



# Earl Stonham Annual Parish Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held online via Zoom, at 7pm on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## PRESENT:

Cllr D Turner – *Chairman*, D Brenig-Jones (PC), M Mann (PC), J Griffiths (Trustees), L Stone (WI), M Gillett (PC), S Budd (PC), H Stanford (PC / PCC), K Wilkinson (PC), T Turner (Village Hall) and H Glasse (PC)

## IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs J Blackburn (Clerk), County Cllr Hicks and District Cllr Morley.

## ES01/21/22 - CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman of Earl Stonham Parish Council, Cllr Deb Turner, welcomed those present and explained that Cllr Colin Woods had resigned from the Parish Council after serving 26 years. She expressed her thanks for all he had done over the years.

## ES02/21/22 - APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from the Police, Reverend Payne and Tony Stevens (Footpaths).

## ES03/21/22 - MINUTES 13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2019

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2019, were approved as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

## ES04/21/22 – REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH

Representatives of the following organisations were invited to speak, answer any questions and, where received, their reports would be attached to the Minutes.

- a) **Earl Stonham Parish Council** – *Cllr Deb Turner*  
(Full Report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Turner read through her report.

- b) **Suffolk County Council** – *Cllr Matthew Hicks*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Hicks reported that over the last 14-16 months the county as a whole had responded amazingly to the Pandemic with communities joining together to help each other. He stated that the work of school teachers was to be congratulated for keeping the classrooms open to those children of key workers.

- c) **Mid-Suffolk District Council** – *Cllr Suzie Morley*

Cllr Morley briefly went through her report, which had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the village website.

She commented that in relation to home working due to the pandemic, sickness levels had decreased due to staff working around their home life and working at varying hours of the day.

T Turner expressed his thanks to Cllr Morley for the way the Grants Team at Mid Suffolk District Council had worked over recent months. A very efficient and quick working service.

- d) **Report of the Church – Reverend Philip Payne**  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

- e) **Village Hall Management Committee – Tony Turner**  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

T Turner reported that the refurbishment of the hall had been completed with more work being carried out than what was originally planned which included the entrance to the car park. New chairs for the hall had been purchased from contributions by the Parish Council and Trustees.

He added that the next project was to tidy up the area at the rear of the hall.

- f) **Suffolk Police**

The Police were not present at the meeting and had not submitted a report.

- g) **WI – Lindsey Stone**  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

L Stone reported that meetings had to be held online via Zoom including visiting Speakers. It was hoped that meetings would continue back in the village hall from July 2021. She added that last year was the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WI so they were hoping to hold an event to mark the occasions this year.

- h) **Earl Stonham Trustees – Jennie Griffiths**  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

J Griffiths reported that the decision as to what to do with the Bowls Club had yet to be decided. It was currently being used by a fitness class.

- i) **Cricket Club – Simon Edgar**

Mr Edgar was not present at the meeting and a report had not been submitted.

- i) **Over 60's Club – Joan Rice**

Mrs Rice was not present at the meeting and a report had not been submitted.

- k) **Parochial Church Council – Cllr H Stanford**  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Mr Stanford reported that services resumed at 6am on Easter Morning. The Benefice Zoom services would continue plus additional physical services with the next one due to be held in Earl Stonham Church on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021.

- l) **Website – Mark Gillett**  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

- m) **Footpaths – Tony Stevens**

Mr Stevens was not present at the meeting and a report had not been received.

## **ES06/21/22 - PUBLIC FORUM**

No issues were raised.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

Chairman ..... Date .....

## **Chairman of the Parish Council's Report – Earl Stonham Annual Parish Meeting**

- Been a very quiet year – Covid.
- Online meetings have worked well enabling the Parish Council to continue its business
- The allotments are all let and are being appropriately maintained, bringing in an income for the Parish Council.
- Donations have been made throughout the year to Stowmarket Food Bank, Homestart, Livability, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Forward Africa.
- Donations have also been made to the Village Hall for the purchase of new chairs following a very successful refurbishment.
- 24 Planning Applications have been considered over the course of the year to which comments have been submitted to the District Council.
- Speeding through the village has been monitored over the year and statistics show 148 vehicles exceeding the speed limit along the A1120 and 39 along the A140 during 2020. 27 vehicles currently during 2021 exceeded the speed limit along the A1120. The Parish Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council has applied for one of the new Automatic number plate recognition cameras, a project by the County Council, to be installed near to the Pub site.
- The Parish Council have had three Members leave, Jen Henderson-Hamilton and Brian Heard resulting in two vacancies being filled by Mark Gillet and Michael Mann. There is currently one vacancy remaining following the recent departure of Colin Woods.

