

Minutes of Kersey Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 7 April 2025 in Kersey Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present

John Hume (Chair), Parish Councillors Liz Bostock, Penny Calnan, Esme Chapman, David Butcher and Richard Walker. 3 members of the public and Sarah Partridge (Clerk) Robert Lindsay – Suffolk County Councillor and Leigh Jamieson - Babergh District Councillor for part of the meeting.

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

APA 1/25 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Kersey Parish Councillor Andrew Rogers. Leigh Jamieson (BDC) apologises that he will be late. Adrian Blyth, Jess Damant, Claire Dunnell Paley, Jonathan Marsh, Linda Newbigging, Veronica Partridge, Mark Pertwee, Neville Whittell

APA 2/25 Minutes of the previous Parish Assembly

The minutes of the previous Parish Assembly, held on 15 April 2024 were confirmed as being correct and signed.

APA 3/25 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

Minutes of Kersey Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 7 April 2025 in Kersey Village Hall at 7.30pm

APA 4/25 Kersey People and Place Plan

The Parish Council has set up a steering group to work on a People and Place Plan for Kersey. Also known as a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement. This will give the community a collective voice and way to record what is important now and in the future. This will help guide the decisions of the Parish Council and importantly, help to influence Suffolk and Babergh Councils in their decision making which impacts on our local area.

About 50 responses have been received from residents following the recent survey which was delivered to every house in Kersey (It is estimated there are 170 lived in homes in the Parish).

Although disappointing, this is a reasonable reply rate for community consultations.

Not all responses have been input into the spreadsheet yet but of those who responded:

Over 90% have their main residence in Kersey. Nearly 1/3 have lived in Kersey for less than 5 years.

Nearly 6% anticipate needing a new family home in Kersey in the next 5 years.

Over 60% are retired or do not work. Nearly 10% are employed in a Kersey based business.

70% of working people work from home all or some of the time.

Over 50% are not happy with the mobile phone reception.

Living in Kersey, people most like the friendly, rural village community, peaceful countryside, quiet roads and natural beauty. All of which people feel are most important and should be protected.

All the community amenities and facilities are well valued.

Better transport links which would reduce reliance on cars was a regular comment. Some residents said they would use a bus service to Hadleigh regularly or occasionally.

50% would welcome safer options to encourage active travel, particularly to Hadleigh.

50% would need community organisations and social opportunities to help their family continue to live in Kersey.

2/3 of people would approve of some new homes being built in Kersey for people with a local connection if it was carefully planned.

Nearly 90% of people use their car weekly.

There are some concerns about speeding and lack of public bus services. Public footpaths are well regarded.

There are some concerns about the number of holiday lets in Kersey.

In 15 years time many would like to see Kersey much as it is now but with more families and a vibrant community supported by parishioners.

Responses from all the various community organisations are still awaited. The steering group will fully analyse all the responses, include them in the draft People and Place Plan to then share with the community at a further community consultation event later in the year.

APA 5/25 To review whether Kersey would like a Neighbourhood Watch scheme

Kersey set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme many years ago. We are fortunate to live in a low crime area and with the advent of social media and the opportunity to sign up to local police alerts this scheme has been allowed to lapse and currently no one has volunteered to co-ordinate a scheme in Kersey. There is information and links from the Kersey website to find police messaging services and advice. Suffolk Neighbourhood Watch Association website has more information about how schemes work <https://suffolknwa.co.uk/index.html>. Reinstating the scheme was discussed in 2024 with the agreement it would be reviewed in 2025. No one present was interested in reinstating a formal neighbourhood watch scheme. However, it was commented that WhatsApp groups covering smaller areas of Kersey do operate and pass on suspicious information. Perhaps this is something to consider for all areas of Kersey.

Minutes of Kersey Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 7 April 2025 in Kersey Village Hall at 7.30pm

APA 6/25 Any other business

Kersey events calendar on the Kersey website. Just a reminder that there is a community calendar where you can keep up to date with all the events planned in Kersey by the many community organisations. Via google calendar you can subscribe to the Kersey community calendar so you get automatic reminders of events. If you are planning an event, please check this first to avoid clashes. If you would like your event listed, please contact Sarah Partridge clerk@kerseyparish.gov.uk

www.kerseyparish.gov.uk/events

Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority. There is a government consultation open until 13 April 2025 seeking views, particularly from all interested parties, including those who live and work across Norfolk and Suffolk, on the effect of establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority in the area. It includes questions on the proposed geography and how the Combined County Authority will make decisions, together with questions on the effects of working across this geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority.

