

Shimpling Parish Meeting
Minutes of Annual Assembly of the Parish
Monday 15th May 2023, 6:00pm held at Shimpling Village Hall

Present:

Councillors: David Dunkley (Chair), Nathalie Brown, Hans Engstrom

District Councillors: Cllr Stephen Plumb

County Councillor: Cllr Richard Kemp

Clerk: Natasha Byford

Public: Four members of the public attended

1. Minutes of last annual meeting:

The minutes of the last Parish Assembly on 9th May 2022 were confirmed.

2. To receive reports for representatives of the Parish:

1. Chair's Report:

Chair David Dunkley gave the following report:

Good evening, everyone and thank you for joining us tonight at the Annual Parish Assembly.

For those of you who do not know me, my name is David Dunkley, and I am the current Chair of the Parish Council. This year each Councillor has taken a turn to chair the council which has given us all a chance to understand the role in greater detail. For my part, I would like to thank the other Councillors for their help and assistance during my term.

On that note, we are sorry to say that Katie has decided to stand down as a Councillor, but we are sure she will continue to provide her knowledge and expertise to our community in other ways. Thank you, Katie, for your fantastic service over the past 7 years.

Also, earlier in the year Mike Atkins stepped down from the council and we would like to give our thanks to him for his service and expertise and hope, if time allows, he is able to re-join the council at a later date.

Staying with the Parish Council for a minute. We would like to thank Natasha Byford, our Clerk, for all of her hard work this year. She has provided a great service, especially with the extra work required as a result of changing the Council Chair every meeting. Parish Clerks do an essential and important job providing continuity, legal and procedural expertise and advice to councillors and we are very lucky to have Natasha.

It is always enjoyable to be able to thank people for their efforts in supporting their community and the Parish Council throughout the year. There are too many to name them all, but we would particularly like to thank Laurence Rooke for all of his efforts this year, including the Queen's Jubilee Plaque. Alan Cook for moving the Quiet Lanes signs, thus ending the saga of their location. Colin Johnston for his continued assistance on promoting the Parish Council's position on the Babergh Joint Local Plan Modifications. Also all of the people who helped on the Village Clean-up and in putting the bunting up for the Queen's Jubilee and the King's Coronation.

Our Village Hall Committee do a wonderful job of running a wide range of events with something for everyone. A full programme for the King's Coronation, film nights, and for the energetic, Pilates, Dancing and Zumba. They have also organised the installation of Wi-Fi and Audio/Visual equipment. They do a great job keeping the hall to a high standard and holding events to bring our community together. We want to thank Marian Peck for her excellent service to the Village Hall. Marian has stepped down as chair of the Committee but is still working hard for the Village Hall on other fronts. Nathalie has taken over as chair and is doing a great job, most recently with the Coronation celebrations.

Our village magazine is an important and essential part of communications for our village, especially for those who do not have access to technology. Thank you, Sarah, for all your hard work in producing such a professional looking magazine for a modest cost.

Our thanks go to Chris Cooke from Lark Valley Landscapes and his employees for their hard work in keeping the village looking tidy. Thanks also go to John Pawsey for arranging the mowing of the grass verges leading up to the A134 in November in readiness for the daffodils flowering in the Spring.

Our County and District Councillors, Richard Kemp, Stephen Plumb and Michael Holt provide significant help and advice to the Parish Council and have provided funding to enable a number of the projects we considered important to the village to be implemented. Thank you for always being responsive to our requests for help; it is much appreciated.

It has been another busy year and thanks to grants from our County and District Councils and managing our budgets carefully, we have been able to do the following:

- installed a wooden football goal/basketball hoop near the playground
- purchased 2 large Gazebos for use by the Village Hall for outside events
- secured funding for a new speed indicator for western side of village (about to order)
- resurfaced footpath from the end of Nigel's Way up to the chicane
- installed Wi-Fi in the Village Hall
- installed Audio/Visual equipment in the Village Hall
- Planted a tree to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee with an appropriate plaque

We also awarded grants from our covid fund to the Village Hall Committee for the Jubilee and Coronation celebrations, the latter included providing a commemorative mug to every child in the village.

On a slightly different note, we are pleased to note that The Bush re-opened, closed and again re-opened, thanks to the efforts of Bernard Essery and Hans Engstrom. The Bush is one of the three focal points for the Village, the others being the Village Hall and the church, and as such is extremely important to the community. Thank you, gentlemen.

Lastly, two areas we have been working on for most of the year, providing additional Bus provision to the village and increasing communications across the village. We have been working with authorities and bus companies on the former and have had some workshops to discuss / review the latter. More to come in the coming year.

