

# **DRAFT Minutes of Kersey Annual Parish Assembly** **held on Monday 13 April 2026 in Kersey Village Hall at 7.30pm**

## **Present**

John Hume (Chair), Parish Councillors Liz Bostock, Penny Calnan, David Butcher and Richard Walker. Leigh Jamieson - Babergh District Councillor 7 members of the public and Sarah Partridge (Clerk)

The Chair welcomed everyone present and thanked them for attending the meeting.

## **APA 1/26 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Kersey Parish Councillors Esme Chapman and Andrew Rogers. Robert Lindsay – Suffolk County Councillor. Adrian Blyth, Jess Damant, Claire Dunnell Paley, Jonathan Marsh, Veronica Partridge, Mary Pearce, Mark Pertwee, Kevin Pratt, Rachael Rogers and Neville Whittell

## **APA 2/26 Minutes of the previous Parish Assembly**

The minutes of the previous Parish Assembly, held on 7 April 2025 were confirmed as being correct and signed.

## **APA 3/26 Reports**

Reports were received from all the Councils and Community Organisations as listed on the agenda. The full reports are all appended to these minutes and will be published on the Kersey website.

- a. Suffolk County Council
- b. Babergh District Council
- c. Kersey Parish Council
- d. Kersey Parish Council working groups:
  - i. Footpath Working Group
  - ii. KCPC (Playground) Working Group
  - iii. KVG (Volunteer) Working Group
- e. Forget-Me-Nots
- f. Franey, Rand and Pest House Charities
- g. Friends of The Bells of St Mary's Church
- h. Friends of St Mary's Church Trust - FoSM
- i. Grays' Trust
- j. Kersey Church of England Primary School
- k. Kersey Playing Field Association
- l. Kersey Projects
- m. Nightingale Trust and Allotments
- n. St Mary's Church PCC
- o. Table Tennis Club
- p. Tuesday Club
- q. Village Hall
- r. Village Produce Association

Information about all the community organisations and more can be found on the Kersey website.

[www.kerseyparish.gov.uk](http://www.kerseyparish.gov.uk)

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### **APA 4/26 Kersey People and Place Plan**

Over the last year the steering group has been making progress with the Kersey People and Place Plan. This gives the community an opportunity to have a collective voice and record what is important now and in the future. A public consultation was held in October with good attendance by residents. The main feedback was that residents are extremely concerned about the number of properties in Kersey which have been left to become derelict and uninhabitable. They would like action taken so these can become homes again. Other repeated comments were the poor mobile phone signal in some parts of the Parish, the lack of a safe walking or cycling route to Hadleigh and restrictions on listed buildings adding renewable technologies to their homes. There is support for a few smaller new homes for local people in the right locations, outside the Conservation Area. Work is now focussed on completing the draft plan and finalising the action plan based on the wishes and feedback of residents. Once finalised this plan will be shared with Babergh District Council and Suffolk County Council who will be obliged to have regard to it when making decisions affecting Kersey.

### **APA 5/26 Any other business**

#### **Potholes**

The ongoing concern about the poor state of the roads and many potholes is very frustrating and a national problem. It seems that until significant improvements in funding are made highway repairs and potholes will continue to be an issue. All residents are encouraged to report highway concerns to SCC highways via their online reporting system, it is quick and easy and you will then get progress updates.

#### **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

Devolution and LGR are two separate processes, albeit closely linked.

Devolution creates a directly elected regional mayor for Norfolk & Suffolk. They will have powers over strategic transport, economic growth, adult skills, housing, health, planning, and nature recovery and includes £37.4m per year for 30 years as an investment fund. Strengthens influence with national bodies and provides a voice in national decision-making. Elections for the new devolved Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral authority are due to take place in May 2028.

The Government has recently confirmed that LGR for Suffolk will proceed with a move to a three-unitary model including a boundary change to expand the size of Ipswich. The new unitary authorities will be:

- Central and Eastern Suffolk Council
- Western Suffolk
- Ipswich and South Suffolk Council

Kersey will be the most westerly parish in the Western Suffolk unitary authority. Elections will take place in May 2027, ahead of them going live and delivering services in April 2028.

#### **Suffolk County Council elections 7 May 2026**

New Suffolk County Councillors will be elected to serve for the final two years of the authority before it is replaced by unitary authorities. Following a boundary review for Suffolk County Council, Kersey will be in the Hadleigh Division. This Division includes Hadleigh, along with the parishes of Kersey, Layham, Raydon and Whatfield. The polling station for Kersey residents is Kersey Village Hall. Following the move to unitary authorities in 2028 it is likely that boundaries will be changed again.

