

Minutes of Kersey Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 17 April 2023 in Kersey Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present

John Hume (Chair), Parish Councillors David Butcher, Penny Calnan and Richard Walker, 4 members of the public, Robert Lindsay – Suffolk County Councillor, Leigh Jamieson -Babergh District Councillor and Sarah Partridge (Clerk)

The Chair welcomed everyone present and thanked them for attending the meeting.

APA 1/23 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillors Esme Chapman and Andrew Rogers. Adrian Blyth, Joan and Ian Hattrick, Jonathan Marsh, Kersey School Headteachers, Linda Newbigging, Veronica Partridge, Mark Pertwee, Mark Rigby, Rachael Rogers, Rachel Wells and Neville Whittell.

APA 2/23 Minutes of the previous Parish Assembly

The minutes of the previous Parish Assembly, held on 11 April 2022 were confirmed as being correct and signed.

APA 3/23 Reports

Full reports are all appended to these minutes and will be published on the Kersey website.

Suffolk County Council

Robert Lindsay gave his report and answered questions, mainly around the new highways contract and pothole repairs.

Babergh District Council

Leigh Jamieson gave his report and answered questions, main around the number of empty homes. Babergh has a strategy to try to get more properties back into use.

Kersey Parish Council

John Hume gave his report.

Robert Lindsay and Leigh Jamieson gave their apologies and left the meeting.

Kersey Parish Council working groups:

Footpath Working Group – a Report was received from Kevin Pratt

KCPC (Playground) Working Group - A report was received from Jonathan Marsh.

KVG (Volunteer) Working Group - John Hume gave his report.

Forget-Me-Nots

A report was received from Veronica Partridge. Forget-me-nots was initially started as an over 60's group. Anyone would be welcome to join and enjoy meeting with people over a coffee or lunch.

Franey, Rand and Pest House Charities

A report was received from Rachael Rogers.

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Friends of The Bells of St Mary's Church

A report was received from Neville Whittell. The Chair thanked the bell ringers and commented that hearing the church bells was a fantastic feature of Kersey Life.

Friends of St Mary's Church Trust – FoSM

A report was received from Mark Rigby.

Grays' Trust

Philippa Harris gave her report.

Kersey Church of England Primary School

A report was received from Jess Damant and Claire Dunnell Paley, Co-Headteachers.

Kersey Playing Field Association

A report was received from Mark Pertwee.

Kersey Projects

Suzie Rudkin gave her report.

Lewis Mowles Trust Fund

Norah Orriss gave her report.

Nightingale Trust and Allotments

A report was received from Mark Rigby. There was a short discussion on how the work of the Nightingale Trust to support those in need could be better publicised. Information is published on the Kersey website and a note is put in the newsletter every few months. If help is needed, please contact Natalie Blyth on 01473 827805 all enquiries will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

St Mary's Church PCC

A report was received from Linda Newbigging.

Richard Walker gave his apologies and left the meeting.

Table Tennis Club

A report was received from Adrian Blyth.

Tuesday Club

A report was received from Rachel Wells.

Village Hall

A report was received from Veronica Partridge.

Village Produce Association

A report was received from Rachel Wells.

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Information about all the community organisations and more can be found on the Kersey website.

www.kersey.suffolk.cloud/

APA 4/23 Parish Review and creating a new Parish Action Plan

The Parish Council will be carrying out a Parish Review and creating a new Parish Action Plan. During this process there will be public consultation to find out residents likes and concerns about the parish and any ideas for improvements, local climate change reduction work and other matters. All the community organisations, businesses, the school and the church will be consulted.

Consultation responses will feed in to the creation of the new Parish Action Plan along with any points from the old action plan which are still relevant and items which regularly come up for discussion in 'parish time' at Parish Council meetings.

Some of the topics covered will include, housing, planning and development, social and recreational activities, voluntary work activities, environmental sustainability, public transport, road safety, the natural environment, access to information and connectivity, local democracy. It will also consider the parish assets.

APA 5/23 Any other business

The May 2023 Parish Council election will be uncontested because only 6 candidates were nominated. Therefore, there is one vacancy which can be filled by co-option. Anyone interested in becoming a Parish Councillor should contact the Chair or Clerk.

Everyone was reminded that at the District Council election on 4 May all voters will need to show photographic ID in order to vote. This includes, passport, driving licence, bus pass etc. The document does not need to be in date but the photograph needs to be a good likeness.

The Chair closed the meeting thanking the attendees. It is all the community organisations and the work done by volunteers which helps to make Kersey a really special place to live.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.54pm.

There are 15 pages appended to these minutes.

Kersey events calendar on the Kersey website. Just a reminder that this is a community calendar where you can keep up to date with all the events planned in Kersey by the many community organisations. Via google calendar you can subscribe to the Kersey community calendar so you get automatic reminders of events. If you are planning an event, please check this first to avoid clashes. If you would like your event listed, please contact Sarah Partridge kerseypc@gmail.com.

