

MONKS ELEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Monks Eleigh Village Hall at 8.00pm
on Monday 25th April 2024

Present:

Cllrs– Alan Braithwaite Chairman, Angela Forrest, James Hodges, and Rupert Perry
District Cllr Bryn Hurren

In Attendance:

Mrs L Rogers - Clerk
26 members of the public attended

1/24 Apologies

Clare Symes, Carl Mudge, Elaine Thom, Diana Reynolds, Alan Line, Patti Derry, Simon and Jan Kelsal

2/24 Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 15th March 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and were duly signed.

3/24 County Councillor Robert Lindsay - report

John Philips and the 112 bus - I was saddened last week to learn of the death of this dynamic man, the founder of GoStart bus. He and GoStart stepped into the breach when the county pulled the plug on the 112 service between Sudbury and Bildeston via Monks Eleigh. His two lieutenants Peter Finch and David Martin have said they aim to keep the community bus service going. Mill Lane - I was told earlier this month that after many months of repeated asks, work has been ordered to repair the damaged culvert on Mill Lane. Work I am now told is due to complete tomorrow ie 26th April. Lower speeds - Much of my year was taken up with chasing lower speed limits for a number of communities. Bildeston now has its 20mph limit, although final works are scheduled for the middle of next month. Lavenham's 20mph scheme has been designed and is now in formal consultation. A 40mph limit for the A1141 at Semer and Kersey is being designed. I hope the speed indicator signs for Monks Eleigh are proving their worth. Proposal to make it easier to get lower speeds - In July, I, with the backing of my political group, proposed a motion to make it easier for communities to lower speed limits on rural roads where the safe speed for driving is clearly lower than the current National Speed Limit. The motion suggested that on these roads, where average speeds are already below 60mph, a lower speed limit than 60mph would encourage many more drivers to slow to a more appropriate, safer speed, thereby reducing accidents and making roads safer for all users. This motion was voted down by the Conservative administration. Benefits better signposted - My group did pass one motion successfully during the year in May 2024, which was for the council to work with its partners to better signpost members of the public to benefits they may be entitled to. This motion was raised as a result of reports that over £15bn of means tested benefits are going unclaimed because people were not always aware of the support they could access to help them. Buses – an investment strategy and priority list needed - I was pleased that Monks Eleigh's suggestion of a demand responsive Digibus got some funding in the recent round. It was a pity that the council chose to reject the submission from Bildeston, Finborough and Hitcham, for a daily route between Hadleigh and Stowmarket during commuter hours. I suspect they simply did not have enough in the grant pot for such a scheme. I will continue to push for the need for a daily route to the mainline station at Stowmarket, from the train-

less town of Hadleigh. Having a goal written into a strategy will make it more likely that the county will win competitive bids for bus cash in the future. I hope something may come of the Digibus scheme for demand responsive transport. Pension committee - I sit on the pension committee at the county council, the value of the fund has risen from 3.2billion to £4billion in the year. I have been pushing to clean up investments and remove fossil fuel investments from our holdings. This has been partially done with something like 25% of the fund in a "carbon aware" fund. The committee also two months ago, for the first time, set a target for reaching net zero with its investments, which was "by 2050 or earlier"

Budget -In February 2024, the Council's budget for 2024/25 was voted in. The Conservative budget proposed an increase in council tax of the maximum 4.99%,

Council services have faced another year of spiralling demand and additional cost pressures, and the council's administration have had to draw £16m from council reserves to balance their budget. Special Needs failure and remedy - Suffolk County Council and its NHS partners who provide SEND (special educational needs) failed their inspection in November 2023.

