

St James South Elmham
Minutes of the Parish Meeting to set the Precept
held on 21st November 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall

Committee Members Present: Mr C. Bradley (Chairman)
Mrs M. Henry (Clerk)
Mr A. Hadingham Mr R. Hadingham
Mr B. Crockford, Mrs A. Dinsdale & Mr M. Graham

and 10 residents of the village.

1. The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and briefly explained the nature of a Parish Meeting, that there are two public meetings a year, the Precept in the autumn, and the AGM in the spring. Tonights meeting therefore was to primarily set the Precept to be raised for the coming financial year 2024/25.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs L. Bradley, Mrs C. Rodbourne & Mr D. Ritchie

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous Meeting of 23rd May 2023 were summarized by Mrs A. Dinsdale
Proposed by Mr R. Hadingham Seconded by Mr M. Graham - Vote unanimous.
Signed as a true record by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Mr A. Hadingham reported that he had had a word with the resident at 1 Rookery Cottage with regard to the parking of vehicles after concern raised at the last meeting. There had been some improvement and they were waiting for 1 vehicle to be towed away.

5. Reports

Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that the waste activities [REDACTED] continue. In early 2021 Suffolk County Council had issued enforcement notices on the owners at both sites, which were appealed against. On 11th January 2023 the Planning Inspectorate made its decision for both sites including "Remove from the land all materials, plant, equipment and waste, including any processed materials and materials spread onto the land, associated with the waste transfer facility". In the meantime, waste activities have continued and appear to have expanded creating an untidy site again. Suffolk County Council are now in the process of preparing legal papers in preparation for court action.

The land in St James Lane renamed "The Village Green" has been a frustratingly slow acquisition process (appox 3 years), however there had been some recent progress.

In the meantime work on and in the field has continued with the mound in the north-west corner which potentially contained hazardous waste being removed. Thanks were expressed to Mr A. Hadingham, Mr R. Hadingham and Mr B. Crockford for actioning this, and further thanks extended to Mr A Hadingham for doing the digger work and re-seeding the area. A bench had been purchased to stand alongside the Jubilee Oak tree; and a large number of Daffodil bulbs (free from East Suffolk District Council) had been planted around the field. Thanks were given to those who had helped to plant the bulbs.

It had been a relatively quiet year, with no further planning applications.

The Chairman then invited reports from the Church, the Village Hall and Village Orchard.

For the Church, Mr B. Crockford said that with services being reduced to approximately 8 a year with smaller congregations, no fundraising taking place but still having to find the money to meet the quota, insurance and running costs; the church was finding it hard, and was having to use their reserves, which is never a good idea. Mr Crockford added that the church was grateful to all the volunteers who helped to maintain the churchyard, but felt it was unfair to ask the Parish Meeting to cover the revenue costs, but any contribution would be more than welcome.

For the Village Hall, Mr C. Bradley read a report from the Village Hall.

The Hall continues to be well used for sports activities and private bookings. The Coronation celebrations was well attended as was the 50th Anniversary of the Hall. Neither were fundraising events as it was felt important to have events that brought the village together. Mr D. Dewson had organised 3 music evenings featuring local bands and depending on demand hopes to continue to do so on a regular basis.

There are still a number of projects which need to be done including the repainting of the exterior barge boards and an installation of a bike stand for which there were funds available. However, the Hall costs approximately £4000 per year to run, with costs of fuel and electricity rising, and with a small committee making it difficult to organise fundraising events, meaning that at present the Hall is using money from the grants offered by the council during the pandemic for the upkeep of the Hall, but obviously these will not last and soon the Hall will be reliant on a donation from the Parish Meeting. The committee recognises that the church at the moment is in greater need, but any donation would be welcomed.

The committee reported that they were sad to lose their chairman, Mrs J. Bastow, who was retiring after 29 years of involvement with the running of the Hall, much of that time as chairman. She had been instrumental in the organising and running of events, as well as ensuring the high standard of catering for which the Hall had become known. The committee are very grateful for all her hard work over such a long time and she will be greatly missed.

The committee is now very small and would welcome new volunteers to help with keeping the Hall a community space.

For the Village Orchard, Mrs M. Henry said there had been an abundance of apples this year, although the stone fruit, plums, geengages and damsons, were not so prolific despite the spring blossom being good. The weather again has had an effect on the quality of the fruit, but the late fruiting apples had been quite good. Owing to the recent high winds there had been a great deal of windfall fruit which had not gone to waste as it appeared that the local deer had been feasting! Because the quality of apples could not be guaranteed this year, none were donated to the Halesworth Food Larder. Although it is heartening to note that quite a lot of the apples have been picked – and we hope that this is by people in the village benefiting from the village orchard. Pruning of the trees took place in early spring, and we thank those who came along to help. The usual maintenance has taken place throughout the year, with 5 trees being planted to replace those which have been lost. Thanks are extended to Mr E & Mr R Hadingham for their continued help and support. We continue to search for another local cider maker or juicer to whom we can sell the apples and thus have an income for the orchard. So therefore the continued support from the Parish Meeting would be much appreciated.

If anyone in the village would like to know more about the orchard, help or support us in any way, please talk to either Mr C Bradley or myself.

The Chairman thanked everybody for their reports.

6. Locality Budget

The Chairman reminded those present that the Locality Budget, which was in the remit of our District Councillor, could be applied for to help towards any project funding in the village.

7. Precept

The Chairman outlined the Precept process and the use it was put to; for example, the support of village facilities, projects, events and activities, membership of useful organisations, and support of

village organisations. For clarity, the Chairman explained the half-year accounts.

At a recent committee meeting the precept had been discussed at length; our policy was to maintain a prudent balance, that should it be needed, could cover the costs of unexpected or unforeseen events, and raising the Precept by inflation was a good way to do this.

A short discussion by the meeting then took place, following which;

Mr R. Hadingham proposed an increase of 5% - £114.40 in the Precept

Mr M. Graham seconded - the vote in favour was unanimous.

Therefore it was agreed that the Precept for 2024/2025 would be increased from £2288 to £2402.40

8. Any Other Business

The request from Mr B. Crockford on behalf of the church was raised and a short discussion followed where it was agreed that the church was there for the benefit of the village, and as such should be supported by the village. Therefore it was proposed that a letter be circulated to all residents highlighting the need for volunteer support not only for the church but also the village hall and orchard. The Chairman and Mr M. Graham agreed to look into this.

Mr B. Crockford said that the condition of the village phone box was deteriorating; 7 panes of glass were broken or missing and it was in desperate need of repainting. It was also commented that some defacing of the posters in the bus shelter had occurred. A discussion followed on how best to approach and resolve these two issues and keep the village looking neat and tidy. It was decided that in the letter to be circulated to all residents, as discussed earlier, it would perhaps be beneficial to include an appeal for a voluntary work party to assist with the cleaning, repairs and repainting. The committee would prepare a letter and circulate it.

The Chairman then thanked all those who continue to help maintain verges, paths, hedges, ditches and public footpaths on or near their property.

Continuing the Chairman offered thanks to his fellow committee members, Mrs B. Crockford and Mrs M. Henry for their help and support over the past year.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.25pm

Greshaw Green Enclosure.

As committee members of the Parish Meeting, the members are also Trustees of the Greshaw Green Enclosure Trust.

No significant donations have been made during the past 6 months. There was a balance of £2308:00 in the account.

The Greshaw Green Trust is there to help any resident of the village who may benefit from help or support from the Trust on behalf of the community. Please talk, in complete confidence, to one of the trustees.