<https://kersey.suffolk.cloud/events/>

Signed

Date

Annual report Kersey Parish Council by Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor 17 April 2023

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 the A1141 through Kersey and Semer – which are national speed limit but where a safe speed would be no more than 40mph. Following a campaign by a local businessman which involved putting 40mph signs up illegally, officers and the cabinet member for highways have agreed to meet me later this month to talk about whether this road can be made 40mph.

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 Kersey 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":

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.

Annual District Council Report

It has been an increasingly difficult year. It was a year that included the Queens platinum jubilee in June. A time that brought the village, in fact many towns and villages, together in happiness. Unfortunately, this was sadly followed by her death, in September, and a period of mourning. The end of an era for many and for many the only monarch we had ever known.

With the country also seeing inflation rocket, energy prices increase drastically and strikes everywhere, the cost of living has been getting worse for us all. With no end in sight to the war in Ukraine the future still looks difficult.

The Council is not immune to this economic situation and the pressure to deliver a balanced budget this year increased. The net cost of delivering services is set to increase by almost 20% while the cost of running and maintaining the council's housing stock has already increased by 50%. In order to ensure that essential services are maintained the finance team leant on reserves, along with increases in Council Tax, rents, and fees to balance the books. With the outlook continuing to look bleak the next few years will be challenging.

Local matters

Locally, it has been a fairly quiet year in terms of the village. However, I have called in planning enforcement to investigate several examples of building work that appears to have been started with no formal planning application, submitted or approved. Unfortunately the response from the enforcement team has not filled me with confidence as the work they have been able to do has been affected by resourcing limitations.

Council Matters

Cost of Living -

In recognition of the difficulties that the residents of Babergh are encountering, the council developed a cost-of-living plan. This five-point plan aims at providing support for residents and staff by bringing together work already underway with new initiatives that provide a suite of measures focusing on providing advice and support, maintaining people's health, and building on work already underway since the launch of the councils' Communities and Wellbeing strategies.

The council has also had a key role in providing support packages to combat the cost of living, energy bills and council tax. The council tax reduction benefit was run alongside a number of national schemes put in place to help with rising bills.

Corks Lane, Hadleigh

Inflationary pressures in the construction industry put pressure on Babergh District Council, back in June. The pressures resulted in a shortening of tender validity periods - to a period of a few weeks and sometimes only days, compared with several weeks, or months previously.

The difficulties meant that the Babergh Cabinet had to agree to increase the peak funding threshold for Babergh Growth Ltd to £7m for use to deliver the redevelopment of the former HQ site in Hadleigh.

Work has started on the site now, although very little seems to be happening. Despite concerns that have been raised about the chances that this project will lose money, the cabinet member for finance and asset management insists it is still on course for a profit.

Funding

The council continue to invest in local infrastructure projects via the Community Infrastructure Fund. More than £500,000 in funding was approved for the latest round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bids. 11 bids received support, including a 3G pitch for AFC Sudbury, an activity room and extension at Stutton Village Hall and a new play area in Capel St Mary.

Environment

The Council voted in favour of motions submitted by myself and Councillor Lindsay to try to improve the waterways of our district and Council Homes.

Councillor Lindsay's motion was to hold Anglian Water to account for allowing increased sewage outflows from new developments, while my motion was on trying to improve the chances of retrofitting council homes and their energy efficiency.

Housing

There has been pressure on both councils following an in-depth review of the Councils' Building Services that identified that a number of properties in the districts were found to be failing Health & Safety compliance. The Council have self-referred themselves to the regulator for social housing and detailed investigations showed that some of homes were not compliant, and urgent action is being undertaken to resolve the issues.

A Regulatory Notice was issued for this breach of compliance, which means that it will now monitor Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils and will meet with the Council regularly to ensure the necessary changes are made.

Other Strategies –

Parking

The councils' approved their first ever joint parking strategy. The strategy includes prioritised recommendations to improve all types of parking, from council-owned car parks to on-street parking. The recommendations include updating signage and markings, increasing safety provisions, providing more EV charging, and cycling facilities, and introducing resident permit schemes to allow overnight parking.

Tree Canopy Survey

The Council also completed a tree canopy survey which identified key planting locations and significant benefits in increasing tree coverage across Babergh that will help tackle biodiversity loss and climate change. It found that tree coverage in Babergh equates to just over 10% of the district, ranging from 5.5% in the Lavenham ward, to 19% in the Orwell ward.

May Elections

The May elections, coming up soon. will be the first where voters will be required to produce photo ID at the polling station. Many forms of ID can be used and even out of date driving licences and passports will be accepted as long as the picture is clear. Alternatively, residents can also apply to the council for photo ID or register for a postal votes which does not require ID.

Kersey Parish Council - Chair's Annual Report 2022-23

The Parish Council is the first tier of government. We represent the interests of Kersey's parishioners, enhancing well-being and security throughout the Parish. Our aim is to make Kersey a great place in which to live, work and visit. Residents are encouraged to raise matters of concern either with individual Councillors or by attendance at Parish Council meetings.

