

## **MONKS ELEIGH PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Monks Eleigh Village Hall at 7.30pm  
on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026

### **Present:**

CLLrs– Alan Braithwaite Chairman and Sarah Bennett  
County Councillor Robert Lindsay and District Cllr Bryn Hurren

### **In Attendance:**

Mrs L Rogers - Clerk  
14 members of the public attended

### **1/26 Apologies**

Rupert Perry, Angela Forrest, James Hodges, Clare Symes, Carl Mudge, Elaine Thom, Diana Reynolds, Alan Line, Patti Derry, John Naylor, Mike Evans, Penny and Peter Jones

### **2/26 Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and were duly signed.

### **3/26 County Councillor Robert Lindsay**

Local Government Reorganisation and elections Elections are currently underway for county councillors to serve two years before the county council is dissolved and a new three-unitary council structure put in its place. I am standing for re-election here, despite the two year limit to office. The Government decided last year that councils are too small and has forced councils to come up with plans to merge together to make themselves larger. Now the Government has chosen to go with the three unitaries proposal for Suffolk from the county's five district councils rather than the one unitary option proposed by Suffolk County Conservatives. The services currently provided by Suffolk County will need to be decentralised to three new unitaries by May 2028. The districts have a carefully thought out business plan as to how this decentralisation might work. The county does not. The county's costs of adult and children's social care have been soaring. The districts believe they have identified a way to make many of these services work more effectively and more cheaply, for example by bringing social workers together with GPs and housing staff and community groups in local neighbourhood teams. So whatever the political colour of the new county administration after May 7, that administration and its officers would be well advised to treat the next two years as an opportunity to work with the districts to try to bring about these proposals in advance of the dissolution of Suffolk County Council in May 2028. Non co-operation with the districts would be irresponsible and against the interests of residents of Suffolk who need functioning councils come 2028.

### **26, 27, 28 - three years, three elections**

Elections of "shadow" unitary councillors are scheduled to take place May 2028, a year after the current county council elections. Those elected will not actually be representing residents until the unitaries are legally created with full staff in May 2028. Alongside this enforced disruption, the Government has also insisted on creating the office of a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor, elected by all the voters in the two counties. The Government has delayed its plans for that election by two years to May 2028.

Footway for Monks Eleigh High Street

I was pleased to help arrange a meeting with Highways officers and your chairman to examine the feasibility of this project. Highways will need to approve any contactors on the project, but otherwise it does seem to meet with their conditional approval. I hope this project can proceed further after the May 7th County elections.

#### Five month closure Bildeston High Street

I have asked Highways network assurance to discuss with me and local parish council chairs what can be done to mitigate the use of rat runs – particularly through the villages of Wattisham and Kettlebaston –with use of temporary weight restrictions and/or speed limits. So far I have been told that they are discussing this possibility with Anglian Water. The replacement of the water main on Bildeston High Street will mean its closure of different stretches over the five months between start in mid June to end in mid November. The surgery will still be accessible by car throughout, from one direction or another at any one time. And all businesses will be open to pedestrian access. I have asked but Konect have not yet told me what they will do about the 51 bus route during this closure, because the necessary diversions will mess up the timetable.

#### 20mph limits

In July I seconded a motion from my political group (Green, LibDem and independent) to make it easier for communities to obtain lower speed limits. This was voted down by the Conservative administration but in January this year they came up with proposals meant to simplify the process for obtaining 20mph (but not other speed limits). From now on, any application for a new 20mph limit in an area where recorded average traffic speeds are 28mph and under is likely to be approved by the council. The local county councillor must also be in favour of the change, and there should be majority support from residents. However the county is still not providing any funding for the changes, which must cover the costs of the official TRO consultation process.

#### Bus 51 between Hadleigh and Stowmarket

This service, six daily, five days a week, started this week, and is the result of an application for bus funding made by three parish councils in my division two years ago. Since then £27m is available to Suffolk for new bus routes over the next three years and parish councils are being asked to bid again for services they want

#### Council Motions

At council meetings throughout the year, my group passed two motions successfully, one banning giving pets as prizes on council owned land and another signposting victims of sexual harm and exploitation, following the Epstein files revelations, to allow them to access local advice and support via Ipswich charity Survivors in Transition. Three motions were rejected by the Conservative majority at the council. These were a proposal that SCC gain accreditation as a council of sanctuary to welcome refugees and displaced people, a call for a review of speed limit procedures to make it easier to obtain lower speeds, and a proposal that the council recognise the rights of rivers in Suffolk, including to be protected from pollution.

