

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF BRENT ELEIGH  
HELD ON 27 MAY 2021 IN THE VILLAGE HALL COMMENCING AT 7:00PM**

**Present:**

Cllr Kevin Went (Chair of the Parish Council)  
Cllr Martin Austin  
Cllr Natalie Helms  
Cllr Karen Marshall  
Cllr Francesca Scoones

**Apologies:**

County Cllr Robert Lindsay

**In Attendance:**

District Cllr Bryn Hurren  
Chair of Trustees of Colman Almshouse Charity  
William Grosvenor (*Clerk to the Council*)  
2 Members of the Public

		<b>Action</b>
<b>21.01</b>	<b>CHAIR'S WELCOME</b> Cllr Went took the Chair and welcomed all present to the meeting.	
<b>21.02</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> Apologies were received from County Councillor Robert Lindsay, also the Churchwardens and the Chair of the Village Hall Committee, all of whom provided written reports to the Clerk.	
<b>21.03</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL</b> Cllr Went reported that the Parish Council's finances are in a very strong position, with a year-end bank balance of £4368 providing adequate reserves as at 31 March 2021. In 2020/21 despite the impact of the Covid pandemic, the Council continued to meet (remotely via Zoom) and to discharge its functions on a timely basis. During the year it was able to give a grant of £200.00 to support the Bildeston to Sudbury weekly bus service, and repainted the BT telephone box in the village which, as a heritage asset, is under the ownership of the Council. Finally he recorded his thanks to the Clerk for support and advice received throughout the Council year.	
<b>21.04</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT</b> In the absence of Cllr Lindsay, the Clerk read out the report, the text of which is attached below at <b>Appendix 1</b> .	
<b>21.05</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT</b> Cllr Hurren presented his report, the text of which is attached below at <b>Appendix 2</b> . In the short discussion that followed, Cllr Hurren was asked if he could provide more information on the likely amount of CIL receipts that the Parish would receive from planning consents already given. He promised to make enquiries of the Babergh Infrastructure Team and respond in due course. He also confirmed that the 112 bus service was safe until March 2022.	

	Cllr Went took the opportunity to thank Cllr Hurren for all his work on behalf of the village.	
<b>21.06</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE ALMSHOUSES AND ASSOCIATED CHARITIES</b> A report was provided and presented to the meeting by the newly appointed Chair, on behalf of the Trustees in respect of all three charities. The text of the report is attached below at <b>Appendix 3</b> .	
<b>21.07</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE A REPORT RE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH FROM THE VILLAGE CO-ORDINATOR</b> Cllr Went gave a short report as Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator. Although residents in Brent Eleigh continue to be relatively safe, there have been worrying increases in cybercrime, and continued vigilance is necessary.	
<b>21.08</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL (PCC) FOR ST MARY THE VIRGIN, BRENT ELEIGH</b> A report was provided and presented to the meeting on behalf of the PCC. The text of the report is attached below at <b>Appendix 4</b> .	
<b>21.09</b>	<b>TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE</b> A report was provided by the Chair of the committee and presented to the meeting by Cllr Scoones. This year the village hall has been largely out of use due to the pandemic. Since the last report however it has benefitted from a small business grant of £10,000 which was important as the Committee has been unable to raise funds to cover ongoing overheads such as insurance, utilities and safety certificates. The hall is now allowed to be used in a limited way for meetings and was recently used for the local elections. The aim in the coming months will be to reintroduce some social events to raise funds (in line with government guidelines). One project in hand is to look at replacing the existing inefficient electric bar heating with an air source system. This would be more efficient, eco-friendly and cheaper to run than the current system. Finally there is a proposal under consideration to install an area within the hall to provide information about the village (historical archive, walking routes, interesting facts) and a decision will be made how such a resource could best be accessed by visitors and residents. The latest accounts are attached below at <b>Appendix 5</b> . Further information about the village hall can be found on the village website: <a href="http://brenteleigh.onesuffolk.net">http://brenteleigh.onesuffolk.net</a> and an email address for enquiries: <a href="mailto:brenteleighvillagehall@gmail.com">brenteleighvillagehall@gmail.com</a>	
<b>21.10</b>	<b>COMMENTS ON VILLAGE MATTERS</b> There were none.	
<b>21.11</b>	<b>CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS</b> There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.59pm. The Chair thanked everyone for attending the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting.	

## **APPENDIX 1: Annual report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay**

### **Foodbank expands to meet greater demand**

This group, which evolved out of the Bildeston community support group during the first lockdown was at its peak supporting 18 families in and around the village. I was pleased to be able to help them with an initial grant from Babergh and in March I contributed £1k from my Babergh awards budget to the foodbank. The numbers supported have now dropped to nine families as more people are able to return to work.