Existing Councillors are David Butcher, Penny Calnan, Esme Chapman, Andrew Rogers (Vice-Chair), Richard Walker and me. All are confirmed in their posts for the next electoral period. Contact details are shown below and are on the Kersey Parish Council website. I thank them and our Clerk, Sarah Partridge for their continuing service to our community. We have one vacancy and applicants for co-option are welcomed. The website contains minutes of meetings and financial details. New Councillors have attended Councillor training with guidance from the Clerk where needed. Further planning training will be organised for Councillors after the May election.

Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor and Leigh Jamieson, Babergh District Councillor, regularly attended our meetings and we thank them for their advice and for taking up issues on our behalf.

Your Parish Council is financially strong. Reserves are well within the percentage range of annual expenditure. Finances are monitored at every meeting and details included in the minutes. This includes comparisons of income and expenditure against budget, bank reconciliations, noting of balances, expenditure approval and signing of cheques by approved signatories. Finances are also audited regularly.

Seven planning applications were made during the year, of which six were approved by the Parish Council and Babergh District Council. One was withdrawn.

There is still a vacancy for a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator.

The late Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee was marked with a very successful Kersey Street Party on 5 June 2022. There were over 300 guests, who enjoyed Indian snacks, a hog roast, salads and strawberries and cream. Entertainment was provided by the Suffolk Concert Band and a troupe of Morris Dancers. I thank everyone who organised and took part in such a memorable event. It was a great example of what our community can achieve. The King's Coronation will be marked by a Kersey Village Picnic at The Glebe on 7 May 2023.

I wish to thank the many members of our Parish who provide service to others by supporting neighbours, through individual initiatives, membership of formal and informal groups, societies, networks and local charities. This work goes on behind the scenes but is highly valued and appreciated. Although we are a small parish, there are over 25 businesses, groups, societies and local charities. Kersey is a vibrant, flourishing, safe and generous community but for this to continue into the future, we need more engagement and contribution from younger residents.

Finally, a brief comment on planning applications. We have many listed buildings in the Parish and most of the centre of the village is in a Conservation Area. Planning laws and regulations are there to avoid harm to our heritage, ensure safe living and working conditions and preserve individual property rights. Obviously, changes will be needed to enhance, modernise or repair properties. It is recommended that advice is sought from Babergh District Council's planning department before starting any work.

Kersey Parish Council publishes on the Kersey website past minutes, financial information, ordinary meetings dates for the year and contact information. There is also a wealth of other useful information on the Kersey website including a calendar of Kersey community organisation events and the Kersey google calendar which you can subscribe to should you wish.

Kersey Parish Council Contacts

Parish Councillors:

John Hume (Chair)	Ayres End, The Green, Kersey IP7 6EB	01473 810098
Andrew Rogers (Vice Chair)	The Gables, Wickerstreet Green, Kersey IP7 6EY	01787 212242
David Butcher	Kedges End, Kedges Lane, IP7 6RY	07710 105341
Penny Calnan	Wickerstreet House, Wickerstreet Green, Kersey IP7 6EY	01787 210459
Esme Chapman	Carlton House, The Street, Kersey IP7 6DY	07910 170606
Richard Walker	Sunlit Cottage, 2 The Tye, Kersey IP7 6HB	01787 211277

Clerk & RFO:

Mrs Sarah Partridge	Bridges Farm, The Tye, Kersey, IP7 6HB	01787 210859
kerseypc@gmail.com		

Parish Council budget, precept and actual finance figures year ending March 2023

Payments	Budget yr ending 31/03/23	Actual to 1 March 23	Added to reserves in year	Budget yr ending 31/03/24
Admin	£ 815.00	£ 812.73		£ 962.00
Staff costs	£ 6,330.00	£ 6,351.68		£ 7,200.00
Training and external meetings	£ 250.00	£ 166.35		£ 250.00
Street lighting	£ 540.00	£ 2,621.40		£ 540.00
Insurance (PC & Glebe)	£ 355.00	£ 358.83		£ 615.00
Glebe hedgecut	£ 85.00	£ 100.00		£ 95.00
Mowing the Glebe	£ 100.00	£ 200.00		£ 250.00
RoSPA inspection	£ 93.00	£ 91.00		£ 100.00
Bin emptying charges	£ -	£ 9.98		£ 20.00
St Mary's PCC	£ 460.00	£ 460.00		£ 500.00
Defibrillator annual support	£ 215.00	£ 126.00		£ 215.00
General PC payments	£ 9,243.00	£ 11,297.97		£ 10,747.00
Training reserve			£ 83.65	£ -
Defib and VETS reserve			£ 89.00	£ -
Election costs reserve	£ 165.00		£ 165.00	£ 165.00
Church Walk future maint reserve	£ 130.00		£ 130.00	£ 130.00
Footpath map printing reserve	£ 75.00		£ 75.00	£ 75.00
Fixed asset reserve	£ -			£ -
General Parish Council reserve	£ -			£ -
Contingencies	£ 467.00			£ 303.00
Total Precept	£ 10,080.00	£ 11,297.97		£ 11,420.00
Footpath working group	£ 455.00	£ 481.47		
Jubilee working group	£ 3,667.00	£ 3,318.98		£ -
KCPC working group	£ 1,847.00	£ 245.83		
Agreed spending from reserves	£ 100.00			£ 100.00
Other payments sub total	£ 6,069.00	£ 4,046.28		
Total Budget	£ 16,149.00	£ 15,344.25		£ 11,520.00