The Chair invited questions, there were none.

2. Finance Report for 2021/22

The Clerk gave the following report:

This is the end of year report of the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), closing the last financial year accounts and opening new accounts for 2023/24.

Finance Report: Total income for last financial year 2022/23) was £19,108.92 including the precept, £10,413.00, receipts from recycling, VAT refund, bank interest and grants of £6,500.00. The Parish Council made payments to a total of £21,939.41 exc VAT. Funds of £34,040.22 were carried forward this year as follows:

Treasurers Account: **£4,516.63**

Business Account: **£29,523.59**

Total Reserves: **£29,799.14**

This includes £3,514.43 of CIL money and £7,529.70 of Covid Grant fund, leaving the PC actual operational reserves of £18,755.01, more than the start of the year.

This is a much better position than was budgeted for, mainly due to the grants we have received. There was an underspend on this year's budget.

The PC also received £163.27 from recycling revenue, which is not included in the budget as it is a completely unknown income.

Reserves: We have already allocated most of these reserves when the budget was created at earlier meetings.

| | 31/03/2023 | 04/04/2023 |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| VH Maintenance | £ 3,000.00 | £ 3,000.00 |
| New Laptop | £ 1,500.00 | £ 1,500.00 |
| Play Equipment | £ 1,000.00 | £ 1,000.00 |
| Lease VH Renewal | £ 1,500.00 | £ 1,500.00 |
| Covid Fund | £ 7,529.70 | £ 3,057.67 |
| Elections | £ 1,000.00 | £ 1,000.00 |
| Bench | £ - | £ - |
| WIFI | £ 3,057.18 | £ 3,057.18 |
| Second SID | £ 3,000.00 | £ 3,000.00 |
| Total Earmarked | £ 21,586.88 | £ 17,114.85 |
| CIL | £ 3,514.26 | £ 3,514.26 |
| Total General | £ 4,698.00 | £ 4,698.00 |
| Total Reserves | £ 29,799.14 | £ 25,327.11 |

We are in a healthy financial position. We can now operate in a crisis, for example, if Babergh were unable to forward our precept payment.

There was no borrowing last year. No tenancies entered into. The lease on the Village Hall runs to August 2023. There were CIL receipts of £1,970.63 made to the council for 2022/23. CIL spending anticipated in the 2023/24 financial year is around £1,000 currently, for the remainder payment for the second SID and for the gazebo weights.

Budget for 2023/24: A Budget was approved in November 2022 of £11,270.00. The precept was set to raise an income of £11,265.00. Total income for year estimated at £11,270.00 from the precept and bank interest.

Internal Controls: All finance practices follow the Financial Regulations adopted by the council and published on our website. They are managed by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and supervised by the members of the council. The accounting software Scribe and online banking with the two signatories are still working well for the Council, being a secure process and allowing suppliers to be paid faster.

Audit: The Audit for last year commenced on 17th April, once again, Suffolk Association of Local Councils is to be appointed. PFK Littlejohn LLP have been appointed to carry out the external audit of small local councils, but we are declaring ourselves exempt this year as we didn't meet the threshold.

The Clerk invited questions, there were none.

3. District Councillor Stephen Plumb

Cllr Stephen Plumb gave their update on the year's activity. Major highlights included:

The District Councils plans to give grants and help homeowners to reduce the 1000 empty homes that there currently are. There are grants to help end rough sleeping in Suffolk.

The Joint Local Plan is due to be in place by the end of 2023.

The £12m relocation plans for the new refuge depot is being considered which could mean residents having 7 different bins!

Cllr Plumb invited questions, one MOP asked regarding the lorry parking situation from the Health Centre past the sorting office in Sudbury, Cllr Plumb told the MOP that Sudbury Town Council were aware of it and were dealing with the situation.

Cllr Plumb left the meeting at 6:21pm.

4. County Councillor Richard Kemp

Cllr Kemp summarised the following report:

Ukraine: One Year Anniversary

A year has passed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It was on the 24th March that Councillors crossparty shared a single motion in support of Ukraine. Our Group recommended the motion, condemning the actions of Putin, as well as committed to support and welcome refugees to become a part of Suffolk communities.

The 'Homes for Ukraine' programme continues to provide hosts for refugees, but is in dire need of more households to come forward and offer temporary accommodation. If you think you can still help, please visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/Ukraine. Hosts are entitled to £350 per month, which increases to £500 after 12 months.

Full Council: Successful Motions and Conservative Pushback

In 2022, our Group submit 6 motions – one for each Full Council meeting. The Conservatives have voted against many of our ambitious and necessary policy ideas.

