

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 5 February 2024, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett.

Present: Cllrs Mrs E Cain (Chairman), Mrs E Aldred, T Alston, Mrs L Drury, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, N Lingard and Mrs K van Zyl. County and District Cllr A Stringer, Mr R Townshend, Chair of Neighborhood Plan Working Group and 5 members of the public

1. **Apologies and consent for absence** – apologies had been received and approved from Cllr Mrs J Weir.
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda** – none.
3. **Reports**
 1. **Wetheringsett cum Brockford Neighbourhood Plan** – report from Working Group Chairman
Mr Townshend reported that following identification of the procedural error by the NP Commissioner in September 2022 the plan had been withdrawn from the submission process and revised including a consultation with parishioners between 16 October – 30 November 23, updated to reflect the current position of the Babergh/Mid Suffolk Local Plan adopted November 23, inclusion of the Hockey Hill planning permission, removal of the site allocation at The Street and the flood issues of October 23. As a result of the review the Working Group now believed the Plan was at the stage for re-submission to MSDC subject to the support and approval of the Parish Council. Cllr Alston stated the Griffin PH had not been mentioned. The Chair thanked Mr Townshend for his presentation, councillors would consider its support at item 6 of the agenda.
 2. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> – no queries were raised.
 3. County Councillor - Cllr Stringer gave his report (written copy attached to the Minutes). Regarding the flood forum and issues raised, the County Council report would publish a list of s.19 enforcement actions, this would be copied to parishes. The floods had been a build up of a multitude of problems not any one issue and it would take a few months to enable a comprehensive report to be produced.
 4. District Councillor – Cllr Stringer gave his report from the District (written copy attached to the Minutes). Cllr Alston queried carbon accounting and biodiversity net gain. Cllr Stringer stated developers would have to demonstrate how they would improve biodiversity and not to deplete wildlife.
 5. Report on flood prevention measures and/or action following October 2023 floods – deferred pending further information.
 6. Footpaths - an obstruction on the bridleway at Mickfield Road (no 55) was reported. Clerk to report to Suffolk CC.
 7. Trees – all trees for the current planting season had been allocated.
8. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

A member of the public queried the availability of new trees to parishioners. Cllr Mrs Aldred stated new saplings should be available to parishioners from August onwards.

A member of the public queried whether there were updates regarding the blocked drain in Church Street and asked for Parish Council support in requesting maintenance, this had been ongoing for many years. Cllr Stringer stated some funding for maintenance work would be available via his highway budget. A letter from the Parish Council, requesting early action by Suffolk CC Highways, was agreed.
4. **To consider for approval Minutes of the meeting held 8 January 2024**

Cllr Mrs Cain proposed approval of the Minutes subject to changing batteries to battery at item 14, seconded Cllr Lingard – unanimously agreed.
5. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report** – none.
6. **Wetheringsett cum Brockford Neighbourhood Plan** – to consider and agree revised plan prior to submission to MSDC

The revised Plan had been circulated to councillors for perusal prior to the meeting. Cllr Alston proposed approval of the Plan, seconded Cllr Mrs Aldred – proposal carried. Thanks were recorded to Mr Townshend and the working group, their work on the plan on behalf of the village, this was much appreciated.
7. **Wetheringsett cum Brockford Emergency Plan** and to appoint working groups:
 1. Emergency Plan working group – to be agreed..
 2. Emergency Flood working group – to be agreed.
 3. To consider draft emergency plan document
Cllr Mrs van Zyl had circulated a proposed draft document. A list of helpers, their contact details and equipment available would need to be included and updated regularly, Village Hall keyholders listed and a list of vulnerable people held. Cllr Mrs van Zyl would put out a plea for helpers via the parish magazine.

The Chair stated she had attended the Debenham Flood public meeting on 26 January last. Debenham was also in the process of revising its Emergency Plan, Cllr Mrs van Zyl would contact the Debenham group to exchange notes. MSDC had recommended parishes produce a flood resilience plan, it was possible grants would be available to put these in place. Item deferred to next meeting pending details from MSDC.

8. Planning applications for recommendation to MSDC

1. DC/24/00159: Rectory Barn, Church Street – notification of tree works in Conservation Area: removal of Fir Tree (T1). A recommendation of approval was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.
2. DC/24/00426: Willow Cottage, Pitman’s Corner – erection of single storey rear/side extension with porch, installation of package sewage treatment plant (following demolition of existing sun room extension). A recommendation of approval was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.
3. DC/24/00551: Rectory Cottage, Church Street – re-pollard two lime trees. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.

9. Planning Decisions received from MSDC

1. DC/22/05614: Rectory Cottage, Church Street – Discharge of Condition DC/22/04668 (Condition 10 Render Mix and finish). Approved.
2. DC/ 23/05660: Land at Norwich Road, Brockford Application under S73a for the Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of DC/20/00324 dated 06/10/2020 Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Erection of 9no dwellings with associated private amenities and parking To vary Condition Number: 2 To allow a revision/amalgamation of the SUDS areas as per Landscaping plan RS/4957/23/01. Planning Permission Refused.