The inspection found 'widespread and/or systematic failings' in the service. As a result of the inspection, the two Cabinet Members for children's services and education at the council quit their roles, and new cabinet members have been appointed to these roles. A new full time and permanent Director for Children's Services (DCS) has also recently been appointed, who will start at the council in July. Suffolk Devolution Deal -After much talk of devolution in the last few years, it looks like this may now happen in Suffolk. The county council will have a directly elected leader – elected by the public next year rather than by councillors. In return there will be a £16m annual investment fund for economic growth, a £5.8m lump sum to regenerate brownfield sites across the county, and a £3m one off investment in retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient. This is small beer in comparison with the council's £750m annual budget. Real decision making powers being handed over from Government at this stage are very hard to find. There is a consultation being held about the deal right now, and you can find out more about it and fill out the survey here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

4/24 District Councillor Bryn Hurren

This has been a pivotal year for all local authorities, whether they be District, County or Unitary. Lack of funding from national government, combined with a huge increase in prices of all commodities, including the rate of borrowing, has hit councils and constituents very hard. As a small District Council, we like others have been hit with increased costs along with increased demands for our services due to the cost-of-living crisis, big rises in mortgage rates and almost double the rate of tenants and homeowners declaring themselves homeless. Through and despite of all this, we have set a balanced budget for year 24/25 but to achieve this, we have had to make some cuts to services, leave vacancies open, edge charges up a little, look at making Babergh and Mid Suffolk one sovereign council, instead of two councils working together, and look seriously at making very modest charges for parking cars in our towns. While we run all our 20 odd car parks for the benefit of all and to support our high streets at the modest sum of £140,000, the horrendous £300,000 in business rates levied upon them and us by the national government is the straw that has broken the camels back and is a disgrace. We have always regarded our car parks as a tool to support and enhance our High Streets and it is regrettable that the national government use them as a tool to impose upon us more stealth taxes. Feel free to lobby your local MP or government minister if you feel as strongly about this as I do. Although BDC collect all of the council tax as a statutory duty, we only keep just under 9% to run the District Council, with PCC now

coming in at around 12%, County at approx. 77% and towns, villages and boroughs at around 2%. Babergh's share equates to £188.00 per year on a Band D property, £3.50 a week and excellent value for all we achieve for all our residents. As a well-run Local Council BDC has always entered the National Council awards scheme in various categories including the biggest one, which is National Council of the year award. We are past winners of a digital tree mapping scheme along with top awards for our CIL management and various housing awards and we have had several commended gongs for the way we perform and run BDC. This year we were awarded the honour for being simply the best council across the whole of the UK outright. A fabulous achievement and a tribute to the coalition of political groups who work together to run the council and to all of our officers and staff who despite the pressure of the lockdown years and even worse now, continue to give sterling service to our residents. The remarks given by the judging panel included praise for the way our 2 councils are run together by one team of staff, the solar panel scheme, fitted to our council house roofs that provides cheaper power for our residents as well as £350.00 in feed in tariffs per year, as a financial benefit, our initiative in changing our fleet of vehicles to HVO, fitting air source heat pumps to our leisure centres and our recycling initiatives. To name but a few. The CIL levy continues to fund many community projects across our area and now it has been widely accepted by most developers, works well and delivers much needed infrastructure projects across our District, we currently have just in excess of £16 m in a ring-fenced budget to award to our villages and communities across the joint Districts.

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Matters local to Monks Eleigh.

I have been thrilled to be part of the CIL applications for funding for our new playground and also the Community shop with its much needed all new fridge and freezer additions. Let's hope the cost of running these appliances goes down as much as the noise level. Also pleased that with my locality budget I was able to help fund some much needed fencing along with monies for a hedge trimmer that is able to be used throughout the village on vital jobs (such as finding village signs amongst the undergrowth). I think that it is good that the neighbourhood planning team headed up by James has made such good progress with the people and places plan, which will be presented to planners and become part of the planning process. I am pleased that the 112 bus service continues to run two days a week and provides such a vital lifeline and Link as part of our transport network. Regrettably my friend John Phillips who started and continued to promote Community Transport through GoStart, very sadly passed away last week. On planning I have tried to advise and oversee the many planning applications that come before us and unlike last year I have largely agreed to all that has come before us. The Old School Site at Church Fields.