# **Cllr Matthew Hicks 2021 Annual Report for the Thredling Division**

## **Council proposes unprecedented environmental plans in response to climate emergency**

In response to its declaration of a climate emergency, Suffolk County Council aims to lead the way with an unparalleled range of activities and policy changes to support its ambition of being a 'net zero' authority by 2030. The council's Cabinet reviewed and agreed an extensive programme of recommendations to achieve this ambition. The plans include dozens of changes and new ways of working, from making its pool car fleet all-electric, to making it mandatory for all future committee decisions to consider the net zero ambition. Being 'net zero' means that the council will remove its carbon emissions where it can; if it is unable to do so, it will compensate for those emissions. The council will adopt a more detailed method to measure its carbon emissions output, so that it can more accurately track its progress on an annual basis. SCC has been involved with successful climate change projects for many years, including the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. We have put millions of pounds into energy efficiency projects for both businesses and homes and continue to do so. Suffolk has been moving in the right direction, having seen carbon emission reductions of 41% since 1990. But now is the time to move up through the gears and do even better. The impact of climate change is an issue which involves everyone and affects everyone. With the approval of these plans, the council will lead by example. We will inspire other businesses to see what can be achieved, to show that change can, and must, happen. In March 2019, Suffolk County Council was the first authority in the county to declare a climate emergency. One of the council's priorities after this declaration was to set up a policy development panel (PDP). The panel met regularly, discussing the changes and challenges the council faces in reducing its carbon emissions. Amongst the recommendations, Suffolk County Council will continue its work with all other local authorities and agencies, under the umbrella of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, which was formed in 2007. With all local authorities having now declared a climate emergency, they will use their combined powers, duties, influence and leadership, continuing their work together to achieve the net zero ambition for emissions from all of Suffolk.

## **Suffolk wins funding for the next stage of A12 improvements**

It was announced that Suffolk has secured £830,000 of funding from the Department for Transport, to develop an Outline Business Case to take forward its plans to improve the A12. Announced during the Government's budget, Suffolk County Council has been successful in winning £830,000 of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT), to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) to take forward its plans to improve the A12 East of Ipswich. This project is specifically looking to increase capacity and improve overall traffic flow at junctions and will explore the potential for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the A12. With the funding secure, SCC's Transport Strategy Team will now begin work to develop the outline business case which, following public consultation, will be used to make a further bid to central government for funding to deliver the scheme. It was also announced in the budget that the DfT have given their approval for SCC to develop and submit a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for a project to dual the A12 between the Seckford and Dobbies roundabouts near Woodbridge. Whilst this does not include any funding at this stage, the SOBC will enable SCC to bid for future funding for this project too. I am delighted that once again Suffolk County Council has been successful in bidding for funding from central government for large infrastructure projects. These improvements are between the A14 Seven Hills junction and the A12/A1214 Park and Ride Roundabout and will help boost road capacity and traffic flow. I am also pleased that the scheme includes additional proposals to help encourage more walking and cycling.

## **More than 98% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day**

On 16 April, it was reported that over 98.57% of Suffolk children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of the schools preferred by their parents. SCC received 7,602 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2020. Some 7,116 children received offers for their first preference school and 7,493 children received an offer for one of their three preferred schools. We have a good track record of offering places at preferred schools and this year is no exception. I am delighted that we have been able to give most parents a place for their child at one of the schools they want. We use published criteria to decide who has priority for places so that the process is fair and clear. I appreciate that not all families will have received a place at their preferred school and where a parents' preference for a Suffolk school is refused, we will automatically add their child's name to the waiting list for that school. We will also advise them about how to lodge an appeal should they wish to do so.

### **Suffolk celebrates 1,000 miles of newly surfaced roads**

I am pleased to report that Suffolk Highways completed its 1,000th resurfaced mile, following the Council's commitment to relay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's road network. In 2017, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet committed to resurfacing 1,000 miles of road across Suffolk over a four-year period; in a bid to improve the quality of roads, reduce the number of potholes and to help stop potholes from forming in the first place. The commitment also makes sound financial sense, as preventing the deterioration of road surfaces by machine surfacing or surface dressing helps reduce the need to spend more money on reactive maintenance repairing potholes now, and in future years. The 1,000th mile was laid at Horham Road in Eye. I am delighted to see our teams deliver on our promise to lay new road surfaces on a quarter of Suffolk's roads. Not only that, but we are also due to exceed the 1,000 miles and complete this work sooner than expected. Residents and businesses have always been clear that they want to see roads and infrastructure improved in Suffolk. This continues to be the biggest discussion point in our local communities. By delivering this programme we have been able to focus our budget and resources on improving our roads countywide and keeping them pothole-free for longer. SCC remain committed to focussing our efforts and resources where possible on this type of road improvement.

### **Suffolk County Council secures £3.1M for building decarbonisation initiative**

SCC working in conjunction with property specialists Concertus, has been successful in gaining over £3M of funding from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to promote capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within buildings used to provide frontline public services. Working with Concertus, the council has been preparing a range of packages to support the decarbonising of various buildings in the Council's estate including applications for the council's headquarters at Endeavour House in Ipswich, four rural fire stations, Beacon House, Waterloo Centre and Leiston Children's Centre. The council's Children and Young People service also reviewed their portfolio of school buildings along with Concertus. This review resulted in the submission of grant applications for nine schools across the county, all of which were successful. This grant scheme aligns with BEIS' new mission and priorities: fighting coronavirus, backing business, unleashing innovation, and tackling climate change. Through this scheme, it is supporting the council's own commitment to be net zero by 2030 along with the Government's own net zero goals and encouraging further green investment within the UK. Packages of work vary from building to building, but many include the fitting of solar panels and battery storage, as well as improvements to wall or roof insulation and installation of Air Source Heat Pumps to move away from the use of fossil fuels for source of heating. This is a really important step in the council delivering upon its commitment to be net zero by 2030. The estimated cumulative effect of these packages will see the council's carbon footprint reduce by over 360 tonnes of CO2 per year, the equivalent of taking 120 cars off the road. This is a fantastic result and underlines our commitment to the county and the planet. I would like to thank all those involved in securing this funding, especially Concertus, Vertas and the Greater South East Energy Hub. I look forward to seeing the work rolled out over the coming months. The council hopes to have the work completed at all the sites before the 30 September