#### Libraries Brought Back in House

Following last year's report, the county's library service was brought back in-house at Suffolk County Council from 1 June 2025. A recent scrutiny meeting heard that front line staffing and volunteering numbers remain the same, with most library users stating when surveyed that they had not noticed a difference in the service provided

#### Council Budget 2026-27

In February 2026, the council set out and voted on its budget for the coming financial year, including its intention to take the maximum 4.99% increase in council tax. Even raising council tax to the maximum, it will still have a budget 'gap' of £5.9m this year which it will have to fund from council reserves.

#### Climate emergency Zero carbon Financial Savings

In January 2026, the annual Net Zero Carbon Budget report was brought to Cabinet to assess the progress of the council towards its carbon reduction goals. The work has so far provided £4.8m of savings by reducing electricity and gas use, which has been crucial for the council's financial survival. Savings include changes to heating controls in Endeavour House in January and February 2025 where gas use was reduced by over 42% without impacting electricity use, reducing energy costs for the council by £30k each year, and a car park solar array established at Beacon House with batteries to capture excess power for use in the building, this is expected to save more than £50k a year.

#### Suffolk Roads Rated Red by UK Government

As you may have seen in the press, the government recently released RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings each county based on how effectively they use the government's highways maintenance funding and the condition of their roads. Suffolk's road maintenance expenditure was rated as Red, the worst category, implying it did not spend as much as it could have done on maintaining the roads. Suffolk County Council's administration, however, has pointed out that the condition of the roads is rated amber and claimed that the Red rating on expenditure is an error because DfT should have included £10m of funding that the county brought forward from a later financial year than the one assessed.

#### **4/26 District Councillor Bryn Hurren**

Firstly to tell you that this year has been dominated by LGR (local government re-organisation) This was stated as a government intent in late 2024 and has remained on the agenda ever since that time and although the Mayoral election for an area across all of Norfolk and Suffolk has been put back 2 years, everything else remains on track for unitary elections in 2028, with a 3 council set up for Suffolk along with Norfolk. This means that council will do everything that is currently carried out by BaberghMidSuffolk along with the current Suffolk County Council. This proposal was put forward by the combined efforts of the 5 districts and boroughs across Suffolk due to worries of 1 council being too large and remote to do a proper job. While the decision has been largely welcomed by the good people of Suffolk, council leader Mathew Hicks did not take it well and issued a pitiful statement, along with a withering speech. For us the district council, we have once again set a balanced budget with a modest tax increase of 2.9%, this brings the cost of Babergh up to just over £4.00 a week which I feel is very good value indeed for all we do, this includes planning to a set prescribed standard, heritage and environmental work to ensure that we and our buildings are kept safe and up to a required standard, without ever allowing a complete free for all. Moving seamlessly on to waste collection, this has now moved on to a highly technical operation with recycling becoming a vital part of this. This is now moving on again with changes to what we collect and its frequency, glass at kerbside will now be an option along with some widening of options for more recycling and much less in the black bin. The days of a tin bin on the shoulders of the operative tipping it into an open lorry and then clattering onto the street are truly over. A good time to remind you that in BaberghMidSuffolk, no kerbside waste goes to landfill, all goes to the Power from Waste facility to make electricity for the national grid. I will just touch on housing, our target

numbers remain at 775 per annum for Babergh but for how long I am unable to say, the demand for housing generally is slowing but the need for first time housing and downsizing is increasing quite dramatically. Maybe with costs of raw materials and labour increasing and housing not selling, this might be a good chance to actually build something that is actually needed most. One of the things that we are doing currently is to organise the County Council elections for probably the last time. We should be doing the elections for the unitary shadow cabinet and PC next year but much can change. Ask me in 12 months.