Street lighting spending includes £2450.20 for conversion to LED lighting. This overspend on the street lighting budget will be funded from the fixed asset reserve and will be paid back by street lighting energy cost savings over a number of years.

The Parish Council set a budget for 2023/24 and agreed the precept received from Babergh. The approved precept amount is £11,420. This means that the Kersey Parish element of the council tax for a band D property for 2023/24 has increase to £59.30 for band D property, an 11.2% increase.

The Parish Council financial year ends on 31 March, the Parish Council usually approves the year end accounts at the Parish Council meeting in May. See the Parish Council Finance page on the website for more information. <https://kersey.suffolk.cloud/parish-council/parish-council-finance/>

Kersey Annual Parish Assembly Reports

Kersey Parish Council Footpath Working Group (FWG)

It has been another good year for the Kersey Footpath Working Group (FWG). The volunteers continue to do an amazing job repairing broken posts and footbridges across the footpath network. In addition to the attention to detail on cutting the footpaths and keeping them in good order for walkers and visitors alike has been much appreciated. The weather at key cutting times did not help the in the year but all volunteers made the effort to include cutting outside of the normal dates to ensure our contract commitments with SCC were met in full.

The FWG has returned to holding meetings at The Bell now that the venue is fully operational and all COVID 19 restrictions have been lifted. All FWG equipment has been serviced as required. A full proposal for upgrading equipment and purchasing some new battery equipment will be prepared for consideration by the Parish Council. The annual budget for the FWG was recently approved by the Parish Council and there are sufficient funds currently available in the accounts to enable the work of cutting and maintaining the footpaths in the season ahead.

As in previous years, I wish to extend my thanks to all the volunteers and landowner representatives for all the help and co-operation given throughout the course of the year. We expect to begin of first cutting of the footpaths from May. We trust everyone throughout the Parish will continue to enjoy walking in the beautiful Kersey countryside in the year ahead.

Kevin R Pratt

Chair Kersey Footpath Working Group

Kersey Parish Council KCPC (Playground) working group

The playground has been available all year for the village to use.

The RoSPA report highlighted a number of issues that have been addressed or are being monitored. At some point, there will be a need to assess the exercise equipment in the playing field as some pieces are starting to show their age.

The Cricket nets was maintained and available for use through the year.

The grass-cutting rota was reinstated on a formal basis and the mower was replaced by a reconditioned quality machine that I hope will survive for several years. I am particularly grateful to Pasco Gibbons for running the rota and completing the quarterly inspections. As always, more volunteers are needed for grass cutting rota.

Two maintenance days were held to keep the playground usable and the hedges have been cut. It was pleasing to be able to start fundraising again and we ran a successful Quiz night in November. This was well supported and a number of local businesses were very generous with prizes for the raffle. In the end £1,094.51 was raised. It is planned to do something similar in 2023.

I am most grateful for all the support I have received over the year and would like to thank the working group volunteers and the Parish Clerk. I'd also like to thank Francis for allowing us to house the mower in her garden, which makes the task of mowing so much very easier.

Jonathan Marsh

Chair KCPC working group

Kersey Parish Council KVG (Volunteer) working group

The KVG is a group of 14 local volunteers. They are responsible for collecting litter, reporting potholes and other hazards in specifically allocated roads and lanes. The main issues this year have been recurrent potholes and an increase in casual littering. If you wish to join the KVG, please contact me.

I thank all the volunteers and other residents who strive to ensure we live in a safe and pleasant environment.

John Hume

Chair KVG working group

Forget Me Nots

The Forget Me Nots have had an enjoyable year. We have 11 active members who enjoy outings around every two weeks, for lunches and coffee trips. The venues are chosen by the members, and we travel far and wide to celebrate birthdays and enjoy social time together. Every meeting we bring an item to put in a raffle i.e Hand lotion etc and a ticket costs £1.00. Everyone wins a prize, and the money goes into "the pot" during the year and then is used to fund our Christmas lunch.

Unfortunately, a member has had to drop out, and another joins us when their health allows. We have welcomed two villagers to our group this year, and we would love to invite anyone who wants to join us to enjoy good company and eat good food.

Transport to and from the venues can be organised, so no excuse not to join us.