5/24 Chairman of the Parish Council - Alan Braithwaite

First may I express the thanks of the Parish Council for the support and constructive engagement of our County and District Councillors. Robert and Bryn give us all the support and direction that they can and we appreciate that backing.

Second may I thank my fellow councillors and our wonderful clerk, Lucinda, for their work. It has meant that the role of chair, that was placed on me has not been too onerous.

This time last year, we were going into an election only to discover that that there had been just one nomination for Parish Councillor – we have up to 7 positions. It goes without saying that one councillor is insufficient and in that situation Babergh would have taken control.

That was clearly not a good option. We were offered another election as a matter of normal

process. Angela, Rupert and I were persuaded to put our names forward along with James, There being no other nominations, we were duly 'elected' without a vote in June. The council is quorate and has functioned professionally, effectively and cordially. Thanks again to Lucinda who guides us expertly and with great good humour. However, we have three vacancies and will welcome the opportunity to co-opt additional councillors. Please give this serious consideration – you will be appreciated. It is not especially onerous and, as you will hear, we have the matter of the village plan that will need input – the wider the better. There should be people in the village with plenty of time as the stats show that the average age of Monks Eleigh residents has gone from 39 at the 2011 census to 52 in 2021. Yes we are all getting older – 36% of the Monks Eleigh population is over 65. That is c.180 people – there are lots of skills and experience out there that can benefit the village. I thought I would divide my comments into four areas: Achievements, Disappointments, Finances and Future Plans.

Achievements:

Looking back on my recent period as a Parish Councillor and the scope of competence and control available to the council, so beyond just the last year, there have been some achievements.

1. Using a CIL grant, the play equipment here on the recreation ground has been replaced, including the Zip wire. This was a big project, initiated by Angela and Lucinda, and is much appreciated.
2. The streetlights have been replaced with LED fittings and this has dramatically reduced our electricity bill. When we started considering this, the cost was in excess of £15,000 and beyond our budget. Fortunately, costs came down and the final investment has been less than £3,000 with a pay off in 3 to 4 years.
3. The footbridge by Scripps Cross has been re-built – thanks to a locality budget.
4. Grass cutting is being well executed.
5. The village has been cohesive in the face of a difficult planning application and that process has returned the consensus result, proterm.
6. The Parish Council Facebook page seems to work well and be appreciated.
7. We have been able to provide financial support to the Shop, the Village Hall, the Church for churchyard maintenance, the 112 Bus and other local causes including the Bildeston Food Bank which supports a few families in Monks Eleigh.

Disappointments

There are some disappointments, that are worth noting. Some of these we have no power to fix, other than to lobby and press.

1. The 17 new houses on the old school site remain unoccupied and deteriorating – which is a social disgrace. The work of the administrator to maximise the assets for the creditors is completely opaque, albeit there should be a public interest. We have recorded our concern but to no avail. It is desperately disappointing and an eyesore.¹
2. There is evidence of vandalism to the new play equipment – just so unnecessary. CCTV is now installed.

¹ At the meeting, our District Councillor, Bryn Hurren, indicated there may finally be some developments in this situation.

3. The state of the roads and kerbs in the village is dreadful following the appalling rainfall over the winter. It somehow makes the village less appealing – but maybe with a bit of warmth and sunshine that mood will change. There are some areas where we are planning to mobilise, but overall there is little that we can do other than whinge. SCC is overwhelmed and nearly bankrupt. At least the work to repair the culvert in Mill Lane has started – that is something to cheer!

Finances

The village has cash reserves beyond those that are operationally prudent, so we have been setting deficit budgets. The outcome for last year was a deficit of c. £3,000 against a plan of minus £7,000. Lucinda has been complemented on the financial control and budgeting by our external auditors.

