

DRAFT Minutes of Kersey Annual Parish Assembly **held on Monday 15 April 2024 in Kersey Village Hall at 7.30pm**

Present

John Hume (Chair), Parish Councillors Liz Bostock, David Butcher and Richard Walker. Leigh Jamieson - Babergh District Councillor, 5 members of the public and Sarah Partridge (Clerk)

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

APA 1/24 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor Andrew Rogers, Adrian Blyth, Jess Damant, Claire Dunnell Paley, Robert Lindsay (SCC), Jonathan Marsh, Linda Newbigging, Mark Pertwee, Kevin Pratt, Mark Rigby, Rachael Rogers and Neville Whittell

APA 2/24 Minutes of the previous Parish Assembly

The minutes of the previous Parish Assembly, held on 17 April 2023 were confirmed as being correct and signed.

APA 3/24 Reports

Reports were received from all the Community Organisations as listed on the agenda. The full reports are all appended to these minutes and will be published on the Kersey website.

- a. Suffolk County Council
- b. Babergh District Council
- c. Kersey Parish Council
- d. Kersey Parish Council working groups:
 - i. Footpath Working Group
 - ii. KCPC (Playground) Working Group
 - iii. KVG (Volunteer) Working Group
 - iv. Kersey Good Neighbours
- e. Forget-Me-Nots
- f. Franey, Rand and Pest House Charities
- g. Friends of The Bells of St Mary's Church
- h. Friends of St Mary's Church Trust - FoSM
- i. Grays' Trust
- j. Kersey Church of England Primary School
- k. Kersey Playing Field Association
- l. Kersey Projects
- m. Lewis Mowles Trust Fund – final report Trust wound up August 2023
- n. Neighbourhood Watch
- o. Nightingale Trust and Allotments
- p. St Mary's Church PCC
- q. Table Tennis Club
- r. Tuesday Club
- s. Village Hall
- t. Village Produce Association

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

www.kersey.suffolk.cloud/

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APA 4/24 Kersey Neighbourhood Priorities Statement

The Parish Council was working on a Parish Review to update the Parish Action Plan. However, after consultation with Babergh the Parish Council has agreed to develop a Neighbourhood Priorities Statements (NPS) which is very similar to the Parish Plan Review. It is much more appropriate and simpler than a Neighbourhood Plan and suits small rural parishes. It will summarise the parish priorities and preferences in relation to 'local matters'. There are no restrictions on what can be included in a NPS. Importantly NPS are mentioned in the Levelling Up Bill, so once completed a NPS is taken into consideration when planning applications are decided by Babergh. Babergh can offer full support to complete the NPS. The Parish Council has already agreed the main topics the NPS will focus on, although these may change as a result of public consultations during the process:

Planning and Development

- Affordable Housing
- Market Housing
- Improve knowledge of residents about the planning system, powers of PC and responsibility of property owners

Cultural, Sporting and Recreational Facilities and Activities (Social infrastructure)

Voluntary and Community Activity

Environmental Sustainability - what we can all do to reduce our impact on the planet

- Carbon footprint reduction
- Access to renewable energy
- Active transport – how to encourage more walking and cycling to facilities in and outside Kersey

Public Transport

Road safety

- Speeding and speed limits
- Parking
- Safe footpath links between Vale Lane and facilities in the centre of village

Natural Environment

- Dog bins and dog fouling
- Working Group to tidy village – KVG set up and working well

Access to information and connectivity

- Improved Broadband Speeds
- Improved mobile phone signal across whole parish
- Kersey website

Local Democracy

- Keep Parish Plan and Action Plan alive in the community
- Encourage interest in the Parish Council – new Councillors and public attendance at meetings.

APA 5/24 Any other business

Kersey has a new defibrillator at Kersey Upland which is ready and available should it be needed. Grateful thanks to Rob Partridge for carrying out the installation. It is located immediately beside the road in a cabinet on the wall of a black farm building at West Sampsons Hall Farm, Kersey IP7 6EN, not far from the red Royal Mail postbox.

The what3words location for this defib is: [person.special.playfully](https://www.what3words.com/?w3w=person.special.playfully)

The unit should be registered on the Ambulance service systems in the next couple of weeks.

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We now have two Parish Council managed defibrillators in Kersey, the other being at the back of The Bell Inn. There is also a defib at Kersey Mill in the old red telephone box. This now means all properties in Kersey have easy access to a defibrillator.

The Parish Council will be organising a community awareness/training session one evening in Kersey Village Hall later this year run by the Community Heartbeat Trust. This session will show how easy it is to use a defibrillator and what to do in a cardiac emergency. Look out for the date in the newsletter.

The Parish Council is very grateful for generous financial contributions which has made it possible to install the second defib unit in Kersey. With special thanks to:

Robert Lindsay our Suffolk County Councillor
Leigh Jamieson our Babergh District Councillor
Kersey Freight
Carter Jonas

Kersey is in need of a Local History Recorder - the previous recorder has moved away from Kersey. This role can be as big or small as you want to make it. The main job is to put together an annual report detailing events in the village during the year. More information is available from Clerk.

National Grid Norwich to Tilbury pylon statutory consultation. The Parish Council will be considering a response to this consultation at their meeting on 13 May and will be informing Babergh of their response to help Babergh understand the community's position.

