

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD AT 8.00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY  
30<sup>th</sup> April 2025 AT NAYLAND VILLAGE HALL

**Present:** Parish Councillors: Cllr Laura Erith (Chair), Cllr. P. Fuller, Cllr. K. Sheath, Cllr. G. Battye, Babergh District Councillor, Isabelle Reece, Suffolk County Councillor, James Finch  
Representatives from Village Organisations, 13 residents and visitors.

1. The Chair welcomed everyone and introduced each Councillor. Cllr. Erith explained that reports would be made by various Councillors during the Meeting. She was delighted to introduce two speakers for the evening: Paul Bryant, Neighbourhood Officer of Babergh District Council and Jeremy Bloomfield, a member of the Stoke by Nayland Neighbourhood Plan Group. Iain Wright, Chair of the Nayland Village Hall Management Committee and Graham Walker of the Lady Ann Windsor Housing Trust were also introduced.
2. **Apologies**  
Received from Cllrs Dawn Harris, Owen Brown, Sam Treharne and the Council Clerk, Debbie Hattrell.
3. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly Held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2024**  
These were approved as a true record. This was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Gerry Battye and carried with a show of hands.
4. **Paul Bryant, Neighbourhood Officer of Babergh District Council**
  - i. Paul Bryant explained about the role of Neighbourhood Plans, particularly in the light of current planning law. These plans have been existence since 2011. Of the 200 parishes in the BMSDC area, 65 have produced Neighbourhood Plans, with 44 of them being adopted.
  - ii. He outlined the current planning system and the role of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Sustainability is a key element. Councils had a role in this. For example, the County Council amongst other things has a role in transport and parking, whilst the District Council has created its Joint Plan. Babergh's Joint Plan Part 1 was formally adopted last year but the Government's latest announcements regarding planning affects the process.
  - iii. He explained that Neighbourhood Planning at parish level was a 'bottom up' approach with communities identifying where acceptable development might take place and where listed and non-listed heritage assets created restraints in the view of the residents. What did we want to see over the next 10-15 years? Evidence collection is the underpinning support for any Neighbourhood Plan. The local identification of green spaces was part of the Neighbourhood process. What goes into the Plan depends on what the community wants and needs. However, we must remember that it is about development of land. It must adhere to National and Local Authority planning policies.
  - iv. The development of housing will be across the district. Babergh's target is 775 homes across the district over the next 20 years. Targets will be allocated across the Parishes and for Nayland and Wissington, that target is 210 dwellings over twenty years. However, the Plan should also include a target created from within the village. How many homes does the Parish Council (PC) and planning group want to see? A Neighbourhood Plan puts the PC in a more defensible position.
  - v. The process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan is a learning opportunity for the Community. Evidence gathered can inform the judgement of plans for development.  
  
He outlined the Consultation Stages: The Draft Neighbourhood Plan would be out to public consultation, including residents, Babergh and Suffolk County for 6 weeks. Then Babergh drive the submitted plan with it going to an independent examiner and then facing a parish referendum. 50% +1 would be enough for a referendum decision. The successful Plan would need reviewing at intervals.

*Neighbourhood Planning – Paul Bryant (Cont.)*

- v. There are costs involved but the real cost is ‘Time’ by volunteers and the PC, in whose name the finalised plan would be submitted. Grant Funding for Plans is available e.g. £10, 000 from ‘Locality’ Organisation. Babergh pay for the referendum. The Parish may employ a Planning Consultant. Mr. Bryant had a list of suitably qualified consultants. It could be a 2–3-year process.
- vi. He asked the meeting to consider the alternatives. These included letting Babergh make the decisions with Affordable/Shared Ownership or rented housing or the successful development through The Community Land Trust Scheme. These already exist.
- vii. He suggested that the Community be canvassed about whether a Neighbourhood Plan is the way forward.
- viii. Mr. Bryant was asked by a resident about specific sites. He replied that sadly, of the 44 adopted Plans, only 5 or 6 of them allocated sites for housing. It was a real difficulty to face for residents.

