

**Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council**  
**Minutes of the virtual Annual Parish Council meeting held Tuesday 4 May 2021 at 7.30m**

Present: Cllrs Mrs E Aldred, Mrs A Arnold, T Alston, Mrs E Cain, Mrs C Estcourt, Mrs H Green, C Harvey, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech and M Pease. County and District Cllr A Stringer.

**1. Election of Chairman**

The serving Chairman, Cllr Harvey welcomed all to the meeting and asked for nominations for Chairman. Cllr Pease proposed Cllr Mrs Cain for the role of Chairman, seconded Cllr Mrs Aldred. Cllr Mrs Cain confirmed she would be willing to take the role. The proposal was agreed with one abstention. The Chairman's declaration of acceptance of office form would be signed at the June live meeting. Cllr Mrs Cain took over the chairmanship of the meeting. Members recorded thanks to Cllr Harvey for his role as Chairman over the last two years and particularly during the last difficult year due to coronavirus restrictions.

**2. Apologies for absence – none.**

**3. Declarations of Interest relating to items on the agenda**

Item 11.1 - Cllr Alston

**4. Election of Vice Chairman**

Cllr Mrs Leech proposed Cllr Mrs Arnold as Vice Chairman, seconded Cllr Pease. Cllr Mrs Arnold confirmed she would be willing to take the role of Vice Chairman. The proposal was agreed with one abstention.

**5. To receive the following reports:**

Police – report available online. No queries were raised.

County Council – Cllr Stringer had presented his annual county report to the Annual Parish Meeting (copy attached to the Minutes below). Cllr Stringer thanked all councillors for their support over the last year, despite the challenges the County had been able to progress and complete many issues raised.

District Council – Cllr Stringer reported on the dismissal of the planning appeal for two dwellings at Nursery Gardens. The Planning Inspector had agreed with the Parish Council's comments. The Chairman enquired as to the improvements reported at the Mendlesham Health Centre. Cllr Stringer stated a complementary medicine facility and some hospital services were to be offered resulting in less travel for patients. A new development in Mendlesham had been named after Dr Lawton.

Footpaths – Cllr Mrs Aldred reported she had walked the circular walk which was in a very good condition apart from dog fouling on the Wetherup Street to Town Lane section.

The Chairman reported she had met with a Footpath's Officer to show him signs in need of replacement. The County were no longer replacing signs not visible from the road. The Chairman had offered to replace missing signs. Councillors to let the Chairman know of any that they knew were missing.

Cllr Harvey enquired whether the situation regarding damage footpaths due cyclists and horses using footpaths had improved. It was reported cyclists were still using the footpaths but the horse situation had improved.

Trees - report given to the Annual Parish Meeting. No further report.

**6. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC – none.**

**7. To consider for approval minutes of the video link meeting held Tuesday 6 April 2021**

Cllr Pease proposed approval of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Mrs Leech and agreed.

**8. Matters arising from the Minutes for report – none.**

**9. To confirm Parish Councillor representatives/Working Groups :**

1. Finance – Cllr M Pease
2. Public Rights of Way – Cllr Mrs E Aldred
3. Trees – Cllr Mrs E Aldred
4. Village Hall – Cllr M Pease
5. Play Area- Cllr B Lacey
6. Emergency Planning – Cllr T Alston

7. Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Mrs H Green
8. Appointment RFO and Internal Auditor – the Clerk to remain Response Financial Officer and SALC Financial Services as Internal Auditor
9. Planning – all councillors

Cllr Pease proposed adoption of the above, seconded Cllr Mrs Arnold and unanimously agreed.

#### 10. Planning applications for recommendation to MSDC

1. DC/21/01535: The Old Airfield, Town Lane – change of use of part of wider site (easternmost portion) from current B2 industrial land use to class B8 (storage or distribution) using former shipping containers. Provision of boundary treatments and erection of new 2 metre fence and access gates.  
A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.
2. DC/21/02113: Dane Lodge, Church Street – notification of tree works in Conservation Area. (T1) 2 Wild Cherry – cut back to allow new perpendicular growth. T2 Bay – cut back to approx. 2 m. T3 Variegated Bay – reduce to approx. 2m. T4 Horse Chestnut – removal of horizontal limb. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.