National Grid has published information on their website and there will be a series of communications explaining the project proposal, webinars, in person public information events and various advertising. See their website for more information:
<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

Norwich to Tilbury is a proposal by National Grid Electricity Transmission (National Grid) to reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between the existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk, and Tilbury in Essex, as well as connect new offshore wind generation. It is proposed to build approximately 184 km of new electricity transmission reinforcement between Norwich and Tilbury. This will be made up mostly of overhead line and pylons, along with some underground cables and a new 400 kV substation.

Offshore wind is being developed at scale and around 60% of the current offshore wind projects will come ashore along the East Coast. Couple this with new nuclear generation proposed at Sizewell C and greater interconnection with countries across the North Sea, we expect to see a significant increase in the level of renewable and low carbon electricity generation connecting in East Anglia.

The proposed line will run from Norwich to Bramford to the West of the A140 and then on towards Chelmsford to the West of the A12 and East of Hadleigh. There will also need to be large scale infrastructure on the coast where the power comes ashore and then lines to take it to Norwich which are not being considered as part of this consultation.

The Parish Council responded to an earlier non-statutory National Grid consultation last year with the following comments: Kersey Parish Council objects to the introduction of more pylons which will

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damage the environment and communities. The Parish Council believes that a coordinated sub-sea offshore electricity transmission network is a far better way to transmit the renewable energy generated off the coast of East Anglia down to London and the South East where the power is needed.

National Grid has not included consideration of an offshore coordinated subsea grid in this consultation.

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/>

At the local **Police and Crime Commissioner election** on 2 May electors will need to show photographic ID in order to vote. This includes, passport, driving licence, bus pass etc. If you do not possess any of these then you can apply to Babergh for a free Voter Authority Certificate

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20pm.

There are 14 pages appended to these minutes.

Signed

Date

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Suffolk County Council – Councillor Robert Lindsay

Coping with Flooding in Suffolk

The drainage systems in the county were unable to cope with the volume of water from exceptional flooding this winter that appears now to be a regular occurrence. Suffolk County Council have committed an extra £1m for individual parish flood investigations (jointly with the Environment Agency) to try and prevent future incidents. Where usually there are only three or four such investigations each year, for 2023 the number is likely to be near 100 investigations. They have to be held in a parish where four or more properties have been affected.

My political group tabled a motion on flooding in December, which among other things, proposed to increase the frequency of clearing drains and gullies around the county; however, the Conservative majority removed the call for changes to schedule before passing their version.

Defib

I was happy to use some of my locality budget during the year to contribute to the village's new defibrillator.

Lower speeds

Thank you to Kersey and Semer parish councils and those in the community for helping to match my locality budget contribution to the 60mph to 40mph scheme on Union Hill. People are supposed to drive to the conditions and layout of the road regardless of the speed limit, but the reality is that many people treat the limit as a target rather than a maximum. 60mph is an inappropriately fast speed for Union Hill and I have no doubt that average speeds will reduce as a result of the change. Please be patient. My experience is that it could be at least a year before they come up with a design and implement it.

Motion to make it easier to get lower speeds rejected

In July I, with the backing of my political group, proposed a motion to review the criteria for changing speed limits to make it easier, particularly on national speed limit roads, to get lower speed limits. This motion was voted down by the Conservative administration, without debate.

Buses – an investment strategy and priority list needed

I hope something comes from Monks Eleigh's investigation into a Digibus scheme for demand responsive transport. My view is the county needs a written strategy, prioritising for investment in the main gaps in bus coverage. This would make it more likely the county will win competitive funding bids. An important gap is the lack of a daily service from Hadleigh to the mainline train station at Stowmarket.

Pension committee

I sit on the pension committee at the county council, the value of the fund has risen from 3.2billion to £4billion in the year. I have been pushing to clean up investments and remove fossil fuel investments from our holdings. This has been partially done with something like 25% of the fund in a "carbon aware" fund. The committee also, two months ago, for the first time, set a target for reaching net zero with its investments, which was "by 2050 or earlier"

New Highways Contract

The jury is still out on Milestone, the new highways contractor. Their contract started right when the floods did. But performance of the contract will be scrutinised after 12 months to assess Milestone's performance and is for an initial period of 10 years, with the option to increase it a further 10 years.

Budget

In February 2024, the Council's budget for 2024/25 was voted in. The Conservative budget proposed an increase in council tax of the maximum 4.99%. Council services have faced another year of spiralling demand and additional cost pressures, and the council's administration have had to draw £16m from council reserves to balance their budget.

Special Needs failure and remedy

Suffolk County Council and its NHS partners who provide SEND (special educational needs) failed their inspection in November 2023. The inspection found 'widespread and/or systematic failings' in the

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service. As a result of the inspection, the two Cabinet Members for children's services and education at the council quit their roles, and new cabinet members have been appointed to these roles. A new full time and permanent Director for Children's Services (DCS) has also recently been appointed, who will start at the council in July.

Suffolk Devolution Deal

After much talk of devolution in the last few years, it looks like this may now happen in Suffolk. The county council will have a directly elected leader – elected by the public next year rather than by councillors. In return there will be a £16m annual investment fund for economic growth, a £5.8m lump sum to regenerate brownfield sites across the county, and a £3m one off investment in retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient. This is small beer in comparison with the council's £750m annual budget. Decision making powers being handed over from Government at this stage are very hard to find.

