

Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 18th May 2022 at 7.00pm at Ixworth Methodist Church

Present were Cllr Ben Lord, Chairman of the Parish Council, C Cllr Joanna Spicer, D Cllr John Griffiths & twenty-two residents.

Also present were representatives from Ixworth Primary School, Green Ixworth, Ixworth History Recorder, Ixworth Patients Association, Rev Karen Burton (St Mary's) Ixworth Village Hall, Ixworth Patients Association and Ixworth Youth Club.

The role of clerk for the purpose of recording the minutes of the meeting be undertaken by Mandy Adlington.

Minutes

The minutes were duly signed as a true record of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 21st July 2021.

Chairman's Report

Good evening everyone and welcome to the 2023 Ixworth Annual Parish Meeting hosted by the Parish Council.

I'd like to begin by welcoming our County Councillor, Joanna Spicer, and District Councillor John Griffiths and thank them both for the ongoing wealth of support to both the Parish Council as well as to the wider Ixworth community. Furthermore, we as Parish Councillors could not do what we do without the support and backup on a vast range of matters offered by our Clerk, Mandy Adlington so my thanks go to her as well for the great job she does for the Parish Council and indeed for the community as a whole.

Changes within the Parish Council

Election season is once again upon us – this year sees elections for both Parish and District Councils take place on May 4th. In the case of the Parish Council, the term for the next four years to 2027 has been elected uncontested and consists of myself, Clare Black, Vicky Sutton, Pam Shelton and Kate Rees for Ixworth with Sophia Wilson for Ixworth Thorpe. Dr Stephen Mann joins us from May as we bid farewell to Ben Birrell who has served for eight years and Debra Reay who stands down after two years.

District Council elections are contested for the first time since 2007 and there are three candidates vying to be your District Councillor for the next four years including John Griffiths for the Conservatives, Helen Vicat for Labour and myself as Independent.

The past twelve months have continued to bring a variety of issues for the Parish Council, and I'll now give a synopsis of what we have been getting involved and dealing with:

Civic Events

Almost a year ago, I reported that there was quite an air of excited anticipation as we prepared to celebrate the unprecedentedly historic occasion of Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee. From a village fete on the playing field, to a beacon lighting sunset ceremony, the village came together just as it did for the Silver, Golden and Diamond Jubilees. It was a most memorable and happy occasion for all generations. Just 95 days after that came the unexpected news that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II passed away peacefully at Balmoral Castle bringing down the curtain on the longest reign of the British Monarchy. Operation London Bridge – the protocol of what must happen in the immediate aftermath of Her Majesty's Death – was activated for every city, town and parish to play their part in. Here in Ixworth, church services were held, and the church bells rung along with books of condolence opened that were sent on to Buckingham Palace. Despite being a time of immeasurable sadness for our country, it was a privilege to play my part as Civic Lead in those historic events. As one chapter of monarchy closes, a new open and in just over two weeks' time, we will come together once again as a community in what will be, for many, a first to watch the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and the Queen Consort.

Neighbourhood Plan

In just under two weeks' time, the next major public consultation for our Neighbourhood Plan will take place and last for six weeks. This is the first consultation since January 2020 and will see the public invited to review the final draft plan, provide feedback and reflections to be considered in one last set of amendments before the plan is submitted to West Suffolk Council and the National Planning Inspectorate for scrutiny and examination ahead of a referendum which its hoped will take place in the Autumn. There will be two public presentation sessions for this – on Tuesday 9 May at 7:30pm virtually and on Saturday 13 May at 9:30am in the Village Hall.