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation?utm_source=Devolution+-updated+17th+February+2025&utm_medium=Email#:~:text=This%20consultation%20seeks%20views%20on,the%20English%20Devolution%20White%20Paper

Local Government Reorganisation. There are also separate proposals for reorganisation of existing county, district and borough councils in Norfolk and Suffolk. This is a totally separate process and is not covered by the above mayoral consultation. It is expected there will be public consultation on this over the coming months so please watch the local press for more details. These changes will be significant and will affect everyone living in Suffolk. We encourage all residents to engage with these consultations.

Babergh Statement of Community Involvement consultation. Babergh would like to reduce the cost of advertising planning applications. They plan to stop posting neighbour letters and to just display a notice adjacent to the application sites. Residents were encouraged to respond to this consultation.

Attendance and engagement with Parish events. Those present considered why more parishioners had not attended this meeting which is an open meeting for all Kersey residents. This meeting was advertised in the newsletter, Kersey website and on the noticeboard. Residents like the newsletter but perhaps there needs to be digital communication as well, as a form of reminder for meetings and events. The younger generations tend to rely on digital communication. This concern also relates to numbers attending events in Kersey and encouraging volunteers for many of the Kersey Community Organisations. It was wondered whether it would help to set up more community WhatsApp groups. During covid groups were set up in Wickerstreet Green and Kersey Tye by the residents. They are now used for important information which is relevant to their area such as suspicious activity, welcoming new residents, wrongly delivered parcels, road closures, power cuts, or anything that affects the whole locality. There is no general chatter or adverts etc. Maybe more could be set up for other small areas of the parish? However, this was dependant on the residents wishing to set them up and then join a group. It was felt small areas would work better than a whole Kersey Parish group which would be too big and therefore information less relevant.

It was suggested that at the People and Place Plan consultation later this year it should have refreshments and be a bit of a social event.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20pm.

There are 13 pages appended to these minutes.

Signed

Date

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

Suffolk County Council - County Councillor Robert Lindsay

Locality and Highways discretionary budget spending.

I have used up my locality budget for the past year and highways budget which was a lump sum for the past four financial years. I understand I am to be allotted an annual budget for both from April 1.

Of relevance to Kersey in the past year was contribution towards the 40mph limit on Union Hill and funding a storyteller to promote storytelling amongst pupils at Hadleigh High School.

Union Hill 40mph limit

Fingers crossed this will happen this long awaited project will happen this spring, to coincide with planned resurface works. I'd like to thank both Kersey and Semer parish councils for their forbearance and co operation on this. The road should be safer for residents along it as well as drivers who use it as a result.

Motions during the year

Of note was my Green, LibDem and Independent group's motion in October to ask for a cross party panel of councillors to look at lowering the bar to intervening for pavement repair (currently they will not repair if the pavement is less than 2cm above the level). The administration voted this down but promised that they would review the criteria they used. We have fed in our request but we have yet to hear whether they will change things.

In December 2024 We also got unanimous approval for a motion calling on the government to adopt policies of prioritising "roofs before rural" when it comes to the roll out of panels. There is no real reason why solar panels can not be made compulsory in new builds and planning barriers to solar on existing rooftops can be eased.

A daily bus between Hadleigh and Stowmarket?

I was pleased to see that the county council are looking again at funding for a daily scheduled bus between Hadleigh and Stowmarket, after rejecting applications that Hitcham, Bildeston and Finborough parish councils made the year before. It makes no sense that there is no regular bus that can get for example students or employees to our mainline train station at peak times. I have been told that if the current operator (HCT) does not want to run the service, the council can put it to tender.

Local Government centralisation – Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk and scrapping local districts and county council

It is becoming clear that the Mayoral tier of government will add a new layer of costs, likely eliminating any hoped for savings from merging district and county councils. The election for the Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk will happen in May 2026. The current schedule is for elections for a "shadow" unitary councillors to be elected in May 2027 and the new unitary council(s) will commence May 2028, at which time county and district councils will dissolve. But there are doubts whether the Govt can meet this timetable. Districts are asking for two and preferably three unitaries in Suffolk, the county council wants one. Larger does not necessarily mean cheaper, since many services – such as bin emptying – are already delivered by district councils collaborating in partnership and other services eg public toilet maintenance - are often more cheaply serviced using local contractors and more efficiently provided by those staff and councillors with more local knowledge.

Suffolk Libraries to be brought in house

On Tuesday 18th March the county's cabinet approved a recommendation to take the Suffolk Library Service in house after they failed to agree a renewal of the contract with the charity that has been running them since 2012. There were no other bidders. Our group attempted to "call in" the decision

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

– giving it another chance to be scrutinised at the scrutiny committee but our call in and that of the Labour group was rejected.