There is a consultation being held about the deal right now, and you can find out more about it and fill out the survey here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Babergh District Council – Councillor Leigh Jamieson

Firstly, I was pleased to help the village on a number of occasions using my locality fund in the last year. I have helped with funding for the defibrillator, a tea urn and chair mover in the village hall and some playground improvements.

In terms of the council the year started with the District elections back in May last year. This turned out to be a very good time for Green Party councillors, who were successful in getting ten members elected. This did not just increase our numbers significantly but made us the largest group within the Council.

As the largest group on the new administration, we have had a major say in setting the Council's key priorities that will be the basis of all plans for the next 4 years. These are an Increase in climate change action, close collaboration with communities, and a focus on good housing. The administration also set a number of short-term ambitions including ways of improving the energy efficiency of listed buildings; a relaunch of neighbourhood plans; identifying more land for community housing and improving planning enforcement using the considerate constructor's scheme, most of which have been started. In terms of the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS). This is something I proposed a couple of years ago. However, despite being approved by full council, nothing happened. Thanks to our increased presence in the administration things have now moved on. The scheme sets out how construction teams should respect neighbours, minimise impact on the environment, and have an inclusive and healthy workplace. Developers will be encouraged to sign up to the scheme when they are granted planning permission, but it will be mandatory in communities where construction could have a severe disruptive impact. The council is also looking at how this approach could be further strengthened in the future.

Part one of the Council's Joint Local Plan finally came in to affect. The decision which has been long in coming will provide the council with up-to-date policies to direct planning decisions. Meanwhile, part 2 of the plan, which revisits the sites available for applications will be developed over the next two years. A call for these sites went out to landowners and parishes last year.

One area that is presenting significant challenges is Housing. The council was already facing compliance issues following their social housing referral in 2022. On top of this there was still a backlog of repairs dating back to Covid.

It was also discovered that there are significant issues with the state of Council housing stock across the district. The group have made this matter a priority and will be pushing the council to improve on

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the situation as soon as is possible. To help with this the council have released £943,000 from reserves to help clear the repair backlog. The money would also support wider improvements to the council housing service in the district. The housing team have also developed a new strategy to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. This strategy has been developed by the new team and is focussed on early prevention & intervention and making rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurring, among other things. The council have also approved higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties in an effort to tackle the homes crisis without the need to rely on new builds.

The Councils financial issues were highlighted at the backend of 2023 leading into this year. Although the budget was approved this year balancing the budget was not easy and was only possible with use of earmarked reserves along with increases in council tax, rents, and fees. Council tax was increased by 2.99% which equates to a rise of 10p a week on a band D home. Council tenants also saw an increase of 7.7%. Social rents increased by £7.92 a week and affordable rents increased £11.13 a week. Ongoing financial pressures, however, still remain a concern for the council with a potential budget gap of £6.7m in the coming years. With income falling short of this the council needs to look at all income and funding streams.

The financial challenges have also led to one of the most controversial decisions that the Council have had to make, the introduction of parking charges in Hadleigh, Sudbury and Lavenham. The charges, which were approved by the cabinet this week, start at £1 for an hour in the short stay parking and £1 for two hours in the long stay.

Other news

- CIFCO, the council's commercial property arm, is still generating decent income for the council and is currently generating 11% of Babergh's income.
- The Corks Lane development continues to progress although there are growing concerns that this will leave the Council out of pocket.
- The aim of improving the parking situation in Garrards Road is still ongoing. The Council have the materials for this work, but the finance is still a challenge.
- The Council have installed twenty-eight new electric vehicle chargers across their car park network this year, to help tackle climate change.

Kersey Parish Council, Chair's Report 2023-24 – John Hume, Chair

Our aim is to make Kersey a great place in which to live, work and visit. We are the first level of government and represent our residents in enhancing well-being and security in the Parish. Current Councillors are Liz Bostock, David Butcher, Penny Calnan, Esme Chapman, Andrew Rogers (Vice Chair), Richard Walker and me. I thank them and our Clerk Sarah Partridge, for their continuing service to our community. Contact details are below and on the Kersey Parish Council website, which also shows meeting minutes, financial reports and an events calendar. We are also grateful for the support and advice provided by Robert Lindsay and Leigh Jamieson, Councillors from Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council respectively.

Your Parish Council is financially strong. Our policy is to have cover in our general reserve for 3-12 months of expenditure. Details are examined at each meeting and there are regular audits and risk assessments. A financial summary for the year is shown below. In the last 15 years we have kept increases in the Parish Council element of Council Tax to a minimum. This year however, it will increase by 27.26% to provide for inflation and the unexpected contribution to the cost of installing the 40mph limit on the A1141. A band D property will be liable for an extra £1.35 per month as a result.

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The Parish Council considered 16 Planning Applications. 13 were supported, two were withdrawn, three refused by Babergh. There were 2 notifications of discharge of conditions for the site to the West of 1-6, The Street.

A well attended picnic was held on The Glebe on 6 May 2023 to mark the King's Coronation. The stolen historic school sign on Church Hill and the gate to The Glebe were replaced. The autumn floods caused disruption and misery to those in the middle of village and Kersey is one of 40 sites on the list for an investigation by Suffolk County Council into prevention. A new defibrillator was installed at Kersey Upland last weekend. The Kersey Good Neighbour Scheme is being developed for introduction shortly. Work has continued on the Neighbourhood Priorities Statement. This is a simpler version of a Neighbourhood Plan and provides most of the benefits.

