

BROME and OAKLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting which took place on Monday 25 March 2024

Present: Parish Councillors Broughton, Keeley, Demanget, Pace, Parry and Stockham, District Councillor Tim Weller. Six members of the public were attended.

The meeting was chaired by the Chairperson of Brome and Oakley Parish Council, Councillor Isobel Demanget. Councillor Demanget opened the meeting and welcomed all those present.

1. Apologies for absence – none.
2. Minutes of last Annual Parish Meeting - the minutes of the meeting which took place on Monday 20 March 2023 were approved.

Reports:

3. Parish Council - The Chairman gave an overview of the work of the Parish Council during the last year.
4. County Council – No report was provided.
5. District Councillor – Tim Weller provided his first report since his election to the District Council in May 2023. The Green Party now held Mid Suffolk District Council majority and had set a list of priorities.
6. Brome and Oakley Community Council – Emma Matthews, Chairperson, reported that membership was increasing, painted and refurbished the bar area at the Village Hall and was running with a 44% profit. A variety of events and classes were being run and Fridays remained a busy social evening.

Brome and Oakley Village Hall Management Committee – John Parry gave an update on the renovations and improvements to the hall. He reported the hall was now dry, warm and the main hall provided a more cosy place for activities. The work party had stripped back the main hall and now had new walls and was insulated and new radiators were in place. Six dedicated volunteers were thanked. There was now a website for the Village Hall showcasing what was on in the hall and the history of the hall. In the last year there had been 200 bookings for the hall. A copy of the report is attached to the minutes and available from the Clerk.

Brome and Oakley Welfare Trust – Jane Pearse, Trust, read a report on behalf of the Trust. Mrs Pearse detailed how the Trust had continued face to face work with parishioners in need. The Trust retained a healthy level of funds and had not been called to assist as much as in previous years. A copy of the report is attached to the minutes and available from the Clerk.

Elizabeth, Lady Cornwallis Almshouse Trust – Milly Prior gave a report on behalf of the Trust. There was a vacancy for a Trustee. All properties are occupied and income had been sufficient to cover all maintenance outgoings. Internal and external decorations had taken place. All finances were in good order.

Brome and Oakley Parochial Church Council - A report which was read by Anthea Atha. The Rickinghall and Botesdale benefice were also without a vicar and therefore a total of nine parishes were going to be served by one vicar across the two benefices. Five yearly inspections had listed maintenance issues; £75,000 had been spent at St Nicholas. St Mary's needed roof repairs to the value of £40,000. The closure of one of churches was still being considered due to the costs of maintaining both churches. A copy of the report is attached to the minutes and available from the Clerk.

7. Open Forum – there was no discussion.

8. Any other business - None. Meeting closed at 20.08.

Minutes approved on 2025

Signed Chairman

DRAFT

Good evening, Residents, Members and Officers.

I have been proud to serve as chairman for another year, we have a great sense of community in our village and it is an honour to volunteer as cllr.

I would like to thank you all for your attendance and achievements and support over the last year.

It is with great sadness that we lost Cllr Halton in May 2023, Ursula was spent many years working tirelessly to support our local community as Cllr and served as Chair of the council for many years making an impact to our village. We remember Ursula's love of life, her colourful personality and her passion for really great food with much fondness.

We welcomed Cllr Ian Stockman to the parish council in June, this means we continue to have a full panel of Councillors. Ian joins Cllr Parry, Cllr Brunton, Cllr Keeley, Cllr Doe, Cllr Pace, and Cllr Prior who all contribute in their own way and taking time to help our village. Members bring together diverse skills to support the Council work and those interested in becoming a Parish Councillor are invited to apply.

I would like to extend particular thanks to our Parish Clerk Sarah Foote who has done an exemplary job of guiding us to adhere to protocol, tirelessly working in the background to help us achieve all of our project goals and supporting us to fulfil our roles to the best of our ability.

I would like to thank our Suffolk County councillor Jessica Flemming who comes along to many of our meetings and supports our projects, particularly the support she has shown in pushing through to completion the traffic calming project for lower Oakley and always keeping us up-to-date and large scale planning matters, transport and highways matters.

I would like to welcome our district cllr Tim Weller who joined us this year, it has been nice to get to know him this year and we would like to thank him for his input to our meetings and for his continued support this year and particularly with the Oaksmere Memorial application and for directing us to various funding streams available at district council which V Hall and church has had chance to access.