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**Flood investigation**

Suffolk County Council completed their flood investigation in September 2025 following the October 2023 Storm Babet flood incident in Kersey and many other parishes in Suffolk. SCC did not fully engage with the Parish Council when compiling the report or send a copy to the Parish Council. Once the Parish Council was aware the report had been published the Council reviewed the content. Sadly, it had several inaccuracies and lacked, what the Parish Council consider, some important details. Feedback has now been provided to SCC, who have said they will incorporate any relevant information into the six-month review currently being carried out.

**Poor Mobile Phone Signals across Kersey**

The Parish Council has been trying to put pressure on network providers to improve the poor and in some areas non-existent mobile phone signals across the Parish. All homes will have to transition to Digital Voice services by January 2027. As Digital Voice relies on a broadband connection that requires a power supply, this raises a significant safety concern. During power cuts or broadband outages — which can occur during severe weather or other emergency incidents — residents may be left with no means of contacting emergency services or others if mobile coverage is also unavailable.

Sadly, it seems the Parish Council cannot take up network connectivity problems with providers as they will only discuss these with their customers. They confirm they remain committed to maintaining and enhancing their networks and would encourage individuals to report connectivity issues so they can be resolved. EE suggested residents with connectivity problems currently using 5G switch to 4G to see whether this provides a more stable experience. If this does not resolve the difficulties, it is likely that the issues are related to the general coverage limitations present within the locality. To investigate localised issues effectively, they rely on affected customers making direct contact. This enables them to raise formal problem reports, gather essential diagnostic information, and escalate concerns where necessary.

The Parish Council would encourage all residents who do not have good mobile connectivity indoors and outside to report this to their network provider.

Suffolk Chamber of Commerce would like to have case studies as to how businesses (including farms) in the Parish are being impacted by poor mobile connectivity, so they can use these in their lobbying activities.

**Kersey events calendar on Kersey website and google** – please let Sarah Partridge know about events planned for Kersey so they can be added - [clerk@kerseyparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@kerseyparish.gov.uk). It is a useful remind of what is on and helps to avoid a clash of dates when event planning.

The Chair thanked all the volunteers of the various community organisations for attending the meeting and for their service to Kersey. This year the community has lost two residents who both made significant contributions to village life. Norah Orriss and Ian Hattrick were former Parish Councillors and volunteers for a variety of community organisations, they are missed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.04pm.  
There are 12 pages appended to these minutes.

Signed .....

Date .....

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## **Suffolk County Council - County Councillor Robert Lindsay**

The county council division boundary changes have taken Kersey out of the Cosford division and moved it into the new Brook division of the county council. That means that although I will be standing for re-election to the county council, sadly I will not be standing to represent Kersey in this election. I'd like to add, since I may not be seeing you all again, that it has been a pleasure serving with you these past nine years. I'm particularly appreciative of your clerk and your chairman's thoughtful patience throughout that time and I will always be proud to have served such a beautiful and such a community-minded, public-spirited parish for so long.

### **Lower speed limits on A1141**

I am pleased that the 60mph to 40mph change got implemented before the end of my term of office. I appreciate the work done by Semer and Kersey parish councils to draw together community contributions alongside the contribution from my locality budget to this important safety measure for residents of both parishes.

### **Bus 51 between Hadleigh and Stowmarket to stop at Kersey Mill**

This service, six daily, five days a week, which starts this week, is perhaps the achievement I am most proud of in my term. I have been asking both Highways and the bus operator Konect about stops at Kersey and Highways have now told me they will be putting up temporary bus stop signs outside Kersey Mill before the service starts until they can organise more permanent structures. The timetable I have does not list all the stops, and I think the assumption is the bus will only stop if there are people waiting and flagging them down.

### **Five month closure Bildeston High Street**

Unfortunately, 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. Anglian Water are holding an open day to explain the scheme and answer questions on April 14th between 2pm and 6.30pm at Bildeston village hall. 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.

### **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 – a motion which I seconded, and a proposal that the council recognise the rights of rivers in Suffolk, including to be protected from pollution.

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

The Government has forced councils to come up with plans to merge together to make themselves larger, on flimsy evidence that larger councils are more cost efficient. They also want at the same time to abolish district and county councils as they currently operate and introduce "unitary" councils that combine the separate functions of the two into one. The Conservatives proposed and spent a lot of public money advocating for one unitary for the entire county, the district councils proposed three unitaries. The Government announced in March this year that it was going for the three unitaries

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proposal. Elections of “shadow” unitary councillors are scheduled to take place May 2027, a year after the current county council elections, but 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.

### **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 for 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.

### **New 20mph Policy**

At Cabinet on Friday 9 January, bowing to pressure from the Green-led opposition, a new 20mph speed limit policy was tabled and approved and is now in place for speed limit change requests. 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 require expensive consultation.

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## **Babergh District Council – Councillor Leigh Jamieson**

### **Mobile Signal**

I had a meeting with a representative from a company called Net Cov in September regarding improving the mobile signal. While they could provide mobile signal boosters the options were expensive. To boost the signal from one provider to one property the costs range from £1500-£2500 depending on how many boosters would be required. To provide a boosted signal for multiple providers to multiple houses (up to six) the cost would be between £15000 - £20000, split between the properties.