Another resident asked about the relevance of Housing Needs Surveys. Mr. Bryant confirmed that such surveys, as the PC undertook some years ago, would only have a shelf life of five years. Another resident asked about the planning importance of traffic and congestion in judging sites & future planning applications. Mr. Bryant replied that there was only so much a Plan could do. Congestion is not a planning issue. ‘Highway Standards’ is the measure. Traffic can’t be a major feature in a Neighbourhood Plan. In answer to a question by Cllr. Reece, Mr. Bryant recommended the website, ‘Guide to Neighbourhood Planning’ where options were outlined. He would drop a link or copy to the Clerk. Whilst there is no definitive checklist, a Community Questionnaire is a way forward.

A resident commented that the Dedham Vale National Landscape status afforded some protection or restraint. Mr. Bryant agreed that things such as this, flood plain, conservation area would proportionally reduce Babergh’s target of 210 dwellings for Nayland and Wissington.

**5. Jeremy Bloomfield of Stoke by Nayland**

- i. Mr. Bloomfield was a key member of the Stoke by Nayland Neighbourhood Plan Team which was formed in 2017. It has 7 members, not all of them being Councillors. Voluntary time has been a crucial issue. Anybody considering a Neighbourhood Plan must be clear that it is not about stopping development, even if the Plan includes that message. It is more about guiding development as the village is unable to stop applications. He felt that if a village was unresponsive initially the team had to pursue it and try to engage and enthuse. At Stoke, downsizing is a real problem whereby smaller dwellings need to be built, for instance, using infill sites. He reported that his team recognised that a village needs new people for its future. For instance, primary school rolls get reduced owing to the lack of housing affordable for younger couples who also must afford to buy cars in villages where no public transport exists. It was essential that we look at site allocations. 25 sites have been identified as having possible potential. It is an advantage when developers come along. In conclusion, he admitted that some group members might want NO development. It is something that a group must accept and move forward. Mr. Bryant added that it was all about adding value at a local level. He also reported two villages could work together.
- ii. Resident, Mr. Amos, told the meeting that 20 houses had been for sale in Nayland and not one local person had made a purchase. Mr. Hunt explained that he lacked confidence in the idea of yet another planning tool.
- iii. Mr. Bloomfield explained how they had used the Primary School children to design leaflets etc. He would be willing to meet up with a potential Nayland and Wissington Plan group.
- iv. Cllr. K. Sheath asked whether Councils could be proactive with developers, identifying sites to agents etc. Mr. Bryant explained that Councils, as Local Authorities, can’t go to developers and show sites.

6. **Cllr. Isabelle Reece, Babergh District Councillor**

Cllr. Reece explained that she provided monthly reports to the PC which was reported. Mrs. M. George raised the issue of Babergh's decision to cut back on issuing current Notices of Planning Applications. She felt that the system of publicising applications was already flawed with notices not being posted in the proximity of an impending development but pleaded that all residents continue to be notified by letter with adequate notice. She noted that not all residents in Babergh had computers or the time and knowledge to continually search the website, to check whether a very local development was being planned. However, the PC should seek an extension to any response to this impending change as she was sure that it would be granted.

Cllr. Reece promised that she would investigate and check further. She agreed that the impending change had been poorly publicised. She would meet with the Chief Planning Officer and report back to the PC.

7. **Cllr. James Finch, Suffolk County Council**

County Cllr James Finch highlighted areas that had been a focus this year, including the rising number of school pupils as having Special Educational Needs. £9 million had been allocated to resource these needs. The financial challenge of Highway maintenance was continuing. The resourcing of and the need for more Foster Carers was also a challenge with 150 needed each month. The County and other Councils objected to the Large Sunnica Solar Farm, being built on farmland. This had been ignored by the government who subsequently approved it. Solar Panels for homes initiative using bulk purchasing, through 'Solar Together' was highlighted by Cllr. Finch who also mentioned the financial impact of the devastation caused by Storm Babet. The County Council had recommended merging all District, Borough and County Councils into one authority. Meanwhile, the Council was prioritising road surfacing, keeping families together, creating a bookable community electric car scheme with one base being in Sudbury, known as Plug-In Community Car Scheme.