### **Major infrastructure projects now underway in East Anglia**

On 4 February 2021 work began on two new bridges on the East Anglian coast, promising to bring huge economic benefits locally. The Third River Crossing in Great Yarmouth and the Gull Wing project in Lowestoft. The projects are just 10 miles apart and have a combined cost of £246m. The UK Government acknowledged the two bridges as nationally important infrastructure projects, with the Department for Transport committing a combined total of over £170million to both ventures. Farrans, one of the UK's leading building and civil engineering contractors, is involved with the construction of both projects. In Great Yarmouth, the construction is a joint venture with BAM Nuttall, and in Lowestoft it is the sole responsibility of Farrans. Road closures for both projects have already been implemented as preparation work gets underway. Trial holes for utilities are underway for the Gull Wing in Lowestoft. The Government has committed to levelling up across the country and with these two major projects, we are now starting to see this happen in our region. The Gull Wing will create local jobs and apprenticeship opportunities in Lowestoft and the Waveney area. Local people regularly emphasise the importance of the Gull Wing. It is great news that I shall now be able to tell them that the talking is now over, and the work has begun.

### **Adopt East launches**

October marked the launch of Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England. Adopt East will work across local authorities in Southend, Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Bedford and Luton to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. Adoptionplus, Barnardo's, and Adoption UK are also part of the partnership. The Adopt East will deliver the highest quality adoption

service to children and families throughout the region by bringing together the expertise and skills of all its partners. The scale of the organisation means that adopters will have access to a larger number of children waiting for adoption. This will help partners to match children with the right family for them, at the earliest opportunity. In Suffolk we have been working hard to find loving and supportive families for children waiting for adoption. These children have not always had the best start in life and really do deserve to find their forever homes. The adoption process can seem daunting for families, but SCC have a wealth of experience and are there to support families every step of the way. Adopt East is great news for Suffolk as it will mean we can draw on expertise and skills from across the whole region to help us to find the right families for our children.

#### **The Hold welcomes first visitors and opens inaugural exhibition**

September saw the public able to access The Hold, Suffolk's flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront. This versatile new building will be the permanent home of the Suffolk Archives Ipswich branch and is shared with the University of Suffolk, who have dedicated teaching spaces within the building. The creation of The Hold, and its associated countywide programme of events and activities, has been made possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further funding support from other national organisations and local Suffolk heritage groups. The public are currently able to access 'front of house' areas, including archive inspired displays, the café, shop, and toilets, including a new Changing Places facility. On 2 October, the long-awaited Exhibition Gallery also opened to visitors. The inaugural exhibition, *Global Events: Suffolk Stories*, examines how Suffolk has responded as a community to key global events over the past 100 years. It focuses on the arrival of American service people during the 'Friendly Invasion' of World War Two, as well as the rising tensions and public messaging of the Cold War period, and the collective community response to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020. Through original archival documents, photos, music, and film, visitors will be able to explore the similarities and differences between these three global events and understand how Suffolk has changed as a result.

**Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division**

**Tel : 01728 628176   Mob : 07824474741   E-mail : [matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk)**

## **Earl Stonham – Parish of St Mary the Virgin – 2020 Executive Summary**

This report is an executive Summary of the Report produced for the Annual Parochial Church Council for 2020.

2020 started off just like previous years with services in the parish church each Sunday, and regular social and pastoral support activities.

The first Covid lockdown hit in March and everything stopped, or did it? It was time for prayer and for thinking 'outside the box'. Worship went on line and many people became adept at using Zoom. We discovered that attending church in the comfort of our homes had its advantages and some people joined these services who were not regular attendees in 'normal' times. Parish newsletters, Bible Readings, Service sheets and reflections were distributed weekly both electronically and, for these not on-line, by traditional GPO mail. Phones were vital for keeping in touch with one another but we all missed being able to actually get together. Our community leapt into action with offers of help with shopping, collecting prescriptions and anything else required. New friendships were made and sharing worship with the other parishes within the benefice helped us to get to know our bigger church family.

By the Summer, Covid infections had reduced sufficiently for lockdown regulations to lift somewhat and physical church services started again on a smaller scale than before. Rules still forbade singing and social distancing meant spacing everyone out, people having to book a place in advance and masks being worn. At least the Church was open for private prayer on Sunday afternoons.

Happily it was possible for Celia Stanford's wedding to take place in July, even if on a reduced scale. Funeral services, and the associated support, continued, albeit in modified forms.

Many regular activities were cancelled or postponed. In their place, the 8 parishes of the Benefice have worked more closely together to share resources, including the opportunity to hold drive-in services for Harvest and Christmas. Good neighbourly support has been more valuable than ever, and has continued throughout the community, throughout the year.

