

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held Monday 6 February 2023, 7pm at the Village Hall,
Wetheringsett.

Present: Cllrs Mrs E Cain (Chairman), Mrs E Aldred, T Alston, Mrs A Arnold, Mrs L Drury, Mrs H Green, C Harvey, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, Mrs K van Zyl. County and District Cllr A Stringer.

1. **Apologies for Absence and to agree consent to apologies** – apologies were received and approved from Cllr N Lingard.
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda** – none.
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).
Queries raised included the availability of funding for pothole repairs. Cllr Stringer stated funding would be available from the current year's budget.
 3. **District Councillor** - District Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes). Cllr Stringer added feedback from parish councillors attending the re-introduced Parish Liaison Meetings would be helpful.
 4. **Footpaths** – the following items were raised for report via the Suffolk CC reporting tool:
Footpath 37 at Moat Farm – obstruction due to fallen tree
Footpath 28 at Wetherup Street – footbridge rotted in places and in need of repair
Footpath 41 at Brockford Street – signpost near A140 in need of reinstatement.
Footpaths 43, 42 and 45 – issues of dog fouling on the footpaths were raised. The Parish Council was funding the emptying of dog bins whilst they were not being fully utilized. Cllr Mrs Arnold would raise the concern with the dog owner concerned. Cllr Alston would include a note in the Parish Magazine.
Footpath from Village Sign running alongside the Church – reports of cyclists using the footpath had been received from a resident. The Chairman would put up No Cycling signs along the footpath.
 5. **Trees** - Cllr Mrs Aldred reported all sapling trees had been distributed in the village. The remaining Black Poplars had been registered with MSDC.
 6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** – none.
4. **To consider for approval Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 9 January 2023**
Cllr Mrs van Zyl proposed adoption of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Mrs Leech and unanimously agreed.
5. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report** – none.
6. **Planning applications for recommendation to MSDC**
 1. DC/22/05036: Land off Violet Hill – application for Outline Planning Permission (all matters reserved) Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) – erection of 1 dwelling.
Additional documents added 24.1.23
Councillors were of the view the additional documents provided did not change the issues raised. A recommendation of refusal was proposed, seconded and agreed.
7. **Planning Decisions received from MSDC**
 1. DC/22/05821: The Laurels, White Horse Corner - Application under S73a for Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of Planning Permission DC/19/05102 dated 19/12/2019. Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Erection of 2 no two storey dwellings with associated detached garage buildings, parking and access work - To vary Condition 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) to enable amended design for Plot 2 as per revised drawing.
Planning Permission Granted.
8. **Planning correspondence**
Wetheringsett cum Brockford Neighbourhood Plan – the Neighbourhood Plan was currently subject to MSDC's formal consultation **Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012** until Friday 10 March 2023. Comments from a Suffolk resident had been submitted to MSDC copied to the Parish Council relating to Parish Biodiversity Action Plans & Ecological Assessments. Cllr Stringer informed councillors of MSDC's policy relating to biodiversity and net gain. Councillors noted the comments received.
9. **Parish Council loan from the Wetheringsett cum Brockford Church & Town Estate Charity** – to confirm completion of loan arrangements. It was reported the repayments due were complete and a vat refund claim had been submitted to HMRC.
10. **Village Hall**

1. Management Committee report

Cllr Harvey reported on forthcoming events and possibly a wedding booking. The grant for the lighting had been received. It was suggested these were purchased and owned by the Parish Council. The cost of the scaffolding would also need to be covered. These items would be included on the next parish council agenda for consideration.

On behalf of the community the Chairman recorded thanks to Cllr Harvey for his time and work on village hall matters.

Enquiries were made as to whether the village hall would be arranging a village Coronation event. It was reported the Middy were organising an event for the village. Cllr Mrs Arnold suggested a Village Fete was held in the summer. The Village Hall Committee were considering this but still to be decided.

2. Diocesan Lease and School Licence Agreement reports - no report available.

11. Wetheringsett Play Area Report – see grass cutting item 12.

12. Grasscutting report

Cllr Lacey reported the current contractor was unable to continue cutting the cemetery and play area due to other commitments. It was agreed an advertisement for a replacement would need to be placed in the parish magazine, based on the similar arrangement of four cuts per year plus some strimming with more regular cuts for the play area. A letter of thanks would be sent to Mr Philip Mills for all his hard work in the cemetery and play area over the last number of years.

13. VAS speed equipment report

The VAS equipment had been relocated in the village from Brockford Street. The Chairman would send the latest data figures to Suffolk Police.

It was reported the ANPR equipment would be used again in Brockford Street later in the spring. The data from that equipment would be available from the County Council and not Suffolk Police.