#### 11. Planning Decisions received from MSDC

1. DC/21/01053: 1 Station House, Brockford Green – internal alterations to provide additional living accomm. Repair and refurbishment of stairs to second floor. Reinstatement of second floor window to west elevation. **Listed Building Consent Granted.**
2. APP/W3520/W/20/3263277: The Acorns, Nursery Gardens – Erection of 2 detached dwellings. Appeal against MSDC refusal of permission. **Appeal Dismissed.**

**12. Planning Correspondence – DC/21/01048: Cherrygate Farm** – correspondence had been received from a parishioner expressing some concern at the Parish Council's support of this planning application and particularly that MSDC had not informed Essex & Suffolk Water Co as a consultee. Parish council members stated the application had been supported on the basis of information available at the time but were now aware since their response had been submitted to MSDC other information had become available that would possibly have impacted their decision. It was reported District Cllr Stringer had called in the application to enable some of the concerns raised to be explored, ie whether a double driveway could be enacted, the use of redundant buildings on the site and the type of insulation proposed. These were some of the issues that would need to be resolved before the District Council could arrive at its decision. The Parishioner would be informed of the current position above.

Town Lane Haulage site – Cllr Stringer reported a planning application had been registered and would be sent out for consultation shortly.

#### 13. Village Hall Management Committee

1. Monthly report to Parish Council

Cllr Pease reported the estimate for repairs to the damaged roof was less than anticipated so loss adjusters had been instructed to proceed with the repair work in late July so as not to impact on school use of the hall. Zurich Insurance had offered £30,000 in settlement and the work would include replacement of the entire asbestos section of the roof. The south wall will be looked at while the work was being carried out and any issues rectified. The hall was now newly decorated inside, partially decorated outside and a new roof which would result in a hall in a stable condition. The refurbishment of the windows would be the next consideration.

The Wave water invoice had been resolved resulting in a credit of £214.00. HSBC internet and telephone banking was in the process of being set up. The current bank balance stood at £5336.53 with income due from MSDC for use of the hall for local elections, £650.00 from Wetheringsett Manor School for hire during the summer term and £650 from Wetheringsett Primary School. The recently refurbished and treated wooden floor would need regular maintenance.

The committee planned to re-open the hall from 17 May 2021 and bookings taken from that date. A wedding had been booked for July. Use of the hall would need to be encouraged to justify a potential new hall, hire rates would therefore need to remain realistic.

2. Arrangements for return of parish council face to face meetings. Cllr Pease confirmed the hall would be ready for use by the Parish Council on 7 June 2021.

#### 14. Play Area maintenance report

Cllr Lacey stated the main item for consideration was replacement or removal of the sleepers and the picnic table would need to be replaced as parts of the wood had rotted. Cllr Pease offered to look into the cost of a combined table and bench set. The broken glass had been removed. It was hoped this was a one-

off occurrence but would need to be monitored.

Cllr Lacey suggested replacing the sleepers in two stages, the top two now and the other two in 2 years time. A cost of £900 for two hardwood sleepers had been obtained from Clarks of Walsham. Cllr Lacey suggested allocating approx. £1000 to replace two initially. Cllr Lacey offered to purchase and provide a vat receipt. Cllr Pease proposed the purchase as above, seconded Cllr Alston and unanimously agreed.

Two play equipment parts were required from Kompan, these were estimated at £300.00. Cllr Alston proposed purchase of the parts, seconded Cllr Pease and unanimously agreed.

The Chairman would obtain a 'No Dogs' sign to be attached to the fencing.

**15. Report on Grasscutting – cemetery and play area**

Cllr Lacey reported all was going well with grasscutting. The school contractor sometimes cuts the play area grass. The School had erected new fencing along the field side of the play area.

**16. VAS speed equipment and Automatic Number Plate Recognition Camera Project (ANPR) report**

Cllr Harvey reported the VAS equipment was currently on Wetherup Street where high speeds had been recorded.

To progress the ANPR scheme, Suffolk CC required completion of a detailed proforma form regarding the sites allocated, ie. requirement for post or not, ownership of verges at allocated sites, visibility and availability of off road parking for operators. Cllr Harvey had some queries regarding the scheme. He would contact Suffolk CC Highways direct to deal with these and would deal with completion of the form.

**17. To consider repairs to road sign at Wetherup St/Debenham Road**

County Cllr Stringer would view the site and sign with Cllr Pease prior to requesting repairs by County Highways.

Two other signs were in need of repair. These would be viewed during the site visit.

**18. Report on operational procedure for Parish Magazine – deferred.**

**19. Wetheringsett Neighbourhood Plan report**

To help the working group progress the plan a short questionnaire for parishioners to complete had been included in the April parish magazine. It was hoped this would capture younger and more elderly residents. The working group was looking at arranging a drop-in session for parishioners in early September as well as gathering information on green spaces, public or not. The group had applied for the second tranche of funding.

**20. Finance**

1. To consider s.137 donation requests - none received.

2. Accounts for payment

Clerk sal/expen April 2021 - £291.40

Cllr Alston proposed payment of the above, seconded Cllr Pease and agreed.

