

MONKS ELEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Monks Eleigh Village Hall at 8.00pm
on Monday 15th March 2023

Present:

Cllrs—John Newton Chairman, Angela Forrest, Cllr Will Sykes, Victoria Keitley-Webb, Patti Derry, Alan Braithwaite and Elizabeth Evans
District Cllr Bryn Hurren

In Attendance:

Mrs L Rogers - Clerk
29 members of the public attended

1/23 Apologies

Clare Symes, Chris Eames, Carl Mudge, Elaine Thom, Christine Nichols and Pat Braithwaite

2/23 Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 14th March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and were duly signed.

3/23 County Councillor Robert Lindsay - report

Floods and drainage backlog

In December 2021 after news of a 10 year drainage work backlog, the county council decided to allocate £10 million to tackle it over the next 3.5 years.

But the impact of climate change plus a long running dearth of investment in drainage and enforcement means that the backlog has grown as fast or faster than it can be fixed. There are a number of long-running flood issues in the Cosford division of which Monks Eleigh is a part, including frequent flooding near the bridge between Kettlebaston and Preston St Mary. In December, I requested details of what jobs had actually been done since the extra funding was agreed. Just 17 of the nearly 1000 flood and drain problems on Suffolk county council's list have been completed. The extra £10m that was allocated in Dec 2021 to be spent over 3.5 years is being used for "low hanging fruit" – minor civil works – that are not in this list, and that work has indeed been speeded up. **Food Bank** The Bildeston Food Bank, sadly, continues to be of essential service to local residents, with the cost of heating and food rising. There is now a record high of 30 plus families being supported by it, and the Food Bank has moved into providing heating oil for a few families who simply do not have enough cash to fill their oil tank. **Roundabout** I was pleased during the year to be able to help this community magazine continue in existence by contributing to a new printer.

County Council budget For the 2023/24 budget the county council has now formally voted to increase the council tax precept by 4%, below the 5% cap they are allowed. An amendment by our political group (Green, LibDem, Independent) to raise it to just below the 5% cap to help fund social care and public transport was voted down. Within that alternative budget, we also asked for £2m for a trial of reducing 30mph speed limits to 20mph in the most dangerous areas of the county, as both Oxfordshire and Cornwall are doing. **Safer Speed Limits** In both Bildeston and Lavenham I have obtained in principle agreement for moving most roads to 20mph limit from 30mph. The Conservatives who run the county a year and a half ago rejected my motion to move to a default 20mph limit in all residential areas. Since then, two Conservative run councils – Cornwall and Oxfordshire - have begun to do just this and I am convinced that safer speeds in Suffolk will happen eventually. Meanwhile there are many roads – including in Hitcham – which are national

speed limit but where a safe speed would be no more than 40mph. Again, it will require a change of policy from the county council before this can be altered. **£1bn Highways contract awarded to Milestone Infrastructure** The county's Highways maintenance contract with Kier Group is due to expire on October 1st. Kier failed to make the three-strong shortlist for the re-tendered contract which has now been awarded to Milestone, part of venture capital-owned M Group Services. Milestone's road maintenance business was created by buying Swedish group Skanska's UK facilities management arm. It will be responsible for maintenance of roads, pavements, rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting. **Carbon budget – county not on track** This year's carbon budget shows that the county council is not on track to reach Net Zero by 2030. Current forecasts show that SCC will still be producing 10,000 tonnes of CO2 in 2030 – that's still half of what we are emitting now. In addition, the Council's calculations are not accurate enough to develop the full assessment of carbon impact our services have on the environment. My group will be asking councillors to redeclare their commitment to Net Zero by 2030. **Report into SEND Provision: Review & Recommendations** Back in 2021, an independent review of the county's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision found severe problems and recommended a string of measures to improve things. In January 2023, our Group was informed that all recommendations outlined in the review are now fully completed. Their priorities moving forward continue to be the timeliness of EHC plans, the number of school exclusions, availability of provision, and the rise in demand for SEND services. **Suffolk "Devolution": Big Deal?** In December 2022, government met with Suffolk County Council to sign an initial county deal. Suffolk will get £16m extra a year (less than has been cut by the Government from the county's funding over the years) but in return must have a directly elected "leader", to be elected by all the voting public in May 2024. A public consultation will now follow, asking residents if this is what communities want. Though some extra money is better than none, Government seems to be passing down few if any real decision-making powers to the local authority. At the same time, during the year, there have been a string of failed Suffolk bids for Government funding – including not a penny for the Bus Back Better bid and two rounds of failed bidding for the Levelling-up Fund.