Finally, Yvonne Martin, a previous Chair, has left Kersey. We thank her for her contribution to village life and wish her well for the future.

Kersey Website: www.kersey.suffolk.gov.uk

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
Liz Bostock	Common Farm, Semer, IP7 6HR	01473 823850
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:

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

Parish Council Finance

The Parish Council set a budget for 2024/25 and requested the precept received from Babergh. The approved precept amount is £14,322. The Parish Council element of the council tax bill for a Band D property is now £75.46 per year, an increase of £1.35 per month. The Parish Council recognised the financial pressures everyone is under and took the decision only after a lot of analysis and debate. Recent high inflation has inevitably pushed up operating costs and this is reflected in the numbers, but the increase has also been driven by two exceptional items. Firstly, the Parish Council owns a number of assets around the parish such as street furniture, playing field equipment, dog bins etc. These items have to be purchased and have various anticipated lives at the end of which they will need to be replaced. To ensure the Parish Council is not caught by surprise with a sudden large bill when something wears out, it is normal practice to put aside money each year into a separate reserve fund which prevents the need for sudden increases in the annual precept to meet the replacement cost. Having reviewed the level of reserves currently held and looked at best practice in other councils it was concluded the size of the reserves are too low and the budget increased for this. Secondly, the Parish Council is contributing towards new 40 mph speed limit signs on the A1141.

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Parish Council budget for the years ending March 2024 and March 2025

Payments	Budget yr ending 31/03/24	Budget yr ending 31/03/25
Administration	£ 962.00	£ 1,142.00
Staff costs	£ 7,200.00	£ 7,560.00
Training and external meetings	£ 250.00	£ 250.00
Street lighting	£ 540.00	£ 560.00
Highway safety signs		£ 1,500.00
Insurance (PC & Glebe)	£ 615.00	£ 500.00
Glebe hedgecut	£ 95.00	£ 110.00
Mowing the Glebe	£ 250.00	£ 250.00
RoSPA inspection	£ 100.00	£ 110.00
Bin emptying charges	£ 20.00	£ 20.00
St Mary's PCC	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Defibrillator annual support	£ 215.00	£ 150.00
Village Emergency Telephone		£ 100.00
Section 137	£ -	
General PC payments	£10,747.00	£ 12,752.00
Election costs reserve	£ 165.00	£ 165.00
Church Walk future maint reserve	£ 130.00	£ 130.00
Footpath map printing reserve	£ 75.00	£ 75.00
Fixed asset reserve	£ -	£ 900.00
General Parish Council reserve	£ -	£ -
Contingencies	£ 303.00	£ 300.00
Total Precept	£11,420.00	£ 14,322.00
Defib/VET reserve spend	£ 100.00	£ 100.00
Fixed asset reserve spend		
Filming donation reserve spend		£ 70.00
General PC total budget	£11,520.00	£ 14,492.00
Footpath working group	£ 2,086.36	£ 620.00
Jubilee working group	£ -	£ -
KCPC working group	£ 1,762.00	£ 1,325.00
Total Budget	£15,368.36	£ 16,437.00

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 Parish Council Footpath Working Group - Kevin Pratt, Chair

It has been another good year for the Kersey Footpath Working Group (FWG). The volunteers continue to do an amazing job repairing broken finger posts and sorting problems across the footpath network. In addition, the attention to detail on cutting the footpaths and keeping them in good order for walkers and visitors alike has been much appreciated.

We have experienced severe flooding on a number of footpaths that has led to damage to bridges, footpaths and bridleways, this limited the amount of cutting that could be performed, 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. A new mower has been purchased, along with a new battery trimmer. 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.

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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.

Kersey Parish Council KCPC (Playground) Working Group - Jonathan Marsh, Chair

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

The RoSPA report highlighted a number of issues, the most pressing of which is the deterioration of the swing legs where they are in the ground. As a result, the swing has been put out of commission. Following advice, a quote has been accepted and we hope repairs will be made in the next few months. In addition, repairs will be made to the slide ladder, and a balance bar support will be replaced.

The Cricket nets was maintained and available for use through the year, however the netting will need to be replaced soon.

The grass cutting rota worked well, as did the mower. This was serviced over the winter. I am particularly grateful to Pasco Gibbons for running this and completing the quarterly inspections. Two maintenance days were held, and additional rubber "bark" was put down with the help of Chris Partridge.

The Quiz night in November was a success and £953 was raised. New fire regulations for the Village Hall restrict numbers so it is important that people book tables in advance rather than just turn up on the night on spec!

As always, we are looking for volunteers as inevitably people drop out as commitments rise or they leave the village. Please contact me or Pascoe Gibbons if you are able to help out.

I am most grateful for all the support I have received over the year and would like to thank the Working group 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 very much easier.

Kersey Parish Council KVG (Volunteer) Working Group – John Hume, Chair

The KVG is a group of 14 volunteer local residents. Our aim is to make Kersey a cleaner, safer community. We do this by collecting litter and reporting potholes, fly-tipping and other hazards to the relevant authority. Each volunteer is allocated a specific area of responsibility and provided with basic kit, safety advice and risk assessments.