10. Planning correspondence – none.

11. Village Hall

1. Management Committee report - Cllr Lingard reported the Hall finances currently stood at a good level mainly due to receipt of the Solar Panel grant. There had been a poor local attendance at the recent Open Mic Evening but well attended by non- residents. The new blinds had been installed.
 2. Report on School Licence Agreement and Diocesan Lease – no progress to report.
 3. Proposed Solar Panels on part Hall roof report – Cllr Lingard was pleased to report a Lottery Community Fund grant of £5,000 had been approved – the match funding grant would no longer be required. One of the revised quotations totalled slightly more than the grant funding, two further quotes were yet to be received. The project would need to be agreed by June 2024 otherwise the initial grant would expire.
12. **Grasscutting report** - Cllr Lacey to contact the contractor to confirm arrangements and cost for 2024 grasscutting
13. **Play Area report** – the previously reported rotted fencing post to be replaced. Cllr Lacey to arrange.
14. **VAS speed equipment:** to confirm relocation arrangements and availability of data
The Chair reported the equipment was currently located at Hockey Hill. An informal arrangement would be put in place for moving the equipment to the approved sites. The Chair would ask Mr M Pease whether he could download the data on a monthly basis.
The Chair suggested looking into the cost of a Solar Powered Device for Brockford Street, she understood a Locality grant could be available to purchase the equipment. A report and quotation/s would be provided for consideration at the next meeting.
15. **Community Speed Watch Scheme** – progress report – deferred.
16. **Report on provision of Kill your Speed highway signs** – the quotation for the signs and grant application had been submitted to Suffolk Cc Highways. Cllr Stringer confirmed receipt of the application.
17. **Village Website** – to confirm editor arrangements
The Chair reported Mr Mike Pease would be willing to take over as editor of the village Website. Handover arrangements would be put in place.
18. **Spring Litter Pick** – to confirm arrangements: Sunday 7 April 2024 meet 9.45am to 10am at Wetheringsett Village Hall. Cllr Stringer stated he would attend and would collect the ordered waste bags from the Public Realm Depot. Arrangements had been made for collection of the full bags from the Village Hall drive week commencing 8 April 2024.
19. **Finance**
1. To consider s.137 donation requests – none received.
 2. Accounts for payment

Compass Point Planning NP professional fees stage 4	£450.00
Clerk – sal-expenses Jan 2024	£336.75

The above payments were unanimously agreed.

3. Finance report

It would be necessary to update the Barclays mandate following recent resignations of cheque signatories. Cllrs Mrs Leech and Mrs van Zyl offered to become signatories.

20. **Report on Parish Council Vacancies** and to consider co-options

There were currently two vacancies and two parishioners were in attendance at the meeting having expressed an interest in joining the council, Mr Stephen Alderton and Mr Darrell Howard. Both candidates gave a brief presentation about themselves and their interests in the village. Cllr Alston proposed both candidates were co-opted, seconded Cllr Lingard – proposal unanimously carried.

21. **Clerk's report/correspondence** – none.

22. **Chair's Report** – the chair reported she had been in contact with the Environment Agency and they would be clearing flood debris from the section of River Dove at Griffin Lane.

23. **Any other business for information exchange/future agenda requests** – none.

24. **Date of next meeting - Monday 4 March 2024, 7pm at the The Village Hall, Wetheringsett**

Meeting closed 8.45pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

County Councillor Report – February 2024

Council Budget for 2024-25

At Scrutiny Committee on 11 January, we got our first look at the proposed budget for the financial year 2024-25. The council has projected increased spend for areas such as social care and SEND which are statutory services – this means that the council is required to spend this money by law. As a result, important areas in the budget that can be cut have been, which will lead to cuts in Housing Related Support for those at risk of homelessness, support for people with learning disabilities and autism, and to the Skills team, who support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The budget also includes a proposed 100% cut to core funding for museums and arts organisations from April 2025, with the funding for 2024-25 coming from government Covid monies to provide a transition period. My group opposes the arts cuts and the other savings, which will hit the most vulnerable in our county. The budget proposals will be voted on during the Full Council meeting on Thursday 15 February.

Autism Strategy for Suffolk

At the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board on 18 January, the first draft of a Suffolk autism strategy was discussed, which will increase awareness and support for autistic people and make sure local services are accessible and meeting their needs. The plans include supporting autistic people to look for work and those who are considering self-employment, tackling health and care inequalities, improving access to education and transition into higher education. The strategy was commissioned by Suffolk County Council and local NHS providers and has been developed in co-production with Suffolk people with autism to reflect their views and experiences.

Sizewell C Construction Begins

Construction begins this month of the controversial new power station at Sizewell, a project that is forecast to take 17 years to complete. This will have a massive impact on local communities, the coastal environment and transport routes in the county. Suffolk County Council has secured £250m in mitigation monies for Suffolk communities, but this will still create a lot of upheaval in the county and the council has a role to play in making sure Sizewell C make every effort to minimise its impact and listens to the concerns of residents and local businesses.

New Funding to Combat Serious Violence

Suffolk's Safer Stronger Communities Board has announced a fund of £150,000 from the Home Office to support Suffolk's Serious Violence Strategy. Organisations can bid for funding for specific projects which support the work of Suffolk's Serious Violence Strategy, with allocation of funding managed through Suffolk Community Foundation.