In July, we asked this Council to declare a cost-of-living emergency in the county of Suffolk. Rising inflationary pressures, food shortages, and stagnant wages have meant so many more households have fallen below the poverty line. With Winter looming, we believed more emphasis was needed on providing emergency support to the most vulnerable households. This was voted down by the Conservatives.

In December, we ask the Council to commit further to Community Transport, as well as investigate further into why the Conservatives failed in their Bus Back Better bid. Rural bus services have been frequently cut, and the council's failed bid meant millions for investment in restoring the bus network was lost. The Conservative's voted the motion down.

A successful motion we passed through the Council was to promote cleaner rivers in Suffolk. We believe every community should have access to safe waters. The motion committed the Council to investigate further into what further work can be done to protect biodiversity and address polluting run-off in rivers, as well as working with farmers to encourage better practice.

2023/24 Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined

At the beginning of February 2023, the Council's budget for 2023/24 was voted in. The Conservative budget will now increase tax by 3.99% - broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in general tax.

Council services have faced a gruelling year of demand and additional cost pressures. In addition, the Council is not on track to achieve Net Zero by 2030, as they have promised to do so. Therefore, we proposed an additional 0.89% increase (19p weekly increase) to ensure vital services were protected from cutting support to residents, and that more direct action is taken to reduce carbon emissions.

Our Group proposed to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a stronger pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we proposed to facilitate a review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.

We proposed using £1m to actively recruit, retain and reward frontline staff in adult social care, as well as providing more for Suffolk Libraries to help maintain services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we wanted to invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through EV vehicle usage.

The Conservatives voted against our budget amendments, saying our proposals were ill thought-out and not appropriate.

Labour did not submit a budget response, nor did they vote in the budget meeting. They stated that they couldn't make a difference to any result.

Failed Conservative Bids

Despite the Suffolk devolution deal aiming to bring us closer to Government, the Conservatives have suffered a plethora of failing bids this year.

The Department for Transport confirmed in May 2022 that SCC will receive no funding for their Bus Back Better bid. The strategy aimed to improve and expand bus services in Suffolk, connecting rural areas to local and important towns. Government confirmed that the bid was un-ambitious, something that our Group criticised the strategy on frequently before its submission.

In addition, the Suffolk bids for the Levelling-up fund were unsuccessful. In comparison, Norfolk received £24m, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough received £48m, and Essex received £40m.

Carbon Budget: SCC is Not on Track

At the beginning of 2023, the Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the Carbon Budget. This is a document that aims to calculate the amount of carbon SCC emits through its services. More importantly, it shows the Council's progress towards achieving Net Zero by 2030 – a declaration made by SCC in 2019.

This year's carbon budget shows that SCC 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.

As SCC has had 31 new Cllrs since the original declaration, our Group will be asking Cllrs to re-declare their commitment to Net Zero by 2030.

Report into SEND Provision: Review & Recommendations

Back in 2021, Suffolk County Council commissioned an independent review into its Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision. The report found severe failings in the delivery of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans for children, serious issues in communicating with parent/guardians, as well as an inefficient work environment within the service revealing high absenteeism. Recommendations were given, in which SCC have worked to implement them.

In January 2023, our Group were briefed on the subject and have been 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 ongoing rise in demand for SEND services.

Locality Funds / Budget

I continue to support organisations, charities and events within my Parishes with donations from Suffolk County Council allocated Locality Budget. If you have any projects, purchases or events you would like funding for please submit your request to me in writing for consideration and I can submit them to Suffolk County Council.

Suffolk Devolution: Big Deal?

In 2022, the Government published its White Paper on Levelling-Up, within which it has agreed that Suffolk will be one of nine initial 'County Deals' up for negotiation to devolve powers. In December 2022, government met with SCC to sign an initial county deal. A public consultation will now follow, asking residents if this is what communities want.

Our Group have questioned whether this is the 'big win' that the Conservatives are portraying this as. £16m a year to deliver 'long-term' transformation is less than what the Conservatives have cut from the council's annual budget over the decades. Other agreements include:

- £5.8m for housing on brownfield sites
- Devolved Adult Education budget (amount undisclosed)
- Transport settlement starting in 24/25 (amount undisclosed)
- £3m to improve energy efficiency in houses

In addition, the deal will look to install a directly elected leader, commonly known as a Mayor – when the Conservatives have said that this wouldn't be the case. Politically, there is a real risk of a stalemate in politics. Not enough information has been given to show how to prevent a gridlock if a Mayor from a minority party is elected.