State of Suffolk's Roads

In July 2024, a report was brought to Scrutiny Committee which looked into the condition of Suffolk's roads, the amount spent by the council to repair them and how repair works were prioritised. The findings were that amount of funding available for repairing highways was around £17m per year, but £50m per year would be needed for an optimal programme of resurfacing. Works are prioritised by the council's Highway Maintenance Operational Plan, which sets out the parameters for repair work and the order of priority repairs. Unsurprisingly, main roads and roads which have a lot of traffic are prioritised over quieter roads which do not. Having said this, the council is currently undertaking a scheme of resurfacing some residential roads which have fallen into disrepair, having announced an additional £10m of funding for this project in May 2023.

Council Budget 2025-26

In February 2025, the council budget for the 2025-26 year included approved the maximum rise in council tax of 4.99%, including the 2% social care precept for adult care.

The budget does not include borrowing from the council's reserves, which was a concern last year. Instead, it relies on delivering £28.4m of savings across many council services. The Schools Grant, SEND and adult social care are providing much cost pressure.

The council is also forecasting that in the next few years, it will have budget 'gaps' that will only grow: £33.1m for 2026-27, and £96.2m in 2028-29.

Still not much sign of improvement in Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Following the poor Ofsted/CQC inspection report published in January 2024 last year, the council has been trying to improve SEND services. It spent an extra £4.4m to recruit more staff and approved £9.1m over three years to clear a backlog of care plans. But in January 2025, the council's Public Health team reported that delays in EHCP (care plans) assessment, ADHD and autism assessment and support, and access to mental health services for young people were still unsatisfactory. In some cases, like speech and language therapy, they were getting worse.

Update on Flooding after Babet

Following the Storm Babet flooding in October 2023, the council announced it was investing an extra £1m to investigate the causes of flooding and take action to prevent further floods.

A year later, in November 2024, the council announced it would be allocating a further £1.5m from its reserves to deal with recommendations made in the 10 investigation reports published so far. A further 38 investigation reports have been commissioned by the council relating to Storm Babet flooding. The council also announced it would be writing to the government to request £20m to protect Suffolk from flooding, given that extreme weather will be become more likely due to the effects of climate change.

Babergh District Council – Councillor Leigh Jamieson

Last spring who would have thought that the proposed changes that we now face would be upon us. Although the County Council had considered devolution proposals during the last few years, there had never been any suggestion that district councils would cease to exist. Back then, we never expected to be spending so much time on one topic.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

Car parks - Babergh, unlike all other districts in Suffolk, had long been able to provide free parking in our main towns. It was a concession that we all cherished but it was something that the council was struggling to continue to fund. While the last administration initially put forward the proposals, continued pressure on the council budget meant that the council had to instigate the charges this term.

Finalised in the early autumn the charges came in to affect in January this year with charges in Hadleigh starting at £1 for one hour in the short stay car park or £1 for two hours in the long stay. Green Party councillors in Hadleigh and Sudbury strongly opposed the implementation of the charges, and I do feel that a free period of an hour or thirty minutes could have been worthwhile. However, although it is too soon to ascertain if there has been any detrimental effect on the towns, early reports indicate that takings are in line with the councils' predictions. The council will monitor the situation, and Scrutiny committee will review progress later this year.

The properties at Corks Lane finally started to go up for sale with some properties already purchased. The development which has been a difficult project for the council, will eventually see the original buildings transformed into new high-quality homes, with a mix of one, two, three and four-bedroom apartments and one cottage. Unfortunately, due to a number of factors including the pandemic and the rising costs of materials the cost of the project continues to rise. As the only party not to have been directly involved in the sell off, Green Councillors have called for a full independent inquiry into the way the whole venture has been handled.

Green Party cabinet members identified Housing as a serious concern early on and by working with the new housing team they have implemented a number of new policies. Also, more importantly, the full housing stock assessment is now almost complete. At the start of the current administration the team were saying that this would take at least four years to complete. The Green Party head of housing did not accept this target and through her persistence the stock check is now 80% completed already.

Another success for the council is the introduction of Listed Building Consent orders and Listed Building Development orders which allow owners of listed buildings to upgrade windows and install PV panels and other renewable technologies. Full council approved the initiative put forward by Green Party councillors, in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, this year.

Other topics discussed over the last year included the proposed changes to waste collection. Back in September the cabinet agreed that the collections will change to a three-weekly cycle with two separate recycling bins, for different materials, along with the introduction of new weekly food waste collections from 2026. The plan is for one recycling bin for things like glass and cartons, while the other will be for cardboard and paper. The general waste bin will be the third bin, and one bin will be collected each week along with the food waste bin.

Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury has also been a big issue this year. Following routine maintenance to the roof in August contractors discovered more complex problems that left the pool closed until the New Year. The repair costs were unbudgeted and have placed an unexpected burden on the already difficult finances.