For more information, please phone Veronica Partridge on 01473 823188

Franey, Rand and Pest House Charities

The Trustees have met twice during the last year.

The number of applications for help has increased this year. Grants were made during the past year to individuals and groups including The Hadleigh Elderly People's Welfare, Shelley Riding for the Disabled and Surviving Winter in Hadleigh, which could also benefit people from Kersey.

The trustees plan to meet again in May this year.

Rachael Rogers

Trustee

Friends of the Bells of St Mary's Church

Practice night is every Thursday from 7.45 pm until 9.30 pm, to which beginners, learners and experienced bell ringers are most welcome. At present Kersey is very short of ringers so please come and give it a go. There is 30 minutes ringing before every morning Sunday service. There are funds in the account to pay for a new set of ropes which will be ordered once rules regarding reclaiming VAT have been clarified. It is hoped to ring a peel to celebrate the King's Coronation on Sunday 7 May.

Neville Whittell

Tower Captain

Friends of St Mary's Church Trust (FoSM)

We are delighted to report that 2022 has been a good year for the Friends of St. Mary's with a number of fund raising events and income from the 500 Club lottery and FoSM membership. The gross income for 2022 as at December 31st was £6,631.50 with a net income of £5,595.10 after expenses. This leaves a very healthy balance of £9,024.21 in the bank. The Trustees held their AGM at the Bell Inn on Wednesday 1st March and at this meeting Mr Chris Partridge offered his resignation which was accepted and he stood down from the trustees. He was warmly thanked for all of his hard work and support throughout the year. Mrs. Claire McQuaker and Ms. Esme Chapman were nominated as new trustees and both were formally elected onto the Trust. A copy of the minutes of this meeting are available if requested through our secretary, Ms. Mary Pearce. A total of £5,000 was transferred to the PCC for works carried out to the West Doors as well as renovations to the area under the Bell Tower. Further fund raising is now underway for renovations to the North and South entrances.

FoSM event summary

We started the year with a Family Farm Day at Bridges Farm, courtesy of Chris and Sarah Partridge, which raised just under a thousand pounds. There was then the very popular jazz night in September, which was sold out, raising over fifteen hundred pounds. We were due to have the Kelvedon Singers but sadly covid, which we all thought we had seen the end of, came back and knocked out a number of the singers voices. The event was carried forward to 2023 and we are hopeful, health permitting, that we will be showing the Kelvedon Singers this year on Sunday July 2nd.

The Christmas American Supper dance was another resounding success. The table themes this year were amazing as guests really went all out for a fun packed festive evening. Over 65 guests dined in the beautiful candlelit church whilst being schmoozed by the wonderful voice of Chris James, singing the festive favourites as well as the popular swing time jazz numbers. The evening was sponsored by Nevelli with auction prizes donated by Mr. Trevor Stirling and Whitwell Services and we are eternally grateful to all of them. Overall the event raised just under £2,000 and was a fabulous fun evening.

2023 looks set to be another fun filled year with a number of events already either booked or very much in discussion. Look out for another Family Farm Day at Bridges Farm, more of the popular jazz evenings as well as the third in the series of American Supper nights. They work well and sell out, so we are very keen to keep offering them especially as we are starting to see a growing number of guests coming into Kersey from outside of the village. A great way to promote the church and bring higher footfall into St. Mary's.

Mark Rigby
Chair FoSM

Grays' Trust

As most of you know, the object of the Grays' Trust is to support the education of residents of the Parish. Whilst this, in practice, largely means the education of school and university students it does include adult education and the support of local educational societies. We continue to hope that the Trust can help the broadest possible range of parishioners with their educational needs.

Our income last year was £11,192 and from that we have made grants to 2 Year 13 school pupils and 8 undergraduates. We have also given grants to the Primary school and to the Tuesday Club. We gave the two Primary school leavers leaving presents and assisted one family with educational expenses.

Given the wider financial climate in the country, the Trustees consulted an investment advisor and were reassured to find that the Trust's investments continued to be healthy.

Finally, the Trustees were saddened by Rachel Wells's decision to retire and would like to thank her for her many years of service.

Kersey C of E Primary School 2022

Kersey CE Primary has gone from strength to strength since academising in November 2021. The return of the Head Teacher to a part time role after maternity leave means that the school now benefits from two Head Teachers, with a crossover day in the middle of the week. The Head Teachers have developed a strong, dedicated staff who are all keen to see the school grow and flourish. We were sorry to see Rev Jackson leave Kersey and the benefice; we are so grateful to him and the church community for their support in promoting our fabulous school during some challenging times. We started the new year with our annual whole school trip to the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich to see 'Jack & the Beanstalk'. All children were able to attend and the school funded those who would struggle to afford it themselves.

In preparation for the Queen's Jubilee, we launched a topic learning about Elizabeth II. The school community gathered together for Epiphany and enjoyed a King's Day parade around St Mary's Church. All pupils wore homemade but very regal crowns and cloaks, made from recycled Christmas wrapping paper. In this unit of work pupils learnt about royal residences across the UK, flags from around the commonwealth and even designed and made a modern electric carriage for the Queen herself!

