



# STRATFORD ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

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## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MONDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2024 at 1930hrs at the Village Institute, Higham Road

### Minutes

#### PRESENT:

Cllr R Barrell - Chairman  
Cllr W Davies  
Cllr D Robinson  
Cllr L Shead  
Cllr G Robinson  
Cllr M Pearce  
District Cllr J Ward

#### IN ATTENDANCE:


F Hall - Clerk

20 Members of the Public

- 1. Apologies for Absence.** Apologies received from County Cllr Georgia Hall, Peter Dawson, Karen Bilner, David Umfreville, Diane Sexton, Philip Wyncoll, Norman Woodard, Brian Such and Rev Manette Crossman.
- 2. Approval of Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023.** The minutes of the APM held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman. Proposed by Cllr Davies and seconded by Cllr D Robinson, all in favour.
- 3. Cllr Roger Barrell – Chairman’s Report, Stratford St Mary Parish Council.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. The Parish Council currently have 3 vacancies for Councillors – if anyone would like to apply then please email the clerk – [parishcouncil@stratfordstmary.org.uk](mailto:parishcouncil@stratfordstmary.org.uk).
- 4. Report on Parish Council Accounts from the Clerk.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. A Parishioner asked if there were plans to raise the fee for the lease of car parking spaces by Orchard Barns. The Chairman advised that the management of the grounds will be handed over to the Village Institute Committee, so this is something for them to consider. The expenditure for the purchase of new bins and noticeboards was raised, the PC have been concerned about expenditure and have been trying to maintain assets but the bins in question were rotten and the noticeboards needed to be replaced. The Chairman introduced the Councillors as we have had some new Councillors join the PC as well as a new Chairman and Vice Chair being appointed last May.
- 5. Reports from County Councillor Georgia Hall, Suffolk County Council and District Councillor John Ward, Babergh District Council.** County Cllr Georgia Hall sent apologies for absence - the full report is attached in Appendix A.  
District Cllr John Ward – full report is attached in Appendix A. A Parishioner questioned how much of the Council tax goes to Babergh – Cllr Ward advised that 74% is for Suffolk County Council, 9% Babergh, 13% Police and Crime Commission and 4% is the Parish Council Precept. Grants from the

*R Barrell* 28/4/25

- Government have been reduced over the years which then has an impact on budget.
6. **Report from Stratford St Mary Primary School.** Mrs Bilner sent her apologies for absence, no report received to read out at the meeting, but a report was sent in afterwards and is attached in Appendix A.
  7. **Report from Langham Hall Estate.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. Charlie will notify the PC of any clay pigeon shoots so residents can be made aware of them. They are still committed to no shots in the high season and the number of days limited to no more than 20-25 a year.
  8. **Report from Stratford St Mary Community First Responders.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. Peter Dawson sent his apologies for absence and the Chairman read out the report.
  9. **Neighbourhood Watch.** Cllr Davies advised that he has placed an article in the Quartet – the village has participated in Neighbourhood Watch for the best part of 30 years but over the years it has declined, with very few residents being involved in the scheme possibly because SSM has a low crime rate. Cllr Davies asked if the scheme is something that villagers would still like to be involved in. Parishioners attending advised that this should continue in the village – they felt the notices on the lampposts are a visible deterrent and raises awareness. Proposal from a Parishioner to have a Neighbourhood Watch Whats App group to communicate crime and any concerns about crime. Also, communication via village Facebook group. More volunteers are needed to help with this scheme – If anyone is interested then please contact Cllr Davies.
  10. **Report from Stratford St Mary Ramblers.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. David Umfreville sent his apologies for absence and the Chairman read out the report.
  11. **Report from the Stratford St Mary Community Trust.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. The Chairman read out the report received from the Chairman of the SSM Community Trust Brian Such. A report was also given for The Dedham Educational Foundation Trust.
  12. **Report from Bowls Club.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. David Umfreville sent his apologies for absence and the Chairman read out the report.
  13. **Report from Stratford St Mary Chapel.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. Philip Wyncoll sent his apologies for absence and the Chairman read out the report.
  14. **Report from the Parochial Church Council.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. Rev Manette Crossman sent her apologies for absence and the Church Warden Sandy Ranson read out the report. Church Clock – the clock stops when birds nest, so they are trying to raise funds for a project to purchase wire mesh to stop the birds from nesting. Also raising funds for maintenance of heritage stone works on the outside of the building which is eroding away.
  15. **Report from the Village Institute Committee.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. Emily Barrell Chair of the Village Institute Committee presented the report. Emily is the new Chair of the Committee and thanked the previous Chair Bill Davies for his 25 years length of service in this role.
  16. **Report on Community Speed watch.** Cllr Davies advised that in 2023 there had been 77 sessions, an hour at a time of speed watch completed. They recorded 17,035 vehicles and 524 were speeding – so average 3%. In comparison in 2022 there were 85 sessions, an hour at a time of speed watch completed. 18,703 vehicles were recorded and 843 were speeding – so average 4.5%. There are 7 people on the team and the minimum needed is 6. The team use 4 different locations which the police decide on. Speed watch is there to remind people that the speed limit is 30mph. If anyone would like to join, then please contact Cllr Davies.
  17. **Report on Village Life.** The full report is attached in Appendix A and the report was read out by Sandy Ranson.
  18. **Report from Orchard Barns.** The full report is attached in Appendix A. Diane Sexton sent her apologies for absence and the Chairman read out the report.

  
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**19. Report from Pylon campaign.** Luke Marshall from the Pylon Campaign Group gave an update on the National Grid Norwich to Tilbury project. Luke talked about the huge impact that the pylons will have if the proposed project goes ahead.

Approx 3 kilometres of trenching will go across the AONB which is about 100 acres of farmland and there could be approx. 50 acres of additional land needed for works whilst it is going on. Approx 60/70% of Langham Hall Estate which is about 120 acres will be impacted. Approx another 15 kilometres underground either side of the estate which is about 500 acres and an additional 200 for works will be needed. At least 1 kilometre of hedge in the AONB will be impacted and 5 kilometres of hedge either side. Glebe Farm and Black Brook - nearly 1,000 trees will need to be chopped down for the works. National Grid are planning 4 tunnelling areas which will mean machines running 24 hours a day causing a noise impact.