Overall, our Group will always welcome devolving more power to local authorities. However, this deal is being wrongfully lauded as the all-encompassing answer, when currently it is not. The public will now need to decide whether this is something they want.

Sizewell C: Where are we now?

In November 2022, the Autumn Statement confirmed they would be pushing ahead with Sizewell C and was fully backed by Government. In November, Government confirmed a £700m investment into Sizewell C, becoming a 50% shareholder with EDF – this verifying that the Government bought out the state-owned Chinese business' stake in the project.

Our Group has consistently questioned this project, arguing the environmental and socio-economic impacts on local communities are far too great – as well as the compensation for economic impact being not enough. The Group continue to argue that wind and solar provides a quicker and cheaper route to net zero, and that building on eroding coastal land is unsafe for the public and biodiversity.

Experts forecast that project to take 15 years to build – 17 years under gloomier predictions – costing up to £30bn, with an expectation of producing 7% of the country's energy needs.

Cllr Ash Lever: Newest GLI Addition!

It was with regret that we sadly saw Cllr Peggy McGregor leave our Group – we wish her all the best in her endeavours. In November 2022, the triggering of the Beccles by-election resulted in the Green candidate, Cllr Ash Lever, winning 70% of the vote.

Cllr Lever has two children and works as a skateboard coach in secondary schools – and aims to give a voice to the younger demographic. Our Group are thrilled to have Ash on board, and it's great to see so many people support our Group.

Thank you

As always, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the very many people who help and support me in the role of County Councillor including Parish Councils, District Councillors and Parish Clerks to name but a few.

Volunteers in the form of groups or individuals continue to contribute immensely to our communities with their dedication and commitment to service, and on behalf of everyone I

extend a sincere vote of thanks to each and every one of them, they really do make an amazing difference!

Cllr Kemp invited questions, there were none. Just a note to say that it was disappointing that only 30% of residents voted and that there was an awful lot of spoilt ballot papers.

Cllr Kemp left the meeting at 6:31pm.

5. Police Report

There was no police presence and they were unable to attend or send a report.

6. Village Hall Committee – Nathalie Brown

Nathalie Brown read out the following report for the VHC:

After a quiet couple of years during Covid the village hall is now fully up and running.

This past year has seen three new weekly exercise classes start up.

Pilates every Monday morning

Dance club on Wednesday evening and Zumba every Friday lunchtime.

The classes are well attended and bring in regular income.

Thanks to the parish council the village hall now has film equipment allowing us to hold monthly film nights, we also held a kids movie morning during the Easter holidays.

We have had screenings of the Shimplington Christmas pantomime, live six nations rugby matches and last weekend the Kings Coronation ceremony.

Another monthly event is the rural coffee caravan, bringing people together over a cup of tea and a slice of cake. This also provides a warm space and lots of useful information about services in Suffolk.

Christmas saw the PCC use the village hall used for wreath making which was great fun and the wreaths were then sold at the Christmas market.

We also held a Christmas party, Santa and his elf turned up for the kids, there was lots of noisy activities and once the children left it was time for the adults to have some fun!

We kicked off 2023 with the sea shanty evening in January raising money for the RNLI.

A couple of months later it was time for the PCC to hold their annual spring market in March with the much heralded marmalade competition.

April and May have been particularly busy for the VH /Kings Coronation committee organising events for the King's coronation weekend which was a huge success with a little something for everyone.

A big thanks to the Parish Council and the Hallifax trust for their kind contributions which allowed us to have a fun weekend and buy commemorative mugs for the children of the village.

Moving forward we have some fun ideas for the coming year,
Race night, Rock n roll dance & quiz nights to name a few.
We are also hoping to hold a silver jewellery making workshop.

There are also projects in the pipeline to improve the village hall space. We hope to install solar panels to help with fuel costs and to generate income for the village hall.
Repairs to the fire doors are due to happen in the next couple of weeks.

Lastly we said goodbye to two members of the committee
Marian Peck, Chair, and Glenda Peck, thank you both for all you've done for the VH over the years.

7. WI – Stephanie Eady

Unfortunately, the WI were unable to attend and didn't send a report.

8. Halifax Trust – Jenny Pine

Jenny Pine gave the following report on behalf of Halifax Trust:

Objectives

The Halifax Trust was founded in 1863. It provides grants and bursaries prioritised as follows:-

- a) The primary school serving the Parish of Shimpling for special benefits of any kind not normally provided by the local education authority.
- b) Bursaries for people under the age of 25 who either attended the Primary School serving Shimpling, Alpheton & Bridge Street or whose parents live in Shimpling.
- c) If there are funds in any year not required for the above, they may be used for charitable purposes for the general benefit of the residents of Shimpling.