In February, younger pupils attended the U7 Multi sports event at Hadleigh High School. Being such a small school, this is a valuable opportunity to mix with other children of a similar age and enter into sporting activities that we would not ordinarily be able to contend in. This month also marked Children's Mental Health Week and Internet Safety Day, with activities taking place linked to both as part of the curriculum.

Toward the end of the month, many school families from Kersey and beyond joined the village celebrations held at the splash to mark the Queen's Jubilee. Claire, Headteacher at the time, and her family attended and were proud to be part of such a memorable occasion.

Reverend Jackson led a thought provoking service at Lent and the children were encouraged to think about the way in which their actions impacted on the wider world.

World Book Day in March is now a favourite event in the school calendar which the children eagerly await; planning with excitement which book character they would dress up as. In 2022 each class winner received a book prize from the school. The day itself was a great celebration of children's literature.

To conclude the Spring Term, Kersey pupils made Easter gardens which were displayed in St Mary's for the wider community to enjoy.

SATs took place in May only two pupils both worked hard and achieved their potential. Transition events to Hadleigh High School where both pupils were moving onto. In preparation for Mrs Damant's return from maternity leave, we organised a number of external providers to teach Upper Key Stage Two (Years 5 & 6) which allowed us as co-heads to have leadership time. This has brought great expertise into the school and offers the children specialist teaching in art, drama, music, PE and French.

Our Leavers' service at the end of the school year is always full of mixed emotions and we were grateful to Rev Jackson for leading us through some time to reflect on the school year that has passed. The gifts from the Church to our leavers are very generous and the children do look forward to receiving something special.

Sports Week was successful once again; being so early in the new academic year, it gives the staff and children some time to get to know one another in a different context to the 'usual' school day. The children experienced a range of activities and opportunities during the week, such as First Aid, a climbing wall, Parkour, martial arts and a trip to Wattisham Airfield. We are always so grateful to those who give up their time to come and give the children such brilliant experiences.

Harvest Festival on 16th October was well-attended by our families and pupils. It was our last chance to say goodbye to Rev Jackson at this service.

Our Open Afternoon at the end of November was very well received. We welcomed a number of potential new families to the school, showing them around and allowing their children to experience a taste of school life. We are feeling very positive about numbers on roll for September 2023, with many siblings of current pupils joining us in Reception in September. It worked especially well holding our Open Afternoon event on the same day as the Church and Woodland Nurseries Christmas Fair.

December saw the annual school Nativity performed in the Church. With our new staging purchased from a generous charitable donation, we put on what was arguably our best Nativity yet. Many families came to watch and we received a lot of positive feedback; we are so thankful to be able to perform in such a beautiful and holy setting. We were also grateful to Rev Jackie Sephton for stepping in to support our Christmas Carol service in December.

Jess Damant & Claire Dunnell Paley
Co-Headteachers

Kersey Playing Field Association

The Glebe continues to provide a large outdoor space that the village and school can use and will provide the space to hold the Coronation picnic in May. We have also provided car parking for a couple of weddings/events and already have a few booked for this year.

As ever, we are grateful to KCPC for their ongoing maintenance of the facilities they have installed in the areas that they lease.

The grass cutting arranged by Suffolk County Council, their contribution for the school's usage, seems to be continuing despite the change in the school's status. We are grateful for this but are still uncertain about the formal arrangement.

Finally, one big step forward this year is that we now have a working bank account again! Barclays kindly put our old account into dormancy without asking and it has literally taken years to get the situation sorted out. The wonders of a public tweet on Twitter finally got the reaction needed!

Mark Pertwee
Secretary Kersey Playing Field Association

Kersey Projects on their village activities from April 2022 to April 2023

The first event we organised was a Drinks & Canapes party on Thursday 2 June at The Glebe, in celebration of the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee which was attended by around 120 people. With the help of Pete Partridge and his team, a marquee was erected, decorated with bunting, and tables and chairs were placed in and around the marquee. We served prosecco and absolutely masses of canapés, all of which went down very well. The evening ended by Kersey's take on a 'beacon' which was lit at 9.45. Seemingly a very successful evening and some of the funds previously raised by Kersey Projects allowed us to entertain parishioners free of any charge.

December 1st, 2022 saw the lighting of the Christmas tree at The Splash and huge thanks must go to Adrian and Natalie Blyth for the onerous task of erecting it and displaying the lights. We had the best attendance this year when we served mulled wine, sausage rolls and mince pies. Again, this was a Kersey Projects function totally free of charge to parishioners. The tree alone costs £90. There was an added attraction this time where we had informed the new tenants at The Bell that we were hosting the early evening and they very kindly saw this as an opportunity to introduce themselves to the village with offers of a complimentary drink and canapés. I'm told this was hugely successful and I can only conclude it was as I was literally unable to get in the door of The Bell, so I missed out! Thank you The Bell!