Within Stratford St Mary the biggest concern is risk of flooding if National Grid add any large volumes of materials into the floodplains – Luke recommends that the PC puts this in their consultation response. Access will also be a big impact for SSM – the field at the top of Gun Hill on the right-hand side and all those fields will be taken up with the majority of the works, storage compounds for trucks and machinery etc and this will be somewhere in the region of 20-40 acres of land. Main access to these works will be coming in off that road and according to National Grids access plans the vehicles will be turning off at Colchester and coming back on themselves and not coming through SSM but there is no guarantee that this will be followed.

Rosie Pearson is leading the central pylon campaign and they are still pushing for the offshore grid approach. There is another option of HDVC underground which instead of using automated current uses direct current and gives a lot more power down the cables and it's fully underground. Any responses given in the non-statutory consultation are not taken into account, so it is very important that as many people as possible respond to the Statutory consultation and Parish Council responses are critical. Responses to the Statutory consultation need to be submitted by the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2024. More information regarding the Pylon campaign can be found on [www.pylonseastanglia.co.uk](http://www.pylonseastanglia.co.uk).

A Parishioner asked if National Grid went for an underground option would the land eventually be restored. Charlie Warburton commented that any land disturbed would take approx. 10/15 years to recover. If underground option was opted for then along with soil disturbance there would also be permanent structures left on ground like access chambers / buildings and it is not known what these would look like. Works could take between 6-18 months to complete. Parishioners commented that Strickmere is the lowest part of the village so is a floodplain, there could be a devastating affect on otters coupled with flooding and rain could take the earth that comes out of the trenchers into the river causing silting.


The PC will be holding a meeting on Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> of April at the Parish Room to discuss the pylons and James Cartlidge MP is holding a public meeting on Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1900hrs at Hintlesham Village Hall to discuss. National Grid are also holding public information events at Copdock Village Hall on Wednesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 11am-4pm and at Lawford Venture Centre on Saturday May the 4<sup>th</sup> 11am-4pm.

**20. Proposal for creating a pavement on the road to Dedham – The Parish Council would like to ask residents for feedback on this.** There is an increasingly number of people walking from SSM to Dedham and because there is no pavement this is dangerous. Parishioners commented that a path would be a good idea so the PC will look into options.

**21. Parishioners Questions and Answers.** A Parishioner asked if the new dog waste bin in Strickmere is being used and if it has solved the problem of dog fouling on someone's drive – The Chairman advised that the dog waste bin is not there to solve the problem of dog fouling on someone's drive but is there to encourage the disposal of dog waste and the bin is being used regularly.

A complaint was raised of dog waste being put in the bus shelter bin. Cllr Robinson informed the meeting Babergh District Council have changed the regulations and wrapped dog waste can disposed of in all wastebins.

Condition of the roads in SSM was raised – The meeting was advised that these are the responsibility of Suffolk County Council. The PC consistently report issues to SCC but they don't have the budget to carry out all the much needed repairs.

  
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A Parishioner asked about grass cutting and the PC are looking into the possibility of paying for interim cuts in between when Babergh cut the grass. Babergh's schedule for grass cutting is every 6 weeks and they advised that they do not have the capacity to do any additional cuts even if the PC were to pay. The PC is actively exploring other avenues.

The PC has called an extraordinary meeting on Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1930hrs at the Parish Room and the AGM of the PC is on Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1930hrs at the Parish Room.

**Meeting closed at 2139hrs**

  
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# **Appendix A**

- 1. Chairmans Report**
- 2. Parish Council Accounts Report**
- 3. Suffolk County Council Report**
- 4. District Councillors Report**
- 5. Stratford St Mary Primary School Report**
- 6. Langham Hall Estate Report**
- 7. Stratford St Mary Community First Responders Report**
- 8. Stratford St Mary Ramblers and Bowls Club Report**
- 9. Stratford St Mary Community Trust Report**
- 10. Stratford St Mary Chapel Report**
- 11. Parochial Church Council Report**
- 12. Stratford St Mary Village Institute Committee Report**
- 13. Village Life Report**
- 14. Orchard Barns**

## Stratford St Mary Parish Council 2024 Annual parish meeting report

This parish council was appointed last May when there were insufficient candidates to have an election. We currently have positions for two further councillors if any one is interested in being involved in the community.

Perhaps this is a good opportunity to explain the role of the Parish Council. The Parish Council manage and are responsible for various assets and functions in the village. These include a number of the street lights, bus shelters, sign boards, bins, life rings, litter picking, and some areas of grass cutting. The Council being local is able to liaise closely with the district and county authorities to ensure their elements of responsibility are maintained such as roads, pavements and most of the grass cutting. Councillors volunteer to take on various roles for the Parish including tree warden and footpath representative. This involve liaising with Babergh and Suffolk County council who are ultimately responsible for maintenance, upkeep and authorisation for changes.

Some councillors have been giving up Sunday mornings to organise working parties to tidy up over grown footpaths around the village and the council intends on purchasing various pieces of equipment to help with this.

The council is also looking to supplement the grass cutting schedule with Babergh to try to see if areas such as the grass around Kenyon close could be maintained closer to a village green.

On top of the normal running costs for the maintenance of the village the council has also replaced the two notice boards, replaced two dog waste bins and bought a further speed sign for the village.

Speeding and unsuitable traffic are the biggest complaints around the village. Currently the council are in correspondence with Colchester City Council over the traffic and working hours from Co Parts towards Black Brook in Dedham. They are also liaising with Babergh planning department over traffic for the new water main using the village. Local farm traffic continues to cause issues and we keep in close contact with the local farmers to see what can be done to mitigate this.

Dog fouling has fortunately not been a major issue in the village, with most dog owners being responsible and picking up after their animals. There are a number of areas where the council have felt it necessary to remind people that they need to clean up after their pets and three signs have been purchased and can be moved around the village when necessary.

Opportunity to thank Faye, our new Clerk, for all her efforts in keeping the wheels of the Parish Council oiled and functioning. Also to thank all our councillors for their efforts through the year.