14. Thermal Imaging Project report

The Chairman reported the organisers of the Thermal Imaging Project arranged training sessions for use of the camera equipment, ie when it should be used, the optimum conditions, the temperature and time of day for use. The Chairman would borrow the equipment again after taking part in a training session.

15. Wetheringsett Village Sign – report on repairs to the sign damaged February 2022. Cllr Alston reported repairs were progressing.

16. Spring Litter Pick – Sunday 5 March 2023, 10am – 1pm (meet at the Village Hall before 10am)

Most councillors had confirmed they would be helping with the litter pick. Helpers would be allocated areas on the day.

17. Finance

1. To consider s.137 donation requests

The following donations were proposed by the Chairman, seconded Cllr Mrs Aldred and unanimously agreed: St Elizabeth Hospice - £100.00; Mid Suffolk CAB – £100.00.

2. Accounts for Payment

PFK Littlejohn – completion of External Audit	£240.00
Clerk – sal-expen Jan 2023	£311.36
P & G Homes and Gardens – grasscutting 2022 season	£600.00
s.137 – St Elizabeth’s Hospice	£100.00
s.137 – Mid Suffolk CAB	£100.00

Cllr Alston proposed payment of the above accounts, seconded Cllr Harvey – unanimously agreed.

3. Finance Report

The External Audit Report from PFK Littlejohn had been received and stated from the information provided to them the audit was complete and had been carried out in accordance with proper practices.

Bank balance at 27.1.23:	£9,079.59
Receipts: 9.1.23 vat paid in error	£159.00
16.1.23 NP grant	£2510.00

4. To consider review and adoption of Financial Internal Controls document 2022-23

The model SALC Financial Internal Controls document had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Chairman proposed adoption of the document, seconded Cllr Mrs Arnold – unanimously agreed.

18. Clerk’s report/correspondence

SALC – Buckingham Palace Garden Party 2023 - request for nominations for parish council Chairperson to attend – noted.

Neighbourhood Plan Report for meeting 6.2.23 – circulated.

The Debenham Project (dementia) – engaging with local communities. Contact from the Project stated it would welcome the opportunity to attend a parish council meeting to explain the objectives of the Project and working to benefit the community. It was agreed a representative from the Project be invited to attend a regular parish council meeting to give a 20 minute presentation.

Mid Suffolk CAB – Cost of Living Forum 24 February 2023. Cllrs Mrs Arnold and Mrs Leech to attend via zoom.

Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parish Council meeting following parish council elections – the date of Thursday 11 May 2023 at 6.30pm was agreed, Monday 8 May being a Bank Holiday to celebrate of HM King’s Coronation.

19. Chair’s Report

The Chair stated she had written to the local MP, Dr Dan Poulter, enquiring when parishioners could expect to receive the Government’s oil subsidy to which she had received a vague reply.

20. Any other business for information exchange/future agenda requests

School Car Park – Cllr Mrs Green stated the white lines at the school car park were now faint making parking difficult. Cllr Mrs Green would contact the school to ask whether they could be re-painted.

21. Date of next meeting - Monday 6 March 2023, 7pm at the The Village Hall, Wetheringsett

Meeting closed 8.25pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

County Cllr Report – 6.2.23

For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving

For information on supporting Ukrainian refugees in Suffolk, email: refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk or ukrainesupport@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

SCC Financial Budget

SCC is currently going through its process to approving the budget for 2023/24. At the beginning of January, the Scrutiny Committee discussed the papers in preparation for them to go to Cabinet and then Full Council.

The Conservative budget proposes a 2.99% increase in tax, broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1 % increase in general tax. The Council aim to make most of its savings through increasing the number of unfunded vacancies amongst the Council’s workforce.

Our Group believes that impact council services have faced this year requires the Council to increase general tax by an additional 0.89%. We have proposed how we would spend the additional funding to protect services from the rising demand and costs.

Budget Amendments –

Our Group has proposed amendments to the Conservative budget for 2023/24. Initially, we would propose to increase the general tax closer to the Government-recommended amount, which will be a 0.89% increase. This equates to a £9.94 annual rise, or a 19p weekly rise for a Band B property, and would generate just over £3.3m. Currently, SCC is not on track to achieve Net Zero by 2030. Our Group proposes to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a clearer pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we propose to facilitate a county-wide review into Suffolk’s speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.

On the frontline, we will use £1m to actively recruit Occupational Therapists and Social Workers, as well as invest more into Suffolk Libraries to help maintain their necessary services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we would invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through EV vehicle usage.

Carbon Budget – SCC is Not on Track

At the beginning of January, the Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the Carbon Budget. This is a document that is intended to calculate the amount of carbon SCC emits through its services. More importantly, it shows the Council's progress towards achieving Net Zero by 2030.