### **Table Tennis Club**

I was pleased to be able to help the table tennis club with £450 of funding from my locality fund.

### **Local Government Review**

This year at council it has been dominated by the upcoming changes to local government. Initially through the Spring and Summer the council worked with the other Suffolk district councils and Ipswich borough council to put together a proposal for a new unitary set up. The county council put together a proposal offering a single unitary council for the whole of Suffolk. Babergh and the other councils felt that a single council would be too remote for local communities and submitted a proposal for three unitary councils. The final decision was to be agreed by the government and last month the government confirmed that they want to go ahead with the three unitary proposal. This will mean that from 2028 the services in Suffolk will be run by three separate councils, one covering Eastern Suffolk, one covering the Western side and the third covering Ipswich and Southern Suffolk. Although no decision has been made on divisions or councillor numbers the chances are that initially the divisions will be in line with the county council divisions that are being used in May. However, Kersey is in the Hadleigh division for May's elections but will be in the Western area as things stand. However, during the first unitary council the boundary commission will review this and may make changes for the next election in 2032.

### **Listed Building Window improvements**

In the Autumn Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils finally made a small step towards helping owners with listed buildings. Improving the energy efficiency of listed properties was a key council policy dating back to May 2023. The councils have one of the highest numbers of listed properties in the country and unfortunately, owners of these historic properties often find it difficult to heat them due to their poor energy performance. Very often the single glazed windows are a significant factor in this, and it leads to higher bills for owners and is costly for the environment. Previously owners had to submit a planning application to the councils for Listed Building Consent to make upgrades. This could be time consuming and was not always successful. The Councils were finally successful, last year, in introducing a new Local Listed Building Consent Order – the first rural councils in the country to achieve this. Local Listed Building Consent Orders allow local planning authorities to make a pro-active and blanket grant of consent for listed buildings within a defined area. It makes sensitive improvements quicker and easier.

### **Housing improvements**

Since 2023 improving our housing stock has been a priority. Huge steps have been taken to get on top of the problems our tenants face and it was a great relief this year when the council came out of special measures. The government is now happy that we are meeting the required compliance targets, although there is still a lot of work to do elsewhere. In addition to this success the council has now completed over 80% of its stock check, which was something that the cabinet pushed for from day one. The state of our homes had always been assumed, and we insisted that a quality check would be needed urgently to understand what needs to be done.

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## Car Parking Charges

Unfortunately, it was agreed that car parking charges across the district would need to increase by 20%. An independent report was commissioned by the council to review the effects of the car park charges implemented last year. The report, completed by the University of Suffolk, identified that while car park usage had declined, footfall and dwell time had remained fairly consistent, while spend had increased. With the data showing that charges have had little to no effect on visiting numbers the cabinet have agreed to raise charges to ensure that full costs are recovered in the ongoing battle to shore up the council's financial position.

## Neighbourhood Plans

Until last year, local community groups developing a plan could access financial and technical support from the government, with basic grant payments of £10,000. However, in June last year the government withdrew this facility, and many parishes had to abandon their plans. Now Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have agreed alternative funding of up to £20,000 to support groups preparing Neighbourhood Plans which help to meet housing need in the area. The grants will support plans which seek to allocate sites for housing development, which make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing needs.

## Council call for emergency support to houses hit by heating oil costs

More than 20,000 homes in Babergh and Mid Suffolk rely on heating oil, which has seen prices double because of the war in Iran. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have set out concern for those impacted, and signposted people to the existing local support available. Calls have also been made for the regulation of the heating oil market and emergency financial support. The councils are advising those impacted to look at the existing options available for help. These include collective buying schemes that bulk buy to secure a better price for households.

## Simpler Recycling

Following on from the last Conservative government's decision to pass legislation for a weekly food waste collection and extra recycling collections, the waste collection process will change in June. There will be a three weekly collection cycle with general waste collected one week and then two weeks of recycling collection. Food waste will be collected every week. The new green lidded bins and the food waste bins will be distributed to residents in the w/c 18th May.

## Kersey Parish Council, Chair's Report 2025-26 – John Hume, Chair

Our aim is to make Kersey a great place in which to live, work and visit. I thank the six other Councillors and the Clerk for their valued contribution to our community. Their details are below. I also thank Robert Lindsay, County Councillor and Leigh Jameson, District Councillor for their regular attendance and support. The Council supported 14 of 15 planning applications, involving 12 properties. The Council responded to the proposed local government changes and supported the new speed limits on the A1141, repairs to The Splash footbridge and local signage. The Council criticised and sent suggested additions to the Suffolk County Council report on the Babet Storm. It was confirmed that the Kersey Brook is a statutory main river and the Environment Agency has permissive powers to maintain it. The Council wrote to Babergh District Council to request simplification of the onerous environmental reports needed to progress planning applications. Babergh responded by saying these were legal requirements. Babergh have introduced welcomed new rules concerning the use of thermally effective glazing in listed buildings. The Council approved new policies on Privacy, Data Protection and IT. Progress on the People and Place Plan has been slow. Following a successful consultation event, the next stage is to incorporate resulting feedback into the draft plan, ready for

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final consultation and then submission. This will give Kersey residents more influence over planning and related matters. All meetings are minuted and appear on the website. Financial matters are reviewed at each meeting. Figures for the year are shown below.