### **5/26 Chairman of the Parish Council - Alan Braithwaite**

This meeting is a statutory obligation on the Parish Council. It is our duty to report to you on how we spend the (on average and approximately) £7.50 per month per household that it costs you. It also a very useful opportunity to look back on how we have done versus what we said would try and do. But before I do that there are some important points to make in a more general framework of local government. In May we have elections to the County Council. Notices have been posted, the hall is booked for polling, and campaigning is in full swing. This election is important as it will be the last for Suffolk County Council in its current form as the Government has decided to put in place single unitary councils for Suffolk replacing the two-tier system of county and district. So, the election of our county councillors is a transition measure and in a 3 to 4 year period both our county and district councillors' wards will be obsolete. The government has opted to put in place 3 Unitary Councils for Suffolk: East, West and North. Monks Eleigh will fall just in the West Suffolk Council. I personally have attended meetings and studied the documentation. It is a huge change with no compelling business case; at least that is my opinion! The government has clearly opted for the 3-solution as One-Suffolk would be so huge and unmanageable. And, based on the old SCC it would not start with a great reputation for customer service! I am hoping that the old and largely excellent Babergh Mid Suffolk organisation will be a solid foundation for our future experience. But this is a moment of jeopardy. So, in that context, we must thank both Robert Lindsay, our county councillor and Bryn Hurren, our district councillor for their calm care and attention. Last year I reported: "Both make themselves readily available to give advice and support on issues we encounter and in our relationships with their respective tiers of government." The same stands true this year. I must also express my personal thanks to my fellow councillors who have served the village diligently and are a pleasure to work with. There are currently 5 of us and we are actively looking for a further 2 to meet the full compliment. We have advertised and are hopeful of garnering at least one addition. Finally, in the thanks section, I want to recognise and pay tribute to Lucinda, our wonderful clerk, who has kept the whole council on the straight and narrow with great efficiency. Sadly, she told me before Easter that she wishes to stand down in order to reduce her work commitment and migrate to 'retirement'. As you will hear we have achieved a lot under her guidance with more to come and I personally will miss her. The recruitment for her role has started and I am pleased to report that there is interest. She will take us through the meeting in May before stepping away. So this is a big thank you to Lucinda and I hope these flowers go some way to showing our thanks and respect. This year I want to divide my comments into 3 areas: Finances, Achievements, and Project Plans.

#### **Finances**

The new houses in Northcote Drive are now embedded in the council tax system and that additional housing increases our tax base by 3.3% and has enabled the council to make no

increase in the rate of tax for a Band D property. The council set the 26/27 precept in January and the following is an overview of the situation considered by the council.

**Income:**

- The precept was £22,300
- We received additional income in the form of CIL and Grants of £37,950
- And we had VAT rebates of £7,800 – we would normally expect this to be c.£1,000 so the uplift is due to the project work we have done.
- Our total income was therefore £64,000 including some minor sundries
- Our budget, excluding projects, was £25,793 so there was a planned deficit of c. £2,500 which was well covered by the VAT refunds.

**Expenditure**

- Our actual expenditure with projections to the year-end included is projected to be £25,400 – in line with budget. Giving us a surplus of c. £5,000 when the VAT rebate is factored in.
- We have spent money on projects during the year as follows:

○ Church walk path	£9,588
○ Church walk lights	£23,676
○ Recreation Ground fence replacement	£2,829
○ Defibrillator replacement	£2,200
○ In total	£38,293
- We have a strong cash position as a result of CIL and grant receipts and that has allowed us to spend.
- Our cash position this month before the first instalment of the precept was in total c. £35,000
- This will be sufficient to cover some of the projects we have in hand but not all. We will be seeking to secure grants as we bring those initiatives forward.

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. I hope you will agree that we operate professional control.

**Achievements:**

The normal business of the council carried on without any remarkable events as you can see from the balancing of the budget.

- Grass was mowed
- Bins were emptied
- Play equipment was maintained
- Streetlights were lit
- Local organisations were supported, including the church, shop, food bank, village hall and 112 bus service
- Planning matters were considered and commented
- Litter was picked

- Communications via the Facebook page continues to be appreciated
- The council passed audit and was regulatorily compliant – thanks Lucinda

This routine will continue in the coming year.