3. To consider for approval Parish Council year-end accounts 31.3.21 and bank reconciliation 31.3.21

Year-end accounts and bank reconciliation to 31.3.21 had been circulated prior to the meeting. No queries were raised other than consideration of allocation of a Village Hall reserve for 2021-22. This would be considered at the next meeting.

Cllr Pease proposed acceptance of the accounts and reconciliation, seconded Cllr Harvey and unanimously agreed.

3. AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return) including Certificate of Exemption - to consider for approval for year-end 31.3.21

The AGAR documents: Certificate of Exemption, Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statement had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Members went through the Annual Governance Statements, questions 1 – 9. Questions 1 – 8 were answered yes, question 9, n/a. No queries were raised. Cllr Harvey proposed acceptance of all three documents, seconded Cllr Mrs Leech and unanimously agreed.

4. To consider arrangements for Parish Council online banking. It was stated that online banking could cause some issues where two signatories were required. It was agreed that current arrangements would remain for the time being.

**21. Report on Parish Council vacancy**

MSDC Electoral Services had confirmed there had been no requests for an election to fill the vacancy. The Parish Council was therefore free to fill the vacancy via co-option. Parishioners would be informed of the vacancy for co-option via the parish magazine and the previous interested parishioner informed of the vacancy.

**22. Wetheringsett Village History Booklet – to consider printing additional copies**

An update as well as re-printing was suggested the booklet having first been published in 1981. Cllr Pease

was waiting for a copy of the digital version. Item deferred to next meeting.

**23. Clerk's report/correspondence**

MSDC – notification of Spring Litter Picks allowed after 24 March 2021 in small groups of up to six and national Gt British Spring Clean week 28 May – 13 June. Cllr Mrs Aldred stated she would be prepared to organise a village litter pick. Saturday afternoon 12 June 2021, meeting at the Village Hall at 1pm was agreed. Equipment would be provided. County Cllr Stringer would attend and provide some equipment.

**24. Chairman's Report – none.**

**25. Any other business for information exchange/future agenda requests**

Coppiced Hedge – Station Road. The cutting back of the hedge was again raised. This had been carried out after the end of February – outside the agricultural hedge cutting season. Cllr Stringer stated there was guidance available for landowners. The hedge had been coppiced it having been left 2 inches above ground. The cutting season September to the end of February was advisory. It was understood the hedge had been cut down on 19 March. If it was believed a species had been disturbed this would be a matter for the police. It was understood there was no evidence of a species having been disturbed and that the hedge had been cut back to enable it to be managed, there having been reports of it encroaching on to the adjacent Station Road.

Village Celebration – Cllr Pease stated an event was being considered for July. Item to be included on the next agenda.

**26. To confirm date of next meeting**

Monday 7 June 2021, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett. Cllr Mrs Estcourt tendered her apologies. The meeting would be open to the public.

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

**County Cllr A Stringer: Annual Parish Report 2020-21**

During this most challenging of years, the LDGI Group have worked hard to continue holding Suffolk County Council's administration to account. We have adapted to the new way of working and the introduction of online council meetings and have been present at every Scrutiny, Cabinet and Full Council, representing the people of our divisions.

**Suffolk County Council Budget 2021-22**

The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11<sup>th</sup>. This year's budget is based on a 12-month financial settlement from government, rather than the 3 or 4 year agreement which is usually offered. Key points include:

- A council tax rise of 3.99% (1.99% basic council tax and 2% Social Care Precept, representing an increase of £53.55 for a Band D property, from £1,343.61 in 2020-21 to £1,397.16 in 2021-22.
- A council tax shortfall of £7.9m less than expected, to be met by using reserves.
- Planned spending is £597.9m, 7.4% more than 2021-21.
- £15.3m of spending to address ongoing COVID-19 costs.
- No proposed reductions in council services or personnel.

**LDGI Group Budget Amendment**

The LDGI Group submitted a budget amendment to Full Council on February 11<sup>th</sup> alongside the administration's Budget. The key change proposed by the LDGI Group was to authorise the use of the full 3% social care precept, unlocking the maximum available funding without impacting SCC's reserves. This would generate an extra £3.452m for social care at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household, freeing up general council tax funds to be spent on other projects and investments including:

- £700k for establishing a COVID-19 grant scheme for Suffolk charities and arts & culture venues.
- £500k for a solar energy scheme for Suffolk businesses.

- £500k to re-enable the use of concessionary bus passes on community transport and demand responsive transport across Suffolk.
- £15k for a citizen's assembly on how Suffolk can build back better while recovering from the pandemic.
- £75k to enable community reviews of highways signage in the local area.
- £50k to expand the flood management team to ensure SCC is applying for all flooding grants it is eligible for.
- A demand-scoping exercise on where demand is for bus routes, a priority list for where future routes need to be, and a feasibility study on establishing an SCC-owned bus company to serve rural areas if commercial bus companies cannot.