### Kersey Website: [www.kerseyparish.gov.uk](http://www.kerseyparish.gov.uk)

Kersey Parish Council publishes on the Kersey website agendas, minutes, financial information, ordinary meetings dates for the year and contact information. There is also a wealth of other useful information on the Kersey website including a calendar of Kersey community organisation events and the Kersey google calendar which you can subscribe to should you wish.

#### Kersey Parish Council Contacts - Parish Councillors:

John Hume (Chair)	Ayres End, The Green, Kersey IP7 6EB	01473 810098
Andrew Rogers (Vice Chair)	The Gables, Wickerstreet Green, Kersey IP7 6EY	01787 212242
Liz Bostock	Common Farm, Semer, IP7 6HR	07827 928093
David Butcher	Kedges End, Kedges Lane, IP7 6RY	07710 105341
Penny Calnan	Wickerstreet House, Wickerstreet Green, Kersey IP7 6EY	01787 210459
Esme Chapman	Carlton House, The Street, Kersey IP7 6DY	07910 170606
Richard Walker	Sunlit Cottage, 2 The Tye, Kersey IP7 6HB	01787 211277
Clerk & RFO:		
Sarah Partridge	Bridges Farm, The Tye, Kersey, IP7 6HB	07765 916162
clerk@kerseyparish.gov.uk		

### Parish Council Finance

The Parish Council finances are secure and well managed. The Parish Council has set a budget for the year ending 31 March 2027 and agreed the precept received from Babergh of £16,230. The budget will be balanced with the agreed use of reserves. The Kersey Parish element of council tax for a band D property will increase to £81.24, which is a rise of just under 49 pence per month.

The Parish Council considered the budget carefully before making the decision to increase the precept, mostly due to inflationary pressures. Unfortunately, this year the tax base, which is used to calculate council tax, has decreased which has increased the council tax by more than inflation. The Parish Council has no control over the tax base; it is calculated by the number of properties paying council tax. When there are so few properties in the parish, small changes can make a significant difference to the tax base.

### Kersey PC Budget and Precept

Receipts	Budget yr ending 31/03/26	Budget yr ending 31/03/27
Precept	£ 15,677.00	£ 16,230.00
Babergh Neighbourhood CIL	£ -	£ -
Filming donations	£ -	£ -
Bank interest	£ 100.00	£ 300.00
Donations for defibrillator	£ -	£ -
Footpath working group	£ 956.42	£ 956.00
KCPC working group	£ 1,000.00	£ 1,200.00
VAT repayment	£ 679.54	£ 500.00
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>£ 18,412.96</b>	<b>£ 19,186.00</b>

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Payments	Budget yr ending 31/03/26	Budget yr end 31/03/27
Admin	£ 1,137.00	£ 1,344.00
Staff costs	£ 7,950.00	£ 9,150.00
Training and external meetings	£ 250.00	£ 250.00
Street lighting	£ 560.00	£ 560.00
Insurance (PC & Glebe)	£ 500.00	£ 675.00
Glebe hedgecut	£ 115.00	£ 120.00
Mowing the Glebe	£ 260.00	£ 270.00
RoSPA inspection	£ 110.00	£ 110.00
Bin emptying charges	£ 20.00	£ 20.00
St Mary's PCC	£ 1,000.00	£ 1,000.00
Defibrillators	£ 460.00	£ 460.00
Village Emergency Telephone	£ 100.00	£ -
People & Place Plan	£ 500.00	£ -
Section 137	£ -	£ -
<b>General PC payments</b>	<b>£ 12,962.00</b>	<b>£ 13,959.00</b>
Election costs reserve	£ 165.00	£ 165.00
Church Walk future maint reser	£ 130.00	£ 130.00
Footpath map printing reserve	£ 75.00	£ 75.00
Fixed asset reserve	£ 1,500.00	£ 1,600.00
General Parish Council reserve	£ 545.00	£ -
Contingencies	£ 300.00	£ 301.00
<b>Total Precept</b>	<b>£ 15,677.00</b>	<b>£ 16,230.00</b>
Defib reserve spend	£ -	£ -
Fixed asset reserve spend	£ 700.00	£ -
Filming donation reserve spend	£ -	£ -
Highway safety sign reserve spend	£ -	£ -
<b>General PC total budget</b>	<b>£ 16,377.00</b>	<b>£ 16,230.00</b>
Footpath working group	£ 680.00	£ 680.00
Jubilee working group	£ -	£ -
KCPC working group	£ 1,825.00	£ 2,025.00
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£ 18,882.00</b>	<b>£ 18,935.00</b>