Brome and Oakley is extremely proud of its Voluntary groups and organisations which have worked tirelessly to support the community in many different ways, we will hear from many of them here tonight.

The Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan was made (adopted) by South Norfolk Council and Mid-Suffolk District Council on 16 October 2023, following a local referendum on Thursday 28 September, where 84% of those voting did so in favour of the Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan now forms part of the statutory Development Plan for both South Norfolk Council and Mid-Suffolk District Council areas and will be used in the determination of planning applications within the neighbourhood area.

Cllrs Halton and Cllr Brunten have put in many hours of consultation and discussions over a number of years and it is very nice to have a clear plan in place for the future development of our combined neighbourhoods.

The details of this plan are available online to anyone and can be found by searching for Diss and District Neighbourhood plan.

We have been consulted on a number of small and large planning applications this year, this is an aspect of the Cllrs work that involves a lot of research and discussion. Some of the larger projects under consultation are the Cranswick expansion, The charging/service station on Brome airfield and the new reservoir. All of these projects have the potential to impact our villages enormously so it's important to understand that impact on our roads, our environment and our community as a whole. The more opinions we hear from you about these projects, the more we can effectively represent your views so please come and talk to us at our meetings, all meetings have a public forum for you to voice your views. You can also comment on individual planning applications on the mid-suffolk planning portal.

I'd like to tell you about some of the projects we are most proud of this year. We have supported the renovations of Village hall (to the sum of.....). This has been a big project where we have provided financial support to pay for materials to replaster the walls, complete the disabled toilet and to start work on the ladies toilet renovation.

We are happy to say that we have ordered a third deliberator to be installed at the Devils handbasin in West Brome, this will allow easy access to life-saving equipment right across our villages.

We have completed the traffic calming project in Lower Oakley, the buffer zone has been clearly marked with new signage and traffic calming measures approved by Suffolk highways and paid for in part by Brome and Oakley Parish council and in part by the county council. The Parish council continues to push for improved traffic calming and improved road safety in our community particularly in lower Oakley and West Brome. Our VAS sign has been busy rotating in the 3 locations gathering data to support any road safety improvement proposals. We are looking for volunteers to join our speedwatch group, all materials and training will be provided, if you are interested, please contact the PC clerk. We have also represented the village opinions on the HGV diversion out of Eye which has had a knock on impact to road safety in lower Oakley, Hoxne and Debenhan to mention a few.

This year we have rented out the full allotment area behind Bromelands, most of this is intended for grazing with one remaining plot being rented for veg growing.

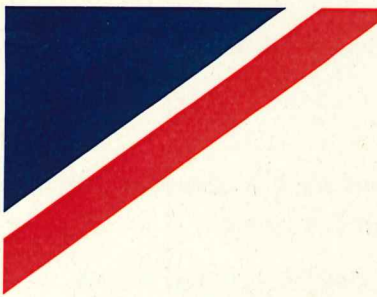
We are proud to have supported the bomb group memorial at the Oaksmere, the PC funded the programme printing of the brochure and applied for the planning of this memorial.

We have supported the church maintainance again this year.

As part of the bio-diversity drive we have funded a number of bird nesting boxes and constructed with the help of the children and adults of the village at a recent coffee morning. It was a very nice activity and I would like to thank Cllr Prior for organising this very enjoyable event.

We look forward to another year of activities to support our community and invite you all to join us at any meeting for the public forum to share your ideas or concerns.

Thanks



Hartismere Division

County Councillor Jessica Fleming

Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07714-597980 Twitter: @jesstfleming

Firstly, thank you everyone for your support this year, please get in touch with your comments, ideas and suggestions which are always most welcome.

The past year has been dominated by the unusual autumn and winter storm events, the council's response to them, and the council budget's. Budget pressures have arisen mainly from wage inflation/ living wage increase, high interest rates and increased demand particularly in adult social care (ACS) and childrens' services.

The Revenue Budget for 2024/5 totals £753 million (up £53m from 2023/4), this has been balanced through a one-off injection of £16m from the corporate risk reserve. However our Chief Financial (Section 151) Officer has made it clear that future years will not have equivalent capacity to draw from reserves. In response council tax has been raised by the limit of 4.99% of which 2% is ring fenced for social care. Overall the financial position is sound though challenging and additional savings proposals must be planned to enable the council to remain solvent going forward.

