow, asking residents if this is what communities want.

Though some extra money is better than none, Government seems to be passing down few if any real decision-making powers to the Local Authority.

At the same time, during the year, there have been a string of failed Suffolk bids for Government funding – including not a penny for the Bus Back Better bid and two rounds of failed bidding for the Levelling-up Fund.

R Lindsay
March 2023

Appendix 2: District Councillor Annual Report 2023 by Clive Arthey to Lavenham Annual Parish meeting on 22nd March 2023

2023-24 Budget

The 2023-24 budget process was helped by an increase in Council Tax Base and a slightly better than expected Government settlement. Babergh's element of Council Tax has gone up by 3% for 2023-2024, with council house rents increased by 7% in line with Government guidance. Babergh's Council Tax increase is £3.48 per year for an average (Band D) dwelling, with Suffolk County Council up £57.51 (+4%),

Suffolk Police up £14.94 (+6%) and Lavenham PC up £19.71 (+20%) on last year. A band D property in Lavenham now has a total Council Tax bill of £2056.36 which BDC collects and forwards, with 73% going to SCC, 13% to Suffolk Police, 9% to BDC and 5% to Lavenham PC.

A few updates to my annual report last year:

Belle Vue House:

Last week Cabinet agreed the sale of the house and look forward to its renovation.

Planning.

You will remember the Joint Local Plan has been progressing in two parts, with Part 1 concentrating on the various Development Control policies. The Inspectors have agreed the modified document for Part 1 which was published for consultation last week. Work continues on Part 2. Also, congratulations to Roy Mawford and his team on progress with Lavenham's Neighbourhood Plan review.

Council Housing.

We have continued to increase BDC housing stock with acquisitions and new build. A self-referral to the Housing Regulator identified a number of overdue gas, electric and asbestos inspections, along with checks on smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Work continues to complete these, but I am pleased all the outstanding asbestos and carbon monoxide detector checks are now completed.

Climate Change

The 'solar carports' in Sudbury's Kingfisher car park were completed, but unfortunately suffered some damage in recent winds. We are looking into design issues with the manufacturer to prevent similar issues in the future.

Waste and Recycling

We have been concentrating on reducing contamination of recyclables in the blue bins. As markets for recyclables become ever more demanding it is important we have the right materials in the blue bins and that they are clean, dry and loose.

Being the end of this Council's term, the rest of my report highlights some of our achievements over the last four years. There is a detailed end of term report on the Council's website.

Covid

£43.8m in grants to 8,500 businesses, including grants to village halls.

Lock-down accelerated our digital development, moving to much more online working and service delivery.

Environment

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils were the first rural authorities in the UK to commission a full tree canopy survey.

Green waste subscribers increased by 17% to nearly 17,000.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan approved to identify and support schemes across the district.

Leisure Centres

£2m new pool in Hadleigh

£2.4m on Kingfisher leisure centre improvements in Sudbury.

CIL

£18m collected.

£3m spent with another £3m allocated.

Provided significant funding for projects in Cockfield, Great Waldingfield and Lavenham, including the new car park in Water Street.

Major contributions to support Gainsborough House and St Peters church in Sudbury.

S106 and grants – district wide.

£227k in S106 to support 18 projects.

£350k awarded in capital grants to support 37 projects.

Further support to 261 voluntary, community and social enterprise groups.

Minor grants to 33 projects.

Planning

It has been an interesting and demanding four years in my role as Cabinet Member for Planning and I am presenting my final reports to the Babergh Council meeting this evening.

The JLP was approved for submission in late 2020 and the Part 1 modification document is now out to consultation.

We have completed annual reviews of our CIL Framework document to ensure it keeps pace with changing infrastructure demands and delivery. Latest review to Council for approval today.

Our new Planning Enforcement Plan also goes to Council for approval today.

Development Management statistics for 'non-major' applications, including householder applications, are currently at 96.6% in time, and our appeals success is running at 98.6% for majors and 99.2% for non-majors.

Building Control market share is currently 73%.

Finally, it has been a pleasure to represent you over the last four years and I thank you all for your support.

Appendix 3: District Councillor's Annual Report to Lavenham Annual Parish Meeting on 22 March 2023 – Cllr Margaret Maybury**Lavenham Ward**

The last twelve months has seen a variety of highlights and lowlights across the Ward with financial gains and perhaps, losses, incurred.

The coalition cabinet for Babergh came and went with alterations across the board. Controversial appointments last May ended with no Conservative experience being used as Chair of a committee or within the Cabinet. This situation has continued.

The Cabinet system was retained after a Council vote with a series of policies written but perhaps not put to good use. Public lavatories for instance (a definite public need) have never been refurbished as my policy of 2018 requested. However, Lavenham Parish Council saw the light and refurbished theirs; a project which did not go smoothly but hopefully is now rectified.

Member allowances were increased to £6,000 pa; Cabinet, Chairman of Council and Committee Chairman allowances were raised as was officer pay. Council tax was raised by 1.99% pa; rents for our tenanted properties was raised by 7%. All-in-all not a good outcome for the cost-of-living crisis hit residents as costs to residents have remained high.