Three meetings were held during the academic year 2022/2023
5th October 2022 & 22nd March 2023.

Current Trustees Chairman – Richard Weller-Poley

Treasurer – Jenny Pine

Nick Smith, Darren Hickey and Stuart Palmer

Distribution of 2022/23 Bursaries & Grants (Autumn Meeting)

Lawshall Primary School

We continue to support the well-established music project. We agreed at our Spring meeting to increase the amount of our donation for music to £2000 per annum.

Bursaries

Six bursars studying away from home, and one living/studying from home were approved for payment, a decrease of seven on last year. We also approved one grant to assist with the costs of Sixth Form College and one to assist with transport costs to Secondary School.

Shimpling Village

We have given a grant to Shimpling PCC of £250 towards the Church Fete, and £250 to Shimpling Village Hall committee towards the Coronation Celebrations. We have also paid the sum of £200 towards expenses for the Summer Dance, in aid of Shimpling and Alpheton Village Halls and the Church.

Finance & Governance (Spring Meeting)

The Parish Council appoints trustees. Our accounts and activities are audited annually and regulated by the Charity Commission. Our investments are managed by CCLA (specialists in investments for charities). The performance of their funds continues to be above average and risk to capital below average. Our annual income from investments is i.r.o £14,500K.

Applications for grants should be received by 30th September, in time for the October meeting. Notices appear in the village newsletters, but please tell anyone you think may be eligible for a grant about the Halifax Trust.

Jenny invited questions, there were none. One MOP thanked the Halifax Trust for the help they had given their granddaughter from ALevel to Degree and were very grateful for their support. It was also discussed that the PC are working on better communications in the hope that we could reach more Shimpling residents to help spread the word about the Halifax Trust.

9. PCC of St Georges Church – Charlotte Blyth

Charlotte gave the following report on behalf of the PCC:

2022 was a year of finding a new normality for lots of organisations, not least our local churches.

During 2022 our churches and churchyards have been open for people to visit, reflect and for worship.

We've been able to sing once again in our services, and indeed now have a new, very capable young organist – Joseph who plays for our services. Joseph is also the organist in Lawshall which is being incorporated into our Benefice, or group of churches.

During 2022 the pattern of services included one traditional 9am Holy Communion service per month in Alpheton and one in Shimpling, as well as the 10.30 service each week at Holy Trinity Long Melford, and a gathering or service at 4pm practically every week somewhere in the benefice.

The '4 o'clock Community' as it has become known, offers something a bit different from a traditional church service. Whether it's 'Café Church' (an opportunity to listen to contributors and explore matters such as mental health), 'Wild Church' (activities and a reflection out in the great outdoors), 'Messy Church' (themed crafts, a bible story and tea) or 'Shine' (informal worship in church), all these services and the occasional social gathering are suitable for all ages, though adults at Messy Church are generally accompanying parents or helpers. The 4 O'clock Community is a proper, growing community, where lots of connections are being forged in the villages and with the local church.

The church community also provides 'Connect' - the weekly toddler group, and a Youth Group which meets monthly, usually in Melford.

For those who are unable to make services in person there is always the option of livestreaming the weekly 10.30 service, as well as Evensong on the first Sunday of each month. Details of how to livestream are on the Alpheton and Shimpling website. DVDs of services are also sent out to a few parishioners without internet access, and home communion is offered by our ministry team, both in people's private homes and in local care homes.

The PCC was joined by many willing volunteers from the village to help at our events during the year – most notably the big fundraiser – the first fete for 4 years due to the pandemic. Thank you to Gillie and Stephen Lamprell for kindly hosting the event, and for all the many organisers and helpers on the day.

We had a very sociable time too at our Spring and Christmas Markets as well as at the annual Harvest Supper. Thank you to all our supporters.

Thanks are due too to Andrew Cracknell, our treasurer; Liz Brunwin, our secretary, and also to Mike and Ted who do such a good job of looking after the churchyard.

The church is of course 'our church' – it's for the whole village, not just the regular worshipers. It's there for the landmark services in people's lives, and for anyone just to visit and quietly reflect.

It is the PCC's hope that, as well as offering regular worship, we will manage to maintain our beautiful buildings and churchyards. We are grateful for those with skills to help in these areas, and will be looking for further help in the near future with raising funds for a major project to restore the east window at St George's Church.

Charlotte invited questions, there were none.

Cllr Dunkley closed the Annual Parish Assembly by thanking everyone.

There being no further business the assembly concluded at 6:48pm.