### **Projects**

It is remarkable how long things can take to bring to fruition. For example, the lighting on Church Walk was only installed at the end of March and has still not been tuned for timing and brightness. The new footpath has been finished for months while we waited for SCC to turn up to do this work. So, we have to expect that our projects on the books tend to run into subsequent years. These are the plans we have in progress:

- ***New Footpath on the A1141*** – this project has been making progress but slowly! A working group has been formed, plans for a scheme have been drawn and we have had a pre-planning consultation with Babergh. We are now waiting for SCC to return the answers to an enquiry on the land involved and whether they will adopt the path once it is constructed. We are also waiting for a reliable cost estimate from an authorised SCC pavement contractor. (I fear the price will instantly go up). We will then be able to discuss the project formally with the URC and get out to seek grants. My hope is by this time next year there will have been spades in the ground.
- ***The allotments*** – there has been demand expressed for additional allotment capacity and the PC is keen to provide it at the existing site. There were some plans put in place to provide animal proof fencing and pathways before the start of the growing season. However, checking the dimensions with the existing holders showed that we had not drawn up the plans correctly and now it is too late to do the work for the growing and nesting season. We will have to re-group and complete the work in the autumn having also investigated the water supply. It will also give us time to look for grants.
- ***The Brett Valley Digibus Project*** – This project is not dead! Last month I received confirmation that SCC do want to run the pilot – it taken forever – or so it seems. The big idea is to provide connectivity to Hadleigh, Stowmarket, Lavenham and Sudbury with an on-demand service using an App or phone booking. SCC now need to write the contract with the selected software provider so we can do the modelling and analysis. The key conclusions so far are (1) that it will not work unless it is integrated with and run by our local community transport operators in Hadleigh and Sudbury (they are on-board with this). (2) the service will not be totally ‘on demand’ – it will be more a question of people negotiating their ride with the system. Connectivity can be a huge societal and economic benefit so keep your fingers crossed.
- ***Recreation Ground Improvements*** – The PC is keen to provide lighting for the MUGA so that its use can be extended in the darker evenings. It is well used by the children which is great – so it makes sense to try to provide this. Our initial investigation did not bring forward a practical and affordable approach – so we have to go back to the drawing board and investigate the options further.
- ***Neighbourhood plan*** We have decided to upgrade our people and place plan to a full Neighbourhood Plan. The reason is that we need to have completed this formal process to be able to defend the village from unwelcome building development. It is

a separate agenda item for this meeting as we need to complete a Housing Needs Survey as part of the process. Please engage with the fuller briefing later in this meeting – it is important.

**In conclusion**

That concludes my remarks, and I will be pleased to take questions. We will also have the opportunity later for people to raise issues. This report will be available on the Facebook page and the website.

**6/26–Housing Survey for Neighbourhood Plan – Sue Downs: Community Action Suffolk**

The Council agreed in March to upgrade the People and Place Plan to a Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan will ensure that the village’s views are registered by the authorities in an enforceable way. To proceed we need to prepare a Housing Needs Survey which consists of sending a survey to every household in the village. These are to be delivered soon. The first part of the survey is for everyone to complete and return, the second part is for stating any housing need your household may have. The finance questions are to help work out what type of tenure and accommodation is needed to meet the housing need. The higher the return rate the better evidence and more robust the survey is so please complete your form and encourage others to do so. Community Action Suffolk is an independent charity who carry out housing surveys in Suffolk. It costs £2,000 and remains relevant for five years. Evidence from the survey can be used when responding to planning applications in the village. The Chair thanked Sue for the work of CAS on the HNS and noted that SPFarms have kindly offered to pay for the survey. The PC will be retaining a consultant to support completing the Neighbourhood Plan.

**7/26 Speedwatch/SID - Chris Eames**

The meeting took a report from Chris Eames. The data is reproduced below.