## **FINANCE REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024**

Income from the last financial year 2023-2024 has been generated by a Precept of £16,100. Other sources of income have been a VAT refund of £849.44 and interest earned amounted to £286.21. The Parish Council also received a total of £1,015.95 as a cleansing grant from BDC relating to litter picking, £150 compensation from Santander and £500 from the County Councillors locality budget. Orchard Barns have once again paid £400.00 as the annual fee for use of the VI carpark spaces. Total Income received was £19,301.60.

| <b>Expenditure for 2023-2024</b>               |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>General Admin</b>                           | <b>£8,903.26</b>  |
| <b>S137 Donations</b>                          | <b>£1,774.59</b>  |
| <b>Playground</b>                              | <b>£282.47</b>    |
| <b>Village Maintenance</b>                     | <b>£5,661.10</b>  |
| <b>Subscriptions/Training/Publications</b>     | <b>£1,113.44</b>  |
| <b>Institute Hire</b>                          | <b>£156.00</b>    |
| <b>Village Lighting / maintenance contract</b> | <b>£704.65</b>    |
| <b>Insurance</b>                               | <b>£482.61</b>    |
| <b>Rent for the River Garden noticeboard</b>   | <b>£25.00</b>     |
| <b>Misc</b>                                    | <b>£2,928.81</b>  |
| <b>Stationery</b>                              | <b>£173.93</b>    |
| <b>Dog/litter bins and emptying</b>            | <b>£652.43</b>    |
| <b>Emergency planning</b>                      | <b>£120.00</b>    |
| <b>Speed gun expenses &amp; signage</b>        | <b>£0</b>         |
| <b>Parish Election Costs</b>                   | <b>£144.91</b>    |
|  |                   |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>                       | <b>£23,123.20</b> |

On Expenditure the Parish Council used £1,136.83 to replace 2 x bins, 1 at the River Garden and 1 at the Weir, extra money was spent on training for new Councillors, Chairman and Vice Chairman, £587.82 was used to replace 2 dog waste bins and £2,680.19 was used to replace the noticeboards at The Anchor and the Weir.

The Parish Council made its annual donations to the Parochial Church Council, Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Project, River Stour Trust, Neighbourhood Watch and Suffolk Preservation Society. Total donations were £1,774.59.

The accounts for 2023-2024 will shortly be audited via an internal audit and relevant documentation will be issued once complete. All documents once issued, will be available to view on the Stratford St Mary Parish Council website and available from the Clerk upon request.

This year we have not been in receipt of any new funds via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), but the amount of £2,373.05 carried over from 2023-2024 has been earmarked to go towards the cost of repainting 15 of the lamp posts owned by the Parish Council within the village.

In Januarys meeting this year, the Parish Council agreed to set the precept again for the next financial year (2024/25) at £16,100 and will use money in the Parish Councils reserves to cover any cost increases.

Faye Hall  
Parish Clerk  
Stratford St Mary Parish Council

## Samford Report 2023-2024

### April 23 - 99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school place on National Offer Day

99.18% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 95.78% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 7,056 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2023.

Families who applied online can log on to the Admissions Portal from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second-class post today (17 April 2023).

### May 23 - Revised policy agreed to protect Suffolk's water supplies

Suffolk County Council Cabinet has today (16<sup>th</sup> May) agreed to a revised infrastructure policy to support water security in the region.

As part of its focus on adapting to a changing climate, Cabinet members agreed a revision to the Energy Infrastructure Policy to cover future projects needed to protect and maintain water resources, including reservoirs, pipelines, and water recycling plants.

This new policy addition lays out how future water infrastructure projects will be managed and the council's role with stakeholders, such as the water companies, Ofwat and the Environment Agency. It also sets out how the council will recover the money it has to spend in the planning process for infrastructure projects.

### June 23 - Suffolk Fire Service to bring control room back to the County

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has announced plans to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk.

Since October 2011, Suffolk has shared a control room with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service in Huntingdon. The joint project has worked well, saving both fire services money and enabling greater cross-border resource sharing.

However, the company behind a project to deliver a new IT system, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This, in addition to advancements in technology, has led to the decision to bring fire control back into the county by the end of 2024.

The proposed new control centre will be brought to Suffolk County Council's Cabinet for approval in September 2023.

### July 23 - Councils set out concerns as public consultation opens for Norwich to Tilbury proposals

National Grid has opened its consultation to anyone wishing to comment on its Norwich to Tilbury proposal, previously known as East Anglia Green. This is an eight-week non-statutory consultation period which closes on 21 August 2023.

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The project will see a new 400kV electricity transmission line built between Norwich and Tilbury, running a distance of 111 miles. It will be made up mostly of overhead lines and pylons, along with some underground cables and a new substation.

The new consultation reveals the route for the pylons, passing through Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. It shows the line will run underground through the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the Essex-Suffolk border.

The consultation is open to residents, landowners, businesses and any individuals or groups that may be interested in commenting on the revised proposals. Consultees can participate online or via face-to-face events.

- Essex County Council, Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council are also being consulted on the proposals as statutory consultees. All three councils have already raised concerns to the initial consultation undertaken last year.

### August 23 - Formal opening of £1.3 million Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service training centre

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Training Centre at Wattisham Flying Station near Stowmarket has recently undergone a £1.3 million upgrade.

It now boasts a tactical firefighting facility, which uses real fire and an LPG-fired facility to simulate incidents firefighters may be faced with.

The most recent addition is the modular office complex, which features additional classrooms and welfare facilities for all delegates and staff.

The centre was formally declared open at the annual base families' day on Thursday August 24 by Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Jon Lacey of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, and Colonel Toby R Moore MBE, Station Commander, Wattisham Flying Station.

### September 23 - Inflation, SEND school transport and care costs contribute to council's predicted overspend

Inflation, school transport for children with SEND, and looking after children in care are the main factors for SCC forecasting to spend £22.3m over its £688.1m budget for this year.

This is a similar story for many councils across the country, due to higher demand for their services, inflation remaining higher than expected for longer, and interest rates rising to levels not forecast by financial markets.

Recent research by the County Councils Network suggests that England's largest councils will need to make at least £1bn in savings to balance their current 2023/24 budgets.

A BBC investigation also reported that councils expect to be £5.2bn short of balancing budgets by April 2026, the average council facing a £33m predicted deficit by 2025-26.

## Samford Report 2023-2024

Suffolk County Council projects a 4% overspend (£29.3m), to be partially offset by an additional Section 31 grant from Government, and additional income from the pooling of business rates with the district and borough councils in Suffolk, totalling £7m.

### October 23 - New highways services arrive in Suffolk as multi-million-pound partnership goes live

The new contract, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will deliver highway projects and improvements across Suffolk for up to 20 years, including maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, improving drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting and much more.

- Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, was awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract back in February and since then has been working with Suffolk County Council to mobilise the new contract ahead of it commencing on 1 October.