Prior to setting the budget, the council conducted a public survey to assess opinion on spending priorities and conducted 3 focus groups. Comments supported funding for (in priority order from survey): Highways & Infrastructure; Children and Young People; Public Health & Communities; Adult Social Care. Comments tended not to support further council tax increases at least on lower bands. Rather, future budgets should focus on efficiencies, salaries in higher pay categories, better partnership working such as health service, and innovation.

The council is responsible for an array of services including Registrars, Coroners, Libraries, Museums and Archives, Asylum Seekers referred by the Home Office, Community Safety, Fire & Rescue Services, Trading Standards as well as Roads, Waste Disposal, Adult Social Care, Childrens Services including Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND), School Transport, Public Health. More information on these services and partner organisations can be found on the web platform www.suffolk.gov.uk

- **Storms and Flooding** – As lead local flood authority, the county council has a duty to investigate 'significant' flooding under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act. These investigations help to establish the source of flooding, factors which may have caused or exacerbated the flooding, the impacts on people, services and infrastructure. Usually around 4 Section 19 events occur annually, this year there were at least 100.

The scale of work undertaken since the storm includes: Clearing and jetting over 8,000 drains, Repairing 1,200 road defects, Contacting landowners about blocked watercourses, Investing £10 million into drain and gully clearance, Hired (7) new engineers to address

urgent flood problems, Gathered over 800 flood reports from homes and businesses, Helped access funding from the Government relating to Storm Babet. Work is ongoing..

- **Supporting SEND** – Along with its NHS partners, the council was jointly inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) last November which found significant concerns with the SEND service delivery by the NHS and Council. (This was the first joint inspection.) As a result changes have been made, a Shadow Improvement Board set up with membership from both SCC and its NHS partners and a new approach developed that incorporates stronger joint working arrangements. The council has invested additional funds to secure essential specialist staff and is committed to improving all aspects of the service.
- **Adult & Social Care** – Following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve a 'Good' standard. Earlier in 2023 CQC announced that 5 local authorities including Suffolk were invited to be part of a Local Authority Assessment Pilot to help develop the new model of inspection against the requirements of the Care Act.
- **Devolution** – The Government is seeking views on in principle devolution arrangements that would include:
 - A directly elected leader of Suffolk County Council
 - Control of a new investment fund worth £480m over the next thirty years
 - Local control of the Adult Education Budget each year (worth £9.4m in 2025/26)
 - £5.8m one-off funding to prepare brownfield sites for development
 - Multi-year transport funding plus £500,000 over two years to finalise Suffolk's Local Transport Plan.

A 10-week public consultation on our proposed devolution deal with the Government will start on 18th March and run through until 26th May. The consultation is in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any residents can complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori - www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution and social media. The question will be debated later this summer at Full Council.

- **Bus Service Improvements** – The council will receive £3.6 million of Government funding over the next two years on strengthening and expanding Suffolk's bus network from the Department for Transport's Bus Service Improvement Fund Phase 2 to deliver improvements to public transport in Suffolk. Suffolk's Enhanced Partnership, which represents the county council and local bus operators, has agreed to allocate £1.2 million to support operator - and local community-led proposals for new or enhanced services across the county.
- **Suffolk's Local Transport Plan** - The plan sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk until 2040 . Feedback is currently being sought on key themes proposed for the fourth version of the plan. A link to the survey can be found at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ltp4>. The consultation runs until 8 April 2024, however late submittals may be accepted.
- **Highways Contract** - Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services commenced its new contract on 1 October 2023. Milestone is the Council's new contract partner for up to 20 years under a contract to provide projects including but not limited to maintaining roads,

pavements and rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

- **Nationally Significant Infrastructure and large-scale energy Projects in Suffolk** - Energy developers are bringing forward large-scale energy projects following the latest publication of National Grid's Transmission Entry Capacity (TEC) Register. The TEC Register is a list of projects (usually NSIPs) that have secured the right to connect to National Grid's network if consented under the Planning Act 2008 by government, not local councils. These connection offers form a legally binding contract with National Grid. The current list of connection offers shows that new projects connections are possible at at Bramford near Ipswich, and at Yaxley, near Eye, in north Suffolk. These projects include large-scale solar panel and battery storage proposals in the same style as the recent SUNNICA scheme in West Suffolk, which is a proposal to create a 2500-acre Solar Farm on the Suffolk Cambridgeshire border.
- **Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Scheme** - The [ESO East Anglia Network Study](#), published on 12 March 2024 by The National Grid Electricity System Operator, was set up to explore other ways to connect and transmit energy from offshore wind in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. Options identified by ESO offer alternatives to the Norwich to Tilbury onshore line including offshore and hybrid schemes with coastal land links. Implications of the ESO study are as yet uncertain and under review.