The Parish Council financial year ends on 31 March. The Parish Council usually approves the year end accounts at the Parish Council meeting in May. See the Parish Council Finance page on the website for more information. <https://kerseyparish.gov.uk/parish-council/parish-council-finance/>

### Footpath Working Group (FWG) - Kevin Pratt, Chair

Footpath Working Group volunteers have done an amazing job over the past year keeping the Kersey footpath network in such good walking condition and replacing way marker signs to keep walkers on the right path. Residents and visitors really appreciate the work of volunteers so a big 'Thank you' must go to all the volunteers. The mowers all worked well last season and are serviced and ready for the new mowing season ahead. Finances remain adequate to cover footpath working group expenses and build a small reserve for future machinery costs. Although not strictly a footpath working group matter, at a recent working group meeting the poor state of the Vale Lane triangle was discussed. It was suggested granite setts should be laid at the muddy corner to prevent damage to the grass and the edge of the highway being eroded further. (Note: Those present at the Annual Parish Assembly were in support of this proposal)

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### **KCPC (Playground) working Group– Jonathan Marsh, Chair**

The playground continues to be used throughout the year and this includes the outdoor gym equipment and the cricket net. The ROSPA report highlighted a few of issues that are in the process of being corrected and or monitored. There were no acute problems. A new child swing seat and notices are in the process of being fitted along with some fence posts to secure the fence where needed. The mower continued to work well and was serviced over the winter. We are ever grateful to the group of volunteers who cut the grass over the summer, some are mowing more than once as we are short of volunteers. More would be welcomed. A successful quiz night was held in November and this raised approximately £1000 which covered the majority of the costs for the year. There are no plans for major equipment purchases. Two maintenance days were held over the year and Pascoe continued to do the regular quarterly inspections for which I am very grateful. Will Steed stood down from the working group as he has moved away. We welcome Theo Gibara on to the working group. I would like to thank Francis for storing the mower. I'd also like to thank the Parish Clerk for help and support particularly in the area of administration and equipment procurement and funding.

### **KVG (Volunteer) Working Group – John Hume, Chair**

The Kersey Volunteer Group (KVG) aims to keep Kersey safe and attractive. The KVG is made up of 14 volunteers who are allocated specific areas for the collection and disposal of litter, reporting fly-tipping and other hazards to the relevant authority. Volunteers are provided with detailed safety guidance and appropriate equipment. The volunteers are thanked for their contribution to our community.

### **Forget Me Nots – Veronica Partridge**

For all those new to Kersey, The Forget Me Nots are a group that was set up by the church well over 40 years ago for the retired of the parish. It has changed its content several times over, depending on the needs and likes of its members. Today we meet on average once a fortnight and dine out. The Forget Me Nots have had a very mixed year, they enjoyed the warm summer of '25 and dined out all around Suffolk. But the year also held sorrows, we lost several of our members, a few who had been ill for a long period of time, but the others left us too quickly and all are still very much missed. We have several invaluable helpers who make sure we reach our destination on time especially for those that cannot drive. We have held our numbers and would love to welcome more to our group. It is not possible to print a date or venue in the Kersey Newsletter as we decide fortnightly where we are to go, but it is usually on a Thursday. If you need more information, please phone me, Veronica Partridge on 07595263111 and if you need transport, as I have mentioned we have great helpers!

### **Franey, Rand and Pest House Charities - Rachael Rogers**

The Trustees have met during the last year and grants were again made to individuals and groups including The Memories Cafe, Hadleigh Elderly People's Welfare, Shelley Centre for Therapeutic Riding, Surviving Winter in Hadleigh (which could also benefit people from Kersey) and The Christmas Present Trust. It was confirmed that the Pest House and Rand charities were to support the Hadleigh area and the Franey charity to support the surrounding villages. The Charity has displayed their notice of publication on local noticeboards and plan to meet again at the end of May.

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### **Friends of The Bells of St Mary's Church - Neville Whittell, Tower Captain**

The Thursday night ringing practice has been maintained from 7.45 pm until 9.30 pm. Sunday service ringing has been inconsistent due to a shortage of people. If anyone is interested in learning to ring the bells please contact Neville or come to the church on a Thursday evening.

### **Friends of St Mary's Church Trust (FoSM) – Sarah Stirling, Chair**

Friends of St Mary's was established to provide financial assistance for the ongoing upkeep and beautification of the fabric of our beautiful Church. It has no religious purpose. The ongoing needs of St Mary's are significant. The cost of maintaining the fabric of this beautiful and historic building is substantial. A recent example is that over the past year we have funded roughly half of the cost of the replacement lighting in the Church. The results are quite splendid. Improvements like this not only enhance the building itself but also make it a more welcoming and usable space for events and services alike. Over the past year we have supported or put on three fund raising events.