4/23 District Councillor Bryn Hurren

Reflecting on the past four years and the year 22/23 specifically, there has been much change. We now have many meetings and briefings held remotely, on Zoom or Teams, usually at around 8.30 -10.00.am. for me as this enables me to get on with the days work. Full Council and main Committee meetings such as planning, Audit and Scrutiny have gone back to face to face meetings in council chamber with officers and public present, these are now live streamed on Utube (whatever that is) and can be watched live or at a later date. These do tend to have a following and mean that our public can avail themselves of this facility. One drawback is that this has picked up some not very amicable incidents. More work and training needed here. The Babergh Budget for 23/24 has now been agreed and brings a 2.9% rise in what residents will be paying for our services. Regrettably Babergh District is now responsible for only an 8.5% share of your council tax, despite extra duties in Parking and Licensing, with the Police now taking approx. 10.5%, parish councils 2% and the County Council 80%. These bodies are going for around 4% rises which will mean that residents will be paying around £70.00 extra on a Band D property. Not good news and totally unsustainable. Planning is our most controversial function and lacks clarity I feel to our residents, we have to work to the national NPPF which means that we have to do and

carry out what the National Government tells us. It has become very hard to refuse anything without going back to the applicant multiple times and the sharp developer knows that. Two local matters are the six houses in the Street. Also the Old School site which is as of two weeks ago is now in the control of the receiver. Our joint local plan is progressing slowly. Should be statute early next year. Is devolution the answer, YES, but not what is on offer. Could give us better control of finances and Planning Decisions. We continue to work hard on our Public Realm and environmental role. We successfully collect the districts Blue, Black and Brown bins. And recycle just under one half in a variety of ways which is probably worth your council tax alone. About £4.00 weekly. None of the kerbside collections go to landfill in Suffolk. Environmentally, I do feel we are doing more than most with our leisure Centre's and vehicle fleet powered by green fuel and energy, we also were one of the first councils to install Solar panels on our council houses, (approx. 2,000 out of 4,000) which brings us in around £350,000. Regrettably on an old tariff, as is our Energy from Waste facility which sells power into the grid. Which is why the power utilities are making millions. Two new initiatives that we have worked on the past year are the walking and cycling strategies which are trying in partnership to upgrade and make it safer to follow these pursuits which are green initiatives in themselves, while we cannot change the routes we can through using gains from developments and monies from CIL make improvements. The second initiative is a new Culture, Heritage and Tourist Strategy to encourage, develop and manage tourism in our area, while farming is still important in Suffolk, Tourism is now worth millions as well and allows farmers to diversify and gives our many B & Bs, Restaurants and Pubs some income to develop or just hang on and survive. There is a huge workforce depending on a good outcome from this initiative and it needs to succeed. Locally I have been pleased to support the upgrading of your new playground with the grant of CIL monies and of the 112 bus route from my own Councillor Locality Budget. Thank you to your clerk Lucinda and all councillors for your support, help and friendship over the past year.

5/23 Report from Sudbury Citizens Advice Bureau by Alan Braithwaite

Alan is the Chairman of Sudbury CAB and finds the work very absorbing. The CAB work to help people with a problem or give advice. They deal with a very wide range of problems with over 250 different recording options on their computer. Currently most problems are energy and housing. CAB are independent, impartial and free. They give objective advice and have comprehensive information. It takes 6 months to train an advisor to a national standard. They use volunteers and more people are willing to volunteer. They are a registered charity and are grateful for funding from Babergh and parish councils. There are ten staff and 40 volunteers giving 250 sessions each month. People are having to make choices of food or heat. Thirty families depend on Bildeston food bank. Baby formula powder is not routinely donated so mothers are diluting baby formula powder to make it last! In Babergh 8000 people are at risk which is 8.6% of the population. 5000 are at risk from the cost of living crisis so CAB are seeing a quarter of them. There has been a steady rise in the complexity of issues over the last 18 months (4 problems for each person). This is not as large an increase as seen in London and the South West. Debt is a large problem. Food bank referrals have increased from last April from 20 to 40 each month. Utilities were 10 each month in April 2021 and are now 20 a month. Please do refer people to the CAB if they are worried or anxious about problems – go before mental health problems arise. They can offer face to face help by appointment.