This year's carbon budget shows that SCC is not on track to reach Net Zero by 2030. Current forecasts show that SCC will still be producing 10,000 tonnes of CO2 in 2030 – that's still half of what we are emitting now.

Our Group believes more needs to be done to improve the accuracy of calculating all of SCC's emissions, which is why we have proposed a Carbon Budget Officer is employed to provide a sole focus on improving the reporting of carbon emissions.

SCC's Further Investment in Trees & Hedgerows

SCC are planning to invest £110,000 in managing and inspecting trees and hedgerows. The money will be used to ensure that trees and hedgerows are given the best chance to thrive.

Currently, the Council has planted around 50,000 trees and hedges this planting season. This comes as the latest science indicates trees can capture nearly twice the amount of carbon as previously thought. Our Group believes this highlights the greater need to plant more trees, and more importantly how crucial it is to not unnecessarily cut trees down.

For more info, visit: <https://phys.org/news/2022-12-uk-woodlands-carbon-previously.html>

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<p>Cost of Living</p>	<p>The cost of living pages on the MSDC website have been refreshed and focus on the support available to people to help them boost their income, and identify their options if they need support with their housing, fuel and energy, and food/ other essentials. Generally, these pages are the best way for people to find out what support there is available locally.</p> <p>Hardship support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Welfare Assistance Scheme – Discretionary financial support up to £200 to support households in hardship with everyday costs. (No more than one payment in a six month period) • Household Support Fund – Discretionary financial assistance for tenants struggling to pay their rent. • Winter Warmth Packs – Provides warm items for households struggling to keep warm at home. • Surviving Winter – Support payments to households to help them heat their homes (including oil). • Budgeting Loan/ Advance – Those in receipt of benefits may be able to request an interest free loan from the DWP. • Eastern Savings and Loan – Residents eligible to become a member have access to a number of loans for essential items, including an interest free oil loan. <p>We also work with partners such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens Advice (Mid Suffolk) (Sudbury) • Suffolk Warm Homes • Anglia Care Trust • Our cost of living pages: Babergh Mid Suffolk • Suffolk County Council’s cost of living pages • The Government’s Help for Households pages <p>Also, households in need would consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charitable grants, although many require a referral from a gateway organisation such as Citizens Advice, many Parishes do have their own hardship fund so this could be something they want to consider setting up?. • Benevolent funds – People in hardship can search online for relevant industry benevolent funds, ie retail, nursing, fire fighters. • Landlords – Many social landlords have hardship funds and staff available to support their tenants, it’s worth a check. <p>To add to this, people can find a warm and social space on the rural coffee caravan website, and find a foodbank here: Suffolk InfoLink Foodbanks in Suffolk Many of which we have funded through grants.</p> <p>Additionally, in our last full council meeting we agreed to renew the existing Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme to allow an up to 100% maximum reduction for all legacy benefit households and introduce a simplified scheme for residents on the Universal Credit scheme. This is an increase on the previous discount of a 95% maximum council tax reduction.</p>
<p>Solar farm policy</p>	<p>We are experiencing a number of large scale solar projects at present, it is exposing how out of date the current local and national policies are</p>

in relation these proposals, we are working on a refreshed policy framework, these are the areas we are working on.

Where and Why

- Where are seeing an increase in solar proposals coming forward
- Feed in tariff came in 10 years ago and the occasional large scale proposals came forward
- Rising costs of inputs in traditional agriculture is encouraging diversification.
- Climate emergency and energy crisis has led to an increase in government support for solar and battery. Advancements in technology has made schemes viable without subsidy, recent rises in energy prices have accelerated this trend
- Where they are situated is driven by availability of connection to transmission network.
- Bramford, Sproughton, Flowton and Palgrave are currently targeted due to proximity to substations etc.

Policy Context

Issues and Impacts

- Landscape and visual impact
- Agricultural land – 1, 2, 3a possible expansion to grade 3b. DEFRA's Magic Maps show grades 1, 2 and 3 but do not differentiate between 3a and 3b. National efforts are required to coordinate our needs for energy and food production.
- Residential and Local amenity - Experience travelling through the landscape, glint and glare, noise from battery or tracked panels and safety.
- We are working with the county on battery storage. Lithium and cadmium batteries do not require separate consent for use as a hazardous substance. Increase in enquiries and applications for storage and grid stability infrastructure that will provide a continuous supply
- Historic landscapes. Archaeologists are making many new finds that could be disturbed or damaged and this is taking a lot of time.
- Biodiversity. NPPF states preference for solar developments to be on Brownfield land. If not possible this needs to not be on the most productive land.
- Cumulative impacts of the solar developments along with other new developments. Combination effects