As we move into 2021 we look forward to more change and more fresh activity.

Rev Philip Payne  
Rector – North Bosmere Benefice  
3 May 2021

## **Earl Stonham Village Hall Annual Report – 2020-21**

Along with all other similar establishments, it has been a very chequered year, with hardly any bookings and all our normal events cancelled. As I write this in April however, it does look like there might be light at the end of the tunnel with limited re-opening possible from mid-May. Of course it remains to be seen how long it takes for everyone to feel confident about meeting face to face again but you can rest assured that the hall committee will do all that is necessary to provide a safe environment for all our users.

As they say, every cloud has a silver lining and in the case of the hall, the forced closure and availability of the necessary funding permitted the long awaited refurbishment of the main hall. A huge amount of the work was done by volunteers and the savings made by not having to pay specialists and getting much better prices on materials, meant that we ended up being able to do far more work than originally planned.

The original scope of work was all completed as planned, including the new roof, air source heat pump heating, new suspended ceiling and lighting, the new beech semi sprung floor, new audio video system and curtains including black-out blinds. In addition to these main items, we also managed to complete the following:

Improved under-stage storage

Timber cladding of the external gable end wall

A new PA system

New padded chairs

Plaster-boarding the rear corridor ceiling

New entrance mats and stage carpet - thanks to a donation from the Stonham Theatre Guild

The other major improvement has been to the car park entrance. Even with the additional items above, we still had some of the original funding left over and with the Parish Council and Earl Stonham Trust contributing to the work, as well as funding from our District Councillor locality budget, this gave us sufficient funds to rebuild 100sq m of the drive and improve areas of the main car park itself. This also allowed us to move the recycling bins nearer the entrance which has freed up car park space.

We have managed to keep the village quiz nights running on Zoom and thanks to David Wicks and John Jones for their quiz-master help. Hopefully before too long we will be able to return to face to face quizzes in the hall.

**Tony Turner**

**Chairman - Earl Stonham Village Hall Management Committee**



## **Earl Stonham Annual Meeting - WI Report – May 2021**

We currently have 26 members who come from the surrounding villages of Little Stonham, Creting St Peter, Stowupland, Needham Market, Brockford and Stowupland as well as our own village.

Like most organisations, we were only able to hold meetings in January and February 2020 before Coronavirus took hold.

We met up 6 times via Zoom to keep in touch with members and then when the better weather came we met on the Recreation Ground at the Village Hall every fortnight during July, August and September. Our Annual Meeting in October was a hybrid meeting with 6 committee members in the Clubroom and others joining us via Zoom. The Committee and Officers remained the same as before. We have also set up a WhatsApp Group which around half the members take part in.

The National AGM in London was cancelled and with the money refunded from this we were able to purchase material for Pauline to make into sets of Scrubs for the NHS. She also made laundry bags to wash these in as well as masks for friends and family.

In December every WI in Suffolk was given the chance to Plant a Tree and nurture it for 5 years - we duly received our Oak Tree on December 7<sup>th</sup> and this is flourishing on the Recreation Ground, having replaced an old one there. We made up Goody Bags for every member consisting of bulbs, chocolates, wine, handmade Xmas napkins, handmade crocheted snowflake for our Xmas trees, magazine and quizzes.

This year we have been able to rebook speakers from last year but on Zoom instead so have met this way monthly from February and have speakers booked until June. We are hoping that if everything continues to go well, we will start meeting back in the Village Hall from July.

At the Suffolk East Annual Meeting last March we were presented with a Certificate for celebrating 75 years as a WI - it would be nice to be able to celebrate that properly this year.

# **EARL STONHAM TRUST**

Annual Report 2019 – 2020

## **Charity Name & Number**

Earl Stonham Trust – Charity number 213006

## **Correspondence address:**

Mrs J. Griffiths, Cornfields, Wicks Lane, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5HL  
(or any of the Trustees).

## **Trustees**

The current trustees are Mr C. Woods (Chairman), Mrs S. Budd, and Mr K. Wilkinson (who are nominated by the Parish Council) and Mr P. Hurt (Treasurer), Mrs J. Griffiths (Secretary) and Mr M. Gillett (who are co-opted) and Mrs F. Wicks (the Church Nominative Trustee).

## **Bankers**

CAF Bank Ltd., 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Mill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

## **Independent Examiner**

J.M. Jones FCA, Hines Farm, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket, IP14 5HQ

## **History, objectives and activities of the Trust**

On 6 November 1984, a scheme was approved and established by the Charity Commission. The effect of the scheme was to amalgamate three previously separate charities. The scheme permits the Trustees to distribute income only. This has to be applied in defraying the cost of management of its property and other administrative expenses. Thereafter, one half has to be applied for relief in need and the other half for educational purposes. Any surplus income may be applied for any charitable purposes for the general benefit of the inhabitants of Earl Stonham. In general, the beneficiaries have to be residents of Earl Stonham. The Trustees are also charged with the management of the Recreation Ground. A new scheme dated 8.10.09 was approved by the Charity Commissioners which confirmed the official name of the Charity, authorised the transfer of all land owned by the Trust at the Recreation Ground into the name of the Official Custodian for Charities and authorised the Trustees to enter into a lease of the Bowls Club site. The formal lease to the Bowls Club was completed 26 November 2010 and expired 25.11.2017 with the Bowls Club continuing the lease until 2019 when it finally closed. The scheme was further amended 25.6.15 to permit the appointment of a Church Nominative Trustee in place of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge as an ex officio Trustee.