This year there has been a reduction in fly-tipping, but casual littering remains a problem, mainly food and drink containers and their contents thrown out of passing vehicles. Potholes have increased in size and number, made worse by the exceptionally heavy rainfall in the autumn. Volunteers have been very busy entering details on the Suffolk County Council reporting tool.

I thank all members of the KVG for their work and contribution in improving life for all Kersey residents. If you would like to join this group, please contact me or Sarah Partridge.

Kersey Good Neighbours

Kersey Good Neighbours has evolved from the community support group set up at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Kersey Good Neighbours best describes the nature of the support on offer. Volunteers could offer help to residents in a time of need with things like: Shopping, collecting prescriptions or dog walking. Also, during power cuts, water leaks or flooding. The Parish Council is aware that there is a problem because people tend not to ask for help. There needs to be continual publicity of this group within the community so residents feel happy to ask for help when they need it. This will be done via the newsletter, website, church community and by asking all community

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organisations to promote this help amongst their members. A new leaflet will be produced for every home in Kersey outlining the support available with contact information for volunteers and other external support available locally. A note was put in the newsletter asking for more volunteers and the Clerk has been in contact with all the original volunteers but is awaiting a few final replies. It is hoped that more may step forward to join this group. Anyone interested should contact The Clerk as soon as possible.

Forget-Me-Nots - Veronica Partridge

The Forget Me Nots have at present 11 active members and hope to welcome 2 more to come and join us on a regular basis. We also have several persons who drop in from time to time when available. We all were very sad at the death of Jean Jarvis who has been part of the group for many years. She is sadly missed. She was 90 years and had a relatively short illness.

On our outings, we decide the day and venue that we can all meet up next, this can vary but it is usually a Thursday. The Forget Me Nots enjoy their trips to various eateries and coffee shops, and sometimes even fit in some shopping. We try to meet once a fortnight. We have various ages in the group, ranging from late 60's to four 90 plus year olds. But no 'old' people!

When the warmer weather arrives, we will be BBQing in my garden at the Chestnuts, they were a great success last year. Also, we will have picnic lunches in the garden and just have a great social time together.

So, if you are a person who enjoys lively company, good food, and transportation if needed, please come and join us, you will be most welcome. You may contact me on 07595 263111 where I can give the time and date of the next venue, and answer all your questions.

Franey, Rand and Pest House Charities - Rachael Rogers, Kersey Trustee

The Trustees have met during the last year and grants were made to individuals and groups including The Memories Cafe, Hadleigh Elderly People's Welfare, Shelley Riding for the Disabled, Surviving Winter in Hadleigh (which could also benefit people from Kersey) and The Christmas Present Trust.

There were two new appointments agreed at the meeting in November 23 - A new Clerk and a new trustee for Layham. The Charity have displayed their notice of publication on local noticeboards and plan to meet again in May.

Friends of The Bells of St Mary's Church - Neville Whittell

The Friends of the Bells funds are £5,200. We have purchased a new set of rope mats. The practices have continued ok but the Sunday service ringing has been difficult due to the lack of available ringers. If anyone is interest in learning to ring please contact me on 01473 822616. Or come along on a Thursday to practice night from 7.45 pm until 9.30 pm. Those with just an interest, beginners, learners and experienced bell ringers are all most welcome.

Friends of St Mary's Church Trust – Mark Rigby, Chair

Trustees: Mark Rigby (Chair), Mark Pertwee (Treasurer), Mary Pearce (Secretary)
Bruce Newbigging, Claire McQuaker, Esme Chapman, Sarah Stirling (retired April 24)

Friends of St. Mary's (FoSM) was formed in January 2019 and held its 4th Annual General Meeting in the Church on Tuesday 2nd April 2024. All financial figures in this report were submitted for that meeting. The meeting was attended by members of the Trust as well as its Trustees.

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The year has been another successful one in terms of fundraising for the Church. An Opening balance of £9,026.01 was grown to a closing balance of £15,040.81. The Trust had a total income of £11,560.25 and expenses of £4,045.45.

This year's funding project for the Church is the replacement and upgrade of all internal church lighting. Due to the age of the lamps and lighting equipment, the project was deemed essential in order to reduce a fire risk. Internal lighting lamps are halogen and now no longer replaceable. It was the fire risk in a timber roofed building that finally persuaded the Trustees to focus on this project as a matter of urgency. New lighting would also enable FoSM to reduce or remove event lighting hire costs for its church events. Total cost of the project is circa £35,000 of which the FoSM have pledged to raise half.

There were five fund raising events during the year, a successful Family Fun Day at Bridges Farm, donated very generously by Sarah and Chris Partridge, plus the Kelvedon Singers, two jazz evenings and an Annual Christmas Supper Dance held in the Church. All events were fully supported and very popular.

The membership numbers and 500 Club lottery sales continue to be a challenge. Whilst new members do sign up to support the Trust, fees and receipts continue to be disappointingly low. The Trust has decided to commit to a major membership and lottery push in 2024/25. (Any help to promote these two revenue streams by the Parish council would be welcomed.)

The Trust has one Trustee vacancy following the resignation of Sarah Stirling and we would like to thank her for her support and hard work over the last years, in particular the excellent Christmas Supper Dance which she has organized on behalf of FoSM.