The precept for the current year is £21,500 which is an increase of 2% on our previous budget but a 5% increase to parishioners due to an error in the calculation last year, as BDC anticipated the 17 new houses coming on stream. This budget anticipates a deficit of £4,000, which we should undershoot just a bit.

The planned breakdown of our expenditure is as follows:

- 45% Administration including our clerk, insurances, subscriptions, training, website etc. This effort is about smoothing the wheels and managing relationships including getting grants.
- 20% Environment including grass cutting, streetlights, dog poo bins and the like.
- 30% Local benefits including to the Shop, Village Hall, Church, Bus and others.
- 5% Contingency.

This does change over time as priorities change. I hope you will agree that we operate professional control. It is a statutory obligation that our full income and expenditure, with transactional detail, is available to parishioners for inspection. We will be making those arrangements shortly and Lucinda will advise.

Future Plans

There are 3 areas that are priorities for the coming year.

1. Improving the causeway – the causeway footpath has been flooded repeatedly over recent months and becomes overgrown in the summer. The plan is to install a Boardwalk so that it is passable at all times and to improve the ease of maintenance at the same time. This will require permissions from SCC and a CIL grant. We are making progress with this plan and hope that this can happen in the course of the year.
2. Completing the village plan – the council is clear that we need our version of the new format Village Plan Lite as a platform to address future planning applications and other aspects of policy. James is leading on this and it is a separate item on this agenda.
3. The Bus Project – as part of a wider call for Bus Service Improvement Projects we submitted a proposal for a digital on demand service to cover the Brett Valley. Surprisingly we have been allocated some funding and yours truly has found himself leading this initiative. At present we have the 112 bus on a Tuesday and Thursday, just to Sudbury. It is good as far as it goes but not a great service for our aging

population. The big idea is to provide connectivity to Hadleigh, Stowmarket, Lavenham and Sudbury with an on-demand service using an App or phone booking. The scope is widening to include the possibility to reach Stowmarket. We are in the research stage and combining with other villages. I cannot promise that it will prove viable and be implemented; so called DDRT is the flavour of the month in bus circles – so it has interesting potential.

This report will be available on the Facebook page and the website.

6/24–People and Place Plan – Village Survey

The parish council have agreed to carry out a People and Place Plan to ascertain what is important to people living in the village. This will begin with a short survey delivered to every house during May. This will ask for people to say what the village lacks and what makes it special to live here. We hope to find out the sense of what people feel about the village. When the survey is complete and the collated, we will feedback the results and decide the next step. It will help to establish a relationship with Babergh's Planning team. We are hoping that many people will respond as it gives people in the village a voice on planning matters. Each house will have one form with opportunity for each person to record their views.

7/24 Speedwatch/SID - Chris Eames

The councillors congratulated him and thanked him for his work in organising the speedwatch team.

SID - Speed Indicating Device - Summary table

	2018/19 Average	2020 Average	2021 Average	2022 Average	Q4 2023	2023 Average
Average Speed	29.4 mph	29.8 mph	28.9 mph	28.8 mph	28.1 mph	28.4 mph
85 % percentile	34.4 mph	35.2 mph	33.8 mph	33.8 mph	32.9 mph	33.2 mph
% Speeders from Lavenham	14.2 %	17.4 %	12.9 %	11.7 %	7.1 %	8.0 %
% Speeders from the East	8.2 %	11.2 %	5.9 %	5.7 %	4.2 %	4.9 %
Average Vehicles per day in one direction	1,852	1,106	1,774	1,673	1,837	1,855

Note: A speeder is someone travelling at 35 mph or more

- Speeds have slightly reduced over 4 years
- New SID, belonging exclusively to Monks Eleigh, delivered in March 2023

CSW - Community Speed Watch (see graph on following page)

- 50 x 1 hour sessions carried out in 2023
- 10,527 vehicles monitored in 2023 (i.e. number of drivers reminded of the speed limit)
- Average speeders in 2023 = 2.9%
- Overall Average speeders in 2019-2023 = 2.6 %

- No lorries caught speeding
 - 12 qualified volunteers of Monks Eleigh CSW team
- Conclusion:
- SID indicates more speeders than CSW, so CSW does change behaviour!