In terms of finance, the budget is a continuing concern to members and officers alike. Despite making savings and additional income totalling £2.6million, the council still had to use £630k from its financial resilience reserve to plug a budget gap and still faces a budget shortfall of £14.6m over the six years from 2024/5 to 2029/30. Further savings and, unfortunately, additional increases in council tax, fees and charges are unavoidable.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

Late in the year came two big announcements from national government. Firstly, The new Labour governments commitment to build 1.5million homes has resulted in 86% uplift in Babergh's housing delivery commitments. The council now has a requirement to build 775 new homes a year across the district - 16,275 properties in 20 years including a 5% buffer requirement. This is a huge ask for the council and will have ramifications for every parish in the district. The Green Party head of planning is working with the planning team to encourage parishes and towns to develop neighbourhood plans. In this way the residents can have a direct say on where they will accept development and what that development will look like.

This announcement was shortly followed by the Devolution and Local Government Reforms plans that will see the creation of a single Mayoral Combined Authority for Suffolk and Norfolk, with Unitary Councils replacing County and District Councils in 2028. Following their acceptance onto the fast-track program, both Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils cancelled elections, planned for this May. Instead, elections for the new Mayor will take place in May next year. National government will decide the size and number of unitary councils at some point in the future. The Suffolk district and Ipswich borough councils have submitted a case for two or three unitary councils as their preferred choice.

Locally, Things have been fairly quiet in Kersey this year. I have been able to help a few residents in the village with housing issues and I am pursuing a couple of options to try to improve mobile reception in the area. In regard to this I am liaising with a third-party vendor who provides signal boosters, while at the same time exploring the idea of install signal boosters on the church tower.

Kersey Parish Council, Chair's Report 2024-25 – John Hume, Chair

Our aim is to make Kersey a great place in which to live, work and visit. We are the first level of government and seek to enhance well-being and safety within the Parish by representing the interests of all residents.

Other Councillors are Liz Bostock, David Butcher, Penny Calnan, Esme Chapman, Andrew Rogers (Vice Chair) and Richard Walker. I thank them and our Clerk, Sarah Partridge for their continuing service to our community. We are grateful for the support and advice of Robert Lindsay and Leigh Jamieson, Councillors from Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council respectively.

Kersey Parish Council remains financially strong. Details are examined at each meeting with regular audits and risk assessments. Our budget for 2024/5 is £18,882, an increase of 1.12% over last year. I am pleased to confirm that the Parish Council element of your council tax will remain unchanged at £75.46 for a band D property.

There were 15 planning applications this year. All were supported and subsequently approved by Babergh District Council. When applications are being considered by the Parish Council it is helpful if the applicant attends the Parish Council meeting.

We started consultation on the People and Place Plan with the aim of providing a collective voice for opinions of parishioners on the future of Kersey. The results can also be used as the basis for a Neighbourhood Plan. Plans for an information Good Neighbour network is being progressed and the newsletter survey carried out.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

The Council supported the introduction of the 40mph speed limit on Union Hill and the street lighting has been amended, saving money and helping dark sky initiatives. Richard Walker has been active in representing Kersey in a series of local transport infrastructure initiatives against a backdrop of reduced subsidies.

These are uncertain times for local government structures and there will be significant changes in the near future. It is vital that localism is not lost and that there is involvement and accountability for residents. This will not happen without participation of a younger generation in the Parish Council and other village organisations. To serve our community in the future, we need succession of management and leadership.

Kersey Website: www.kerseyparish.gov.uk

The Kersey website moved to a .gov.uk domain name this year, which is much more secure. 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 Council set a budget for 2025/26 of £18,882 and requested the precept received from Babergh. The approved precept amount is £15,677. There has been no increase in the Parish Council element of the council tax bill for a Band D property which remains at £75.46 per year.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

Parish Council budget for the years ending March 2025 and March 2026

Payments	Budget yr ending 31/03/25	Budget yr ending 31/03/26
Administration	£ 1,142.00	£ 1,137.00
Staff costs	£ 7,560.00	£ 7,950.00
Training and external meetings	£ 250.00	£ 250.00
Street lighting	£ 560.00	£ 560.00
Highway safety signs	£ 1,500.00	£ -
Insurance (PC & Glebe)	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Glebe hedgecut	£ 110.00	£ 115.00
Mowing the Glebe	£ 250.00	£ 260.00
RoSPA inspection	£ 110.00	£ 110.00
Bin emptying charges	£ 20.00	£ 20.00
St Mary's PCC	£ 500.00	£ 1,000.00
Defibrillators	£ 150.00	£ 460.00
Village Emergency Telephone	£ 100.00	£ 100.00
People & Place Plan	£ -	£ 500.00
Section 137	£ -	
General PC payments	£12,752.00	£12,962.00
Election costs reserve	£ 165.00	£ 165.00
Church Walk future maint reserve	£ 130.00	£ 130.00
Footpath map printing reserve	£ 75.00	£ 75.00
Fixed asset reserve	£ 900.00	£ 1,500.00
General Parish Council reserve	£ -	£ 545.00
Contingencies	£ 300.00	£ 300.00
Total Precept	£14,322.00	£15,677.00
Defib reserve spend	£ 100.00	£ -
Fixed asset reserve spend		£ 700.00
Filming donation reserve spend	£ 70.00	
General PC total budget	£14,492.00	£16,377.00
Footpath working group	£ 1,260.00	£ 680.00
Jubilee working group	£ -	£ -
KCPC working group	£ 2,925.00	£ 1,825.00
Total Budget	£18,677.00	£18,882.00