**SID** - Speed Indicating Device

**Summary table SID summary – 2025 for MEPC**

	<b>2018/19 Average</b>	<b>2020/21 Average</b>	<b>2022 Average</b>	<b>2023 Average</b>	<b>2024 Average</b>	<b>2025/H1 Average</b>	<b>2025/H2 Average</b>
<b>Average Speed</b>	29.4 mph	29.4 mph	28.8 mph	28.4 mph	28.5 mph	28.5 mph	28.2 mph
<b>85 % percentile</b>	34.4 mph	34.5 mph	33.8 mph	33.2 mph	33.3 mph	33.2 mph	33.0 mph
<b>% Speeders from Lavenham</b>	14.2 %	15.2 %	11.7 %	8.0 %	8.1%	7.6%	7.8%
<b>% Speeders from the East</b>	8.2 %	8.5 %	5.7 %	4.9 %	5.4%	4.8%	4.2%

<b>Average Vehicles per day in one direction (AADT)</b>	1,852	1,440	1,673	1,855	1,811	1,841	1,790
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Note: A speeder is someone travelling at 35 mph or more

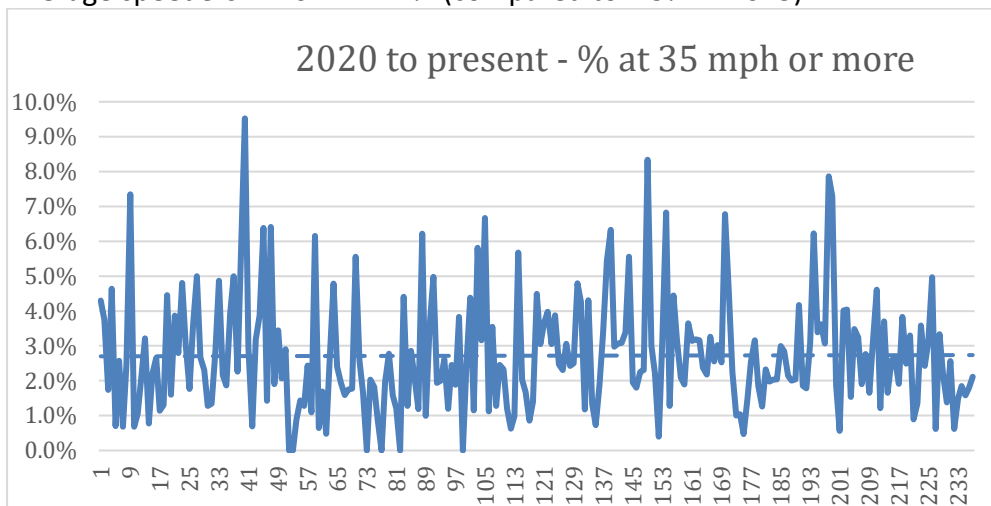
- Busiest hours: morning 07:00 - 08:00, afternoon 16:00 - 17:00
- Speeds slightly reduced over time
- SID belongs exclusively to Monks Eleigh, delivered in March 2023

CSW - Community Speed Watch

55 sessions carried out in 2024

12,181 vehicles monitored in 2024 (i.e. number of drivers reminded of the speed limit)

Average speeders in 2024 = 2.7% (compared to 2.9% in 2023)



There were no lorries caught speeding

10 qualified volunteers of Monks Eleigh CSW team, though a couple of extra volunteers would be most welcome.

Conclusions:

The degree of speeding is in slight decline. SID indicates more speeders than CSW, so CSW does change behaviour!

The Chair thanked the Speedwatch team for their work.

### 8/26 Table Tennis – Brent Eleigh Spinners - Claire Symes

We started playing in Brent Eleigh hence the name. When the new Village Hall in Monks Eleigh opened we moved here. We meet every Tuesday evening from 6.30 to 8pm. All abilities welcome. Equipment is provided. Doubles and singles played. Four tables available. A warm and friendly welcome awaits you. There are 8-10 people who regularly play and we would welcome more. Just turn up. £2 per evening. We have regular friendly competitions against teams from Mildon, Ringshall and a local business. There are occasional social get togethers for a meal. This year with some additional funding from Fit Villages we were able to replace an old table with a much better one which takes up less room in the storage cupboard.

**Table tennis** is great cardio vascular exercise

It improves balance and coordination  
It helps burn some calories  
It helps to keep the brain active, increasing motor and cognitive skills.  
It is good to socialise with others  
So basically it staves off Dementia, Heart Attacks and Strokes. Use it or lose it.

### **9/26 Carpet Bowls – Diana Swansborough**

We are still going from strength to strength, with a membership of 19 at present. Of course we would always welcome more members. We mostly play roll ups on Monday afternoons from 2.30 to 4.30pm and occasionally friendly matches with other local teams. If anyone is interested in joining our happy band for a social afternoon of light exercise please ring Diana 01449 740070 or just turn up on Monday afternoon.