8/24 Table Tennis – Brent Eleigh Spinners - Claire Symes

We play every Tues evening from 6.30 to 8. Our numbers have been gradually dropping so we are keen to welcome new players. We have four tables available and play singles and doubles. The cost is £2 per session and there are bats to borrow if needed. During the year we organise friendly competitions with a local business. Twice a year we have a social event. The benefits of table tennis are to keep you active, improve balance and coordination and socialise with others. Do come along and try for yourself.

9/24 Carpet Bowls – Diana Swansborough

In the past year we have continued to have a good social group on Monday evenings from 7.30pm until 9.30pm. Improving our carpet bowls skills. We play occasional friendly matches with Boxford and Polstead both at home and away. This year we have purchased very smart polo shirts with our logo on them. At present we have 14 regular members and would welcome anyone who would like to join us for a pleasant evening and gentle exercise. Our fees are £3 per session just to cover the cost of the hall rental.

10/24 Monday Lunch Club – Cllr Angela Forrest

Monday Lunch Club generally takes place on the fourth Monday of the month. It aims to provide a 2 course meal and coffee for an affordable price in our beautiful Village Hall. It is a lunch for the community and I hope that the most important element of the lunch is that people can enjoy meeting each other, have a chat, a reasonable meal and NO WASHING UP. We regularly have between 20 and 27 people but we have a maximum of 30 so do consider joining us if you have not been before, all are welcome.

11/23 Millennium Green – Cllr Patti Derry

The aim of the Millennium Green is to offer an area of tranquillity in the heart of the village for both humans and wildlife to enjoy. Of course this ideal does not just happen by chance. Without careful management by a team of trustees and helpers the green would quickly revert to “jungle” as the blackthorn and bramble hedges would encroach into the open space and the other plants become overwhelmed by invasive and smothering weeds. To this end the green is divided into two parts: the open mowed space left for human use and the other areas including nettles, brambles to encourage and support a wide variety of birds, insects, reptiles and animals. The open grassed area is maintained by a team of volunteers who cut the grass using the MG ride on mower throughout the summer months. This area creates a lovely safe place within the village to come for a picnic with your children and grandchildren. One of the main concerns for the trustees is the health and safety of the area. To this end professional advice is taken on their management of the trees. In particular the trustees keep a watchful eye for signs of virulent diseases including ash die back and unsafe branches etc and take immediate action if required. Dogs on leads are allowed on the Millennium Green. The Trustees rely on the dog owners acting in a responsible manner in all matters relating to dog safety in a public space. A dog bin is provided for the proper disposal of dog waste once it has been picked up as we are all aware that dog faeces can cause a range of serious illnesses in humans, especially young children. Finally a big thank you must be given to the trustees for their commitment of time, energy and expertise to the green and also to the volunteers who turn up to lend a hand

when work parties are required . The average age of the Trustees at the October clean up was 76 so you can see we are really in need of new younger helpers. If you would like to lend a hand just keep an eye on the notice boards where work party days are advertised or volunteer to become a trustee of this lovely village asset

12/24 Poetry Club – David Mills

We meet just once a month, as we have always done
Since our first meeting five long years ago.
We meet to read out words, how strange!
Just read out words, how curious!
Words, what are they? What are words?
They're only air when spoken,
Strange living sounds and breathings from the throat.
And on the page they die
And lie as dry as dust
And yet live on until the worm invades
Or the paper rots.
Words in any language are a gift,
Man's greatest mystery.
They're power and love.
The infinitely various and subtle sounds
Of human life itself.
So let words sing and zing
Or let them shout
Or let them moan or murmur
Or whisper sweet nothings.
They are like music,
Sometimes more sound than sense,
But ever magical, strange echoes and reflections
Of the deepest mind within.
We hope to carry on exchanging words in the foreseeable future.