Ward success has always risen to the top with financial support funding being awarded for "warm spaces"; CIL payments being received by the individual parishes; plus various external and internal grants being gained for worthy causes throughout the Lavenham Ward.

I have been delighted to use my Locality Budget for good causes around the Ward which benefit a cross section of the community. These included this year, a kitchen refurbishment for the Bowls and Social Club at Great Waldingfield to help them continue their community works; installation of accessible gates at Branchlines, Great Waldingfield, for suitable entrances to the woodland which enables all to enter and enjoy nature around the wood, ponds, orchard and green space beside the impressive church of St Lawrence, Great Waldingfield; and the incredibly successful Community Pantry at Great Waldingfield, which, in conjunction with the Rector, the Reverend Faith Marsden, I researched and set up the Friday event. The Community Pantry attracted other benefactors too and the most amazing volunteers who each week provide active support to others.

The joy of the Seventieth Jubilee Celebrations of HM Queen Elizabeth II was celebrated Ward-wide with street parties; beacon lighting; choir singing; church bell ringing; and much other partying. I was delighted to attend over ten events in three days to share with all the joy of the occasion.

For Great Waldingfield a low light and a great sadness was the unforeseen deaths of a mother and daughter in tragic domestic circumstances. The village has tried to overcome the tragedy but it still lingers in the hearts and minds of residents and will for the foreseeable future.

The death of HM Queen Elizabeth II was felt throughout the Ward. Suitable recognition of the event led to books of condolence being set up throughout the parishes, due reverence paid and community sharing of grief.

Personally, I am grateful to the Ward for the most compassionate support I received on the death of my husband at the beginning of the year and since. Thank you to you all.

I always like to recount to others (any that will listen from near and far) the depth of community spirit within the Ward, the help shown to a neighbour and the long list of social projects which cover the Ward's needs and more, which has led to recognition in the form of an honorary award of the British Empire Medal for one Lavenham resident, plus an invitation to the Coronation of King Charles III for the same resident.

Lavenham Ward is always well represented at national and local events, a feat I am very proud of. Well done to all.

M Maybury
March 2023

Appendix 4 Financial Position

INCOME SOURCE	Planned	Predicted Outturn	Surplus
Precept	87433	87434	1
Grants LA cleansing	9730	10374	644
Burials	5500	5980	480
Car Park donations	8000	13405	5405
Donations		670	670
Interest received		721	721
Supplier Refunds	637	4533	3812
Miscellaneous		531	531
Totals	111300	123648	12348
EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	Planned	Predicted Outturn	YE position
PWLB repayment	7520	7520	0
Staff	24250	15691	-8559
Audits, Payroll services & employer costs	2500	5966	3466
Administration	8750	6857	-1893
Cost of democracy[1]	600	4800	4200
Public Realm [2]	30500	32384	1884
Cemetery Management	1600	1455	-145
Street lighting Maintenance & Energy	4000	4107	107
Car Parks, Public Facilities	20930	18379	-2551
Website development	1000	250	-750
Parish Office equipment	2000	2000	0
support to 2 Lady Street [3]	0	3750	3750
Grants	2750	2750	0
Christmas lighting and celebrations	2700	2480	-220
energy Water Street Car Park inc EV	1200	587	-613
Business rate provision	250	0	-250
contingency	750	0	-750
	111300	108976	2324
Predicted Outturn Notes			
[1] includes £5,000 for replacement and refurbishment of street furniture			
[2] costs of a ballot in May 2023 and a referendum on LNP2			
[3] includes a grant of £750 for a security camera and an earmarked reserve of £3000			
Interim Year End Position			
Income surplus	12348		
underspends	2324		
total surplus	<u>14672</u>		

Appendix 5: Financial Position without Donations

INCOME SOURCE	Planned	Predicted Outturn	Surplus
Precept	87433	87434	1
Grants LA cleansing	9730	10374	644
Burials	5500	5980	480
Car Park donations			
Donations			
Interest received		721	721
Supplier Refunds			
Miscellaneous		531	531
Totals	102663	105040	2377
EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	Planned	Predicted Outturn	YE position
PWLB repayment	7520	7520	0
Staff	24250	15691	-8559
Audits, Payroll services & employer costs	2500	5966	3466
Administration	8750	6857	-1893
Cost of democracy[1]	600	4800	4200
Public Realm [2]	30500	32384	1884
Cemetery Management	1600	1455	-145
Street lighting Maintenance & Energy	4000	4107	107
Car Parks, Public Facilities	20930	18379	-2551
Website development			
Parish Office equipment			
support to 2 Lady Street [3]	0	3750	3750
Grants			
Christmas lighting and celebrations			
energy Water Street Car Park inc EV	1200	587	-613
Business rate provision	250	0	-250
contingency	750	0	-750
	102850	101496	1354
Predicted Outturn Notes			
[1] includes £5,000 for replacement and refurbishment of street furniture			
[2] costs of a ballot in May 2023 and a referendum on LNP2			
[3] includes a grant of £750 for a security camera and an earmarked reserve of £3000			
Interim Year End Position			
Income surplus		2377	
underspends		1354	
total surplus		<u>3731</u>	