### **10/26 Monday Lunch Club – Cllr Angela Forrest**

Monday Lunch Club has changed its name to Community Lunch, hoping this sounds more inclusive and that it is not a club you have to join. It is held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month mostly, in our beautiful village hall. Monday was chosen as Corn Craft and the Swan are both closed. The meal is two courses, preceded with a soft drink and finished with tea or coffee. Generally, around 25 people come to eat but 30 is the maximum number that can be catered for. The purpose of the lunch is to provide a good meal where members of the community can socialise, all are welcome so please consider coming if you would like a day off from cooking and doing the washing up. Tickets are available at the village shop and are £10.00 each. Apologies that the price has been incorrect in the Roundabout the last 2 months. The cooks and helpers are all volunteers, and any excess money goes to the charities Cystic Fibrosis Trust and BreakthroughTD1. Both charities are close to my heart as they research the conditions that 2 of my grandsons have. I would like to thank Janet Mackie, Teresa Pryke, Wendy Paris, Di Swansborough and Chris Eames who all help to make the Lunch Club run smoothly. A really good team whose help is greatly appreciated.

### **11/26 Millennium Green – Cllr Patti Derry**

The Millennium Green continues to be a tranquil and peaceful asset for the enjoyment of all villagers and visitors to Monks Eleigh. Until now a group of very willing Trustees has been charged with maintaining this special village space to meet all of its objectives. As the average age of the current Trustees is around 76 the Trustees have concluded that, despite their best efforts and commitment, they can no longer carry out all the demanding tasks of maintaining the Millennium Green to a standard that enables trees and shrubs to flourish and to ensure the open space is safe for members of the community to enjoy in their leisure time. Despite repeated efforts to motivate more trustees and volunteers to step forward to carry out the tasks it has not happened, therefore, it is with regret that it has become necessary to hand back responsibility for the care and upkeep to the Parish Council who have the ultimate responsibility for the Millennium Green. As Chair of the Millennium Trustees I would like to thank all of the current and former trustees for their vision in its conception, their commitment to its upkeep and their sheer hard work over the last 25 plus years. As a memorial to the millennium 2000 the Millennium Green has now become an important part of the history of the village. In order for it to be nurtured for the benefit of

future generations, the Parish Council needs your support as they take on this beautiful and tranquil “breathing space” in the heart of our much admired and historic village.

### **12/26 Film Club – Carl Mudge and Elaine Thom**

The film club has just finished the season completing 6 years since it first commenced. This season showed the following films with attendee numbers.

FITS REPORT 25/26

21/9. Penguin Lessons (57)

19/10. Mr Burton (44)

16/11. White Bird (42)

18/1. The Roses (60)

15/2. Downton Abbey (34)

22/3. The Life Of Chuck (21)

12/4. Song Sung Blue (39)

Average 42 attendees per film.

Accounts are to be completed for this season but will still be in profit; all profits to the village hall. Film licence fees have increased and we have had to move to Blue Ray disks due to issues with equipment; we will also have to look at digital downloads as more films are available via this route and will need to acquire a laptop for this. On going issues with equipment but we have now sourced an expert who has recently resolved one issue relating to sound. The season will commence again in September 2026.