## **Management and governance arrangements**

The scheme provides for 7 Trustees. Three are nominated by the Earl Stonham Parish Council (who serve for 4 years), three are co-opted by the remaining Trustees (who serve for 5 years) and the seventh is appointed as above. The Trustees meet quarterly.

## **Procedures and policy for grant making**

Applications for grants are considered at Trustees meetings. Form of application is advertised in Parish

magazine as well as the Trustees, from their knowledge of the inhabitants of Earl Stonham, try to identify other potential beneficiaries.

### **Financial Report and performance of the Trust**

In the year 2019/20 the Trust's expenditure was significantly higher than previous years because of professional fees relating to the future of the former Bowls Club Site and loss of annual rental income. A reduction in investment dividend was largely offset by increase in rent for Guildhall Cottage.

The Trust gave a grant to the Cricket Club and increased grants for Education and Relief in Need and continued to seek worthy applications in the Covid 19 lockdown. Meetings were conducted by Zoom and e-mail.

The annual Playground Inspection report was considered and appropriate action taken.

The Trust continues to seek a viable long term plan for the former Bowls Club site after a negative response for potential development from a Planning Official.

### **Investment policy and reserves**

The permanent endowment of the Trust consists of the Recreation ground, the cottage and investments. The Trustees have continued to retain their investments through collective investment schemes. As at 30 September 2020, these investments continued to show a healthy increase over their original purchase price. Of relevance is that Guildhall Cottage is an old building which needs maintenance and expenditure.

### **Independent Examiner**

The Trustees intend to ask the existing Examiner to undertake the independent examination of the Trust in 2020-21 and express their thanks to him for his work in 2019-20.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

Mr C. Woods



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich**

# Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva

## Parochial Church Council

### Annual General Report 2020



**EARL STONHAM WITH STONHAM PARVA  
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL  
ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the above presents the Annual Report for the year 2020. The report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act of 1993.

#### **LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

St Mary's Church, Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva.

**Correspondence address:** The Rectory, The Street, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket IP14 6AQ **Telephone:**

(01449) 711684 **email address:** revphilippayne@btinternet.com

The PCC is a charity exempt from registration with the Charity Commission.

## **THE PARISH TEAM**

Priest in Charge: Revd Philip Payne

(01449) 711684

Lay Minister: Mrs Frankie Wicks

(01449) 711222

Churchwarden: Mr Mark Parry

(01449) 711816

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

The PCC has 10 members (ex officio and elected) and the electoral roll had 43 names on it for 2020. The PCC held 3 meetings during the year, in addition to the Annual Vestry Meeting and the Annual Parochial Meeting, which was held on Wednesday 21st October 2020.

Discussions at PCC Meetings included: Covid, Outside services between all parishes in Benefice, Growing in God, Little Stonham church, unification of Deaneries.

## **RECTOR'S REPORT – NORTH BOSMERE BENEFICE**

When Jesus was asked 'what would be the signs of the end times', he replied 'As it was in the time of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man; people will be going about their normal business and they will see nothing untoward until it happens (Matt 24:37 and Lk 17:26, paraphrased). An exchange worth reflecting on as we look back over 2020.

The annual 'Rector's Report' tends to be a cut-and-paste job; with the numbers revised and the odd one-off inserted for good measure. 2020 is different and as this report is more for posterity than for the immediate record, it strays from my usual format.

The year began normally enough. The news from China and Italy, in particular, was disturbing but I think it would be fair to record that, except for medical and political specialists, most of us were blissfully unaware of what was coming. It was, as I began in my opening paragraph, business as normal in blissful ignorance.

Parish life continued in this way for the first two months of the year. By late February/early March it was becoming clear that some sort of shut down was imminent. Mothering Sunday services planned for 22 March were cancelled at the last minute as large swathes of economic, social and spiritual life were deemed inessential and shut down by government decree. Churches were included in this inessential category; our buildings were closed and all public worship (unless on-line) was banned. At this stage most of us expected a short closure followed by a swift return to 'business as normal.' Life in the parishes continued.

## **Worship and Fellowship**

Thanks, in the first instance, to Rev Helen and to Ruth Dennigan (Reader), we were able to quickly establish a regular pattern of on-line worship using the facility ZOOM. What started as a short-term solution quickly settled into a weekly pattern of worship on Wednesday and Sunday mornings and Friday evening. Other special services being added as required. Regular congregations settled longterm to around 6-12 for a week-day, 40 to 50 for Sundays (more for special occasions). The breakout facility in ZOOM also supported a welcome opportunity for social interaction around service and study-group meetings.