Hempyard Bridge

Its now eight years since the Parish Council first began lobbying Suffolk County Council as to the deteriorating condition of Hempyard Bridge. Hempyard Bridge has been traced back to at least the 16th Century and is curtilage listed as part of the Grade I listing of Ixworth Abbey. Five years ago, a wooden structure deemed to be 'temporary' was installed to keep pedestrian and equine traffic away from the edges of the bridge. Initially, Suffolk County Council raised the issue over ownership of the bridge only to then conclude they owned it and in any case are responsible for the bridleway that passes over the bridge. In recognising this, the ever-familiar theme of funding then emerged – initially estimated to cost £100k to repair, by 2021 that had raised to £250k which was more or less the extent of the entire budget for Rights of Way within the County Council. Having secured additional funding that was assured to be allocated to Hempyard Bridge, this time last year I reported that owing to a small window in which work was to be carried out, assurances were given that this long overdue repair work would take place this year. Two weeks ago, I met with the Cabinet Member responsible for Highways and Rights of Way and last week, we were informed that owing to other bridges in graver need than ours (including a wooden one in Bardwell that will cost £100k to replace that has been closed for 18 months) as well as the fact that in October, the contract with the County Council's contractor will cease. All of this means that the earlier firm assurances from last year will now go unfulfilled. The Parish Council are bitterly disappointed with this dereliction and will continue to make as much noise as possible in the hope that an avoidable collapse of the bridge into the River Blackborne is averted.

Budget

As with all local authorities, we continue to endure the various measures of mounting pressures on public services. However, thanks to our financial prudence leading us to have a good level of financial reserves, the Parish Council afforded residents with a small cut to their council tax precept for 2023/24. Typically, we have either frozen our portion of council tax or made a minimal increase but in view of the cost of living crisis, we felt we needed to try and do something to help residents as much as possible. We always strive to provide quality services and we made this decision on the basis that it would not jeopardise what the community has become accustomed to in years gone by.

General Issues

In addition to some of the issues I mentioned earlier, we continue to observe, and receive concerns of a plethora of issues within the village including:

- Adverse Highway Conditions
- Parking Problems / Congestions
- Impact of potential development in neighbouring villages

In looking back over the years, I have made an annual report for the Parish Council, the first of which was eight years ago in 2015, the conditions of our roads have featured in it. It continues to be a regular and somewhat heated topic of discussion with the County Council and whilst some successes eventually take place, patches of repairs are often short-lived and therefore end up being reported with some frequency. Despite the best of intentions from our County Councillor, we do find ourselves compelled to raising the bar in terms of lobbying as is evident in the recent news of Hempyard Bridge.

There probably isn't a metre of road in the village that is not affected by problems with parking or congestion. Whilst we don't like to appear defeatist, it is an issue which is increasingly difficult to find solutions to – whilst it's a common problem across the parish, each area seems to have nuances which individualises the difficulty in finding solutions. As with any issue, where we will do our utmost to find a solution but with limited resources executed ultimately by volunteers, we sadly can't make promises or guarantees.

Whilst our attention remains paramount to the emergence of forecasted developments in Ixworth, we have found it pertinent to keep a close observation on what is happening amongst our neighbours. In particular, it is with quite some trepidation that we watch what is happening in Stanton. Not only is there the ongoing outline planning application by Bloor Homes for approx. 250 homes on the land opposite the Shell Petrol Station, at the end of last year JayNic Developments submitted a planning application for an unprecedented commercial development of 27 hectares to include an automotive disposal facility set to generate more than 900 HGV movements in a 12-hour period, 80% of which are anticipated to travel passed Ixworth. This seismically sized development has been met with considerable opposition from residents in many villages as well as various parish councils where the dominant theme is the impact on the A143. Whilst there are advocates claiming the benefits of the new relief road and improvements to the Summer Road junction will arise from this, those benefits seem slightly short sighted given the current levels of congestion on the A143 that will only be hugely exacerbated by this! For us in Ixworth, it highlights even more the long overdue need for a footbridge, maybe even a green bridge, over the A143. At the same time, it

has highlighted once more how the fundamental lack of joined-up thinking sees such planning applications evaluated in bite-size chunks rather than a more wholesome approach – for example, if the Bloor Homes application is approved then modifications are recommended to the Northern Roundabout of the A143 – however, these are not in line with the adopted Crown Lane Masterplan from 2010 to create that roundabout from 4 into 5 arm exits and therefore glosses over entirely the needs that developments in Ixworth will generate to that piece of highway infrastructure!

Whilst we as Parish Council have interests and ideas on how to make Ixworth a better community and place for us all to live in, we always welcome any other ideas, issues or are happy to hear of any concerns that you, the residents, would like us to look into. Some of them may be possible for us to explore and work through, others may not; there's no guarantees but if there are things you want to see addressed, be it positive or negative, please do come and reach out to us.