- The ever-successful Farm Day, which Chris and Sarah Partridge host, and which FoSM support by providing the drinks and food. Chris and Sarah are kind enough to donate half of the gate takings to FoSM, the other half being donated to a charity of their choice. This year it was the very relevant Meningitis Now Trust. We are ever grateful to Sarah and Chris (and their family), for organising the day, which is always a highlight in the calendar and a wonderful way to bring the community together, as so clearly seen at this year's event.
- In late June we hosted a choral event, based around madrigals, performed by a well-regarded local group.
- In October we repeated an event from the previous year. The Three Chordettes performed a selection of Swing songs, alongside afternoon tea. This was a sellout event, and one we hope to repeat in 2026/27.

After the monumental fund raising from the Christmas 2024 Supper Dance, we made the decision to take a break from that event in December 2025, so as to give us some breathing space, to 're-theme' the evening which we plan to run again this year. Watch out for advertised dates in the next few months. Overall, the past year has shown both the challenges and the opportunities we face, that said, each event has contributed funds for the ongoing life of the church building and the strength of our community. As we look forward, I believe there is real potential to build on what we have done—reviving successful events, trying new ideas, and continuing to support St Mary's in both its preservation and its future.

### **Grays' Trust – Philippa Harris, secretary**

During the last year the Grays' Trust has divided £9,900 between two sixth formers, eight undergraduates, one post graduate, the Tuesday Club and Kersey Primary School. The latter contribution was used, as it was the year before, to take the pupils to a pantomime. The Trustees hope that this will become a regular addition to the school's activities. A grant was also made from the Trust's contingency fund. These grants are generally paid towards unexpected, educational costs which might otherwise cause hardship. Unlike academic grants (which will not be considered by the Trust after the 31st August in each year), contingency fund grants can be applied for at any time. At the moment the bulk of Grays' Trust's income is going to school, college and university students, but we feel it is worth reminding all parishioners that they may make an application for any costs associated with education, training and re-training or further employment qualifications. Applications should be made to [graystrustapplications@gmail.com](mailto:graystrustapplications@gmail.com) and we look forward to hearing from you.

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### **Kersey C of E Primary School - Claire Dunnell Paley & Jess Damant, Co-Headteachers**

We welcomed five new pupils into our Reception class this year. They have settled superbly and are enjoying all of the wonderful opportunities on offer. Sports Week was successful once again; being so early in the new academic year, it gives the staff and children some time to get to know one another in a different context to the 'usual' school day. The children experienced a range of activities and opportunities during the week, such as circus skills, martial arts, yoga, archery and skateboarding and scootering. The climbing wall returned once again, with 'Spider Mountain,' an extreme climbing frame and inflatable slide! We also learnt about keeping our mental health in check. We are always so grateful to those who give up their time to come and give the children such brilliant experiences. Our Kersey Outdoor Explorers sessions are a real highlight of our fortnight and we are so grateful to be able to use an area of the churchyard for this. The children are getting so much out of it and it is a welcome change to the daily school routines to go outside in all weathers and explore and learn. It has been a real pleasure to begin working with Vicar Geoffrey; he is regularly hosting a collective worship for us and the children enjoy going to church for these assemblies. Geoffrey has also got involved in our school life by joining our SGC and joining the staff for discussions about our vision and values. Our Remembrance Day Service at St Mary's was attended by service personnel from Wattisham and Mrs Dunnell Paley played The Last Post. A number of villagers joined us and it was moving to remember together. The school made its own wreath and laid it by the font with others from the local community. Our Open Morning in November was a success, holding it during the school day worked really well and we showed around over 10 families. St Mary's was the perfect performance venue for us to stage last year's nativity, 'Bethlehem Baby'. It is always so festive to be able to have our performances in the church. Vicar Geoffrey led our Candlemas and Christingle service in January. It was lovely to see the church lit up by all the Christingle candles and hear the children softly singing. We had our annual Pantomime trip to the New Wolsey Theatre to see Beauty and the Beast at the start of the new year. This performance was accessible to all and every one of our pupils thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We celebrated World Book Day with a thrilling literary quiz; the children's costumes were once again a real treat to see! We have recently had some work completed in the school car park area - many thanks to all those involved who gave their permission for the works - we hope that it will improve the aesthetics of the car park and provide a welcome space to anyone wishing to have some time to reflect. (Note: concerns were raised at the Annual Parish Assembly about the deep layer of loose pea shingle which has been spread over the carpark. It makes it difficult for those with accessibility issues to walk on. The surface was formerly a solid bound surface. St Mary's PCC will discuss a resolution with the school.)