When seeking a new highways partner, the county council wanted a keener focus on delivering greater social value, building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment, using local skills and talent, and giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector.

With this in mind, the new partnership was built around six key contract objectives, which will form the basis for all that Suffolk Highways delivers going forward. These objectives are:

- - Collaboration and Partnership
  - Social Value
  - Environment and Net Zero Carbon
  - Customer Communication and Engagement
  - Commercialism and Enterprise
  - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

### November 23 - Cabinet approved £10 million new funding to resurface residential roads

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting (7<sup>th</sup> November), Cabinet approved an extra £10 million to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk.

The funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual road maintenance budget but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads.

- Over recent years, the county council has recognised the importance of improving roads for residents, this new proposal follows the successful £21 million contribution towards the resurfacing of 1,000 miles of road between 2017 and 2021, and more recently the committed £21 million between 2021 – 2025 to increase pavement maintenance, deliver drainage improvement schemes and repair road signs.

It is hoped that the extra £10 million boost to resurface some local roads, minor rural roads and urban cul-de-sacs would result in a reduction of new potholes, which in turn will reduce the overall financial burden on the council's emergency and reactive repair budgets. Between 2020 and 2023, 2

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out of 3 pothole repairs were carried out on local roads, minor rural roads, and urban cul-de-sacs. During that period, more than half of all defects reported by the public were on these types of roads.

The extra investment will make use of more sustainable materials such as warm mix asphalts that have a lower CO2 footprint than traditional hot mix asphalts and which include recycled materials to reduce raw material use; resulting in a more positive impact on Suffolk's environment.

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### December 23 - Government backs A12 road improvements with funding commitment

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The government has confirmed (on 31<sup>st</sup> October) funding for a transformative package of improvements as part of Suffolk County Council's A12 Major Road Network scheme.

- The scheme will see upgrades to the key roundabouts from the A14 at Seven Hills, east of Ipswich, north to the A1152 at Woods Lane, and a new dual carriageway section replacing the existing single carriageway bottleneck at Seckford Hall between the B1438 and B1079.

It will also deliver improvements to bus links and walking and cycling connections to reduce the issue of severance for communities on either side of the A12 – for example, where the A12 separates houses from local employment and retail areas.

The Department for Transport has committed to funding up to £ 54 million of the scheme's estimated £ 64 million total cost. The remainder of the cost will be funded by local development contributions, including from Sizewell C and Brightwell Lakes.

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### January 24 - More public money for adult and children's care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books

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In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county's most vulnerable residents.

- £74 million extra needed to protect the most vulnerable over two years
- £64.7 million savings to be made over two years
- Council set to reduce workforce, services and use savings

As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children's services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children's care, special educational needs and disabilities and home to school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The two-year savings proposals, which have been [published on the council's website](#) today, include:

- £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
- £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme, which has focused on reducing demand for more expensive social care options by boosting people's independence and ability to stay well for

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- longer through innovative methods including cutting edge care technology. This transformation programme has already saved £30.7 million over the last six years
- £0.5 million of savings by stopping core funding to Art and Museum sector organisations. To assist with the transition, £528,000 of COVID recovery money will be made available to Arts and Museum sector organisations for 2024/25 which will fully cover the funding reduction for one year.
  - £140,000 of savings by centralising Suffolk Archives to The Hold and closing the branches in West and East Suffolk. In February 2023, the council committed £3.4m to relocate the West Suffolk Archives branch to the proposed Western Way development. Remaining at its current location would have required over £5 million to protect the historic records and meet modern archive standards. West Suffolk Council has since decided not to progress with the Western Way development, ending that opportunity. Centralising the three branches into one brings Suffolk in line with the majority of archive services across the country and is better value for taxpayers' money.
  - £15.9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024/25 budget.

### Feb 24 Public consultation on Suffolk County Council's proposed devolution deal starts on 18<sup>th</sup> March

A 10-week public consultation on our proposed devolution deal with the Government will start on 18<sup>th</sup> March and run through until 26<sup>th</sup> May. The consultation will be in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any residents can complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori. The consultation will be available through our website [www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution) and social media. There will also be media coverage highlighting the consultation.

# Brett Vale Annual Parish Meetings 2024

## Babergh District Councillor's Report

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### **New Administration**

The Green, Independent and Liberal Democrat groups agreed to power-share at Babergh for the next four years after no party achieved an overall majority in the elections last May. Part of the agreement was to have a rotating leadership, with a change each May. Cllr David Busby was elected leader for the first year. Unfortunately, he had to step down in September and take a break from council business due to health issues, with me acting up temporarily into the leader's role. I will be handing over to Cllr Deborah Saw next month.

We set out our initial vision and priorities for the next four years and then held a major engagement exercise with residents, communities, businesses and other stakeholders and partners – so they could tell us whether they think we are focusing on the right issues. It was a very useful exercise which confirmed that, for the most part, we have got the priorities right, but we did make some changes. The priorities are grouped into three themes:

- Revitalised and improved environment
- Thriving economy
- Resilient communities

### **State of the District reports**

In October, we published our State of the District report, which provides a treasure trove of useful data on issues such as housing, environment, health and wellbeing, and the local economy. Insight from these reports is also helping influence future council priorities. The report is available on our website.

### **Planning**

In November, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils formally adopted part 1 of our Joint Local Plan - the blueprint for the districts' future development until 2037. This followed examination by the inspectors over the Summer, followed by their assessment that the plan is sound. It is proving to be very effective – not only in giving clear guidance to developers, our planning officers and planning committee members, but also in defending appeals against planning decisions. Part 2 is now well underway.

We are also progressing a local listed building consent order to enable owners to install energy efficiency measures, including solar panels, in listed buildings, without the need for individual listed building consent.

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

The number of parishes with Neighbourhood Plans is steadily increasing with 17 adopted now and another 21 are in progress. These have considerable weight as they form part of our planning policy

- and, despite some cynicism, planning decisions are made on the basis of what a neighbourhood plan says, as Assington and Leavenheath can attest.

## CIL

Significant amounts of CIL continue to be collected from developers, with much going back to communities to fund community projects including play areas, cycle paths and village hall improvements, in addition to funding major infrastructure such as school extensions.

## EV charging points in council car parks

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are installing 28 new electric vehicle chargers in our car parks, financed by a government grant. The government is encouraging councils to do this. This has proven to be controversial with many people questioning whether there is the demand. It may well be that we are ahead of the curve on this and, if it proves that demand is not as expected, we will return some of the bays to general parking until demand increases.