13/24 Knit and Stitch – Jean Gatewood

We continue to meet and enjoy working together. One of our members enjoys quilting and has made many beautiful quilts for each baby in the neo-natal ward at Ipswich hospital. The babies take their quilt home as a memory for the future.

14/24 Whist Club – Angela Forrest

We have a progressive Whist Drive once a month on a Wednesday evening, starting at 7pm and finishing around 9pm. We play 18 hands of whist, having a break for homemade refreshments. If you like playing cards and fancy a night away from the telly, come and join us.

15/24 Film Club – Carl Mudge and Elaine Thom

This season had seven films and the season will start again in September. The last film took place on Sunday and the end of year accounts still need to be done but profits go to the hall as usual.

16/24 Village Shop –Chris Drew

Huge progress in year. On behalf of the shop management commi2ee, I'm pleased to report that very positive progress on various fronts has been made during the course of the year. New chillers Perhaps the most visible of these, which I'm sure all have noticed, is the arrival of the new chillers and freezers. These have been made possible by generous grants received from both Babergh District Council and our very own Parish Council – a huge thank you to both. Apart from the

obvious improvement to the look of the shop, the main immediate benefit has been that they are far more energy efficient than the old machines. Consequently, the saving on our electricity bill is both immediate and substantial. More about this later.

New Till and EPOS System The next big project for improving the running of the business, is to replace the till and the EPOS system that goes with it to manage our stock. This will be put in place in the first half of May, and we expect it to help us greatly streamline the way we handle stock purchasing and management. This, in turn, should allow us to reduce waste and improve the overall viability of the shop. This has been made possible by very generous donations from various individuals and local businesses, so another huge thank you to all of them too. Sales have held steady throughout the year, roughly keeping pace with inflation. It should be said that this is enough to keep us viable, but only just – so we will continue to work on encouraging more people to use the shop.

Finances As Treasurer, I'm delighted to report that the financial situation of the business has really been transformed in the past year. This is partly as a result of the grants and donations mentioned earlier, but also by the fact that the business actually managed to make a surplus last financial year – albeit a small one. And this has continued into the current year.

Electricity In his report to the Parish AGM last year, Alan Line, the chair of the commi2ee, flagged up a number of issues of concern at the time. Not least among these was the prospect of coming to the end of the fixed price electricity supply contract that we had in place at that time. The worry was that this could double (or more) our electricity bills. I am pleased to report that the new more efficient chiller units, combined with a much more modest increase in price than expected, have in resulted in our overall electricity costs remaining much the same as before.

Celebration 20 years A particular highlight of the year has been the fact that the shop reached its 20th anniversary last month. This remarkable achievement was celebrated with a re-enactment of the original opening ceremony all those years ago, followed by a party at The Swan bringing together many of those volunteers responsible for getting the shop up and running in the first place, and keeping it going since.

Volunteers At this time last year, we had only fairly recently taken the difficult decision to try to run the shop without a paid manager. Whilst the absence of this overhead has been the key difference in our new-found viability, it would simply not have been possible without the amazing efforts and support of all our volunteers. As well as our 'front-of-house' volunteers (serving in the shop), special mention should go to the fantastic team of 'back-room' volunteers who have quietly stepped forward to perform all the other functions required to keep the business ticking along, from organising volunteer rotas, to buying and managing stock, to maintaining and cleaning the premises, and so on. Thank you all! I should mention at this point that any new volunteers are always much needed and very welcome! Finally... The fact that the shop exists and has kept going for so long is testament to the depth of goodwill that exists for it in the community. We now look forward with confidence to the next 20 years.