The Serious Violence Strategy focuses on young people and communities at risk of becoming involved in serious violence, and the funding for projects is available to charities, voluntary sector organizations, social enterprises, parish councils, educational settings and other public bodies from April 2024. Applications are invited for grants between £4,000 and £15,000 and organisations can apply by visiting:

<https://www.suffolkcf.org.uk/grants/seriousviolencedutyfund/>

'Good Journey' Scheme for Visitor Attractions

Visitor attractions in Suffolk are invited to sign up for a new scheme promoting car-free days out in the county. Suffolk Growth Partnership and Suffolk County Council have teamed up with national organisation 'Good Journey' to create the scheme, which launches in March. Around 25 local tourism and visitor attractions are invited to join the Suffolk Good Journey scheme offering residents and visitors discounts and incentives to leave the car at home and explore more of the county on foot, by bike or using public transport. Participating attractions will be supported and will feature on goodjourney.org.uk which provides travel information and discounts to domestic and international visitors and there will be a marketing campaign to promote it. Visitor attractions and venues interested in joining Suffolk Good Journey can find out more details by contacting Loretta Jones at Good Journey on loretta@goodjourney.org.uk or info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk

Blue Badge Team - Change of Telephone Number

As a direct result of customer feedback, the Blue Badge phone number will be changing, and there will now be a dedicated phone line for Blue Badge customers. From **31 January** the Blue Badge team will be answering enquires on **03456 066 077**, this number will be visible online across the SCC Website, InfoLink and any future published materials. This is a change from the current telephone number, which is 0808 800 4005.

For more information about how you can apply for a blue badge or assist someone to make an application, please visit <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking/blue-badge-scheme>

DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant

Those whose homes or businesses were flooded by Storm Babet and have not yet applied for the initial £500 flood recovery grant payment should do so as soon as possible as this is the first step in applying for the further £5,000 for flood protection from the government's Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant. The application process for the latter will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures.

Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>

For more information about the flood investigations which are due to take place in the wake of Storm Babet, please see <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/storm-babet>

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Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

District Councillor Report

Empty homes and Council Tax	<p>To incentivise bringing more homes back into use, MSDC is proposing to increase the amount of Council Tax payable on long-term empty homes. Currently these attract a levy of 50% on the Council Tax payable. The new policy will be levies of 100% for empty homes being left for one (to five) years, 200% for five (to ten) years and 300% for ten years or more. Exceptions will apply – such as property under probate or properties undergoing major repairs. If approved, this will be from April 2024. Additionally, it is proposed that second homes attract a 100% levy. If approved, this will be from April 2025 as a year’s notice has to be given.</p> <p>The level of Council Tax levied by Mid Suffolk is likely to increase by around 2%. But Council Housing rents are likely to rise by more, as we must keep our housing stock in good order, as well as pay back the mortgage for our council houses, all ring fenced to be paid back only form revenue arising from Council House rents.</p>
Innovation Centre Stowmarket	<p>MSDC has commissioned and circa £19,000,000.00 Innovation Centre on Gateway 14 Stowmarket, The concept is to create a centre where business can share new ideas and technologies etc, as well as giving us an opportunity to increase Skill levels.</p> <p>We have had interest from some companies in the sustainable building sector, which we believe we should take this opportunity with both hands.</p> <p>.</p>
Fees & charges for 2024/25	<p>For the annual review process of setting fees or charges MSDC has to consider factors such as inflation and the hours involved. The Council cannot charge for some statutory services and national Government sets others. Discretionary charges, such as vehicle licensing, litter bin emptying and pavement licensing, can be set locally and for these MSDC aims to cover costs.</p>
Stowmarket sports facilities improvements	<p>MSDC Cabinet has approved the full business case of the Stowmarket Sports Health and Leisure Project to allow the first stage, covering new and updated sports facilities, to go ahead. This includes a 3G pitch, special athletics track, multi-games area (MUGA), improving existing pitches and other facilities, it is hoped work can start in 2024.</p>
Home insulation	<p>The <i>Cosy Homes</i> initiative launched with a £2 million fund and we are encouraging householders to apply. Eligible households can apply for free energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including if privately rented. Full details to be available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>This initiative is in addition to a programme of retrofit for the Council’s own housing stock. Also, particularly vulnerable households can continue to access help via the wider Suffolk scheme, www.warmhomessuffolk.org</p>
Flooding	<p>On Friday 26th of January a flooding forum was held at Debenham leisure centre, officers from the District and County Council and Environment Agency. Over 300 residents attended over 2 separate sessions.</p> <p>It was helpful to learn at first hand what different agencies roles are and what we might be able to do, to mitigate the impact of future flood events.</p>
Local Plan “call for sites”	<p>Now that part 1 of the joint local plan has been approved, we have to go through the “call for sites” all over again, to make sure the allocations plan (part</p>

	2) is to be found robust, sites proposed in initial stages will have to be resubmitted, as well as any wishing to be allocated in the upcoming part 2.
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Cllr Andrew Stringer

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