## NG Pylons

- The pylons saga grinds on.

The Norwich to Tilbury project non-statutory consultations took place last year and the 10-week statutory consultation started on 10<sup>th</sup> April.

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk continue to oppose the plans and we have significant concerns, particularly over the impact on our residents and the environment. We continue to state our preference for a coordinated offshore grid as it provides the best technological solution for connecting the North Sea wind farms off the East Anglian coast with those further north, the interconnectors to the continent and delivery of the energy to London and the South-east. We don't believe this is being given the serious consideration it deserves but we are aware that the current costs mean that it is very unlikely to happen. However, in the light of the recent NG ESO Review's assessment of underground HVDC we will look at this to determine how we respond to the consultation.

The Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement project is progressing towards its Development Consent Order. We have continued to submit formal opposition to the proposals, with concerns with the site of the Dedham Vale East CSE compound and the overhead section between the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley underground sections.

## Community support

We continue with our varied and important programme of grants and support activities for our communities and residents. This work is often under the radar as it is not a statutory service, but it is valued greatly and makes a huge difference to many. We have:

- Provided support for residents struggling with the cost of living crisis.
- Provided activities to help tackle loneliness for older residents.
- Introduced a new scheme to improve the wellbeing of young people in schools and connect them with their communities.

- More than 30 community projects in Babergh and Mid Suffolk have each received a share of more than £36,000 to keep residents warm and connected this winter.
- Other projects have received a share of £230,000 in grants and funding as part of our commitment to residents' wellbeing and ensuring communities have access to local community facilities.

## Repairs and energy efficiency improvements in council houses

- We are carrying out a major programme of repairs and installing energy efficiency measures in our council houses. The repairs programme has suffered recently for a number of reasons, but we have committed extra funding and are carrying out a major overhaul of the repairs service.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk received £1.6m of government funding last month to add to £2.25m already committed by the councils to install energy saving measures.

## Homelessness prevention

We continue to help households at risk of homelessness with more than 1,500 having been helped across Babergh and Mid Suffolk since 2019 as part of our homelessness reduction and rough sleeping strategy.

## Changing Places Toilets

New fully accessible toilet facilities for those with additional needs are being installed with the help of a government grant. There will be one as part of the new café in Belle Vue Park in Sudbury, and I attended the official opening of another at Flatford Mill, managed by the National Trust, last month.

- Official openings of toilets – the glamorous life of a council leader.

## Flood support

Emergency council teams worked to support areas impacted by floods this winter, particularly in the wake of Storm Babet in January, offering practical support, as well as information and advice on what to do for those whose homes or businesses were affected.

## Budget

We have increased Babergh's element of council tax bills by 2.99%, the maximum we are allowed by government – any more would require a referendum to get approval. This is an additional £5.46 to £188.10 a year, or £3.62 per week, for a Band D home. Babergh's proportion is only 9% of the total council tax.

We have also agreed higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties as part of a raft of measures to bring more homes back into use.

- We have also had to increase our council house rents to ensure that we can afford repairs and energy efficiency improvements.

Balancing the budget has only been achieved through the planned use of £1.1m of earmarked reserves. In total we are forecasting to use 48% of our earmarked reserves over the two years 2023/24 and 2024/25 – clearly not a sustainable position.

We are facing a forecast cumulative budget gap of £6.7m over the next four years and we will be undertaking a number of measures to address this: we are increasing the fees we charge for many of our discretionary services, we have identified further savings we can make in how we do things, we will reconfigure the senior leadership team, we will not fill staff vacancies unless the post is essential and we will postpone some capital projects, but we do want to try to maintain the services that many people want and value. There aren't any easy decisions, which brings me on to the most controversial: the decision to charge for short-term parking. The majority of stays will only cost £1 and we will be including measures to ensure those attending surgery appointments won't have to pay and to provide permits for parents dropping off and picking up children from schools. We simply have no choice but to do this and our charges will still be among the lowest in Suffolk – indeed the country.

Fears that businesses will suffer are simply not seen elsewhere – if this were true, it would mean that nearly every town in the country is struggling and councils everywhere would be rushing to remove parking charges. The truth is high streets thrive or fail for reasons unrelated to parking. What they have to offer matters most.

Most councils are struggling: some have issued bankruptcy notices and other may well follow in the coming months. All, irrespective of political control, are critical of the current local government financing regime, which is no longer fit for purpose. A long-term settlement has been promised and postponed for many years. Along with other council leaders, I have called on the government to address the local authority funding crisis.

## **And finally...**

Babergh, along with most county and district councils, was 50 years old on 1<sup>st</sup> April. Created by the Local Government Act 1972, the new councils came into being in 1974. Some, of course, have since undergone further reorganisation with the abolition of the short-lived metropolitan county councils and the on-going formation of unitary councils. It will be interesting to see what the future brings for us. The previous local government structure lasted 80 years so change is probably inevitable at some point.

For all its perceived shortcomings, Babergh does work extremely well for our residents in increasingly challenging circumstances. So, it was wonderful to see our staff and councillors recognised by Babergh and Mid Suffolk being named UK council of the year 2024 at the prestigious iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards. I was delighted to represent Babergh at the ceremony at Church House, Westminster, last month. More glamorous than the opening of a toilet!

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**John Ward**  
**Babergh District Councillor**  
**Brett Vale**  
[john.ward@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:john.ward@babergh.gov.uk)

## Report to the Parish Council April 2024

It has been another busy year for the school community.

- In November 2023, the school was visited by Ofsted. We continue to be a 'good' school and the report is available to read on the website.
- The Forest School area of the school grounds has had an overhaul and this is well used by all the children in the school as part of their curriculum. Mrs Martin has worked hard on this area and has worked hard on an accredited course. She is just waiting for her assignments to be marked and returned.
- To date, we have 80 children on roll and it is expected that we have a healthy number of children joining us in September 2024.
- Miss Jones and the Junior Road Safety Officers have continued to work on Road Safety projects and this has very recently included taking part in the local speed watch. This committee regularly organise walk to school weeks (to try and limit the number of cars near the school), send letters and reminders about parking considerately and safely when dropping and picking children up from school and they also support teaching the younger children about road safety.
- At Christmas, once again, we used Stratford St Mary church to perform our nativity and also to perform our carol service. Thank you to those for helping us by opening up, sorting out the lighting and heating and making it an amazing space for the children to perform.
- The children are still enjoying school trips. Last July, our older children enjoyed a residential trip to Plas y Brenin in North Wales. It was a fantastic opportunity for the children to visit an area which is very different to our local area and they took part in a range of activities which included gorge scrambling, hill walking, climbing and canoeing. The children have also visited a London theatre and numerous other trips which have included visiting castles, the zoo and the local area.
- The school website [www.stratfordstmaryprimary.co.uk](http://www.stratfordstmaryprimary.co.uk) has a wealth of information and in particular the News page details more of the learning and events which have taken place. Please feel free to visit these pages.