By June we were able to reopen buildings for private prayer at least one day per week. In August we recommenced regular, physical services, albeit with limited numbers and no singing. Social distancing became a recurring mantra. The first service of Holy Communion (distribution in one kind only) in the Benefice since March was celebrated at Coddensham on Sunday 9 August. From then onward, weekly Sunday Eucharists, together with morning and evening prayer at least once each per month, continued until shut-down again in November. Remembrance Sunday saw small, private acts of Remembrance only, at those locations where War Memorials were positioned in the Churchyard or public space, not inside buildings. Physical services recommenced for December and included Christmas Eve/Christmas Day Eucharists at Stonham Aspal and Earl Stonham respectively. Throughout this period, ZOOM services continued. As we entered 2021, a worsening public health climate led to the voluntary cessation of all physical worship and meetings across the Benefice once more.

Two other services worthy of note; in September Broughton Hall Farm played host to a successful and well received Drive-In Harvest service and the formula was repeated for a drive-in Carol Sing at Gosbeck Village Hall carpark in December. In addition to the 2 Eucharists mentioned, Christmas also saw a number of churchyard services to overcome the constraints of indoor activities, particularly numbers and singing; the drive-ins enabled people to sing in their cars.

## **Occasional Offices**

## **Weddings**

Weddings were banned for much of the year (in all locations, not just church), then subject to severe constraint on numbers and singing. One wedding was celebrated in Earl Stonham in July, 2 in Crowfield in December.

## **Funerals**

Funeral ministry continued, albeit under constraints on numbers and with no singing. For much of the spring and summer, funerals were either grave-side or crematorium only, not inside the church building. Whilst this placed additional constraints on all concerned at a particularly difficult time; there was something especially moving about many of these graveside ceremonies. Across all 8 parishes we conducted a total of 31 funerals and/or interments.

## **Baptisms**

All postponed due to pandemic constraints.

## **Social Welfare**

It is important to record that, although no new social welfare/support ventures were initiated in the name of the parishes; in all 10 villages, church members played an active part in a variety of village community-based social support activities. From delivering food and medicines, to on-line social meets and much more beside.

A weekly e-mail shot containing the Parish pew/notice sheet, a weekly Rectorial reflection and other relevant material is widely distributed.

## **GPO mail ministry**

The internet provided vital connectivity for many, but not everyone is connected. Since April 2020 a weekly hard-copy mailing has distributed news, reflections and other material to around 24 individual addresses.

## **Hayzel House**

The Hayzel House church community (Service & Soup) continued their network of communication and met in small groups as and when national restrictions allowed.

## Schools

The challenges faced by schools during this pandemic are well documented elsewhere and our 2 primary schools are no exception. Physical access to the schools has not been possible but I have maintained regular contact through my work on the governing bodies of both schools; through occasional video inputs, and through a short appearance at Stonham Aspal School for a leavers event, and a short, pre-term time of prayer for the staff of Creting St Mary School.

***Rev'd Philip Payne Rector***

## SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding continues to be on the PCC Agenda for every meeting with prominent notices with contact details displayed in the Church and the Parish Room.

During the year all the members of the PCC have completed their basic training and those with specific roles have attended appropriate courses.

Frankie Wicks has continued as Safeguarding Officer and keeps a record of training done.

The diocese changed its system of Safeguarding Training in October 2019. There are now 3 levels:

- Basic Awareness
- Foundation Course
- Leadership Course

Both the Basic Awareness and the Foundation Course are easily available online at the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich website.

PCC members are expected to do both the Basic and the Foundation Courses. The Leadership Course is for clergy, ministry team members, churchwardens etc.

Although PCC members have done training previously we have to do the Basic course every 3 years as a minimum so some need to get updated. The recent editions of the courses are said to be more informative than before.

***Frankie Wicks Safeguarding officer***

## FABRIC REPORT

Because of the delayed date of the 2019 APCM due to the pandemic, some elements of this report were included in last year's edition.

2020 was an unexpectedly challenging year for the community but we have endeavoured to make the building and churchyard as accessible as possible whilst keeping people safe by our all following government and CoE guidelines and restrictions. It was sadly necessary to temporarily suspend the car park to discourage gatherings that were not permitted in the graveyard, but it has been subsequently reopened. The periodic village emails I have sent on behalf of the church have been used to gently remind recipients of the prevailing guidelines and restrictions, as have our ACNY pages.

Prior to the pandemic we had conducted a walk round of the church to identify items from the Quinquennial for further action but this has been put on hold for now. None of these items were immediate and will be reassessed in due course.

During both lockdowns, in line with CoE guidance, and since given the paucity of services, I have visited the building weekly to check on the internal and external condition including - thanks to Colin Edgar's advice - "exercising" the organ, as well as running the water. In the colder months during the Sunday opening hours the heating has been on, to the mild chagrin of our estimable Treasurer, to ensure "preservation by operation" as much as the modest warmth of our visitors. On my solitary visits I have felt humbled to be in this special place and am glad everyone can once again visit, albeit less frequently than we have been used to. The church remains open for private prayer each Sunday afternoon and periodically on other selected occasions.

A full risk assessment set by the CoE was carried out prior to the church being opened for private prayer and then services. Whilst the current physical distancing measures constrain capacity they do not reduce maximum attendance below either what is normal for our regular services or what is currently permitted under government and CoE guidance for weddings and funerals. Access is still restricted outside service/prayer time to manage the risk of disease transmission, so thank you to our cleaners and flower arrangers who kindly work within these new guidelines.