For current information from National Grid refer to:

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

- **Sizewell C** - Construction 'began' on 15th January 2024 under the terms of its Development Consent Order for the twin 3.2GW nuclear power stations. The council obtained significant improvements to plans during the project's examination by the Planning Inspectorate, including maximising transport of construction materials by rail and sea rather than by road. For more information refer to [Suffolk County Council's role in Sizewell C](#) . During construction the council will have a number of responsibilities:
 - Oversight of discharge requirements (equivalent to planning conditions) to maintain control over highways, archaeology and flooding
 - Project governance including chairing the Transport Review Group
 - Administering a portion of funding negotiated during the examination and secured through a Deed of Obligation (a legal agreement between Sizewell C, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council for the scheme to limit its impact on local communities during construction).

BROME & OAKLEY PAROCIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
REPORT to
BROME and OAKLEY PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
25 March 2024

1. Finance. It is becoming increasingly difficult to raise money for church repairs from the various charities which normally in the past have generously contributed.

St Nicholas' church

The last project was the completion of the works at St Nicholas required by the Quinquennial Inspection report, where £57,000 of the £70,000 was raised from a one off legacy and private subscription from parishioners.

St Mary's church

So far, research shows that similar funds are not available for the first stages of repairs listed in the Quinquennial Inspection report for St Mary's. Over £25,000 is now needed for the immediate repairs to keep out the damp from the interior to prevent further deterioration of the plaster work. The response from the charities so far approached has been limited which, sadly, means that the start of the repairs has been delayed.

The report goes on to list extensive further repairs needed to the church and tower including major projects to safeguard the stained glass windows and the structure of the tower. This difficulty of raising finance for church repairs is the reason why the PCC raised with the Parish Council the possibility of the closure of one church at one of our earlier meetings.

2. Benefice Reorganisation

Since Adrian Watkins retired last year, the North Hartismere Benefice will be merging with Redgrave, Botesdale and Rickinghall, meaning a new benefice of 9 parishes with 10 churches. The Diocese will be advertising for a Vicar/Rector for the enlarged benefice. If there are any applicants, they will be interviewed by all the PCCs. At a meeting with the Bishop on 14 March, we were told that a new Rector/Vicar would live nearer the middle of the merged benefices and that the Oakley Rectory would be let.

3. Churchyards

The PCC thanks the Parish for their contribution to maintenance of our church yards. This sadly does not reflect the actual cost of the maintenance to a standard which your parishioners expect. Further discussion is needed.

4. Church Closure

With the Benefice reorganisation, you will appreciate that the Diocese has not yet given the PCC any guidance on how this project could be taken forward, except to say that the Bishop is extremely reluctant to see the closure of any church. The questionnaire sent out last year to all Brome & Oakley households received only 8 replies.

5. Church Services

Last year, between St Mary's and St Nicholas', there were 26 services as well as a wedding, a baptism, three funerals, a marriage blessing and the re-dedication of St Nicholas' reredos after its renovation.

With the limited resources available, the schedule for 10 churches is now controlled by the Benefice with input from the church wardens. The Parish should make their views, if any, known to Irene Goff, our hard-working church warden, to be relayed to the Benefice.

BROME & OAKLEY VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

By John Parry, Chairman. Brome & Oakley Village Hall Management Committee

It's been a busy year for the Village hall. We're into the third year of a major volunteer-led refurbishment programme to make the building warm and dry and comfortable and a generally more pleasant place to spend time.

In this we're led by Tom Pace who's expertise is invaluable. In 2023 we completed renovation work on the bar, and external storage areas. We've more or less completed renovating the main hall, i.e. the gable and window wall and ceiling. We have installed a new emergency exit door which complies with building regulations and started work on renovating the ladies loo. We've also generally improved the plumbing and ventilation systems in the kitchen and bar area.