Church Farm  
Dedham Road  
Langham  
Colchester  
CO45PS

m: +44(0)7770 917 709  
e: info@langhamhallestate.com  
www.langhamhallestate.com

## **Update for SSM Parish Council**

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024

### **General**

It's been another extremely busy year for the estate as we continue our efforts to improve the viability of the entire estate and arable farm. Our equine business continues to thrive despite the disruptive flooding we have experienced. Our pastures and woodland are in reasonable health although there is more to do to insulate us from the damaging impact of extreme weather. We are now in year 4 of a 10-year woodland management plan. The plan involves felling and regeneration, but it's expensive to administer, so progress and keeping pace with goals is tough. New drainage solutions in our field margins and extensive repairs and refurbishment to estate property are also ongoing.

The arable farm surprisingly remains marginally profitable despite the extremes in our weather and the many other macro-economic/geo-political factors we are all aware of. We expect to continue to run the farm, but we are now considering further diversification perhaps into wine.

Permissive access on the estate between the Essex way and Stour Valley Path remains in place and we look forward to continuing to honour this commitment made last year.

### **NGET – Norwich to Tilbury**

We are appalled by the proposed scale of works. Reviewing the plans (such as they are) it is hard to see how the estate will survive. We are seeking professional and legal advice and will be challenging NGET all the way.

### **Shooting**

Our clay pigeon shoot days are now shared with SSM Parish Council ahead of time. And we continue to honour our commitment not to shoot in the high summer (July & August).

### **Hospitality**

Residents may have noticed works to East Lodge and/or Cosgrove Lodge. Both are being refurbished and will become important income generators for the estate when they are open to the market as holiday lets later this year. In addition, we are exploring the possibility of converting a horse lorry and shepherd's hut into glamping units for the short stay market.

### **Events**

In June of this year and July of next we will be hosting weddings on the estate. Although we don't plan to become a wedding venue, we are considering whether a few events each year might be appealing. We are, in particular, exploring the possibility of hosting a charity 2k, 5k and 10k trail run on the estate with the support of another local business in Jun of 2025 and in support of Essex and Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) with whom we have just agreed a three-year charitable partnership.

### **Other**

I remain a little concerned about the number of small incidents we experience with dogs that are not kept on leads. I would like to put more signs up to remind dog walkers to do so, but I am also mindful that it may just provoke further vandalism.

We will not have the pleasure of any cattle (Lincoln Reds) this year or grazing sheep. The costs of repairs to and replacement fencing around 3-yearthe pastures makes any such arrangement prohibitively expensive.

We will be planting further cricket bat willows in the SE corner of Stratford Meadow and NE corner of North Meadow later this year.

## **Community First Responders - Co-ordinators report.**

The group has continued to provide cover on the Essex and Suffolk border throughout the year. In 2018 the cover was an average of 36 hours a month, 2019 48 hours, 2020 80 hours, 2021 128 hours and in 2022 the average was 106 hours. In 2023 we managed to increase this again to 126.875 a month or 1522.5 for the year. Over the year there were about 275 days that had some cover, that about 75% of days in the year had some cover by one of the responders.

We have managed to recruit a fourth responder, Nathan, who lives in Higham. This now means there are four responders attached to the group. Natalie and Stephen are sharing one kit and Nathan and myself share the other kit. The Trust has decided that all CFR should wear "greens", the same as Paramedics and Ambulance staff, we just have different shoulder tabs. The group has now got these uniforms.

The finances remain in a healthy state with £5470.60 in the Barclays account and another £914.32 in the trust account. Fund raising has been good over the last year and we are now back to where we were before we purchased the second kit.

The group continues to train monthly in Stratford st Mary. This training is important and it keeps the responders updated on techniques, re-enforces skills and gives us new skills. All 4 responders have recently passed our annual assessments.

There have been two CPR and Defibrillator familiarisation sessions in Great Horkesley and one in East Bergholt. Two more sessions will take place shortly at the Great Horkesley school for years 5 and 6 pupils and a session for the staff. The school has recently installed a Defibrillator.

The Village Emergency Telephone system is still in place but this has not been utilized by anyone over the last year.

It is worth mentioning again that if help is needed the public must call 999, the ambulance service will then contact the responders, if they feel it is within our remit. The trust continues to be under a lot of pressure and all calls have to be prioritised, this means there are sometimes long waits for patients. Initially the call centre will probably give a worst case of timing. If a responder is with you they will continue to monitor the patient and if somebody deteriorates, they will update control and talk to a clinician to see if the priority can be changed. We know in times of crisis people are worried, anxious and can panic. Direct calls to responders from the public should not be made.

The group now maintains four defibrillators in Stratford st Mary, Langham, Great Horkesley and Dedham, these are all checked on a monthly basis.

## **SSM Parish Clerk**

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**From:** David Umfreville <dcu26@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** 17 April 2024 16:53  
**To:** parishcouncil@stratfordstmary.org.uk  
**Subject:** Annual Parish Meeting, 22/4/24. Att. of Clerk to Parish Council.

Dear Ms Hall,

I am in receipt of two letters addressed to my brother Don as the contact for the SSM Bowls and SSM Ramble Clubs. Don has now moved from the village and asked me to supply reports on both clubs.

Since the pandemic both clubs suffered reduced attendees and therefore in the last twelve months have ceased to be run as such. However with a nucleus of former members both groups continue to meet on an informal basis. The Ramble group still publish a list of future walks in and around the area which take place a few times per month, just as before and leave the Parish Room at 9.45.

The Bowls group again continue to play in the Parish Room twice weekly on Tuesday and Thursdays starting at 2pm.

Obviously anybody interested in coming along to either group will be most welcome, and for the time being can contact me on 01206 322656 should any more information be required.

Sorry to have left this notice rather late, but find I am now unable to attend the APM.