17/24 History Group – John Naylor and John Mills

I am pleased to report another successful season of talks, as usual 6 talks from October 2023 to March this year, with a varied programme including talks on Village signs, the River Stour Navigation, the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and Victorian Oil Lamps. In addition to these it was particularly pleasing to have two talks by locals: one by friend and villager Mike Evans on his deeply fascinating career in the Royal Navy, and another by Christopher Hawkins of nearby Mildenhall on his wonderful family archive, there for us to view with his incredible display of historical items relating to both Mildenhall and the surrounding villages. All 6 meetings were very well attended. Our membership now stands at around 70, and of course we hope members will sign up again for next season's programme which is now prepared and ready. It is also very fitting that a wonderful

old village like ours with such a long and interesting heritage, should have a vibrant History Group, and that is what we hope we are. Just a few other brief points to mention:

Our very efficient and energetic Secretary and Treasurer Jan has completed the enormous task of sorting and cataloguing the Monks Eleigh Village Archive., now safely housed here by courtesy of the Hall trustees: a great achievement on her part ensuring the continued preservation of this important village asset. The village archive now includes no less than five boxes of valuable material about the village generously donated by villager Tim Vince, whose family has played a large part in the early history of the village. One of the best things we did last year was to co-opt John Naylor on to our small committee – John has proved to be a great help when I myself was out of action for quite a while last year. Our friend and neighbour Arthur Grosset has continued to put much interesting material on the Monks Eleigh History website, notably the early 19th century Census Returns, and has also placed many fascinating newspaper cuttings about the village from old local newspapers on Facebook. We now look forward to another good season and to seeing you at our first meeting in October.

18/24 St Peters Church – Mike Birt

Services – the established pattern continues; Sunday services rotate each week to a different church in the five church benefice of Monks Eleigh, which means that a main service takes place almost every fifth week at St Peter's. Other services in the year included the Easter Sunrise service on Easter Sunday morning, a Benefice service to commemorate the coronation of King Charles, a harvest service in the autumn, the Benefice Remembrance Sunday service in November and a Christingle service and the main Christmas Day service, with full congregations during December. We also had a choral Evensong in April and several other evening services during the year.

Children's Work – Four events for children and families were held during 2023; a David and Goliath themed fun activity afternoon in February, followed by an Easter Egg hunt and Easter crafts afternoon. The remaining events were an Exodus and Traveling themed afternoon followed in the winter by a Christmas themed afternoon of crafts and activities, the latter ably assisted by the participation of the Monks Eleigh Knit and Stitch group. All these events took place in the church and thanks go to all the helpers, participants and supporters for this very important area of church and community work.

Fund Raising – The Monks Eleigh Fete and Dog Show took place with great success; thanks to Pat Braithwaite and all on the organising committee for all their hard work. A Brass Band concert was held in the church in October and in November a Jigsaw Fest was held in the village hall. The church was represented at Bridge Barns Christmas Fair in November, with publicity and also to promote the work of the church and the Christmas services and events. The Suffolk Historic Churches Trust Ride and Strid event in September was supported by St Peters with half the sponsorship money being returned by Suffolk Historic Churches Trust to the church to go towards fabric maintenance work. The Lent Lunch for St Peters, held in the village hall, raised money for the East Anglian Sair Ambulance.

Church and Courtyard – the church continues to look beautiful and much admired by visitors and village residents, thanks to the ongoing presence of flowers; the careful weekly cleaning and decorations set out for Easter, the Coronation, Remembrance Sunday and Christmas. The Churchyard has been carefully maintained to a high standard, with new fencing and a gate installed at the rear of the church during the year.