6/23 Chairman of the Parish Council –Cllr John Newton

I had the privilege, or should I say the misfortune, of being elected chairman at the Parish Council meeting in May last year and I have firstly to thank Angela Forrest who preceded me as chairman for all the hard work she put in to the job in recent years, and also the support given to me by my fellow parish councillors over the past year. Lucinda our parish clerk has kept us all within the bounds of the law and I thank her for her ongoing advice on various procedural and other matters.

I also have to thank our district councillor Bryn Hurren and county councillor Robert Lindsay in keeping us updated on local and regional matters and dealing with the numerous questions that have been raised by us and villagers the past year. And what a year it has been. We have had 7 meetings and a total of 67 villagers have attended our meetings with the record being on 25th July when some 38 villagers made their views known about the development proposed at The Orchard site in The Street. A fairly robust discussion ensued with a split opinion of support and opposition to the application. The PC raised no objection to the new houses but opposed the new bungalow. A decision on that application is awaited. Various other planning applications mainly in respect of minor works were also considered over the past year as well as commenting on tree works in the village. I am sure that we are the chainsaw capital of Suffolk. Regrettably there seems to be no further progress with the completion of the Northcote Drive scheme and the PC are doing all they can to get the matter resolved and are pressing Babergh to take what actions they can to get the development finished and CIL money paid over. I have to thank on behalf of the PC the numerous volunteers that assist in all aspects of village life including the speedwatch team, the grass cutters and the chain saw fairies who cleared The Causeway after a tree fell down that SCC could not find. We supported by way of grants the village hall, village shop, the church, go start as well as the 112 bus service and we have now set up a bursary for those families in need : they can apply confidentially to any member of the PC or Mike Birt. During the year we have arranged for street lighting to be upgraded to LED, finalised the designation of Quiet Lanes, and arranged for the removal of the stile on the footpath between Back Lane and Stackyard Green : we have also purchased a speed camera for use by the speedwatch team to assist road safety in our village. I had the honour of attending a meeting of the history group recently when I presented Vivian Aldous with a certificate and scroll to confirm her being enrolled as an honorary villager for her work in researching the manorial records of Monks Eleigh and producing a book that will be a very valuable source of historical material for years to come. Concern had been expressed about the safety of the Polegate Bridge in Back Lane that was funded by 2 of my neighbours in Back Lane, Elliot Levy and Keith Morris in 2000 as part of the millennium celebrations.

As a lot of you may know that bridge has recently been replaced with a new one that I hope will give us a further 23 years use. We are now planning a revamp of the play area by the village hall to provide some new equipment for children of all ages and abilities and hopefully a zip wire that is a very popular request. Don't forget that we still have allotments available for those with green fingers.

We look forward to participating with Babergh in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan that will set out local planning policies for the village : an open invitation is made to all villages who would like to participate in this project to contact Lucinda or any of

the councillors Finally we have the coronation picnic celebrations on Sunday 7th May on the playing field (or as we always say in England if wet in village hall) and I hope that most of you will come join in this event .For some of us it is our second coronation but for most of you it will be your first Preceding the picnic on Thursday 4th May will be the local elections and an opportunity for any resident to put their name forward to serve on Babergh and/or the PC: registration of interest has to be made by 4th April Some of our existing parish councillors will be standing down so there will be opportunities for new blood and new PC members are always welcome In the meantime the aims of the PC next year are to continue to respond to the community and interest and involvement by villagers is valued and encouraged.

7/23 Speedwatch/SID - Chris Eames – read by John Newton

CSW and SID Presentation:

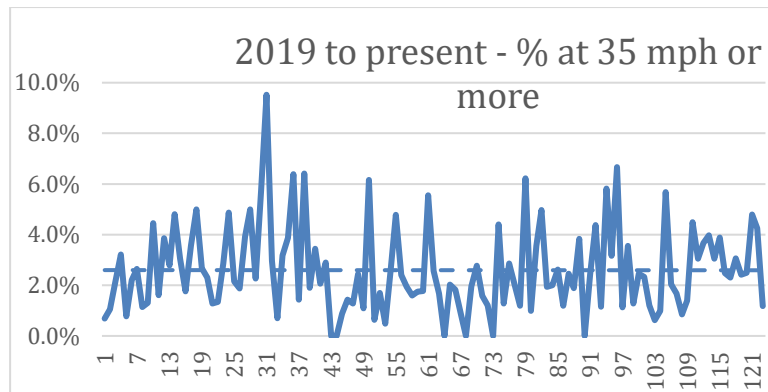
	2018/19 Average	2020 Average	2021 Average	Q4 2022	2022 Average
Average Speed	29.4 mph	29.8 mph	28.9 mph	28.7 mph	28.8 mph
Maximum speed	75 mph	70 mph	80 mph	80 mph	80 mph
		At 21:20 from Lavenham	At 19:00 from Lavenham on 9-09-21	At 13:30 from Lavenham on 8-11-2022	At 13:30 from Lavenham on 8-11-2022
85 % percentile	34.4 mph	35.2 mph	33.8 mph	33.7 mph	33.8 mph
% Speeders from Lavenham	14.2 %	17.4 %	12.9 %	10.6 %	11.7 %
% Speeders from the East	8.2 %	11.2 %	5.9 %	5.3 %	5.7 %
Average Vehicles per day in one direction	1,852	1,106	1,774	1,752	1,673

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

- Speeds slightly reduced over 4 years
- Awaiting purchase of a new SID for sole use of Monks Eleigh

CSW - Community Speed Watch

- 54 x 1 hour sessions carried out in 2022
- 11,166 vehicles monitored in 2022 (i.e. number of drivers reminded of the speed limit)
- Average speeders in 2022 = 2.6%
- Overall Average speeders in 2019-2022 = 2.5 %



- No lorries caught speeding
- 12 qualified volunteers of Monks Eleigh CSW team

➤ **Conclusion:**

- SID indicates more speeders than CSW, so CSW does change behaviour!

8/23 Table Tennis – Brent Eleigh Spinners - Claire Symes read by Lucinda Rogers

We started five years ago with the help of Fit Villages who support rural communities to set up physical activity sessions. They identified the following benefits:

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.

We meet every Tuesday evening from 6.30 to 8pm. All ages and abilities welcome.

Equipment is provided. Doubles and singles played. Four tables available. A warm and friendly welcome awaits you. There are 8-10 people

9/23 Carpet Bowls – Diana Swansborough

In the last year we have gained a few more members and now have 15 regular attendants but would always welcome more to our social Monday evenings where we improve or bowling skills in a relaxed atmosphere. Last year we were lucky in receiving a lovely new set of yellow bowls from a very kind person. Now Les Bridger has very kindly made end blocks and centre discs and Barry Thorpe has made Jack guiders. This week we have just taken possession of 222 new mat rollers/storage boxes. So we are very well equipped now, and improving all the time. The fee is still only £3 per session so do come and join us on a Monday evening at 7.30pm or give me a ring 01449 740070 Diana Swansborough

10/23 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 other 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. We thank them all. We also thank Adrian Keitley-Webb and Ralph Whitehead for their annual hedge cutting service using their specialist machinery. Without this machinery the task would be overwhelming if trustees and volunteers had to undertake it using just domestic gardening tools. 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. Sadly, this year saw the death of Arthur Watchman, one of the original founders of the Millennium Green. Arthur was a committed naturalist whose knowledge and love of the landscape and its fauna and flora was boundless. His hard work and dedication, along with other volunteers helped to establish this wonderful open space and natural habitat right in the heart of our village. We thank him for the part he played in creating that vision. 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. If you would like to lend a hand just keep an eye on the notice boards where work party days are advertised.

12/22 Poetry Club – John Naylor

Twelve of us meet each month to share and enjoy poetry. David will be back soon

13/23 Knit and Stitch – Jean Gatewood

On behalf of our members we would like to mention what we do, apart from tea and biscuits when we meet. 2022: The beginning of last year, our first meeting held - after Covid - was seeing and enjoying friends again. And a good start to 2022, was our involvement in the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. The village sign was decorated with plenty of flags donated by Knit & Stitch. A group effort made yards of fabric bunting that was hung in various places around the village and Church gateway. Sadly a few months later we lost our dear Queen. The terrible news from Ukraine, we decided to have a table at the Village Show with knitted items in the Ukraine colours. On one of the hottest days of summer - NOT ideal for a woollen sale - it went well and £100 was raised for the Ukraine Appeal. 2023: With Coronation Celebrations for our new King in May, we will again be decorating with bunting and flags....kindly stored by Margaret Drew. We are hoping to get involved with Hadleigh Ukraine Appeal who make regular journeys to Ukraine depending on the safety. Our aim is to collect wool, needles, crochet hooks etc. from various sources for the women having lost everything, to make things for themselves and families. We are waiting for confirmation that this can go ahead.