## **GoStart rescues 112 bus route to Sudbury**

In March 2020, the then operator of the 112 bus pulled out because the County had withdrawn its subsidy. Despite protracted pleas and negotiations with me, the County refused to provide any more funding but luckily GoStart Community bus from Sudbury was able to step in. I contributed £1k at their launch in March 2020 and another £1k last month March 2021 from my locality funds from Babergh and Suffolk.

## **Budget amendments**

Being a group allowed us both at the County and Babergh to put together a series of budget amendments and several motions over the year which although they were voted down by the Conservative administration, will have flagged up areas that need attention and some of which were later adopted by the administration.

## **Group Budget Amendment – floods**

One of many amendments our group at Suffolk County Council proposed in February was to fund an extra officer for the flooding team to help bid for funding and manage projects. At the end of March the flood risk scrutiny committee recommended to Cabinet that the council hire extra staff to the floods team to help tackle the flooding backlog.

## **20mph motion Suffolk**

My feeling is that there would be enormous health and other benefits if residential areas in Suffolk were allowed 20mph limits by default rather than being forced to go through the hoops that Bideston has. As a result I proposed earlier in the year a motion that called for a scheme to reduce speed limits in all suitable residential areas from 30mph to 20mph, for a price of £4m. Communities would have been able to opt out. This was rejected with the administration saying that 20mph could not be enforced without expensive measures.

I also seconded a biodiversity motion for Suffolk that will implement a new biodiversity strategy. This was passed unanimously.

## **Pension committee**

I sat on the pension committee and during the past financial year the committee agreed, after much pushing from me, to move its entire passive equity fund into a low carbon fund. It represents about 10% of the total fund.

## **Cabinet approves 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk**

In June 2020 Suffolk's Cabinet approved a 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk, which identified 148 potential routes to be prioritised. This is as a result of a motion proposed by me in July 2018, which called on the Council to produce a strategic costed 5-year cycling plan.

Funding has not yet been secured for these routes, but the cycling plan will provide a strong basis to bid for funding as and when it becomes available.

## **Climate emergency recommendations published**

In July 2020, Suffolk's Cabinet approved the recommendations of a cross-party policy development panel outlining how the Council should respond to the climate emergency and reduce emissions. This followed a motion from myself and my Green colleague in March 2019, which declared a climate emergency and committed the Council to be carbon neutral by 2030.

## **APPENDIX 2: Annual Report from District Councillor Bryn Hurren**

This year for most of us has been a year like no other for all the wrong reasons.

Having said that it has also been a year where Babergh as a small local District Council has shown a distinct willingness to support their electorate and businesses to the very best of its ability. We have made sure that all who were entitled to business interruption grants and rate relief have received the best and the most that we were able to give them.

Also, as landlord to close on 4,000 tenants the Babergh / Mid-Suffolk housing teams have been there to advise and help those that have been shielding, alone, short of supplies and in debt to make ends meet at crucial times, while always trying to see that bills were paid both for rent and other critical utilities before due deadlines.

One thing that soon became apparent was that the much-criticised universal credit system was not suitable for quick fixes and parachute payments as it is cumbersome and slow to administer and bring help and at times it seemed it was designed to be just that.

As a long-time serving Councillor it has been good to see staff at all levels continue in their posts even when distant from colleagues and other team members but there has been a toll I feel, on some of the younger members of staff who have lacked guidance and the mentoring that normally would come from an office environment.

For myself I have put in all the effort that I have been able to summon in pursuit of my elected duties and as joint chair of the Audit and Standards Committee it has fallen to myself to see that money allocated has gone in the direction and cause that it should.

The death rate from Coronavirus in Babergh has been amongst the lowest in the whole country but still tragic to know that close to 260 souls in the Babergh District have lost their lives to this virus. I was especially saddened to lose a close friend in Eddie Kench who has always been a support and a source of comfort to me especially when writing items for the BRN. If you feel it, write it, was his constant advice and the more controversial the better. I spent time in his house fitting and fixing ramps and steps so that he could push his wife Janet around in the new wheelchair just before I heard that he had become ill and still wish that I had spent more time with him before rushing away to do the next job.

Thankfully at the last district election the public voted to have a council of No Political control which has made it essential that we all work together and for the minority groups to contribute and get on with the work we were elected to do, without a ruling political group going off on vanity trips and chasing political white elephants or even blue ones.

Although planning and heritage issues are still our Achilles heel I do feel that all other departments and functions have performed well. With the huge environmental challenges that we all face being tackled despite not really much leadership from the government we have implemented our own climate emergency and have used CIL monies to start a program of converting our fleet of vehicles to bio diesel fuel and a move to electric rechargeable vehicles for fleet cars. We will also make a start on tree planting and biodiversity on land that we own or on host land for those willing to take part. It is also hoped to switch our investments in bonds that are associated with fossil fuels to more green and environmentally friendly alternatives.