### **13/26 MESCAL –Alan Line**

The Committee is pleased to report a year of consolidation, delivering a modest increase in our capital base. Full accounts will be presented at the AGM on the 27<sup>th</sup> May. This meeting is for shareholders but for the princely sum of £ 1 to buy a share you are welcome to attend the meeting. Currently the shop welcomes an average of 54 customers a day, with an average spend of about £6. These numbers have been relatively stable for the last few years, but we would obviously like to see an increase in both. The Post Office reinstatement on 27 April will hopefully bring increased footfall. We will be welcoming Ruth Crockett and her team, who run Hitcham Post Office as well as PO counters at three other community shops, they bring valuable experience to ensure they will be offering an efficient service to the village. To keep this service, the Parish Council and the Shop have agreed to cover any revenue shortfall, up to £2,500, for the first year. Our thanks to the Parish Council for their generous contribution in providing help to secure this much-needed facility. Another major challenge has been replacing two committee members who are stepping down at the AGM on 27 May. Operating over the last year with just five members has been difficult, and I want to thank my colleagues for going above and beyond to keep the shop thriving. I am pleased to report we have secured three nominees for election at this year’s AGM and we will warmly welcome their input. We still have room for two more members—please let me know if you can help share the workload. Only 7% of community shops nationwide are run solely by volunteers, so I extend a sincere thank you to the 55 volunteers who staff, stock, clean, and keep the shop compliant. It simply would not happen without you. Occasionally, we have had to close for an hour or two due to a lack of a volunteer to run the till. We therefore renew our call for volunteers to support this worthwhile community asset, it is totally flexible and your duties can easily be fitted in with your available time --- again please see me after this meeting if you interested in learning more.

**14/26 St Peters Church – Pat Braithwaite on behalf of Rev. Birt**

St Peter's Church continues to be open every day during daylight hours, and all are welcome to come and spend time in our beautiful church.

There have been many visitors to the church and the services and events held in the church have attracted many, with the church offering a place of hope, peace and stillness in our ever changing and anxious world.

There have been several significant services in the last twelve months, alongside a full list of monthly Sunday Holy Communion and occasional Evensong services, together with Wednesday Morning Prayer services every week. The VE day and VJ services last year were well attended and the Ukraine Vigil last year and again earlier this year also attracted good congregations.

Events in church last year included a music concert by Brass and Ivories, so well received that they are returning in a few weeks' time to play again for us in the church. A Newcomers to the Monks Eleigh Benefice tea party was held again in The Rectory Garden in September last year, with many people attending this popular event. The Monks Eleigh Fete and Dog Show was held in early June last year and was very successful, despite the forecast of bad weather and a reduced number of stalls and attractions.

In February this year the Monks Eleigh's Got Talent concert was held in the Village Hall, attracting a large and enthusiastic audience. A total of £1,500 was raised to help with the costs of maintaining the church.

On a sad note, a total of five funerals were held at St Peter's during the last twelve months. A baptism was also held in the church, and a total of four weddings brought joy as the church bells rang out across the village. Two more weddings are scheduled at the church for later this year.

The annual Christmas and Easter services at the church were real high points and the children's' craft events and activities were well attended and well received.

Future works planned for the church include refurbishment work to the bells, repairs to areas of the plaster work inside the church and other maintenance work. A bequest from Yvonne Frank, a faithful church member and former village resident, was received in year and this is to be used for the continuing work and maintenance of the church.

The PCC are very grateful for the continued support and involvement of the Parish Council in key events for the community and the church.

I would also like to thank all those who work unstintingly to keep the church and churchyard looking so wonderful, especially for the services and events held in the church. The sound of the church bells is always a welcome sound for so many; my thanks to Paul Haskell and the team of bell ringers. A special note of thanks for those who have returned the church clock to working order and to those who keep the crows and their nests away from the church tower!

### **15/26 Village Hall – Patti Derry**

I would like to start my report by thanking all the Trustees and caretaker for their hardwork and commitment over the last year. This commitment has played no small part in the great success of the village hall once again. I am pleased to report that the hall is used regularly and appreciated by local groups and people from outside the community. As a valued community asset, the hall offers opportunities for sport, culture, hobbies, entertainment and social interaction to all sections of our community. Bookings for people outside Monks Eleigh are growing for weddings and parties especially at weekends. Feedback from all of these groups has been very good and as always the cleanliness of the hall is a major feature of that positive endorsement. Thanks must go to Julie for her care to ensure everything is perfect for each booking. Financially the Village Hall is in a healthy position thanks to the fees from the high volume of lettings, the income from Flicks in the Sticks and the annual grant from the Parish Council precept. We are very grateful to all those contributing to our funds. The Trustees regularly review all bills from suppliers and contractors and endeavour to find the most economically favourable for the benefit of the Village Hall. The hall's solar panels help to offset some of the cost of electricity so that once all running and upkeep costs have been met any surplus can be ploughed back into the continued improvement of the hall facilities. Inevitably the hall and its equipment sometimes needs repairing or replacing and the Trustees use their various skills to carry out much of this work. When a job is too difficult or specialised, the help of professionals is sought engaging local firms whenever possible. Currently there are 8 Trustees appointed in line with the Village Hall constitution. All trustees are elected or appointed at the Annual General meeting. Each trustee has a specific role within the group to ensure the range of responsibilities is carried out efficiently. Following a vacancy for a Trustee this year we have welcomed Paul Haskell to the team who carries out the role of treasurer.