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 R Pratt, Chair

It has been another good year for the Kersey Footpath Working Group (FWG). The volunteers continue to do an amazing job repairing broken posts across the footpath network and maintaining the footpaths in generally good condition. As a result of these efforts, the volunteers continue to receive praise from residents and visitors to the Parish.

The new mower operates well and the new motorized strimmer has been of benefit. The annual budget for the FWG was recently approved by the Parish Council and there are sufficient funds currently available in the accounts to enable the work of cutting and maintaining the footpaths in the season ahead.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

As in previous years, I wish to extend my thanks to all the volunteers and landowner representatives for all the help and co-operation given throughout the course of the year. We expect to begin of first cutting of the footpaths from April/May.

We trust everyone throughout the Parish and our many visitors will continue to enjoy walking in the beautiful Kersey countryside in the year ahead.

KCPC (Playground) working Group– Jonathan Marsh, Chair

The volunteers have worked hard again this year to maintain the playground, exercise equipment and cricket net at The Glebe. These are all enjoyed by residents, the school and visitors. The annual quiz night was a success and an entertaining evening. The quiz raises important funds to help with maintenance costs for the recreational facilities. Thank you to all the volunteers who help with maintenance and mowing at the Glebe.

KVG (Volunteer) Working Group – John Hume, Chair

The KVG's aim is to make Kersey a pleasant and safe place to live, work and visit. The volunteers are allocated a specific area and their role is to collect litter, report highway problems to Suffolk County Council and notify Anglian Water of leaks. The volunteers are thanked for their contribution to our community. More volunteers are always welcome. For more information contact John Hume of the Clerk Sarah Partridge.

Forget Me Nots – Veronica Partridge

We have had a very enjoyable year, and welcomed a few new members, but also said goodbye to Molly Robinson and Marie Chaplin who are no longer mobile enough to join us. Norah Orriss has moved to Hadleigh, and we do pick up from Hadleigh, so Norah is working hard to get back her past mobility so she can join us.

During our outings for lunch, the next venue is chosen at the closing of our meal, making it very difficult to put details into the Village Magazine, but if anyone wishes to know where we are dining next, please contact me, Veronica Partridge on 07595263111 for full details and pick up if required. This coming Thursday we will be eating at Corn Craft. Booking is necessary only through me.

We dine every two weeks on average with at least 10 persons, and we also welcome others who join us on occasion when they can.

The Forget me Nots was established well over 40 years ago by the Parish Church and has evolved and become what it is today, which is the wish of the members, a lunch dining group, with a few variations from time to time.

If anyone would like to know further about The Forget Me Nots, please do make contact on the above number, we would all be very pleased to welcome you.

Franey, Rand and Pest House Charities - Rachael Rogers

The Trustees have met during the last year and grants were 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 in May.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

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

The ringing practices have been maintained, but we have been short of ringers for the services, so if anyone is interested in learning to ring can they please contact me. During the year we have received 2 donations and have funds of £5,000.

Friends of St Mary's Church Trust (FoSM) – Mark Rigby, Chair

Another strong year for the FoSM. After income of £5,398.79, the balance at the end of the year was £20,439.60. Membership increased during the year, bringing the total Friends to 22 members. In addition, there are 57 '500 Club' tokens in play each month yielding £145 a month gross, £72.50 net after prize payout.

There were three events held during the year, raising a gross income of £7,949 and £5,855 after expenses.

The first event in the spring was the Bridges Farm Open Day, which is very kindly organised and donated by Sarah and Chris Partridge. This is an excellent family fun event, raising just under £1,000 and our deepest thanks go to Chris and Sarah for their generosity and continued support to St Mary's. Income was raised from teas, coffees and cakes, a BBQ and 50% of entry revenues.

The second event was the Three Chordettes afternoon tea and a first run at this type of event. The event was a complete sell out and raised over £1,300 and probably had the highest rating of positive feedback. We are hoping to run a repeat this coming year. Special mention goes to Suzie Rudkin for the generous loan of fine bone china and cake stands, and Juliet Logan-Lynch for providing and delivering fabulous table flower arrangements.