This budget amendment was not accepted by the administration.

### **Motions from the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group**

My Group proposed three motions to Council in 2020-21:

- A call for the Council to publicly oppose EDF Energy's proposed Sizewell C development and retract any 'in principle' support for nuclear power.
- A 20mph scheme to reduce speed limits in all suitable residential areas from 30mph to 20mph, for a price of £4m. Communities would have been able to opt out.
- A biodiversity strategy motion.

The first two motions were rejected, although the Council backtracked on Sizewell C just two months later and now do not support the build. The biodiversity motion passed.

### **Biodiversity strategy adopted**

At Full Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December, Suffolk County Council unanimously passed a motion that will see Suffolk County Council developing a biodiversity strategy and embracing biodiverse land management practices. The motion was proposed by the LDGI Group and supported by all other groups. The motion will ensure:

- Delivery of a biodiversity strategy that will set out how we could increase Suffolk's biodiversity, halt the loss of habitats and species, and reintroduce declining species in suitable locations.
- Assessment of how the council can lead organisations across the county in efforts to improve biodiversity.
- Adoption of biodiverse land management options on council land.
- A letter to the Secretary of State asking what further support can be made available to local authorities to enhance bio diversity within their areas.

### **Suffolk County Council decides to oppose Sizewell C**

The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council agreed on 22 September that they can no longer support EDF Energy's proposals for Sizewell C in their current form. However, the Cabinet maintained their support for the principle of a new nuclear power station in Suffolk.

The Cabinet's key concerns were regarding transport impacts, site design and the environmental impact on the Suffolk coast. The Cabinet also believe that the current proposals do not sufficiently avoid, minimise, mitigate or compensate impacts of the proposed development.

These concerns will be submitted as Relevant Representations to the Planning Inspectorate.

### **Increase in social worker pay**

In April 2020 Suffolk County Council agreed to increase the pay of children's social workers to match the remuneration offered by neighbouring councils, in order to attract and retain skilled social workers in Suffolk. It is estimated that the pay increase will cost £1.4m and will be funded from council reserves.

This policy was first proposed by the LDGI Group in as part of our budget amendment in February 2020. Both the Conservatives and Labour voted against this motion at the time.

### **Cabinet approves 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk**

In June 2020 the Cabinet approved a 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk, which identified 148 potential routes to be prioritised. This is a result of a motion proposed by the LDGI group in July 2018, which called on the council to produce a strategic costed 5-year cycling plan.

Funding has not yet been secured for these routes, but the cycling plan will provide a strong basis to bid for funding as and when it becomes available.

The 148 routes identified by the plan are intended to be a starting point, rather than a fixed programme of works. The Cabinet's approval of the plan means that discussions can begin with district and borough councils on developing the five-year-plan further. If the parish council has known routes in the area it would like to see improved or created, please let me know and I can feed this into the process.

### **Climate emergency recommendations published**

In July 2020, the Cabinet approved the recommendations of a cross-party policy development panel outlining how the council should respond to the climate emergency and reduce emissions. This followed a motion from the LDGI group in March 2019, which declared a climate emergency and committed the council to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Key recommendations include:

- All future decisions must take into account carbon emissions
- Annual publication of a carbon budget alongside the financial budget
- Publish a cross-council action plan by the end of 2020 for net zero emissions across Suffolk
- Changing to a 100% renewable energy tariff
- Replacing all pool cars and service vehicles with fully electric vehicles by 2025
- Develop an investment programme for renewable energy generation on the county farms estate
- For all existing council buildings (including maintained schools), switch away from oil, LPG and natural gas use by 2030 and invest in onsite renewable energy generation
- Provide advice for academies/free schools to develop their own net zero emissions plans

### **Changes to Children's Centres challenged**

In August 2020, the Cabinet agreed to reduce the number of Children's Centres in Suffolk from 38 to 17 full-time and 11 part-time Family Hubs. 8 centres will be repurposed for nurseries or SEND provision, whilst 2 will close permanently (Chatterbox in Ipswich and Caterpillar in Woodbridge). The council has said that this is not a cost-saving exercise and that any savings will be used to fund additional staff for outreach work.

Concerned about the detrimental effect on families, particularly those in rural areas, the LDGI Group worked with the Labour group to collectively challenge the Cabinet's decision. Our challenge focused on concerns over the lack of financial analysis and the lack of clarity over the new outreach model.

The challenge was discussed by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 September. Unfortunately, the majority of the Committee voted against our challenge and endorsed the Cabinet's decision. This means that the planned changes to children's centres in Suffolk will go ahead.

I would like to thank all Parish Councillors and Clerk for all their work and patience through what has been a testing year

Andrew Stringer