

## Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council

### Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 3 April 2023, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett.

Present: Cllrs Mrs E Cain (Chairman), Mrs E Aldred, T Alston, Mrs A Arnold, Mrs L Drury, C Harvey, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, N Lingard, Mrs K van Zyl. County and District Cllr A Stringer and one member of the public

#### 1. Apologies for Absence and to agree consent to apologies

Cllr Mrs H Green sent her apologies for absence. Consent was unanimously agreed.

#### 2. Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda – none received.

#### 3. To receive the following Reports

1. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> - no queries were raised.

2. County Councillor - Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes).

Questions raised included the change in 3 tier schools to 2 tier resulting in redundant school buildings.

Cllr Stringer stated these had been put to alternative use, at the former Bacton Middle School planning permission had been granted for 50 dwellings.

3. District Councillor - Cllr Stringer presented his written report – copy attached to the Minutes. Recent activity in Town Lane resulting in additional containers stored without permission was raised. Cllr Stringer stated there should be a further update from Planning Enforcement within the next few weeks. A request for regular update reports was made.

The row of tyres on the verge in front of a modern property in Church Street was raised. The tyres were stacked 3 high and it was believed not appropriate in a conservation area. Cllr Alston stated he would speak to the householder.

4. Footpaths – Cllr Mrs Aldred reported several footpaths were suffering as a result of very wet weather.

There were still some dog fouling issues in the Wetherup Street area. Two signposts were missing, one at Old Hall, Debenham boundary and one at The Mill. Signs were also reported missing at the Wetherup Street bridge and Scotch Farm, Station Road. Cllr Mrs Aldred would carry out a survey of signs.

A No Cycling sign was required near the Church footpath, Cllr Mrs Cain would put up a sign.

5. Trees – Cllr Mrs Aldred stated she had attended the County Tree Warden's AGM at Waldringfield. There had been speakers from DEFRA and a report on the late HM Queen's Platinum Green Canopy scheme. The group was now applying to become a fully registered Charity which would enable it to apply for grant funding to promote tree planting schemes.

6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** – no comments.

#### 4. To consider for approval Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 6 March 2023

Cllr Alston proposed acceptance of the minutes, seconded Cllr Lingard – proposal carried.

#### 5. Matters arising from the Minutes for report

The clerk reported all election papers had been delivered and checked in at the MSDC Return Centre at Eye.

#### 6. Planning applications for recommendation to MSDC – none received

#### 7. Planning Decisions received from MSDC

1. DC/23/00632: Land off Pitman's Corner – Outline Planning Permission for erection of 1 retirement dwelling and construction of new vehicular access to High Lane. **Outline Planning Permission Refused**

#### 8. Planning correspondence

Norwich Road, Brockford development – it was reported the appeal for refusal of 14 dwellings had been withdrawn. The Chair reported the ditch at the rear of the site had been dug out but sewage was still running into the ditch. This had been reported to Building Control at MSDC and the Environment Agency had confirmed there was pollution in the ditch.

9. **Wetheringsett Neighbourhood Plan report** – it was reported the Plan was now with the independent Neighbourhood Plan Inspector to determine whether the Plan met the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. It was hoped the Inspector's report would be completed by late May 2023.

#### 10. Village Hall

##### 1. Management Committee report

Cllr Harvey reported current funds stood at some £2500 and the annual insurance premium had just been paid. The school builders equipment currently in the village hall car park had been stored without notice. Cllr Harvey was in the process of trying to contact the builders to establish how long the equipment would be there.

##### 2. Diocesan Lease and School Licence Agreement reports



The latest Cabinet meeting approved an additional £32.013 million of investment in the Children and Young People's Directorate to ensure the Council could continue to meet its statutory duties in providing and maintaining safe, secure and appropriate accommodation for young people to learn and for those in need of care support;

The Cabinet approved additional borrowing of £26.066 million in order to fund part of the £32.013 million increase with the remaining balance of £5.947 million being funded from other capital sources,

The cabinet approved the application of £1.488 million from the Central Contingency Budget in 2023-24 to the Capital Financing Budget to fund the revenue cost of the £26.066 million of borrowing.