The Trust welcomed two new Trustees in the year, Claire McQuaker and Esme Chapman. There are no other changes to Trustees or Officers.

Grays' Trust – Philippa Harris, Secretary

Trustees: Mary Pearce (Chair), Philippa Harris (Secretary), Rev. Geoffrey Clement (ex officio), Peter Martin, Hugo Sacker, Stuart McQuaker, Bridget Allen

Email address for applications: graystrustapplications@gmail.com

Having very recently moved from the village Peter Martin, has resigned as Chairman. He will continue as a Trustee for the coming year in order to facilitate the transfer of the Trust finances to our new Chairperson, Mary Pearce. We thank Peter for his years of service to the Trust.

Our income for last year was £8,250 and £7,550 of that was awarded in grants to two sixth form pupils, 9 university students and to the Tuesday Club. We were sorry not to receive an application from Kersey School but kept back our usual contingency fund for any pupil who might need special financial support.

The Grays' Trust exists to help all parishioners, young and old, with educational or training costs. Thanks to the skill and dedication of past Trustees, we are able to award quite significant sums of money to applicants and are happy to consider a wide variety of requests.

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Kersey Church of England Primary School

Jess Damant & Claire Dunnell Paley - Co-Head teachers

We welcomed 8 new pupils into our reception class this year. They have settled superbly and are enjoying all of the wonderful opportunities on offer.

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 circus skills, martial arts, yoga, archery and skateboarding and scootering. The climbing wall returned once again, with 'Spider Mountain,' an extreme climbing frame and inflatable slide! We also learnt about keeping our mental health in check. We are always so grateful to those who give up their time to come and give the children such brilliant experiences.

Our Kersey Outdoor Explorers sessions are a real highlight of our week and we are so grateful to be able to use an area of the churchyard for this. The children are getting so much out of it and it is a welcome change to the daily school routines to go outside in all weathers and explore and learn. Mrs Gray, our KOE lead, is undertaking her Forest School training.

It has been a real pleasure to begin working with Vicar Geoffrey; he is regularly hosting a collective worship for us and the children enjoy going to church for these assemblies. Geoffrey has also got involved in our school life by joining our SGC and joining the staff for discussions about our vision and values. Our Remembrance Day Service at St Mary's was attended by service personnel from Wattisham and Mrs Dunnell Paley played The Last Post. A number of villagers joined us and it was moving to remember together. The school made its own wreath and laid it by the font with others from the local community.

Our Open Afternoon in November was a success, though we missed the church craft fair which has often coincided in the past. St Mary's was the perfect performance venue for us to stage last year's nativity, 'A Little Bird Told Me'. Due to widespread illness in the school community we had before and after Christmas performances which were all very well attended. Thank you for allowing us to use the church again and allowing the children who were unwell the chance to perform.

Members of the community and Vicar Geoffrey joined us for some impromptu carol singing in the village. We enjoyed stopping at various points in the village and the children's voices brought smiles to many faces. Rev. Jackie led our Candlemas and Christingle service in January. It was lovely to see the church lit up by all the Christingle candles and hear the children softly singing. We had our annual Pantomime trip to the New Wolsey Theatre to see Dick Whittington at the start of the new year. This performance was accessible to all and everyone of our pupils thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Pancake races took place on Shrove Tuesday, marking the start of Lent. The children attended a collective worship to discover the significance of Lent.

We celebrated World Book Day with a thrilling literary quiz; the children's costumes were once again a real treat to see!

This academic year the school is celebrating its 150th Anniversary with events planned:

Monday 24th June 2pm- service in St Mary's Church with Bishop Martin

Wednesday 26th June 1pm-3pm - afternoon tea for all previous and existing parents, pupils, staff and governors (there will also be a short musical performance in the church from Kersey and Boxford pupils from 2pm)

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Kersey Playing Field Association – Mark Pertwee, Secretary

The Glebe continues to be used regularly by villagers and locals. We have also provided car parking for a few events.

The grass cutting, which is arranged by the school as a contribution for their usage, continues, supported by the Parish Council, and we much appreciate this. We are also grateful to KCPC for their ongoing maintenance of the facilities they have installed in the areas that they lease.

This year we were delighted to receive a generous donation from The Lewis Mowles Trust as part of their winding up. Thank you to the retiring Trustees for this, as we have very limited funds. This donation and one from the Parish Council for the materials enabled us to install a new field gate and posts this year. It is set slightly more into the field to allow safer pulling off for cars and much easier opening and closing.

Kersey Projects – Suzie Rudkin

The biggest event for 2023 organised by Kersey Projects was the bi-annual Kersey Open Gardens on 19th June. Twenty-eight gardens within the parish were opened to the paying public and this proved to be a huge success with around 600 people attending. It proved to be one of the hottest days of the year and this caused a couple of complaints but the prize must go for the complaint that our scones weren't big enough and not so good as Bressingham's!! Despite this, we were able to donate £2,000 to St Elizabeth's Hospice from profits with the balance reserved by Kersey Projects for future raising events.

December 1st, 2023 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 served mulled wine, sausage rolls and mince pies. This was a Kersey Projects function totally free of charge to parishioners. The tree alone costs £90.