On 26 November, Friends of St Mary's, hosted a Christmas Fair in the church and but were unable to supply the refreshments. Kersey Projects stepped in and ran the 'café', supplying light lunches, cakes and teas and coffee. Funds from the café went to Kersey Projects.

January 2023 brought Burn's Night! We entertained 70 paying guests for an evening of traditional Scottish fayre – haggis etc etc – and dancing to The Hosepipe Band. Huge thanks have to go to Stuart McQuaker and Matt Smith for providing the catering. Feedback has requested that we make this an annual event!

To sum up. Kersey Projects exists to host events which we hope the village will enjoy, not only to raise funds to allow us to do this, but also to raise funds for chosen local charities.

The Lewis Mowles Trust

The Lewis Mowles Trust is paying for a seat to be put next to the church. We are also giving a donation to the Village Hall towards future improvements other donations are being considered before the account is closed.

Norah Orriss

Treasurer Lewis Mowles Trust

Nightingale Trust and Allotments

The Nightingale Trust continued its work throughout the year and had income of £1010.31. Expenditure was £1,498.64 leaving a net outflow of £488.33. The trust has capital reserves of £8,976.39.

The year was a successful one with a number of maintenance projects completed including the cutting and resetting of all of the boundary hedgerows and footpaths. A project that was well overdue and completed by Mr. Rick Osborne. Gates and pathways were also reviewed and maintenance completed where necessary. Following requests from the allotment tenants, a new noticeboard was erected by the upper pumps to enable allotment holders to share information about gardening equipment as well as seed availability and other site information. Further pump repairs were also made and we are pleased to report that both pumps are now in good working order.

We managed to secure a hefty discount on seed purchases via our secretary which was a benefit to all tenants. We made a donation to Kersey Primary School to set up a gardening club for children to learn about the importance of growing their own food and understanding the provenance of locally sourced produce.

Finally, a tenants whatsapp group was established to improve communications across the Allotment holders and the Trust.

All of the allotment plots are full with the exception of plot 21, at the upper end of the site, which has been cleared and will be returned to natural wilding and planted with wild flowers to encourage and support insects and other wildlife onto the allotments.

The Trust, as part of its founding principle, provides support to people in the community, in particular residents who may be struggling with food and heating payments.

An enhanced winter payment was made to help a number of people with their winter fuel bills following the energy crisis, as well as support via Morrisons food vouchers. The trust also continues to offer a taxi service in conjunction with the Boxford taxi driver scheme enabling those in need of transport to and from medical appointments to receive a driver at reduced rates. Current rates are set at 45p per mile and this is closely monitored against local taxi firms, whose fares range from between 90-110 pence per mile. The Trust, in addition to providing transport, supplements fares for the first £20 in any given year for individuals. All of the drivers are local and are predominantly the Trustees themselves.

There were no changes to the Trustees, all of whom provide their time and support to this wonderful charity free of charge, and are a genuine asset to the village, supporting one of the oldest registered charities in Suffolk.

Mark Rigby

Chair Nightingale Trust

St Mary's Church PCC annual report on the activities of the PCC for 2022

The year started with Rev Jackson encouraging Jenny, Linda and Liz to take on more responsibility for services to support and help Rachel. We all then worked together to develop Sidespersons 'teams' for each service in order to establish closer and more regular connections within the village. So far these teams have worked well – it's lovely to have you all as part of our team, providing a warm welcome to worshippers at each service and we value the time that you give.

A loyal and long serving PCC was re-elected in April 2022 comprising: Rachel Wells as Church warden, Jenny Partridge, Lucy Oldham, Colin Grannell, Nick Judd, Frances Whymark, and Linda Newbigging. Holly Crompton Battersby and Liz Hanson agreed to be co-opted. Although Liz resigned in December 2022, she remains on the worship team for 3rd Sunday service and kindly leads other services where necessary. Vacancies remain for a second Church Warden and Deanery Synod reps.

The PCC began work on a 5-year plan in 2021 which was briefly reviewed during 2022. A succession plan for the PCC and a long term vision for St Mary's for at least the next 5 years will be an important focus for our new incumbent.

It was with a heavy heart the Rev Jackson resigned his incumbency in this Benefice in September 2022. Many from the Benefice attended his 'installation' at Layer de la Haye and we wish him and the family very well in his new ministry. The new Priest in Charge is unlikely to be in place until August or September 2023.

We are grateful to the many clergy, elders and readers who have stepped in to help organise and preach at services whilst we are in a vacancy. We wish Julie Boast very well in her retirement as our Church Elder in March 2022 – she is greatly missed.

Our regular pattern of services continues and we would like to thank Ian Hattrick who continues to play the organ regularly. We would also like to thank the Bell ringers who continue to ring prior to services and we know that the practise night is appreciated by everyone in Church Hill and The Street.