Looking forward we've stripped out the ladies loo prior to its refurbishment. Then as the weather improves there's some outside work on the porch and guttering to finish. But the big task will be to insulate and renovate the flat roof at the back of the hall. This is the last main uninsulated area. As we are doing that we are hoping to install solar panels and a battery storage system in order to reduce our reliance on heating oil, save money and improve our sustainability rating. That will require major grant funding, starting imminently.

The volunteers tend to work Tuesdays. The work party led by Tom have done an immense amount of work. The core group through the year has been Tim Moss, Roger Broughton, Tony Hull, Donald, and Jo Cullen. More recently we're been joined by Peter Joyce, Andy Downes and Owen Salvage. The work party has sunk well over 250 working days into the building. That's a terrific commitment to sustain and I don't know of any other village halls who could match that. Financially we've been supported by the Parish Council, the Community Infrastructure Levy Fund and our own resources. The Community Club has also contributed financially on joint areas such as the bar.

Other than building work I'm also pleased to report that bromeandoakleyvillagehall.com is now up and running as of earlier this month. Our thanks to Mark Dibella and son Lukas for their work on this. It looks very smart. Lucas by the way did this work as a Duke of Edinburgh Award module.

So what's all this work for? It's so the village can enjoy the village hall for a range of community activities. Has it worked. Absolutely. In the year to end of March we let the hall on around 200 occasions, that compares with 170 in the previous 12 months. The local table tennis league book around 70 dates a year and a revitalised Community Club 55. Tom and Barbara's very well attended coffee mornings and community lunches add another 20 or so dates and routinely attract 60+ people. And what was a three month winter bridge club on Monday afternoons has morphed into a year round club.

So in summary what we have here is a success story. We hear a lot about the decline in rural services but Brome & Oakley, centred on the Village Hall, is a a successful, thriving community in the truest sense of that word.

JP March 2024

Brome and Oakley Welfare Trust

C/o Ivy House Cottage
The Street, Brome
Eye, IP23 8AD

Report for the Annual Parish meeting, 25th March 2023

The activities of the Welfare Trust have continued through the last year, much the same as the previous year, with three/formal meetings a year, and an active face-to-face and on-line communication network.

The Trust's finances remain healthy and adequate for the current low level of activity. Using income from our investment accounts and donations, we have been able to re-investment around £200 per quarter. That, with one donation from SEWCO Ltd, combined with a very low level of donations to residents of Brome and Oakley, means that the current financial holding of the Trust is in the order of £34,000.

In 2023 we made only one donation, although others have been offered and not accepted. This low level of provision of financial assistance arises from the Trust being unable to identify those in need within the parish. This is probably because of a combination of factors such as a relatively affluent community, welfare benefits already in place and visibility of the Trust.

We continue to be aware that many in our community do not know of the Trust's existence and have taken some steps to address that, such as entries in the Parish Magazine and the production of a small information sheet that can be picked up in the village hall and at the Churches. We have also introduced business cards that make it easier for Trustees to introduce themselves, when following upon a potential need. We try to ensure that we are listed in the various places that might meet people in need and send them in our direction – but we do have to be aware that the Trust only makes provision for Brome and Oakley.

Current Trustees are David Hardaker, Chair; Jo Cullen (secretary) Barbara Pace, Sarah Gore and Jane Pearse (Treasurer)

Reverend Adrian Watkins departed in the summer and has not yet been replaced. Elaine Halton, after many years of stalwart Service retired at the end of last year. Sarah Gore agreed to be a Trustee in January.

Jane Pearse, Treasurer

Brome & Oakley Annual Parish Meeting 25/3/2024

Almshouse Report

Trustee meetings have continued on a regular basis. Unfortunately due to retirement, Adrian Watkins, our ex Officio Chairperson resigned last summer, so have a vacancy for another Trustee. Meanwhile Chairmanship is rotated around Trustees, as allowed by our rules.

Other Trustees remain unchanged - John Parry Treasurer, Jane Pearse Secretary and other Trustees Tim Moss, Milly Prior, Tom Pace & David Hardaker.

We still have full occupancy with the same residents. No issues to report.

We are continuing to invest in building maintenance projects & have commenced internal decorations. External lime washing booked for May.

We did not proceed with the garden project due to it being slightly more complex and costly. But may revisit a more simplified project at a later date.

All finances are in good order and no one in arrears.

Milly Prior
Trustee