The final event of the year was the annual Christmas supper dance, a genuine firm favourite in the Kersey calendar and an excellent fundraiser. This year the event smashed all expectations and raised well over £3,500. Our immense gratitude to Sarah and Trevor Stirling for not only leading the event but an additional thank you for offering the wine tasting auction prize. A lot of hard work and effort goes into the event, not only from the trustees and fellow co-opted members but also from the guests! There will be another Christmas event this year but will be on a new and entirely different theme.

Our thanks go to all of our sponsors for the events, in particular BGA Print and Nevelli & Whitwell Services. We would also like to thank Viv Marsh, who has over the last five years helped with the design and printing of all our printing needs, be these our flyers, advertising material, and tickets. There were no jazz events this year due to the stretched resources of George Double and his tour commitments but we continue to work with him and hope to be in a position to put on some form of jazz in the future.

Grays' Trust – Philippa Harris, secretary

In spite of a year of widespread financial uncertainty, our investments continued to perform well. Out of the year's income of £11,264 we made grants of £8,311 divided between 2 Sixth Form students, 8 Undergraduates, 2 Post graduates and the Tuesday Club. We also enabled the Primary School to take all pupils to the pantomime in Ipswich.

The Trustees decided to increase the size of the contingency fund to allow the Trust more flexibility in the consideration of unexpected applications.

Whilst we expect applicants for Sixth Form or University grants to make their applications by the end of August, in time for the start of the academic year, we would like to remind Parishioners again that the Grays' Trust exists to support all types of education and training. The Trustees are happy to consider a wide variety of requests from both young and old.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

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

Since our last report we received our Ofsted inspection which took place on 25th and 26th June 2024. We are pleased to share our report grading of 'good' and in particular, two fundamental areas of primary school life: behaviour and attitudes and personal development, which were both judged as outstanding. The inspector's visit coincided with our 150th celebrations but this did not stop us from having a fabulous time. Bishop Mike attended a formal service at the beginning of the week and various events took place, culminating in an afternoon tea for current families, alumni and Kersey residents. We were overwhelmed by the number of people who attended and the treasures that surfaced, including photographs and behaviour registers over a century old.

We are currently attracting families from north of Kersey, (Hitcham, 8.13km from school), the east (Somersham, 9.61km), the south (Shelly, 5.62km) and the west (Edwardstone, 4.8km). This shows the draw of our wonderful school, perched on the hill by the church. We have 6 pupils in our reception class. They are all now well and truly settled into Kersey life, enjoying their first year of school and all it has to offer. Early in the autumn term, we held Sports Week which as usual was a huge success. The children's favourite climbing wall returned once again, along with 'Spider Mountain,' an extreme climbing frame and inflatable slide! They also experienced a range of activities during the week, such as ultimate frisbee, yoga, archery, dodgeball, skateboarding and scootering.

We marked Remembrance Day with a Service at St Mary's. We laid the children's homemade wreath by the font with others from the local community. Each year, new pupils who have joined our school add their own poppies and our wreath grows as the school does. It also allows us to remember the pupils who once attended Kersey but have now moved on.

Our Kersey Outdoor Explorer sessions are a real highlight of our week. We are grateful to be able to use an area of the churchyard which we have now developed into a little spot that the children love and care for passionately. We all get so much out of it and it is now an established part of our school timetable which allows youngsters to go outside in all weathers to explore and learn.

We held an Open Afternoon in November, though without the church craft fair which has often coincided in the past, it did not attract as many people. We are considering moving it to a school day when pre-school children and their parents may visit and see the school in action, enabling them to meet pupils and see lessons in action and join in with some activities and learning.

St Mary's was the perfect performance venue for us to stage last year's nativity. Vicar Geoffrey led our Candlemas and Christingle service in January. Once again it was a very special service and a magical moment to hear the children softly singing while holding their lit Christingles.

The spring term began with our annual pantomime trip to the New Wolsey Theatre, this year to see 'Sleeping Beauty'. This performance was accessible to all and every one of our pupils thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

We celebrated World Book Day with our popular annual literary quiz; the children's costumes were once again a real treat to see!

Pancake races took place on Shrove Tuesday, marking the start of Lent. Vicar Geoffrey led our Easter service last week.

There are a number of residents from the village who give their time and skills to support the school. Our thanks go to Jane Morgan who leads Stave House music sessions and Lynn English who hears readers. We are so very grateful for their visits each week.

Our new school website has now been launched and we are delighted with its new look. Video footage will soon be added to showcase our school; this will be filmed later in the summer term.

We are also expecting our SIAMS inspection this term. To prepare for this, we have been thinking about how pupils show courageous advocacy through their actions and ensuring that we have a number of spiritual areas located throughout the school.