As I bring my report for this year to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the Parish Council for the ongoing, steadfast dedication to leading the community by example on a variety of matters; some of which you have heard of this evening. Each of us do what we do voluntarily in the hope that we make a positive difference in enriching our community.

Thank you once again for coming out this evening. Unfortunately, I have another engagement so I will leave you in the capable hands of Cllr Rees.

Report from County Councillor Joanna Spicer

Firstly, I would like to thank the Parish Council and John Griffiths for all their help they have given me over the last year and look forward to working with them again in the next year.

I have been a County Councillor for over 20 years and in that time there has been many changes and many problems to be fixed. It is disappointing to say most get fixed, but unfortunately some don't.

Currently there is pressure from small and large new developments. As a Council we need to make sure that when any type of development happens then the facilities required such as schools and transport are looked at to make sure the infrastructure in the area can cope with the new residents.

In the coming year Suffolk County Council have another challenging year ahead of us, Covid is still affecting us, the situation in Ukraine is still ongoing, with over 1000 residents from Ukraine living in our area and of course social care.

The Council spends 75% of its annual income on adult & childcare which unfortunately only leaves 25% to spend on everything else.

In the coming year we are hoping to continue working on the following;

- **Hempyard Bridge** – I am hoping the repairs will be agreed and work commence in 2024
- **Stowlangtoft Bridge Farm Bridge** – the bridge is also in need of repair, and I am hoping this will also be repaired in 2024 which will mean the road at the bridge will need to be closed.
- **Ixworth Thorpe Flooding** – a lot of work has been done to try to resolve this problem. Its situation will be monitored throughout the year.
- **Road Safety** – I have helped install a dropped kerb outside the school in Crown Lane this year and I am hoping to work with the Parish Council to perhaps install another in Ixworth.
- **Defibrillator** – the Parish council are hoping to install another defibrillator at the Fire Station. Suffolk County Council have offered to install, at no cost to the Parish, at the Fire Station.
- **Ixworth Neighbourhood Plan** – the Neighbourhood Plan is nearing completion, and we hope it will help with such things as road safety and schools and general infrastructure around the Parish.

I would also like to congratulate SET Ixworth on their recent inspection and I have been informed that this year, year 7 is oversubscribed.

Ixworth Library has now been run by Suffolk Libraries for over ten years and seems to be going from strength to strength. I visit often for myself as well as a granny and have found it to be welcoming and fun.

I would also like to thank Ian Rees for volunteering to be the footpath warden for Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe, he has been invaluable in helping with a few issues relating to footpaths over the last year.

I would like once again to thank everyone and if you have any queries or questions relating to Suffolk County Council please contact me.

joanna.spicer@suffolk.gov.uk

Report from District Councillor John Griffiths

D Cllr Griffiths also thanked all for attending and how good it was to see everyone, it shows what a good community we have.

I would also like to thank the Community for their support and everyday help in assisting me with my Councillor duties. and thank both schools in our Parish for their hard work and commitment to their pupils.

The last few years have been very difficult for West Suffolk Council with Covid, Brexit and various other complicated issues.

West Suffolk Council have achieved a lot this year, we have completed an environment initiative, continue to empty bins and issued many grants to businesses and residents, along with the day-to-day responsibilities we have as a District Council.

Once again thank you for inviting me and my thanks go to the Parish Council, Mandy the Clerk and C Cllr Spicer for their help and assistance over the year.

I have granted, through the locality budget. Grants to the Christmas Fayre, the Primary School Toddler Group, the Kings coronation Celebrations, Ixworth School, the new defibrillator along with various other local community groups in the area.

I have a locality budget each year to assist any community groups, if your group may need assistance please contact me in the email below.

In the coming year the Neighbourhood Plan for Ixworth continues and also the West Suffolk Local Plan, both are needed to ensure we as a community get what is required in this area as we look to the future.