We also try to keep people safe with our food inspections for hygiene and safe working methods and the score on the door system of grading has served us well for restaurants, shops and eateries of all sorts. While one recent case has hit the headlines, it should be remembered that thousands of inspections take place every year to keep us all safe.

Plans are also in place to enact a decision to take back our public realm function in house, this hopefully will mean better control of work and hopefully more work carried out with less taxpayers' money. I hope that we will then have access to a scraper for our road cleaning duties which will mean that we will no longer have to wait for County Highways to get the mud off the roads before we can effectively sweep them. Hopefully this will mean we do not have a repeat of the stand-offs that occurred this past winter.

Locally I have done my very best to be here for you whenever needed and have always tried to throw my weight behind you, which it certainly has been on a few occasions this past year. I look forward to expanding on this report and answering your questions when we meet.

Thank you to our Clerk, Councillors and all residents of Brent Eleigh and I look forward to continuing to work together for the next two years.

Bryn Hurren.

### **APPENDIX 3: Report from the Colman Almshouse Trust and associated charities**

**The Colman Almshouse Charity**  
**Charity No. 211992**  
**Note for parish council meeting on 27-05-21**

We have had a change in trustees since the last report, and a change in Chair. We'd like to thank Mark Elgar for his years of chairing and welcome Alison Pooley as his replacement. Mark remains as a valued trustee. We'd also like to thank

Vivian Warner and Win Gage, for their many years as trustees, both extremely dedicated to the almshouses and the residents.

We'd like to welcome new trustees in Mike Birt, Karen Marshall and Alan Wyper. Alan has taken on the additional task of treasurer, a role that Win undertook for over 10 years. We are currently in the process of changing over bank account signatories and finalising other treasurer details.

A copy of the accounts for the almshouse charity to the end of 2020 will be forwarded to the Clerk along with this report. The accounts additionally show the financial positions of the two smaller associated charities; Gilberts (208951) and Edward Colman's Education Charity (310311).

The income of the almshouse charity derives almost entirely from the weekly maintenance contributions (WMC) paid by the residents of the almshouses. We have been able to keep the level of these maintenance contributions fixed at the same rate for the past few years and are now looking at potential increases in WMC when new residents move in. The Almshouse Association has recommended a 1.5% increase this year, and the current WMC is well below the local allowance (the amount the local authority would pay in housing benefit). It is essential we maintain the balance between income and expenditure, whilst keeping a clear contingency. The replacement of windows and doors to the rear of the almshouses and the replacement of front doors is due to be undertaken this summer.

Currently, there is one vacancy in the almshouses (no 2), with residents in the other 5 being longstanding. The current vacant almshouse requires a new kitchen and the trustees are getting quotes for a wet room bathroom. We have three people who have approached different trustees about being appointed as a resident, and we will make a selection (possibly based on interview) and appoint in line with the charity scheme. A connection with Brent Eleigh or one of the surrounding villages is the main qualifying criteria. We would encourage anyone who might be interested themselves in living in one of the almshouses, or who knows someone else who might be interested when we next have a vacancy, to get in touch with one of the charity's trustees.

The two associated charities also hold funds which are available for distribution to qualifying individuals with a connection to Brent Eleigh and the neighbouring villages. Applications for grants from these charities are very welcome. Edward Colman's Education Charity supports people in education or just starting in a trade. Gilbert's Charity, has a small amount of funds available to help people within our community who are suffering financial hardship. In the past this charity's funds have been used to assist with the cost of one-off items of necessary expenditure. This fund has been most recently used to help the resident of no 2 move into her new home in Lavenham.

Any enquiries about the almshouses, or concerning grants from the two associated charities, can be directed to the chair of the trustees Alison Pooley on 01787 249877 or by email on [alison@ecoarb.co.uk](mailto:alison@ecoarb.co.uk) or to any one of the trustees listed below:

Alison Pooley, Mark Elgar, James Davis, Alan Wyper, Karen Marshall, Patti Derry, Mike Birt.