The summer term ahead is looking exciting - we will be commemorating VE Day with afternoon tea in the playground, enjoying Sports Day and performing our summer production of The Three Little Pigs!

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

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, for the school's 150th event and for Kersey Project's Summer party.

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.

This donation and one from the Parish Council for the materials enabled us to install a new field gate and posts this year. It is set slightly more into the field to allow safer pulling off for cars and much easier opening and closing.

Events Organised by Kersey Projects – August 2024 to January 2025

Our Summer event during 2024 was the Summer Party, held on Saturday 24 August. This was a free event, open to all parishioners and eighty people attended! We were entertained once again by the marvellous Dan Sharp and a cold buffet was served. The weather was not kind to us and it poured with rain the whole day, mercifully stopping at around 7.00 pm so although we were a bit chilly, at least we didn't get wet. We understand the party continued at another venue until around three o'clock in the morning. Enormous thanks must go to Pete Partridge and his helpers for their sterling work erecting and dismantling the marquee and to Jonathan and Suzannah Marsh for the use of their electricity!

On Saturday 30 November 2024 we organised a Christmas Floral Decoration Workshop, a ticketed event and enjoyed by twelve creative people! This event could not have taken place without the marvellous Juliet Logan-Lynch whose expertise and creative talent was given free to make this workshop a wonderful success and with twelve very happy partakers going home with their creations!

Sunday 31 November 2024 was the date for the annual lighting of the Christmas tree, an event which could not take place without the heroic work of Adrian and Natalie Blyth who erected the tree and put up the lights. Mulled wine, sausage rolls and mince pies were served with over 60 people attending.

Friday 24 January 2025 was the date of this year's Burns Night, a ticketed event, where 60 people again enjoyed being entertained by the Hosepipe Band encouraging us all into dancing, most of which was wonderfully chaotic and enormous fun! Masses of thanks go to Stuart McQuaker and Matt Smith who once again, literally, stepped up to the plate and cooked the delicious traditional haggis meal.

Our main event in 2025 will be Kersey Open Gardens, taking place on Saturday 7 June when, to date, we have 21 gardens opening to the public.

Nightingale Trust – David Butcher, Trustee

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 29th March 2025 and one of its trustees retired on rotation, Mr Matt Smith. The trustees thanked Mr Smith for his hard work and support over the previous four years. A new trustee, Mrs Kim Daniels, was welcomed.

The following financial summary was presented at that meeting.

Total assets as at 29.03.25 was £9,473.47, compared to £9,901.10 for the previous year. (lower due to increased donations made.) Total income for the year was £1,697.47 and total expenditure was

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

£1,801.00 making a small loss of £103.53. The trust remains in a healthy position and no unforeseen liabilities are outstanding.

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. A one-off payment to Kersey Primary school to assist with gardening planters. The trust works closely with the school and local community to ensure that good causes that are in line with the trust's mandate are supported and maintained.

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 and water pumps are in good working order, and all public footpaths and walkways are cleared and safe to use. The trust has full public liability indemnity cover through Zurich Insurance. Each plot is inspected twice a year for health and safety reasons, with any issues reported and actioned promptly. The trustees would like to make special mention to Mr Adrian Blyth for all his help and support in general maintenance along with Natalie Blyth who ensures the allotments are well run and administered. 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 facility will run again in the 2025 season. Our heartfelt thanks go to her for this support. There were no reports of damage or theft this last year to any of the allotments or tenants' property.

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

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all villagers involved in the care and maintenance of our church. This includes our dedicated flower arrangers, cleaning team, clock winders, door lockers, bell ringers, readers, and sides person team. Your dedication enhances our services and creates a warm, welcoming atmosphere for all who enter St Mary's. We deeply value your contribution and remain grateful for the time you generously give.

Despite facing challenges in fundraising and PCC membership, our church community has shown resilience and dedication in maintaining our much-loved place of worship and fostering a strong spiritual environment.

Safeguarding responsibilities are now part of the PCCs role. This includes training. There have been no reports of safeguarding issues this year.

Fundraising for church running costs remains a challenge due to limited opportunities in an already flourishing village calendar and the lack of capacity within the PCC. Two coffee mornings were booked by U3a and a walking group.

A celebration of the Clock's Centenary with a mad hatter's tea party is planned for 31st May. In September the cricket match was held at Rockall and afternoon tea enjoyed by all.

Service times and schedule was regularised during 2024; Tuesday mornings at 9.30 and Sundays at 11am for the first two Sundays and even song at 4pm or 6.30pm in the summer.

Faculty applications for the Shrine, internal windows were approved and one for the lighting submitted (since approved).