Once again thank you for coming along and if you need to contact me my email is –

john.griffiths@westsuffolk.gov.uk

The following reports were received from the various groups attending

Ixworth Church of England Primary School

Lyndsey Allsopp, Had Teacher of the school gave the following report –

The school has had a very busy year, and our recent Ofsted inspection has now rated the school as 'Good' which is much improved from the previous rating of inadequate.

I would like to thank the staff, the children the parents and the Governors for all their help in achieving this improvement.

The school is a happy and fun place to be, and I have a very good team around me to make sure all children thrive whilst at the school.

The school now has a new toddler group, and we are hoping the children from this group will naturally feed into the school over the coming years. The group take children from the age of 3 and run AM and PM sessions. The group is enabling families to be able to return to work knowing their children are in a safe and fun place. The school and the group are investigating if we could extend the group to include 2-year-old children as well. I hope I may have further information on this in the coming year.

One further item is while we have a small but committed team of Governors, we do still have some vacancies and are looking for additional members with perhaps funding or business experience to join us. If interested please contact to discuss further.

Thank you for inviting me, and I would like to say what an honour it is being the Headteacher of such a great school.

Green Ixworth

Mr Roger Spiller gave the following report –

It has been a very busy year for Green Ixworth and at present there are many environmental issues in our minds.

The group recently used a drone to film Blackbourne River and are now compiling a report on what the filming showed. WE were pleased to see Otters along the river.

Hempyard Bridge has obviously been on our radar, and we are fully behind the Parish Council to get it repaired and have assisted when the Parish Council have met with Suffolk County Council to discuss repairs. We are hoping that once repaired there will be a bridleway all around the village.

Sizewell C will have an impact of Ixworth and Pakenham with possibly 7000 lorries over 16 weeks when they start the work and move soil from the site to a new Fen area in Pakenham. Green Ixworth are studying each development on this as it happens.

Developments in other areas close to our Parish will also have a major affect on us, Shepherds Grove in Stanton has applications to develop into larger industrial areas which will increase traffic along the A143 past Ixworth. Green Ixworth feel there should be a strategy adopted by Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk Council and Highways England for the whole of the A143 as each development affects all areas along this road. Applications should not just consider the area the application is in.

Costs of heating are also high on our agenda, and we are assisting residents to help cut the cost of their heating. We have been able to assist residents on having a heat map to see where they are losing heat. If the lose can be stopped then obviously heating costs will reduce.

Green Ixworth's Tree Officer is compiling a hedge survey, organising a litter pick and has assisted in planting of trees and shrubs in Crown Lane.

Green Ixworth work with various groups including the Swift Group and are pleased to say we received an award from Suffolk County Council.

Green Ixworth is always looking for new members so please visit our website where you can join and there is an opportunity to sign up for our free regular Newsletter.
The website if - greenixworth.org.uk.

Ixworth History Recorder

Mrs Sue Spiller gave the following report;

I have been the History Recorder for Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe for five years and am one of nearly 250 recorders appointed by Suffolk Local History Council, which aims to have one recorder for each of the 484 Suffolk parishes. It is a voluntary post with a minimum job description but with wide ranging opportunities – it's up to each of us what we do, as long as we write an annual report.

A lot of changes have happened this year including a new Headteacher for SET Ixworth.

A very successful Covid Vaccination Programme was run by the surgery.

The following have also happened throughout the village;

- PO Van – comes once a week
- Community Café in the Pykkerell
- A Street Fayre
- New VAS sign Cemetery has improved
- Play Area has been refurbished
- Library continuing and getting busier
- Welcome to Ixworth Thorpe Sign
- Green Ixworth, along with planting over 600 trees they have been lobbying and assisting in various environmental issues around the village
- An alteration in streetlights – switching them off overnight assisting in environment
- St Mary's receiving their bronze award
- Electric charging points at the village hall
- Toddler group at the Primary School
- Primary School getting their Good rating
- Thriving Community Facebook groups

I have also written many articles for the magazine and had a book published.

My annual reports, book collection, memorabilia and artefacts will eventually be donated to Ixworth Library or Suffolk Archives when I retire as the History Recorder for Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe.

We live in a village which is full of history, and I am always open to ideas from residents about ways of sharing its history with others.