Yours sincerely,

David Umfreville.

# Stratford St Mary Community Trust

*Incorporating: The Cloth Charity Estate and The Lettice Dykes Foundation*

## Annual Report - April 2024

The Trust retains the capability and the commitment to provide modest grants to help parish residents in temporary need of financial assistance. Such grants can be considered to assist parish residents who are in "need, hardship or distress or who need funding to assist with access to education, retraining or redeployment.

The trust has a direct e-mail address, [trust@stratford-st-mary.org](mailto:trust@stratford-st-mary.org), which can be used for this purpose or for general communication.

**All information passed to the trust or to individual trustees will be treated in strictest confidence.**

At the time this report is issued, the Board of the Stratford St Mary Community Trust consists of the following individuals, all of whom are resident in the parish:

| Name           | Status                                      | Role              |
|----------------|---|-------------------|
| Shaun Baker    | Managing Trustee ( <i>co-opted</i> )        | Trustee           |
| Roger Barrell  | Managing Trustee ( <i>co-opted</i> )        | Financial Officer |
| David Isaac    | Holding Trustee ( <i>co-opted</i> )         | Trustee           |
| Brian Such     | Holding Trustee ( <i>SSMPC Nominated</i> )  | Chairperson       |
| Norman Woodard | Managing Trustee ( <i>SSMPC Nominated</i> ) | Trustee           |

Board of Trustees.

## The Dedham Educational Foundation

In respect of grants for educational purposes, attention is also drawn to the activity of the Dedham Educational Foundation whose area of remit includes Stratford St Mary and from where financial grants are available to assist attendance at Secondary Schools, Sixth Form Colleges, Universities & Colleges of Further Education. For details, please contact the Clerk to the Foundation, Mrs. Claire Arculus on 07752201441 or at [dedhamefclerk@gmail.com](mailto:dedhamefclerk@gmail.com)

### Registered address

Stratford St Mary Community Trust  
C/o 1, Spanbies Road  
Stratford St Mary, Suffolk, Co7 6YH  
Telephone: 01206 323 728

e-mail: [trust@stratford-st-mary.org](mailto:trust@stratford-st-mary.org)  
Charity number: 213046

## **REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL 2024**

### **STRATFORD ST. MARY CHAPEL**

We are a non-denominational Church which gives us a number of advantages over Denominational Churches.

We have a service each and every Sunday morning at 10.30am Our average attendance is about 50 which includes 15 – 20 Children and Young People.

During the week we have several Bible Teaching & Discussion Groups – some at the Chapel and some on Zoom. Since we are blessed by several Bible scholars and writers as members, we are able to welcome Christians from other Churches where in depth Bible teaching does not exist.

We currently run a Coffee Morning each Tuesday at 10 am largely patronized by local people. It is entirely free and strictly social.

On Thursday mornings – during term time – we run a Mums & Tots group called “Little Sparks”

Each Friday during term time we run a Children’s Club called “Sparks” and a Youth Club called “Ignition” These are the only clubs which exist in our area and therefore they attract a high number of Children & Young People. There are around 30 children and 40 Young People, mostly from the village but with some from East Bergholt and Capel St. Mary.

Finally, we have to report that the defibrillator has been used 3 times during the last 4 months.

**Report on the activities and life of St Mary's Church**  
**for the Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Stratford St. Mary Parish Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024**

Good evening,

The annual meeting offers us the opportunity to review the past year and to look ahead to the future. The parish church of Stratford St Mary has had another busy year. Our longstanding churchwarden Jonathan Dewey moved during the year and we are grateful to Sandy Ranson for stepping up to be our new churchwarden, with Christine Cousins supporting Sandy as deputy warden. We also have a new PCC Secretary with Martin O'Brien who is also one of our church organists and choir members. Janet Dennis continues as our treasurer and with several new members we now have a full PCC which will be up for re-election at this years Annual Parochial Church Meetings on 1<sup>st</sup> May.

The Church warmly welcomes adults and children for Baptism and several couples were married in Stratford last year. It is also the role of the parish church to hold funerals for those who live in the parish, and parishioners can be buried or have their ashes interred in the churchyard.

During the year, we held services for the coronation of HM King Charles III and we commemorated Easter, Harvest, and Remembrance Sunday.

The Church held a very successful Christmas Tree Festival and Community Carol service, both of which were very well supported by the local community. Stratford Primary School visited the church and held its Carol Services in the church, and we welcomed young visitors from Orchard Barns Nursery.

In 2023, we again welcomed several cultural tours and we hosted concerts by the Stour Valley Arts & Music Society, and also the Wattisham Military Wives Choir. We also held a very successful Joseph Sing-along with cream teas in the interval which was very well supported.

We are very grateful to all those who help and support the church in any way and who help keep the church in such good condition. We have many visitors every week who use the church for private prayer and visit the building as a historic landmark and we receive many appreciative comments.

We want to again express our grateful thanks for the support from the Parish Council which helps towards the grass cutting and keeping the churchyard tidy. The churchyard is not just a burial ground but also an open community space which is used by local residents and by those with connections to the parish as a quite space.

Looking ahead, the popular Phoenix Brass Band will be playing at St Mary's Church on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> June for an afternoon concert with cream teas in the interval.

And the Wattisham Military Wives Choir will be returning to the church for a Remembrance concert on 26<sup>th</sup> October. We hope that both these concerts will appeal to the local community.

The Church is such an iconic landmark in the village that we are planning to print Christmas Cards with an image of the Church. Proceeds from the sales will go towards the upkeep and maintenance of St Mary's Church.

If we can offer support to anyone in the village, please do get in touch with me, with our churchwarden, Sandy Ranson or with our assistant warden, Christine Cousins. We are also happy to hear from you if you would like to use the building for a function, exhibition or concert.

We are here for the local community, and we welcome any cooperation. Thank you.

**Rev'd Manette Crossman**

**Rector of the Benefice of Higham, Holton St. Mary, Raydon & Stratford St. Mary**

**15<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Stratford St Mary Village Institute**  
**Report to the Annual Parish Meeting**  
**22 April 2024**

This past year has been particularly eventful for our Village Institute. We began by revising our Charity Constitution, which was completed by June 2023. The Institute, established in January 1928 by Miss Boghurst Fisher, was designed to benefit the local community. I'm pleased to report that we have both preserved our founding principles and updated several aspects of our constitution to serve current needs better. This includes clarifying trustee roles, updating our voting processes, and reviewing our policies and standing orders.