Building and grounds maintenance and servicing

We would like to thank Nick Judd for continuing to support the PCC by monitoring service and repair schedules for the building and grounds. The Quinquennial Inspection, completed in Nov 2024, will be actioned by the PCC over the next 5 years.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

The PCC continues to support the spiritual life of the school; Rev Geoffrey attends once a week for Collective Worship or Open the Book and Linda continues to serve as a Foundation Governor.

Like many organisations which depend on volunteers, we would like to encourage anyone with a little time and energy to consider being part of the PCC team to help us serve the community for many years to come.

Kersey Table Tennis Club - Report for the Year ending 31st March 2025 - Adrian Blyth

The Table Tennis Club has had a moderately successful year with attendances down on the previous year this, despite advertising in local village newsletters. However, attendance has been sufficient to cover our costs.

The Clubs finances remain healthy and self-supporting via the fees structure. Reserves are available to support basic equipment replacement. The accounts for the year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 will be audited in the next few weeks.

During this season, we applied for a grant with the aim of upgrading our tables which have been in use since 2009. This application was unsuccessful and we will continue to pursue other avenues to help finance this aim.

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).

Our provisional dates for the season 2025 to 2026 are 04/09/2025 (start) to 25/06/2026 (finish)
The purpose of the club is social and recreational and all abilities are welcome.

Tuesday Club – Rachel Wells

The club met nine times in 2024 one meeting was cancelled due to lack of numbers. We started the year with a talk on the French Garrigue followed by the Isle of Wight. Rev Geoff and Dean Jo came to talk about their life and work. We were joined by Lynn Mortimer and her husband James who gave a very entertaining talk on their mayoral year. Phoebe Chew came and we all had a fun evening decorating cupcakes finally PC Niall Johnson advised us on crime prevention. The annual meal was held at Groton Fox and we finished the year with a Christmas party.

Sadly the horse Tilly which the club has sponsored for many years became unwell and was put to sleep. We now sponsor a grey called Cloud.

The club is grateful to the Grays' Trust for their donation to help with the cost of speakers.

Due to old age, illness and moves the club is very low on numbers and it would be good if more joined us.

Kersey Village Hall – Veronica Partridge, Chair

Kersey Village Hall had a financially sound start to the year, April 2024 – April 2025, and continued to hold its own all throughout the year. No regular bookings were lost (Elections; various Committee Meetings; table tennis; art classes; and yoga classes, also the Annual Quiz and the immensely popular Burns Night) The school also uses the Hall from time to time. There are also one off letting such as children's parties.

Annual Parish Assembly Reports April 2025

We have not had any further viable enquiries for regular bookings. but this seems to be the norm with other Village Halls that we have talked with.

The work on the fire exit has been completed as per the fire regulations and has tidied up the stage fire exit, which has allowed for more room for wheelchair users leaving the Hall.

The Autumn Buffet, which is the only fund raising that the Committee do for the Hall, showed that the numbers were down, 50 attended, disappointingly lower than the previous year. Kersey's ageing population and the lack of interest in the Hall by the younger generations and in other village organisations is a growing concern.

But saying that, the evening was deemed very enjoyable and £750 was raised on ticket sales, £217.00 for the raffle and total income was 967.00, with expenses £352.33 leaving a total profit of £614.67

In January, the Hall celebrated its 90th year and the Committee chose to mark this occasion with a free Buffet for all villagers, 65 persons attended. It gave the Villagers a small view into the past to show how the Villagers came together to raise the funds to build this Hall, and used it on a regular basis as shown in adverts and newspaper cuttings!

Unfortunately, Norah Orriss, our treasurer, tendered her resignation after more than 56 years on the Committee due to ill health. Norah has looked after our Finances and invested wisely to give us an excellent return. She is sadly missed by all, also for her intimate knowledge of the Village, its past population, and our beautiful Hall. But she is taking a very keen interest from a back seat.

Refurbishment of the Hall is under discussion for this coming year and the Committee will endeavour to keep the Hall to the high standard that has been maintained over the last 90 years.

I have been Chairman of this Committee for 15 years, and I feel it is time for me to hand over this position to someone who will bring new innovations to the table.

I would like to thank the Committee for all their dedication to the Hall and to myself, special thanks to go to Norah Orriss and to Natalie Blyth for all their very hard work, without them in recent tough years, our Hall would probably not have survived the troubled time.

Village Produce Association – Rachel Wells

During the year we organised an outing to Cambridge Botanic gardens, the annual flower show was held in September.

Since Covid and lockdown started our marquee bookings have been down but this year things are looking better with a good number of let's which is encouraging. We were able to make donations to help the church floodlights, churchyard and newsletter. The AGM was held in March when a healthy financial report stated a balance of £10,267. Norah Orriss resigned after being on the committee for many years and a new member was appointed.

We are planning a visit to Wimpole Hall on the 21st June with the Flower show on the 13th September. This is the 60th show so we would like it to be a bit special.