### **Kersey Playing Field Association - Mark Pertwee**

The Glebe continues to be used regularly by villagers and locals. It has also been used for car parking for various events. The grass cutting, which is arranged in conjunction with the school as a contribution for their usage, continues, supported by the Parish Council, and we much appreciate this. We are also grateful to KCPC for their ongoing maintenance of the facilities they have installed in the areas that they lease.

### **Events Organised by Kersey Projects – April 2025 to April 2026**

Our main event of the year was Kersey Open Gardens 2025 when 22 Kersey gardens were open to the public and when we were also part of St Elizabeth Hospice's Great Garden Trail. There were repeated daily warnings by the Met Office that the weather on Saturday 7th June would be absolutely dire, to the point we had phone calls and emails asking whether we were going to cancel the event. In the end, the gods shone on us (perhaps not quite literally) but they managed to stave off the rain until almost 5 o'clock on the dot! However, the weather forecast did put visitors off attending and our footfall was considerably lower than in 2023 when, by contrast, it was the hottest day of the year. However, we were still able to donate the same sum of £2,000 to St Elizabeth Hospice for which we received very grateful thanks. The second event in which we participated, held in the village hall on

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October 3rd and 4th, was the showcasing of all the Kersey community organisations. We represented Kersey Projects by a display of some of the events that we have organised over recent years. This was a well attended event which we understand produced some interesting and helpful feedback. The annual Christmas tree lighting took place on Monday 1 December where mulled wine, mince pies and sausage rolls were served. We had a good turnout of residents and they enjoyed this free event. Our main event scheduled for 2026 will be an afternoon of Pimm's & Strawberries, to be held on The Glebe on Sunday 21 June. This is again a free event, open to all Kersey parishioners. As it's mid-summer's day, we are hoping for lovely weather but just in case, we will have the marquee erected!

### **Nightingale Trust – Natalie Blyth, Secretary**

Trustees: Mr Mark Rigby (Chair), Mrs Pamela Brown (Treasurer), Mrs Natalie Blyth (Secretary)  
Mrs Rachel Wells, Mr David Butcher (Parish Representative), Ms Ann Swan (Health & Safety Executive)  
Ms Kim Daniels

The Nightingale Trust held its AGM on Saturday 28th March 2026. All trustees were present except for Ann Swan who gave her apologies. The following financial summary was presented at that meeting. Total assets as at 28.03.26 was £8188.88, compared to £9,473.47 for the previous year. (Lower due to a drop in the CCLA fund value, particularly in the last quarter.) Total income for the year was £3925.60 and total expenditure was £2882.26 making a profit of £1,043.34. The trust remains in a healthy position, and no unforeseen liabilities are outstanding. Due to the current market volatility, it was decided to reduce the CCLA fund holding to 50% of total assets and move remainder to cash holding. The Trustees therefore approved the transfer of funds to reduce the investment fund to £4,100.

The Trust continues to pursue its original 1874 remit and as a result several worthy individuals were supported by food donations and contributions towards winter fuel. Total payments made to beneficiaries was £500 and an equal payment made to the Hadleigh food bank. Also, a contribution was agreed to the PCC for the purchase of food ingredients to assist with coffee mornings at the Church.

The Trust is responsible for the allotments to the rear of the street in Kersey with all plots under tenanted rentals. Work is carried out regularly to ensure that the hedgerows, gates and water pumps are in good working order, and all public footpaths and walkways are cleared and safe to use. A perimeter fence was constructed to section off the Bell Inn carpark from the allotments, preventing stray dogs from fouling the pathways, as well as to communicate no unauthorised access to the allotments, other than the clearly marked public footpaths. Dogs must be always kept on a lead.

The trust has full public liability indemnity cover through Zurich Insurance, with a full health and safety review carried out each year as part of that indemnity cover. In addition, each plot is inspected twice a year with any issues reported and actioned promptly.

The trustees would once again, like to make special mention to Mr Adrian Blyth and his wife Natalie, for all their help and support in general maintenance. Natalie also manages the buying consortium for the Kings Seed Company, allowing all tenants and residents of Kersey to benefit from a 50% discount across the seed catalogue. This is a benefit which has a very high uptake in the village and allotments (total orders exceed £1500). This facility will run again in the 2026 season. Our heartfelt thanks go to her for this support.

There were no reports of damage or theft this year to any of the allotments or tenants' property.

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### **St Mary's Church PCC - Linda Newbigging, PCC Secretary**

This report outlines the life of St Mary's, Kersey during 2025.

Rev Geoffrey and the PCC are deeply grateful to the many villagers who volunteer to help care for the church and keep it open by cleaning, flower arranging, locking and unlocking, winding the clock, ringing the bells, and those who support our services as Sides persons and make everyone feel welcome and contribute to the services.