The fabric and services remain in good working order, bar a small section of plaster at the top of one of the clerestory windows which fell to ground. The DAC advisor recommends that our architect inspects it as there have been a number of apparently similar incidents during the lockdowns, possibly due to a lack of heating and moisture. However, given the volume of fallen plaster versus the remaining gap, it was not the first time this has happened at St. Mary's and indeed previous Quinquennials have noted what my predecessor calls "the plaster of Damocles" as an item to be aware of and informally monitor rather than requiring immediate action. That being said I will investigate whether there is the opportunity to combine an architect's inspection with a scheduled visit. For now there are two more pews out of use than distancing would require, which has no effect on current capacity given the church layout and would have only have a modest impact pending restitution once all restrictions are hopefully lifted this summer.

The small cracked pane in one of the nave leaded lights remains and whilst a recommended craftsman has provided a quote for repair, further reflection suggested access needed to be further assessed before proceeding. It might be that use of a cherry picker could be combined if the missing plaster is to be inspected at close quarters.

The organ has been tuned and a minor repair carried out as a result. As noted above I "exercise" the organ weekly. The bell clappers were repaired during the first lockdown, and to the foundry's credit returned on a special trip that they turned into a short holiday. A valve in the kitchen water heater was noticed to have failed, thankfully without causing any damage, and has been replaced at modest cost.

The Heard family kindly fettled the Parish Room paintwork, replaced the nearby pedestrian gate and also the bird netting inside the church porch. Tony Fowler kindly repaired the roadside noticeboard which had developed an unhelpful tendency to open in windy conditions. He has also allowed us to retain his temporary Christmas floodlight to provide a beacon of light for all passing whilst restrictions on everyday life remain - he and the Treasurer doubtless doubly await their final relaxations. John Jones and I cleared the downpipe on the south transept that had become blocked.

Following the ending of the contract with MYGroup to carry out an annual check and clean of the roof, guttering and drains we need to consider an alternate provision going forward.

The annual inventory check will be carried out and the inventory updated if needed subject to distancing and other constraints.

The churchyard has been kept tidy particularly by John Bull, ably assisted by John Jones and others, all of whom have given kindly of their time for which we are in turn grateful. Mike Dawe has recently sourced and planted a new hedge to fill the gap by the rear gate. Recent work by UK Power Networks on the power lines on the northern boundary have resulted in a beneficial haircut to some of the laurels.

It remains a matter of concern that Stonham Parva is still not able to be used for our occasional services nor receive visitors due to a roof problem. I met the Churches Conservation Trust architect when he carried out a full assessment of the damage and it is hoped repairs will be carried out as soon as possible so this special place can once more be enjoyed, though we have been warned a lack of funding means this is not imminent. Thank you to Mary Hamilton for continuing to cultivate a positive relationship with the CCT field officer.

I have continued to expand the content of our A Church Near You page, and that of the Benefice. Despite its best efforts to frustrate it contains details of all Benefice services, Philip's weekly reflection and Liz Ince's pew sheet, a reminder of Zoom services and other seasonal pages. More recently we have been able to add a link for donations, though as you might expect the site does not help by not allowing us to have both a general donation and one for our monthly chosen charity. The latest stats suggest show continued growth in views to 250 (120) weekly, 700 (470) monthly and 6,400 (4,600) views this year (last year's numbers in brackets) so I believe it is worth persevering with. We have reserved the St Mary's Earl Stonham.org domain name so that we might have our own website one day, but for now I feel it best to sit within the widely visible and Diocese promoted ACNY umbrella.



It remains an enormous privilege to serve as Churchwarden and fabric person and I would like to thank everyone in the Parish, Benefice and beyond who have been such a great support.

**Mark Parry Churchwarden**

## **THE CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

2020 started off just like previous years with services in our church on Sundays, Coffee and Cake every 4 weeks and Library Lunches too. Visits were made for pastoral reasons by many people and plans made for the forthcoming year.

The first Covid lockdown hit in March and we stopped in our tracks. At first we were all in shock of some sort. It seems unbelievable that schools closed and so did churches. Had there ever been a time when the church was locked before?

It was time for prayer and for thinking ‘outside the box’. Worship went on line and many people became adept at using Zoom. We discovered that attending church in the comfort of our homes had its advantages and some people joined these services who were not regular attendees in ‘normal’ times. Mary Payne posted paper copies of readings, updates and a letter from Philip each week. Phones were vital for keeping in touch with one another but we all missed being able to actually get together.

Our community leapt into action with offers of help with shopping, collecting prescriptions and anything else required. New friendships were made and sharing worship with the other parishes within the benefice helped us to get to know our bigger church family.

By the Summer Covid infections had reduced sufficiently for lockdown regulations to lift somewhat and physical church services started again on a smaller scale than before. Rules still forbade singing and social distancing meant spacing everyone out, people having to book a place in advance and masks being worn. At least the Church was open for private prayer on Sunday afternoons.

Our shared Rogation service, walk and tea shared with the other parishes was just one of the many events cancelled but Harvest Festival had to be celebrated somehow. It was not easy to find our way through rules and regulations but eventually a Drive-In Harvest Festival took place on a meadow at Stonham Aspal with music provided by David Tydeman’s band from a trailer. Amplification enabled the sound to be heard in individual cars and with them parked at suitable distance the congregation could join in and sing inside their cars.