## **APPENDIX 4: Report from Brent Eleigh St Mary's Parochial Church Council**

### **St Mary's Church, Brent Eleigh - Report for the Annual Parish Meeting, being held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

1. We have pleasure in presenting our Report which covers the calendar year from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, plus current position.
2. Having then been in an inter-regnum/vacant by then for just over a year, we were delighted to learn of the interim appointment of Rev. Mike Birt, in March 2020. Mike was licensed in October 2020, held at St.Mary's in Kettebaston, as St. Peter's in Monks Eleigh, our 'mother church', was by then occupied by builders. Mike and his wife Sue moved into the Rectory at Monks Eleigh the previous month, & have proven to be magnificent in every way, taking great interest in the community, and making contacts.
3. Otherwise the greatest feature of the year, affecting absolutely every activity and life overall, has been the Covid-19 pandemic. No weddings have been able to be held; no services from early March through to September; and again from after Christmas, except via Zoom. There have been two funerals – just burials, with graveside committals. The

church was physically closed for much of the year, as required; Services resumed at Easter 2021, the church open to visitors on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Once restrictions are completely removed, it is planned to hold a greater variety of services, ie Morning Prayer, Family Services, Evensongs etc; and welcome back weddings and christenings.

4. Fund Raising; has been greatly curtailed, except for much appreciated 'planned giving' via direct debit or bankers order, or the newer PGS scheme. In the highly-successful SHCT bike ride, one couple from Brent Eleigh raised over £400. The only 'event' was a Christmas Draw, (properly registered with Babergh D C), raising some £1400 after expenses. Selling tickets around the village enabled considerable contact to be made..

In 2021, we presently have four events planned; a Sale of Books & Pictures on 26<sup>th</sup> June; Summer Sunday Cream Teas on 2 Sundays in August; a 'Crafts & Quilts' weekend on 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> September; and a Folksy Concert on 25<sup>th</sup> September. We hope that these varied events will appeal to all.

5. Churchyard; two very successful working parties were held, with an increase in numbers helping. We were pleased to receive a grant from the Parish Council specifically to assist with Churchyard maintenance costs. Also, screening was added for the outdoor toilet, and the brickwork repaired on an awkward corner near the car parking area.

6. Fabric; the flat roof to the Tower was professionally recovered in felt, with weed roots poisoned. Following an electrical test, the earthing system was found to be non-compliant, which resulted in new arrangements being required, involving a diamond drilled hole through the 1.8m tower wall, for which a Faculty was necessary, and obtained. An electrical test certificate has since been received. The air-to-water heat pump was serviced – for the first time since installed 10 years ago. We are rated as an 'eco Church'.

7. Relighting Scheme; Full permission was granted by the Diocese, after practical difficulties posed by Covid, and an Appeal commenced to gain funding from outside sources, to enable the complete installation of LED technology to illuminate the interior, the current light levels being way below safety levels in moving around, and for properly showing the details to advantage. We wish to increase visitor numbers, which in turn will assist the sustainability of our finances. A number of applications to Trusts have been made, and can take months to be evaluated, but signs are good.

8. Safeguarding; Olga Lancaster (resident of Chelsworth) has kindly acted as our Parish Safeguarding Officer during the year, and there have been no issues reported. Additional update training will be undertaken in 2021.

9. Flowers and cleaning; in a very 'sporadic' year, we thank all involved for their flexibility and assistance in every way. The Nine Lessons & Carols Service, by candlelight, at Christmas was a highlight, and the Church looked amazing. 'A first' was Carol Singing around the Christmas Tree outside the Village Hall on Christmas Eve.

10. Following recent evaluation by the Diocesan Bells Advisor, the 3 bells (dated from 1623) have been passed as safe to ring with care, using the clapper ropes only. Residents may now hear these bells prior to services. (The original bell frame is still in place c.1350, but the bells of 1440 were replaced by the above).

11. If you have any questions, we shall be pleased to answer them.

Michael Warner

Church Warden, and Deputy Chairman, St Mary's P C C.

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021

## APPENDIX 5: Village Hall Committee accounts 2020/21

Income	Date	Description	Amount
	28-Apr	Covid 19 Grant	10000
	2		
	October	Donation	77.01
	20-Nov	Donation	30.00
	05-Mar	Donation	20.00
		total	10127.01

Expenditure	29-Apr	Eon Energy	154.97
	04-Jun	Matchless Fire	78.00
	25-Jul	Anglian Water	32.24
	21-Aug	Eon Energy	74.48
	16-Oct	Anglian Water	10.58
	08-Dec	Christmas Tree	30.00
		A Jamieson	
	14-Dec	Garden	228.34
	29-Dec	CAS insurance	886.47
	28-Jan	Eon Energy	105.24
	27-Jan	Anglian Water	11.97
	15-Mar	Anglian Water	11.72
		Total	1624.01

Cashbook	04-Apr	Community Acc	1390.81
	04-Apr	Savings Acc	2756.94
	31-Mar	Community Acc	9695.48*
	31-Mar	Savings Acc	2758.20
	31-Mar	Petty Cash	23.64

\* includes 2 late presented cheques included in last years figures