Conclusion – This was a very successful year for the church in terms of services, events and church attendance levels – with a real emphasis on increasing engagement with the village and residents. There were highs and lows in terms of funerals and weddings and a baptism,

all very much part of village and church life and an essential part of the churches ministry and outreach into the community. The continuing and very audible presence of a strong bell ringing team is vital in announcing services and special events and their work is appreciated by many – thanks are due to Paul Haskell and his team. All at St Peters look forward to the coming year with renewed enthusiasm and energy as we seek to maintain and extend the worship, ministry and profile of St Peters within the village and Monks Eleigh Benefice communities. We are looking for more people to come and join us on the management team of the church – the parochial Church Council – we have a number of vacancies on our strength and to keep the church going we need people to help with the administration and running of the church in year; 4 meetings a year plus an annual meeting are the main commitments and unless we can maintain a healthy level of PCC members the work and continuing numbers keep a full team going the church will suffer in terms of its future ministry, worship, profile within the village and its longer term future. Please join us!!

19/24 Village Hall – Patti Derry

This year has been another extremely successful year for the village hall thanks in no small part to the response from village residents as well as those from further afield in booking and using the hall.

The hall facilities have been fully used and some part of the building is booked at some point every weekday throughout the day and evenings for activities covering a wide range of interests and offering opportunities for sport, culture, hobbies, private study, and social interaction to all sections of our small community. The carpark itself has also been rented on several occasions offering parking for activities not using the village hall including walking groups and church events. Weekend bookings are growing and we have seen bookings for parties, weddings, christenings, baby showers and sadly wakes increase over the course of the year. We are also pleased to welcome several new groups as regular users of the hall. The hall has also become home for Monks Eleigh groups including the very popular lunch club, history club, flicks-in-the-sticks, poetry club, table tennis club, whist club, knit and stitch and bowls club which all continue to thrive. All of these activities are run and managed by village residents and we thank them for their support, enthusiasm, hard work and commitment to our hall. The monthly programme is advertised on the village hall web site, on the notice boards at the shop and at the Village Hall. This programme gives information of when the hall is booked thus giving information on when it is available for hire.

The Commercial weekly users which include Pilates and Yoga sessions attract both users from the village and those from further afield, as do Suffolk Stitchers and the East Anglian Gardening Group. We thank them for choosing to use our facilities as a venue for their classes. The meeting room is used regularly for meetings of the Village Hall Committee, The Millennium Green Trustees, The Parish Council, and The Church. The hall will now always be used as the village polling station for any future elections.

Currently there are 9 trustees overseeing the management, operation and smooth running of the hall. These include elected trustees and trustees nominated by the village organisations who use the hall in line with our constitution. All trustees are appointed at the Annual General Meeting. On behalf of the village community, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the trustees for their hard work in making Monks Eleigh village hall a venue to be proud of. Financially, the hall is in a good place thanks to the high volume of lettings, and the grant we receive annually from the Parish Council. Out thanks go to these bodies for this generous support. The hall's solar panels help offset some of the electricity cost so that once all running and upkeep costs have been made any surplus funds can be ploughed back into the

improvement and extension of facilities at the hall. This year has seen the replacement of the shutters in both the kitchen and bar as the original ones were difficult for users to operate. The new electric shutters have made life much easier for all. We are also continually upgrading glass ware in the bar and equipment in the kitchen. By increasing or upgrading facilities we aim to increase the hall's "letability" thereby bringing more opportunities to the village to meet a wider range of needs of our local community.

Finally, our thanks go to all the friends of the trustees who work so hard to contribute to the success of the hall, but especially to the residents and friends of Monks Eleigh who support all of the events that go on. Support of these activities ensure the continued viability of the hall and endorse the important role the hall plays in promoting the wellbeing of the residents of our village. Our final thanks go to the hall cleaner Julie Goodchild who works so hard to ensure the hall is clean and ready for every group to use.

20/24 Village Person of The Year

Cllr Braitwaite announced the Community Award is awarded to Mike and Sue Birt for their outstanding contribution to the village and thanked him for their support and help to the village.

21/24 Public Forum

The parish council agreed to investigate installing lighting along the path at the top of Church Hill

The Chair thanked all for attending especially those who had put together and delivered presentations to the meeting.

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

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