We've also seen significant changes in leadership. Bill Davis stepped down as Chairman after more than 20 years of dedicated service. I have taken over his role, and we have new officers in several key positions. I want to thank everyone who has stepped up to take on these important roles. I am extremely grateful to them all for the time and care they donate to the Village Institute.

We have been reviewing our terms of reference in regards to trustee responsibilities and finalising taking over the management of the grounds of the Institute including the play equipment, which we hope to have completed in the near future.

Alongside this, we have undertaken a significant internal renovation to the Institute building to improve energy efficiency with a nearly 50% grant from Babergh District Council. Renovation work continues as we await the delivery of blinds and further work on acoustic measures to improve sound quality. We are also looking to replace the hall chairs. This has been a significant expense for Institute reserves, and we hope the local community feels it has been well worth the investment. Certainly, we are already receiving favourable comments from existing users, and our bookings appear to be going up.

This year, we also saw the installation of free Wi-Fi connectivity in the hall through Gigiclear and the establishment of a website for the Hall.

Revenue raised through hall rental goes directly towards maintaining the Institute and future renovation works, including items such as the external paintwork and roof in the future. Once we take over the management of the playground, hall hire revenue will also support the maintenance of the ground, including the play equipment, which is an added benefit for the community of Stratford St Mary.

Financially, our accounts have been externally audited, as they are every year, and on 31 December 2023, we had £39,217.73 with an income of £5057.50 during the year. Expenses of £6,878.83.

Both Hall hire and fundraising were down from last year, though our reserves reflect COVID-related grants in previous years. Expenses were greater due to repairs and substantial increases in energy costs.

However, following the major renovation work project, we have spent a substantial amount of our reserves alongside the £8965 grant from Babergh, and our reserves

now stand at less than £10k. Bearing in mind the planned expenses involved in finalising the project and future expenses on new hall chairs and external painting, etc, this is in line with what we feel is appropriate for financial contingency planning. We are seeking further grants to pay for external works like replacing the roof in the future.

We hold an Annual Public Meeting this year on Friday 31st May at 7.30 pm, and we invite anyone interested in joining the Trustee Committee to get in contact. We want to extend our co-opted members to include a wider representation of local groups and individuals. If you are interested, please do feel free to speak to me before the 31st of May. We normally meet around 4-5 times a year, though admittedly, during the renovation project, it has been much more frequent!

### **100 Club Report**

Philip Brown has been the 100 Club secretary this year. The 100 Club has 89 members as of 31 December 2023, which is down from the previous year and was able to contribute £400 to the Institute reserves in 2023. Membership numbers are lower than we would like, and we will discuss how to manage this at the annual general meeting in May. Thanks to Philip and his trusted collectors and to the subscribers of the 100 club who help us to raise funds to maintain and improve the Institute.

Emily Barrell

Chairperson Institute Committee

22 April 2024

## **Village Life: report for the Parish Council AGM April 2024.**

The Village Life group is a loosely constituted group of volunteers whose aim is to support and run a range of social and community events within the village.

We had an active and successful year in 2023 putting on a variety of social events. The highlight of the year was the Coronation Celebration weekend on 6/7th May 2023. This included a BBQ and live band, plus karaoke on Saturday evening, followed on Sunday by a Village picnic, complimentary afternoon teas, free ice-creams, kids wacky races and fancy dress. All who attended received a souvenir Coronation mug. Grateful thanks are extended to the Parish Council and Trustees of the Institute Hall, who agreed to underwrite the expenses of the weekend and to Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council for covering the cost of the souvenir mugs. In addition to the weekend events, there was a village 'make a crown' competition.

A highly successful May Ball was held at the end of May, at The Talbooth. This was a sell-out event and is to be repeated.

We also held three successful Quiz Evenings in January, April and September. These are always popular and have become a regular feature.

The year's programme concluded with a Race Night, held in November.

Meetings of the Village Life group are open to all residents and are advertised in Quartet. New ideas for activities are always welcome.

Looking ahead to 2024, we have:

A May Ball on 24th May

Quiz Night on June 21st

Ceilidh with live band, on October 5th.

Sandy Ranson for the Village Life Group.



# ORCHARD BARN

Stratford St Mary 

Day Nursery for children aged 0 to 5 years

## In recent months:

- We have had a new garden refurbishment, developing our outdoor spaces
- We have had a change of management – featuring Diane
- We have welcomed lots of new families to our registers
- We visited Stratford St Mary Primary school for the nativity play in December
- We paid a visit to Stratford St Mary church for the Christmas Tree festival, and entered a tree ourselves
- Invited the church into nursery to teach our children about Christingle



Before



After

New management team, as of September 2023



Diane Sexton, Nursery Manager. Diane has worked at Orchard Barns for 10 years and has many more years' experience working with children.



Olivia Pulford, Deputy Manager. Olivia has worked at Orchard Barns for 3 years and is also our Pre-school room leader.



Abby Constable, Third in Charge. Abby has worked at Orchard Barns for one year and has a passion for working with toddlers, making her the perfect fit as out toddler room leader.



Leanne Amoss, Forest School Lead. Leanne has worked at Orchard Barns for 20 years and is our Forest School Lead, after having three children of her own.

Other members of our team who help keep the nursery running:



Kirsty



Jade



Ellen

Bank staff:  
Bethany  
Rachel  
Abbie  
Lila



Maria (chef)



Jazybeth  
(housekeeper)

## Our future plans:

- Renaming the rooms – Rainbows, Stars and Clair Bears, after sadly our colleague Clair passed away.
- Spring open day on 13<sup>th</sup> April and bake sale in May, to raise funds for a memorial bench in the garden and a plaque for the baby room.



We sadly lost our work colleague, Clair in September. Clair had worked at Orchard Barns for 4 years and developed our baby room to a high standard. We have been working hard to keep the memory of Clair going since then and will continue to do so in the future.

## More future plans:

- We are planning to visit Hall Farm to learn about farming and caring for animals
- We are looking for people in various occupations to come in and talk with the children about their jobs
- We have a growing area where we are teaching the children about planting, caring for and growing plants and vegetables
- As it comes up to some of our children going to school in September, school teachers will begin visiting us to familiarise themselves with the children.
- We are hoping to work with Stratford St Mary Primary School to extend our Forest School sessions, inviting them to our nursery for sessions as well as visiting their Forest School Garden.