14/23 Whist Club – Angela Forrest

We have a progressive Whist Drive once a month on a Wednesday evening, starting at 7.00pm and

finishing around 9.4pm. We play 18 hands of whist, having a break for homemade refreshments. It is a social evening; the most challenging part generally is the movement of people between the hands and avoiding the wooden spoon (the booby prize)!

If you like playing cards and fancy a night away from the telly, come and join us.

15/23 Film Club – Carl Mudge and Elaine Thom – read by John Newton

The current film season began in September and is due to end in April 2023 consisting of a monthly (Except December) film at 4.30pm on a Sunday. The FITS ethos is to encourage social gatherings in a warm setting during the long winter months and to provide a selection of films that appeal to our customer demographic. Films shown so far...

September - Elvis

October - Phantom of the Open

November - Downton Abbey, A New Era

January - Mrs Harris goes to Paris

February - The Lost King

Planned for March - The Duke, showing on March 12th.

Our average attendance per film has been 47 people

The ticket price per person is £5 and includes tea, coffee, squash, biscuits and cake.

This covers our costs for the film licence (c £100 per film which has just increased this year) and refreshments and generates a profit which goes back into the village hall.

Full accounts and payment is made after the last film in April.

16/23 Village Shop – Alan Line

It has been a very difficult period for the shop since the last report to the Parish. The shop is now relying on solely volunteers following the decision to dispense with the services of a paid manager. A decision that quite simply had it not been made, would have ended in the closure of the shop. In November, Barry Charnley stepped down after 5 years as Chair of the committee, as he thought there was a need for some new ideas and wanted the shop to have a new energetic team to take it forward through the next stage of its evolution. We must record a huge vote of thanks to Barry for steering the shop through such an extremely turbulent time. I have taken on the role of acting Chair and we are moving ahead to secure the future of the shop against a very difficult background. Following a successful feedback meeting with the Shop Volunteers, there is clearly a desire amongst the volunteers for the shop to succeed. This meeting was a very worthwhile exercise to provide feedback to the Committee to help guide them in their future deliberations on a number of issues including: product range, shop hours, shop facilities & Volunteer experience. However in order for us to succeed we are in need of more volunteers and custom in the shop. Our current turnover is enough to keep us afloat if we are to think about the future with any confidence we must also significantly increase takings. Overheads are the real enemy, if we were to renew our fixed price electricity contract that expires in January 2024 at current suggested rates that would increase our annual electricity cost by nearly £ 6,000 pa. We are committed to improving the offering of produce, as outlined in the feedback but we need the support of the community to provide the footfall in the shop. We are also working hard to improve the Volunteer experience by creating a Volunteer Handbook, in line with the sector standard. This is a significant piece of work that has been undertaken by Sarah Crouch, a new Committee member, and this document will be a very valuable asset to all volunteers.

Our financial reporting has also been overhauled by Chris Drew who provides financial reports that we would be the envy of many companies. We are indeed fortunate not only to have the services of Sarah & Chris but also the rest of the Committee Victoria Keitley Webb, our hard working Secretary, Peter McGill and John Newton. We would however like more help on the committee. So

if anyone would like to join us in any role to share the load you will be more than welcome. We also have an amazing group of volunteers whose sterling efforts keep the shop going, why not come and join them and be part of a very worthwhile Community initiative. We would love to hear from you will be warmly welcomed, whatever role you wish to undertake.

17/23 History Group – John Naylor

The group is well attended and it has been a successful season of meetings with a great variety of subjects. Every meeting is different and interesting. The new programme begins in October – do come along

18/23 St Peters Church – Mike Birt

St Peters is celebrating Mothering Sunday on March 19th at our 10.15am Service – all are welcome. After the service we plan to plant a hornbeam tree in the green wild area at the back of the churchyard – this was donated by Bishop Martin as part of his Diocese wide plan for churches to commemorate the reign of the late monarch Queen Elizabeth