To conclude -well done Monks Eleigh Village Hall! Our trustees who are all volunteers, have given their time and energy on behalf of the village to provide a vital community amenity of which we can all be proud.

### **16/26 Poetry Circle – David Mills**

It's now eight years since we began to meet,  
We hold our meetings still just once a month.

We listen, read, enjoy the poems we share,  
And celebrate the power, and beauty, of the word  
From poets old and new, some happy, others sad,  
Some difficult and deep, some humorous.

And in between we talk about them too,  
We even have an interlude of song,  
And often put the world to rights as well.  
Imbibe a glass of port, and have a laugh or two!

### **17/26 Walking Group – Maureen Morris**

Walks are arranged on the first Monday of the month and the third Wednesday of the month. Maureen Morris co-ordinates the Monday walk and Chris Eames leads the Wednesday walk. We meet on the Village Green at 9.30 and we sometimes do a local walk

which takes about 1.1/2hours – 2hours or we go by car to a destination and walk from there which takes more time. For more information contact [maurengmorris@gmail.com](mailto:maurengmorris@gmail.com)

### **18/26 Wildlife Group – Maureen Morris**

MEWG is a group of residents interested in the natural world. From Spring to Autumn each year, four organisers arrange monthly trips to places of interest in Suffolk and occasionally Essex or Norfolk, focussing on birds, wild flowers etc. One highlight in 2025 was our visit to Bower House Farm, Polstead, owned by Alan and Sue Keeble who are enthusiastic conservationists. Some of us attended a talk about swifts in Boxford that resulted in the free swift boxes now installed on the gable end of our community shop.

Our March and April outings this year have been to Wrabness and Church Farm Marshes. Other trips in 2026 will be to Newbourne Springs, Old School Wood at Great Waldingfield, Walton Backwaters by boat and Daws Hall Nature Reserve. We often finish our excursions with refreshments in a pub or café. If you would like to know more please contact [monkseleighwildlife@btinternet.com](mailto:monkseleighwildlife@btinternet.com)

### **19/26 Community First Responder – Paul Dachtler**

Paul volunteers as a First Responder and lives in Chelsworth. First responders often reach an incident before ambulances and doctors as they live within 5 miles. This means they can be a vital link of providing care for patients. It would be very good to have more people volunteer to do this. There is lengthy training and they are very important in rural areas away from towns and cities. Do look at the website if you are interested. The Chair confirmed that the PC will be looking at supporting this initiative alongside other villages to supplement Paul's equipment.

### **20/26 Shaun Moffat from Bildeston Foodbank (Bildeston Community Support)**

Bildeston Community Support started in March 2020. Now supporting over 170 families. Four in Monks Eleigh and ten within one and a half miles of Monks Eleigh. We have donation points in Morrisons and the donations are shared between Bildeston and Hadleigh and thank you for any donations made. We have to constantly buy food to help. We can take donations by cash or card. Only 60% of what we do is food. We also help with carpet, tumble driers, curtains and other household goods. Twenty one percent of Suffolk is in poverty where people's outgoings are greater than their income. Everybody deserves a chance and to be able to eat. We also give help to rebuild people's lives. We listen to them and help them move forward. We are trying to join all the food banks together in Suffolk to increase the effectiveness to fight poverty. Community and Mobility Transport – we are working with Digibus so people can get to doctors, vets, solicitors, shopping etc. Our referral agencies include councils, prison, schools, churches and others. People have to prove their need and we introduce them to other services.

### **21/26 Village Person of The Year**

Cllr Braithwaite announced that this Community Award for 2026 goes to jointly to Patti Derry and John Naylor for their outstanding contribution to the village. Patti and John were not able to attend the meetings so, a separate presentation is planned.

**22/26 Public Forum**

No comments were made

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

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.30pm.

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