Safeguarding remains a priority, with regular PCC oversight, full compliance with Church of England guidance, and there were no safeguarding incidents during the year. Regular worship continued throughout 2025 with three services a month in Kersey plus a Benefice service on the fourth Sunday. In addition, our special services at Mothering Sunday, Easter, Remembrance and Christmas were very well attended. We were pleased to welcome families for a wedding and a baptism, and we also remembered three members of our congregation who passed away. Fundraising and social events, supported by the Friends of St Mary's, and the PCC, brought the community together and helped us manage ongoing financial pressures, particularly relating to building maintenance. Major improvements were made to lighting, while other repairs, including a roof leak and maintaining an aging boiler, remain a challenge for the year ahead. We are grateful to FoSM for their financial support of our work at St Mary's and to the Partridges who open their farm each year, in part to support the church. In addition, we are supported with grants when available. As reported in the latest newsletter, St Mary's has to find £500 a week, every week, to stay open, so the support we receive from you all for our fundraising events is highly valued by us and we thank you for that. PCC numbers remain low, and we are all getting older, so succession planning to replace us all over the next few years is constantly under consideration, younger PCC members will be vital for the long-term protection and promotion of the Church. St Mary's remains a valued part of village life, and we warmly invite anyone interested in helping, in whatever way, to contact me at any time, thus ensuring that the church continues to serve our community and the building remains in good condition for many more years to come.

### **Kersey Table Tennis Club - Report for the Year ending 31st March 2026 - Adrian Blyth**

The Table Tennis Club has had a successful year with attendances up on the previous year. At the beginning of January, we replaced our two oldest tables that had been in service since 2009 when the club was founded. This was funded through the use of our own cash reserves and supplemented by a locality award, obtained with help from Leigh Jamieson. The new tables are of a more robust design and have been well received by those that attend the club. The Clubs finances remain healthy and self supporting via the fees structure. Our reserves are depleted but remain satisfactory. The accounts for the year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 have been audited. The club operates from Kersey Village Hall on Thursday evenings between 7:30 and 9:00pm. Players may elect to play either one hour or the full session at a current cost of £2.00 or £3.00 respectively. Juniors are charged £2.00 irrespective of the duration. There are no pressures to change the fees structure at present. The season runs from September to June (dates published on the Kersey Website). The current season will finish in June. Our provisional dates for the next season 2026 to 2027 are 10/09/2026 (start) to 24/06/2027 (finish) The purpose of the club is social and recreational and all abilities are welcome.

### **Tuesday Club – Rachel Wells**

The Tuesday club met 9 times in 2025, the July meeting was cancelled due to the hot weather. There was a talk by Rev Clement on his work as a stonemason at Westminster Abbey. We travelled to South

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Africa and Iceland, had an Australian adventure and were shown some wonderful photos of the Royal family. We also had a cream tea afternoon. The annual meal in May was to The George in Hadleigh and we had a Christmas party in December. The club continue to sponsor a horse at the Shelley Riding school. We are grateful to the Grays' Trust for their donation to help with the cost of speakers. Another varied programme has been arranged for this year when we hope to see some new faces at the meetings. Everyone is welcome.

### **Kersey Village Hall – Philippa Harris, Chair**

For the past two years the cost of maintaining the village hall has exceeded its income so the Committee is now facing the fact that this a trend rather than a blip. Part of the reason for the shortfall is that the school, having dramatically reduced in numbers, no longer needs to hire the hall so often. This loss of receipts is compounded by the fact that, like the rest of the world, our costs continue to rise. There are three ways in which we can attempt to remedy the problem. Firstly, we can economise. But, as we are already very careful about spending, this isn't likely to cover the difference between our income and our costs. This year alone we have had the exterior paintwork re-done, the back door replaced, upgraded the outside light over the parking area, repaired the plumbing in the disabled lavatory and made extensive investigation into the cause of the dry rot in part of the sole plate. The latter problem will need to be dealt with in the coming year and is unlikely to be cheap. Secondly, we can increase the hiring of the hall. Easier said than done. During the last year we have extended the area in which we advertise with very little result and the Kersey Community Consultation Event has so far produced no extra use of the hall. This is a problem the Committee continues to battle with. The third possibility is to increase our fundraising. The Autumn Buffet continues to provide us with a small addition to our funds but we need to increase our ticket sales. There are one or two other ideas the Committee will be exploring during this year. Our fundamental purpose has always been, and will continue to be, to provide the village and all its organisations with a well-equipped, well-maintained building in which to gather. We hope the village will continue to use it!

### **Village Produce Association – Rachel Wells**

An outing was organised to Wimpole Hall in July. This was not quite so well attended as usual but all those who went had an enjoyable day. We held our 60th flower show in September with a good number of entries. The marquees were let 14 times during the year, at the end of our financial year there was a balance of £10,921 in the funds. This year the outing is to Anglesey Abbey on the 18th July. The question most asked at the organisation evening was 'Where was the outing going to be this year?' We will see whether all those people really were interested. The flower show is being held on the 12th September, you should all have received a schedule.