As winter approached infections went up again and planning Christmas was the next challenge. We delivered ‘Christingle kits’ in bags to families so that they could watch the Christingle service on Zoom and build their own Christingle; assuming the sweets hadn’t been eaten beforehand.

We joined in the benefice Drive-In Carol Service, with the band again, at Gosbeck. Brave volunteers coped with traffic although it was very cold.

We hosted a service for the ‘Longest Night’ especially for those for whom Christmas was being a difficult time for whatever reason, both in Church and on Zoom. Regulations changed at the last minute so that many families were prevented from meeting together. There were no ‘Carols on the Green’ or ‘Carols by Candlelight’ in our church. However, on Christmas morning there was one Communion service for the benefice and it was our turn to host that so at least we decorated the Church.

2020 was a year unlike any other so we went into 2021 praying for better things.

**Frankie Wicks**

## **ST MARY’S BELLS REPORT**

No ringing.

Taylor’s Belfounders were able to return in the summer and refit six repaired clappers which were badly worn.

We look forward to ringing again when permitted.

## DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Deanery Synod met twice during 2020, once in January as the final meeting of the Bosmere Synod. As at 1 October 2020, the Bosmere and Stowmarket Deaneries were formally merged under a Bishops Mission Order to form the new The Gipping Valley Deanery with Revd Diane Williams as the Rural Dean. Due to the pandemic, the first meeting of the new Deanery Synod was held via Zoom in October. Once physical meetings can recommence, it is expected that meetings of the enlarged Deanery will be held in Stowmarket.

As usual, the business of the Synod was preceded on each occasion by a presentation on a subject of interest.

- In January this was given by Richard Stainer, the World Development Adviser for the Diocese. He gave a very interesting and thought-provoking talk about his recent trip to Ethiopia with Christian Aid. Richard spoke about the problems the country is facing as a result of climate change and how due to the changing weather patterns, they no longer know the best time to plant crops. Richard encouraged us all to think about what we can do to care for God's creation. Richard said that he was willing to speak on behalf of Christian Aid to churches and other groups.
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- In October, Joe Hawes spoke on his work as Dean of the Cathedral and the work they carry out in support of the parishes in the Diocese: the focus for major celebrations and acts of remembrance; a place of pilgrimage, hosting major concerts, art exhibitions, drama and recitals, a place of retreat; resourcing music and liturgy; providing lifelong learning opportunities; resourcing children and young people's work; resourcing pastoral care best practice; providing Sunday Cover in parishes; providing a listening ear for clergy.

As Deanery Organiser for Bosmere, (including after the merger) John continued to report on financial shortfalls for the Deanery and Diocese.

There were updates from the Diocesan and General Synods.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

In 2020 we incurred a deficit of £1,310 on our Unrestricted Funds, as a result of the wholly exceptional conditions caused by the national lockdown. Hardly any services were held between mid-March and the end of the year, leading to a fall of £2,000 in collections.

Coffee and Cake, parish room lettings and fee income were similarly affected by the lockdown.

Thankfully, nearly all of our income comes through planned giving, by bank standing order and the Parish Giving Scheme. Thanks to our generous and ever-supportive donors this income has continued unabated through the year and indeed was boosted by a one-off donation late in the year.

Collections for charities could not take place for most of 2020, with the result that we were able to raise only £1,072, far below the levels that we have achieved in recent years. At the beginning of 2021 we have set up a Give a Little account which enables donors to give online with their credit or debit card. .

What does the future hold? We are hoping to see a gradual resumption of normal activities in the coming months, but if this has to be postponed I am confident that, with your support, we will balance the books while continuing to make our Parish Share payments to the Diocese.

I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has again been so generous, supporting both our charity collections and the church's running costs, thus making the Treasurer's job easy and free from anxiety.

## **Report for Annual Parish Meeting – Web Site**

I took over from Chris Hamilton as the WebEditor in November 2020. This coincided with a decision to develop a new website to be designed and hosted by Suffolk Cloud who have worked with a number of other Parish Councils in Suffolk.

The new web site went live in February 2021 and has been completely refreshed and has a new design which should promote accessibility and ease of access and can be used with screen readers.

Visitors to the site should find it easy to navigate with the home page offering quick access to information about the Parish Council, St Mary's Church, the Local Community and Earl Stonham Village Hall as well as links to key pages and documents for download. There are also a number of menu buttons at the top of the page that will take visitors to specific information which may be of interest, including a What's On Page which contains dates of forthcoming events.

The content (including photography galleries) from the previous web site has been archived.

Suffolk Cloud set up Google Analytics for us to provide us with a range of web site data, for example, in the last 90 days:

- The % of users accessing the web site by device – Desktop (56.2%), Tablet (11.4%) and mobile (32.5%)
- There have been 1,113 pageviews with the most popular pages
  - Home Page (282)
  - The Recorder (50)
  - Parish Council (48)
  - Parish Councils Meeting dates (46)
  - Business Directory (39)
- The majority of visits to the site take place between the hours of 07.00 and 20.00 and are fairly evenly spread across the week.
- 80% of visitors are from the UK, but 11% are from China, 6% from the USA and we have even had 1 user from New Zealand.

Councillor Mark Gillett

28 April 2021