By popular request, building on the success of last year, Friday 26th January 2024 brought our second Burns' Night. We entertained 70+ paying guests for an evening of traditional Scottish fayre – haggis etc – and dancing to The Hosepipe Band, which proved to be even more popular this year! Huge thanks have to go to Stuart McQuaker and Matt Smith for providing the catering.

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.

We are planning a Summer Party on the Glebe in August of this year, free to all Kersey parishioners.

Lewis Mowles Trust Fund – Norah Orriss

The Lewis Mowles Trust Fund was wound up August 2023 and remaining funds donated to various Kersey community organisations. Over the years the trust has donated a total of £22,000 for the benefit of Kersey and the community organisations.

Neighbourhood Watch – John Hume

The aim of NW is to protect individuals and property by influencing neighbourhood safety, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. It is a charity, claiming to be the largest voluntary crime prevention scheme in the UK, covering 2.3 million households.

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The advantages are that it is relatively low cost, helps create a crime prevention and awareness culture and can be run in a low key way by volunteers. There are claims that it reduces crime in areas where there is a NW.

The disadvantages are that it needs a volunteer. It may create unnecessary anxiety and prejudice and the crime reduction cause and effect claims have been questioned. There are also less obvious and intrusive ways to create a safe environment. Some have also claimed it is a way of creating a police substitute.

According to police reports, Kersey has a low crime rate compared with national and local statistics. We have had a NW scheme coordinator in the past and activity was minimal.

My view is that it is a laudable concept. However, given past and current experience I recommend:

1. We do not join NW but review membership annually.
2. We explore how other existing networks, WhatsApp groups, etc could be used to achieve the same aims.

The meeting agreed with this recommendation.

Nightingale Trust and Allotments – Mark Rigby, Chair

Trustees: Mr Mark Rigby (Chair), Mr Matt Smith (Treasurer), Mrs Natalie Blyth (Secretary)
Mrs Rachel Wells, Mrs Pamela Brown, Mr David Butcher, Mrs Ann Swan.
(Mr Viv Marsh and Mr David Woollard retired March 24)

The Nightingale Trust held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday 23 March 2024 and two of its trustees retired on rotation, Mr. David Woollard (Parish representative) and Mr. Viv Marsh. The trustees thanked both Mr. Woollard and Mr. Marsh for their support and work for the trust over the previous four years and five years respectively. Two new trustees were welcomed onto the trust, Mr. David Butcher, (new Parish representative) and Mrs. Ann Swan.

The following financial summary was presented at that meeting. Total Fund investments and cash in hand as at 23/3/2024 was £9901.10 compared to £9394.19 the previous year on a like for like basis. Total income for the year was £1050.06 and total expenditure was £1,254.36 making a small loss of £204.30 for the year. The funds however, remain in a healthy position and no unforeseen liabilities are outstanding.

The Trust was set up in 1874 for the benefit of the poor and needy of Kersey and its surrounding area. The Trustees ensure that the spirit of the trust is upheld and donations were made to a number of individuals whom the trustees felt were worthy beneficiaries of the trusts support. Over £400 was donated in both cash and food vouchers to the beneficiaries and an equal payment was made to the Hadleigh Food Bank which provides necessary food support to our local area. In addition to the above donations, the trust also provides on request, a taxi service for those local residents who are in need of transport to and from medical or dental appointments. This is a much-needed service and the trust continues to be delighted to provide it. The trustees also work closely with the local school, Kersey Primary School and have in the past made donations to the school to support the provision of fresh fruit for the children as well as the funding of the greenhouse which is used to help children understand the benefits of growing their own produce.

The trust is responsible for the allotments to the rear of the street in Kersey where we have 21 plots, 20 of which are available for tenants. All plots were under rent at the end of the year. The 21st plot, due to the nature of its position and being constantly under shade, has been returned to wilding and

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this year a number of dwarf fruit trees were planted to encourage insects and other wildlife. The full perimeter of the allotments underwent a major hedge trimming and general tidying up of all footpaths, gateways and public access areas. There are two working water pumps and a tenants notice board. The Trustees would like to thank Adrian Blyth for all of his work and support in repairs and maintenance across the allotments. He and his wife Natalie have been a godsend.

Natalie Blyth has also set up a buying consortium with the Kings Seeds company. This enables the buying power of the allotment tenants to benefit from a 50% discount across the catalogue for the pre-season orders. She is also very kindly extending this facility to all residents of Kersey.

St Mary's Church PCC – Linda Newbigging, PCC Secretary

The PCC met six times during the year since our last APCM and was chaired by PCC members in the absence of a Vicar.

We wholeheartedly thank all the groups of volunteers who help to keep the church open daily and to keep it looking so well cared for; cleaning team, flower team, lock up team, helpers with grounds maintenance, clock winding team, our side-people and Ian Hattrick for continuing to play at our services and the Bell ringers who ring in our services. We are also grateful to Viv Marsh for continuing to produce the Parish Newsletter for another year. The many visitors to our church regularly express their appreciation for the wonderful building and the way in which it is maintained and presented.

The PCC continued to have concerns about meeting its financial obligations; the quota payment for 2024 is the highest ever at £16,500 and we need to increase our fundraising efforts. We are very grateful to FOSM who continue to support works within Church. With guidance from Rev Jo Delfgou, arrangements to keep the Bell Ringing Chamber open were agreed. With guidance from the Diocese Advisory Committee a Faculty for the Shrine and Sedilia replacement windows was submitted and is now out for public comment. The PCC has also begun a new faculty to replace the church lighting. A Quinquennial report will be instigated this year which will identify the next round of required repairs and restorations.