The highlight of the year must be the Queen's jubilee. A service of thanksgiving held by the splash kicked off the traditional street party which was just one of the wonderful events held at the village during that glorious weekend. Very sadly, a short time later we also held a service of commemoration for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II; a book of condolence was signed by many visitors to the Church. A hornbeam will be planted in the churchyard as part of the 'Queens canopy' initiative.

During the year, the PCC has continued to manage a rolling schedule of maintenance and to carry out more major repairs as highlighted in the Quinquennial of 2019: windows have been repaired; electrical sockets added; the roof has been checked, patched and should last another 5 years. There are some major outstanding works from the Quinquennial: to improve the soakaways; repair the church steps; and replace the boiler. We await further advice and quotations and it is our ambition to improve the South door screen during 2023. The next Quinquennial is due 2024.

The Churchyard has been looked after for at least 20 years by Keith Cowan and he has now retired and handed over to George. The PCC has decided that 2023 should be a year of improvement in the churchyard so that it looks as good as the church building itself. We hope to inspire and involve people from the village in this work and will hold a maintenance day in the Spring.

Our beautiful church continues to attract daily visitors and their positive feedback and compliments demonstrate just how important this place is to casual visitors, pilgrims, worshippers and those seeking solace and comfort.

The PCC would like to expressly thank the flower arrangers, clock winders and the cleaning team for all they do to keep St Mary's looking loved, looked after and welcoming to visitors and worshippers – your efforts are very much valued by all.

Linda Newbigging
PCC Secretary

Kersey Table Tennis Club, report for year ending 31 March 2023

After a somewhat poor period of attendance for April through to June it was necessary to increase our session fees to cover the hire cost of the Village Hall.

Our summer break was used to raise awareness of the Club's existence to the wider community and this was rewarded with much higher attendance levels when our new season started in September. This has been maintained to date and is sufficient to generate enough income to meet the hire costs of the hall.

Overall, the Clubs finances remain healthy and reserves are available should equipment require replacement. The accounts for the year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 have been audited.

The Club operates from Kersey Village Hall on Thursday evenings between 7.30pm and 9pm. Players may elect to play either one hour or the full session at a cost of £2 or £3 respectively. Juniors are charged £1.50 irrespective of the duration.

The purpose of the Club is social and recreational and all abilities are welcome

Adrian Blyth
01473 827805 amblyth1@gmail.com

Tuesday Club

There was a full programme for the year. We started in March with a beetle drive followed by our former county councillor Jenny Antill coming to talk about a novel she had written. Rev Holly Crompton Battersby gave a very interesting talk on her life and work, followed by an old friend Chris Parfitt with a Cornish Medley. We had flowers from the French Alps and Watery places of Suffolk, a poetry evening and a talk about the Dogs Trust, plus the annual meal at Groton Fox and the Christmas party. The club continues to sponsor Tilly at the Shelley Riding school. This years programme has been arranged and anyone is welcome to attend, the monthly meetings are always advertised in the newsletter.

Kersey Village Hall

Since 1935, when the residents of Kersey got together and raised funds to build the Village Hall, the Hall has been used as the lynch pin of the Village.

Many events took place within, dances were very popular and indeed the Hall had a sprung floor inbuilt for this very use. There were Whist Drives, meals and birthday parties, committee meetings, it was the place to be for all activities.

As the years went by, the activities changed, the local families left as there was no affordable accommodation for the young families, and the ethos of Kersey altered. This brought with it a change in the use of the Hall. No more dances as such, although in recent years an enterprising group of Kersey ladies have brought this back into our lives, with Christmas parties, Burns night suppers and other community events. We still have regular letting activities such as Art Classes, Table Tennis, Yoga, Quiz night and regular Committee Meetings.

The Village Hall Committee are working hard to keep the Hall up to the standard of our longest serving Chairman, Paul Ryde, and to make it more user friendly.

This last year has seen a replaced window to the storeroom and a new door for the disabled access. Forthcoming works in the pipeline are replacement of heaters to the committee room and the ladies toilet and landscaping to the rear of the Hall to improve drainage and access.

We are very fortunate to have a healthy bank balance at present, but with the loss of use of the Hall by the School since becoming an Academy, and we are no longer in receipt of the generous rental paid by them, we will have to live within our means.

This last year our income from letting and the Autumn Buffet was £3,939.40
Our expenses for electricity, maintenance, insurance, water and council tax was £5,270.00.

Veronica Partridge

Chair Kersey Village Hall Committee

Village Produce Association

The proposed outing to Bressingham Gardens was cancelled due to lack of support. An outing is planned this year to Hyde Hall on the 15th July. A successful flower show was held in September. Bookings for marquees were up which was encouraging after the last two years. Finances are healthy, there was an income of £2,167.59 with expenses of £1466.64 Donations were given to help the churchyard, church floodlights and newsletter. We are pleased to welcome Marvin Kuzamba who has joined the committee.