This extra borrowing is needed to fund increased school places needed due to high levels of housing growth, these spaces are the county councils statutory duty, concerning to note that SCC is not able to secure enough funding to cover this cost from developer contributions.

### **New Highways Services: Contract Agreed**

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded SCC's new highways services contract. The contract, worth between £800m-£1bn, will begin 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 and will last up to 20 years. The service will provide maintenance of roads, pavement, Rights of Way, drainage, hedges, construction of new roads, and snow clearing etc.

Our Group campaigned last year for Suffolk Highways maintenance to quote for the service to be brought back in-house. This was due to the extortionate prices the previous provider, Kier, gave for simple jobs such as tree cutting and speed bump designs (i.e., £5,000 for a pair of dropped kerbs, £7,500 to cut down a single tree, £10,000 to design four humps in a road).

Our Group has been given reassurance from Suffolk Highways that the same mistakes will not be repeated, and that the contract is more robust to deal with the inflated quotes previously received. However, our Group will closely monitor to ensure this is the case.

### **Household Support Fund: Extension Granted by Government**

The Government has agreed to extend the Household Support Fund, meaning local authorities will continue to receive funding to help residents through the current cost-of-living crisis. The grant is distributed through small payments to support vulnerable household meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.

To apply for help, visit Suffolk's Cost-of-Living support leaflet at: <https://suffolk.pagetiger.com/cost-of-living-support/scc1>

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## **District Councillors' Report: Wetheringsett Parish Council - April 2023**

<b>Council Meeting 20 March</b>	<p>Changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) conditions were made to allow funding bids towards library projects, continued funding (after a pilot) for cycling/walking initiatives and to reduce the need to have quotes valid for several months.</p> <p>A Planning Enforcement Plan was also agreed although we are concerned there is still not enough resource in that area.</p>
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<p><b>MSDC 2023/24 Budget</b></p>	<p>Mid Suffolk District Council will not be raising Council Tax for 2023/24. Within the 2023/24 budget, the Conservative and Independent Administration proposed a £3.5 million surplus, most of which will be put into a “strategic transformation infrastructure fund”. This may be used on the Stowmarket sports and leisure project and an innovation centre at Gateway 14 if plans are agreed. Total reserves are just under £21 million. Our Group’s proposal that £2 million of this is allocated towards energy efficiency measures was agreed and will be used to provide better insulation to housing across the district to help with the energy and cost of living crises as well as climate change.</p> <p>Last year’s agreement (included in the 2022/23 budget as a result of our Group’s amendment) to fund the delivery of the electric bus rural transport project has been put on hold by the Cabinet.</p> <p>A 7% increase in council house rents was agreed – just over £6 for social rents and £9 for affordable rents. Also, a 10% increase in garage rents – in line with the increase in CPI – and increases in sheltered housing service and utility charges.</p> <p>A reminder that of your Council Tax bill, approximately 78% goes to Suffolk County Council, 14% to the Police and 9% to Mid Suffolk District Council (as well as a proportion for each Parish).</p> <p>Members approved a capital expenditure of £6 million to deliver improved depot facilities, primarily for the waste collection service. This could result in a new depot for Mid Suffolk to replace the Creeting Road, Stowmarket depot or a new site to serve both districts.</p> <p>Council also approved funding for the development of a detailed design and planning application for the Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities (SHELF) project. A full business case will then be prepared and bids made for external funding.</p>
<p><b>MSDC Cabinet decisions</b></p>	<p>Cabinet approved a Private Sector Housing and Civil Penalties Policy to empower the council to use civil penalties as an alternative to prosecution in cases of unsatisfactory conditions in private sector housing. Civil penalties would be a last resort if all attempts to persuade the landlord to make good deficiencies within the rented property had failed.</p> <p>An update was given on the outcome of the Council’s recent referral to the Regulator of Social Housing. Future governance and monitoring arrangements and a new set of key performance indicators for the Housing Service were approved.</p> <p>Cabinet adopted a new Culture, Heritage and Visitor Strategy; one of its aims is to encourage development of the Visitor and Tourism Sector and to encourage residents to enjoy what Mid Suffolk has to offer, as well as encouraging tourism.</p>

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