St Mary's hosted the Licensing service for Rev Geoffrey Clement in September and since his arrival he has been taking time to get to know each Parish and understanding how the services rota works. He has also joined the governing bodies of the Benefice primary schools whilst also supporting a weekly Collective Worship at Kersey Primary. The service pattern continues at St Mary's on the first three Sunday: Early morning Communion, Family Service and Evensong. The fourth Sunday at Elmsett and a Benefice service (on rotation) for any fifth Sundays.

Table Tennis Club - Report for the Year ending 31st March 2024 – Adrain Blyth

The Table Tennis Club has had a successful year with attendances up on the previous year. Participation from within the parish has also improved.

The Clubs finances are healthy and self-supporting via the fees structure. Reserves are available should equipment require replacement. The accounts for the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 will be audited in the next few weeks.

The club operates from Kersey Village Hall on Thursday evenings between 7:30 and 9:00pm. Players may elect to play either one hour or the full session at a current cost of £2.00 or £3.00 respectively. Juniors are charged £1.50 irrespective of the duration. There are no pressures to change the fees structure at present. The season runs from September to June (dates published on the Kersey Website).

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Dates for the season 2024 to 2025 are 05/09/2024 (start) to 26/06/2025 (finish) The purpose of the club is social and recreational and all abilities are welcome.

Adrian Blyth 01473 827805 amblyth1@gmail.com

Tuesday Club – Rachel Wells

In 2023 the club had an interesting list of speakers which included a talk on researching the book Kersey through the centuries, Madagascar, The Titanic, Thatching and Romania. There was also the annual meal at The Bell, a beetle drive and Christmas party. The club continues to sponsor Tilly at the Shelley Riding School. We are grateful to the Grays Trust for their generous donation to help with the cost of speakers. Anyone is welcome to come along to any of our meetings.

Village Hall – Veronica Partridge, Chair

This year we celebrate 89 years since Kersey Village Hall was built by the residents of Kersey Parish. Money was raised by the resourceful residents, and land was donated by the Stiff family: plans were drawn up (copies are hanging in the Committee room in the Hall) and the building was duly opened by Lord Woodbridge in February 1935.

Changes have been made to the Hall over the years, the toilet block was added in 1965, and the disabled cubicle added in the year 2000. The Committee room was built in 1974 for the princely sum of £2,531.00.

The various Committees over the years have modernised, repaired, and replaced fittings to bring the Hall up to date, and this year is no exception. Due to our resourceful Secretary Natalie Blyth, we obtained a grant of £10,000 from Babergh District Council to be spent on the Hall. The project in mind was to make easier disabled access, by taking away the stage fire exit and removing a large concrete step hindering wheelchairs. Also, a new backdoor was fitted to the Committee Room.

The larger project was to tidy up the back of the Hall, which had a steep bank from the garden behind, which was causing a lot of dampness and to make this area usable for the hirers of the Hall. The result is a very neat and usable space with paving and drainage and has all but cured the dampness in the Hall. We have also replaced smoke detectors with more up to date models, and more efficient heaters were sourced. Escape exit lights were added by advice from the Fire Officer.

To gain this grant, much form filling has had to be done with Policies to be put into place.

- a) Finance and Reserves Policy
- b) Fire Risk Assessment
- c) Equality and Diversity Policy
- d) Health and Safety Policy
- e) Environmental and Sustainable Policy
- f) Safeguarding Policy.

We were also awarded a BDC Locality Grant from Leigh Jameson for £250.00. Which was used for to buy a chair trolley and an extra-large electrical hot water urn.

The takings from bookings were similar to last year 2023, down by just £34.50, to £2972.00. The Autumn Buffet had less people in attendance but took a healthy £749.52 after expenses. This is the only fund-raising activity for the Hall. Regular Hall bookings are elections, various committee meetings, table tennis, art classes and Yoga classes, also the Annual Quiz night. Kersey Projects used the Hall for a very enjoyable Burns Night, and as a tearoom for open gardens. The school uses the Hall from time to time, and there are other various lettings, for example, children's parties.

In today's world, parking has become a problem for outsiders use, thereby limiting hiring potential.

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The present Committee are always looking at ways to improve and upgrade our beautiful Hall, and I wish personally to thank them for all the support I have had as Chair over the many years. Special thanks must go to Norah Orriss who has been Treasurer for over 55 years, investing and keeping our money safe, and earning through wise investments. She has always been praised for her very clear and concise Statement of Accounts. And last but by no means least, Natalie Blyth who has wholeheartedly embraced the role of Secretary and is a most valuable asset to us all. Thank you both Norah and Natalie.

Village Produce Association – Rachel Wells

Another successful year with 12 marquee lets, although currently there are very few lets for this year. Despite the very windy weather an outing to Hyde Hall was enjoyed by those who went. A successful flower show was held in September, it was encouraging to have some new exhibitors. Donations were given to help with the newsletter, church floodlights and churchyard. After expenses there is now a balance of £9,993.59 in the accounts.

This year an outing is planned for the 13th July to the Botanic gardens at Cambridge and the flower show is on the 14th September.