8. **PC Finance Report**

The Chair read the *report* prepared by Cllr. S. Treharne:

- i. As of 31st March 2025:  
 £1000.00 in the Current Account,  
 £16,902.21 in the Linked Account  
 £79,000.00 in the Capital Investment Account  
 £4,400.73 in the National Savings Account making a total of  
 £101,302.94  
 The Capital Investment account totalling £79,000 is where we have allocated funds for certain projects coming up during the coming year.  
 £60,000 allocated to the village hall roof increased from an allocated £50,000 last year.  
 £5,000 allocated to the village hall car park  
 £5,000 allocated to streetlights  
 £7,000 allocated to the village playground  
 £2,000 allocated to driveways
- ii. The Parish has also received money from the *Community Infrastructure Levy*. This is a charge which is levied by local authorities on new development in their area. This levy has the commitments of being invested on infrastructure needed to support development of their area within 5 years of being received.
- iii. Money received from *CIL* over the past few years has been allocated to the village hall roof repairs, new bins and Fairfield Playground improvements.  
 You can therefore see that finances currently look very healthy however over £70,000 of this is pledged to new projects.
- iv. *Precept Calculation:*  
 In the finance committees annual meeting, back in November it was agreed that the PC precept would be increased at a rate of just below 5%. This was lower than last year (7%) to try and recognise the difficult financial times and equally avoid the risk of Leaving the village short of necessary funding to maintain current standard.

9. **Fairfield Recreation Ground and Playpark**

Cllr. Battye reported that a visual inspection took place weekly and the independent Safety Inspector had declared that the Fairfield was in good condition and maintained well. Any specific observations would be acted upon. Major work would now include fencing, signage and ongoing upkeep.

10. **Planning**  
Cllr. P. Fuller reported that the Parish Council had dealt with assessing 29 applications during the year and objected to 4 of these plans.
11. **Village Hall**  
Mr. Iain Wright (Chairman) reported on the successful funding operation to provide a new roof for the hall. Work would start soon, with vegetation being cut back to allow scaffolding to be erected. The current delay had been in dealing with the original registration of land. Councillors expressed their thanks and re-iterated that the Parish Council was wholly behind the improvement and had great faith in the Village Hall Management Committee and its Chairman. The meeting voiced its unanimous support.
12. **Allotments**  
The Chair reported that a small number of allotments were not meeting the required standard and have been served notice.
13. **Burial Ground**  
Maintenance was on-going.
14. **Local Charities Annual Report**  
Cllr. Gerry Battye briefly explained the financial bequest by Mrs. Violet Walsh. As a result, through the Charity Commission, The Walsh Trust had been formed, now having Cllr. G. Battye, Cllr. P. Fuller, Miss Kath Hunt and Mrs. Mig Drew-Knight as Trustees. The sad death of former Trustee, Mrs. Eva Rolfe was referred to and followed by a short tribute to her work in the village. Mrs. Rosemary Knox had recently resigned and her virtues as Trustee were extolled.
- The original bequest had yielded an income this year of £782.84 and with an existing balance of £210.56, £900 had been transferred to the Community Pantry and Hardship Fund. Cllr. Battye referred to that Fund's Annual Report which described some of the ways in which the Fund was meeting financial needs in Wiston and Nayland. The village needed to be better at identifying and targeting these needs. A resident expressed worry about possible abuse of the system e.g. the Nayland pantry, but Mr. Battye highlighted the latest report from the Hardship and Pantry Fund where this possibility was addressed.
15. **Parish Trees**  
Cllr. K. Sheath reported on the Council's survey of the safety of its own or public trees. It had involved an independent assessment as well as the village Tree Warden. The report would be the basis for an action plan during the coming months.
16. **New Councillor's Observations**  
Cllr. Kevin Sheath spoke of his experience of volunteering and being accepted willingly as a new Parish Councillor. He reported that it had been a positive experience. There was much to learn, and he was still learning. He had found the online training support useful. The time commitment so far had not been over onerous. He had found the meetings efficient and businesslike and encouraged anyone to have a go for the two vacancies. Any Councillor or the Clerk could be approached first.
17. **Electors' Questions and Observations**  
Mr. A. Amos voiced his frustration with the PC, County Council and Environment Agency over the continuing lack of any management of the growing reed bed on the River Stour at Caley Green. He pointed out that it had gone on for years. Nothing was happening. Cllr. Finch explained that he was currently in touch about this with the relevant County Officers. Cllr. Erith and Cllr. Battye reported on the amount of frustrating time spent by the PC, (who didn't own the site), in trying to get effective bed management whilst conserving the habitat. This had taken place in meetings and on site.

The low number of attendees at the meeting was a disappointment but the PC would continue to try its hardest at engaging with the residents.

**The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.**