[Sue Spiller \(ixworthrecorder@hotmail.com\)](mailto:ixworthrecorder@hotmail.com)

Rev Karen Burton – St Mary's Church

Rev Burton thanked the Parish Council for inviting her to give an update on St Mary's.

The Church has been very busy this year and we are a growing Church with regular attendance at the Sunday service of over 35 people each week.

We hold a 'messy church' session, and it is good to see members all enjoying themselves especially Dads and Grandads.

We are trying to become an ECO Church and have received a bronze award, this was achieved by not mowing the Churchyard to death and Suffolk Wildlife Group and residents of the village are assisting in advising us on this topic.

The Church is also trying to bring residents together by making the Church a Warm space where all are welcome to just come into the Church to get warm, have a chat and of course a cuppa.

St Mary's has held many events this year and below are some but not all;

- **Queens Platinum Jubilee** – we held concerts and tea parties for the whole Parish.
- **Choir Events – the choir has taken part in various events**
- **Angels Events – Angels were hidden for residents to find**
- **Services – various services were held throughout the year**

Unfortunately, we then lost our beloved Queen, the Church had candles for residents to light along with a book of condolence. We then held a pre-Coronation Service for our new King.

The Church also lost a very important person to all members of the Church and community Cannon Oliver, Cannon Oliver was a much-loved character of this Parish and served St Mary's for many years.

A project the Church is currently working on is installing a toilet within the Church and I hope I will have more information on this next year.

Thanks also go to The Royal British Legion for once again organising the Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service, it is good to be together and gather around the War Memorial to remember the fallen of the Parish.

Once again thank you for inviting me and please come along to St Mary's as we are a very lovely place to visit and have many enjoyable events throughout the year.

Ixworth Patients Association

Mr Graeme Norris gave the following report;

The Patient's Association was set up in 1988 and it supports the surgery that serves various villages in the area not just Ixworth.

Talks on the surgery and health issues are not required as much as when we were first set up as information can be more easily accessed online.

The surgery is now part of a Practice Network which means they are able to access an extra grant. The surgery is hoping to expand more easily and offer more services opening earlier and later.

The surgery has now a regular Social Prescriber. A Social Prescriber can assist patients in various aspects which are non-clinical such as blue badge applications, housing issues, form completing along with various other topics.

The surgery is very keen to take part in various research campaigns and clinical studies and are always looking for volunteers.

As with all surgeries across the country Ixworth are having problems attracting GP's.

The Association offers a driving service for residents to attend appointments who have transport issues. Volunteers are always welcome, please contact me on the email below if you could offer a few hours every so often, mileage of course will be paid.

If you would like to know more about the Association - and take an active role - please contact me:
graemenorris46@gmail.com

The Association is here to support the practice but if you have any complaints these need to be directed to the surgery not the Association.

Jiggins Memorial Village Hall & Playing Fields

Mr Mike Jones gave the following report;

The Village Hall Trustees are taking the lead on the Youth Club are my report on this will follow this report.

The Village Hall is the venue for many groups and organisations to hold their meetings and classes.

The Trustees are looking at developing the playing field and are talking with various consultants and obtaining surveys. It is being looked at to make the playing field more accessible and offer areas for picnics and recreational activities. We are hoping to plant more trees and bushes and make the whole area more family friendly.

The hall itself is also being looked at, we hope to increase the hall at its current location or possibly move to a new location dependant on developments in and around Ixworth.

The Trustees will hold a consultation once any plans are finalised.

Many of our long-term contracts, such as energy contract, are coming to an end so will of course be looking at signing to the best deals for the village going forward.

The Trustees will of course keep everyone updated and thank you for letting me give this report.

Youth Club

Mr Mike Jones then gave the following update on the Youth Club;

Unfortunately, there has been delays in opening the Youth Club for many reasons such as delays in recruiting youth workers and processing their DBS checks. All this has taken well over twelve months.

The Youth Club team are still working with SET Ixworth to use a room on their premises, and we are hoping to open in early July.

The team are still looking for volunteers to assist the employed youth worker and at present it has been agreed to open one evening a week. If successful we would then look to open an additional evening.

The Youth Club will not solve all the issues we face in Ixworth, such as lack of facilities for younger members of the community, but we hope it will help.