The church has also received a grant to install a commemorative bench in the churchyard marking the reign of the late monarch and this will be purchased and installed in due course. The church has also been given a lovely gift of an embroidered Platinum Jubilee kneeler. On Sunday 7th June the Sunday Service at St Peters will celebrate the Coronation of King Charles. In the last year the church has hosted a Platinum Jubilee celebration service and a Thanksgiving Service for the late monarch Queen Elizabeth 2, together with regular Sunday worship services. The bells have been rung regularly and have been much appreciated by many in the village. The church continues to offer a range of Occasional Offices services; last year they included a baptism, three two weddings and sadly several funerals. The church continues to be open every day and welcomes visitors; recent work includes the installation of a handrail by the gravel path leading up to the church and there has also been work to maintain the churchyard in good order and to keep the interior of the church looking clean and tidy. The church now has a presence on-line with its 'A Church Near You' webpage which carries details of all forthcoming events and services. This webpage is part of the national Church of England church location and information website and has received many 'hits' weekly as visitors and local people look to find out more about St Peter's Church. This coming Easter we shall again be holding the popular 7.00am outdoor Easter Sunday Sunrise Service, followed by refreshments in church. All are welcome. A Monks Eleigh Lent Lunch was held in this village hall on 10th March as part of the five parish Lent Lunches programme in the Benefice. Regular family and children's crafts and activity days have been held successfully in the church through the year. Following the success of our 'David and Goliath' day last month an Easter Family crafts/activity day at the church (including an Easter Egg hunt), is planned for the afternoon of Easter Sunday on 9th April. More events to support the work of the church and its fabric are planned for the coming months and these will be advertised on the website and in 'Roundabout' and other publicity, including information on service sheets, posters, flyers and word of mouth. These events will include choral concerts and organ recitals. The PCC continue to be very grateful for the support and involvement of the Parish Council Parish Council in key events for the community especially the annual village Fete where so much is done to support the work at St Peter's. The Fund to support Monks Eleigh children and young people with education course work fees, books and associated expenses is still very much available and

applications are invited from those who feel they may be eligible for such assistance. This Fund was established with both PC and PCC support and involvement.

19/23 Village Hall – Patti Derry

This year has been a year without interruption from any major issues. Such relief after the disruption caused by the Covid outbreak. 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 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. Weekend bookings are growing and we have seen bookings for parties, weddings, christenings 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. These include the Upbeat Choir group, the East Anglian Gardening Group and the Suffolk Stitchers. Our home grown clubs including the very popular lunch club, history club, flicks-in-the-sticks, poetry club, table tennis club, whist club, knit and stitch, bowls club and regular rock and roll dances continue to thrive. Pilates and Yoga sessions are also held every week. We are delighted to say there is always something to do in Monks Eleigh! All of these activities are run and managed by village residents and we thank them for their support, enthusiasm, expertise and hard work. 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 village hall trustees themselves have run a number of activities throughout the year. In addition the meeting room is used regularly for meetings of the Village Hall Trustees, Shop 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 8 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. 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. Our 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. To this end this year we have created a paved patio area outside the main hall doors. We are also continually upgrading glass wear in the bar and equipment in the kitchen including replacing the fridge with a large fridge freezer at the request of hirers who use outside caterers. It also means people attending Flix in the Stick can now buy tubs of ice cream to eat during the film just like in a real cinema. The additional features will 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 our trustees and other friends of the trustees who work so hard to contribute to the success of the hall, but especially to the residents and friend of Monks Eleigh who support all of the events offered at the hall. Support of these activities ensure the viability of the hall and endorse the important role the hall plays in supporting the well being of the residents of our village. Our final Thais go to the hall cleaner Julie Goodchild who works so hard to ensure the hall is clean ready for every group to use.

20/23 Village Person of The Year

Cllr Newton announced the Community Award is awarded to Chris Eames for his outstanding contribution to the Speedwatch and SID in the village over many years and thanked him for his support and help to the village. Unfortunately Chris was away so unable to come to the meeting.

21/23 Dogs on the Recreation Field

A discussion was held about the pro's and cons of allowing dogs to be exercised on the recreation field. A show of hands vote was taken and it was roughly equal in opinions. The matter will be discussed at the next parish council meeting

22/23 Use of Church Hill Village Green

A resident offered to repair and re-seed the apex of the green. Concerns were raised that simply restoring it to grass will still allow people to drive over and park on the village green causing damage. To be discussed further at the 27th March meeting

23/23 Public Forum

Damage to Swingleton Green during work at Fenn Farm by contractors parking on the village green. It is hoped that the owner will arrange to restore the green following the completion of work to the house. Clerk to write to this effect. This is to be done following the tree work which will have to wait until the contractors have finished parking on the green

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.....