The team are hoping to engage with the community on ideas that may help the situation and we hope to update everyone through the magazine and social media on a regular basis.

The Royal British Legion Ixworth & District Branch

The following report was received from The Royal British Legion Ixworth & District Branch;

The past year has been quite an active one for our branch. Shortly after these proceedings last year, we were delighted to be a part of the village's commemorations for the Platinum Jubilee. This included us hosting a lighting of our beacon as part of a sunset ceremony that was replicated across the country. At sunset on 2nd June (69 years to the day following the coronation of Her Majesty The Queen), the beacon was lit by our President – Dr John Cannon and was attended by around 200 residents. On the Sunday of the extended bank holiday weekend, the branch participated in a civic parade and church service of thanksgiving for Her Majesty The Queen.

Expecting that the next civic outing for our branch would come as has been tradition since 1921 at Remembrancetide, we very much played our part in the events that surrounded the death of our Patron – Her

Majesty Queen Elizabeth, just 95 days later. Other than the scouting movement, Her Late Majesty was only patron of one other organisation for the entirety of her reign that being the RBL. Our Branch's Union Standard was provided to the Church as part of the civic protocol in Operation London Bridge. We also held a special Remembrance service in tribute to The Queen on the Friday before her state funeral which included lying a Poppy wreath in her memory. For the Proclamation of His Majesty King Charles III, in the absence of a proclamation ceremony occurring within the branch's patch, our Branch Standard was deployed to a proclamation ceremony in Framlingham. The RBL's National Festival of Remembrance, attended by representatives of our Branch and in the presence of The King just two months after the death of the Queen very proudly paid tribute to the support given by The Queen over 70 years to the RBL. As of yet, we await to hear news of who will succeed Her Late Majesty as patron.

Ordinarily, many people generally associated themselves with "the Legion" during the Poppy Appeal and Remembrancetide each Autumn. However, whilst that maybe when things are most prominent in the public's minds, our work goes on all year round – and Remembrance is never confined to just a seasonal two-week window each year.

Membership of our branch remains healthy compared with our neighbouring county branches with approximately 50 members. Many continue to think that a criteria for membership is that you have had to be serving or have served within the armed forces. Whilst that historically was a criteria, that has not been the case for many years, and we would therefore strongly encourage anyone who would like to support the legion on a local branch level to get in touch where we can signpost you to becoming a member. As a branch, we meet on the last Thursday of every month in the Greyhound from 7:30pm.

We have once again held our Winter Games night tournament – a programme of pub games where neighbouring branches come along and compete in a series of friendly games that shall culminate in a social presentation evening next week. Many of our branch members, some of which have included veterans of the armed forces living in the village, have done a fantastic job in renovating the telephone kiosk in Stow Road. We're quite keen to get some ideas from the community on what the telephone kiosk could be used for now that would be different to what other communities have used theirs for. So far, we've not received much by way of suggestion but remain very open to hear of any novel ideas that we could consider as to a future use.

2022 saw the return of the Poppy Appeal to full strength following the pause and interruption caused by the pandemic. Co-ordinated with grateful thanks to Maxine Kasicki, and with the return of doorstep collection, our branch contributed to £3,992.27 to last year's Poppy Appeal – a considerable increase on what was raised during COVID.

In recent years, Remembrance has had a particular following in the village with swells of people gathering along the High Street and attending the church service on Remembrance Sunday. Last year saw that return to its pre-pandemic extent and saw standing room only in church.

Thank you to everyone across the community for their continued support and we hope to meet more of you and welcome any of you who might like to become members in due course.

Community Recognition Awards

The following awards were presented:

Individual Award

The Award was given to Mr John Sharpe all his work over the last 44 years, for his conservation work and as a Parish Councillor. Mr Sharpe was not present at the meeting so the Parish council chairman would take the award and present it at Mr Sharpe.

Group Award

The Award was given to Ixworth Supports Ukraine. The group took swift and effective action in providing practical support to refugees in the first shocking phase of the Russian invasion when everything was chaotic and wretched.

Cllr Kate Rees on behalf of the Parish Council thanked everyone for attending.

With no further business the meeting closed at 8.55pm.

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Signed

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Date