

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

Present: Cllrs Mrs E Cain (Chairman), T Alston, C Harvey, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, N Lingard, Mrs K van Zyl.
County and District Cllr A Stringer

1. **Apologies for Absence and to agree consent to apologies** – apologies were received and accepted from the following councillors: Cllrs Mrs E Aldred, Mrs A Arnold, Mrs L Drury and Mrs H Green
2. **The Debenham Project : engaging with local communities – presentation by Carol Garrett**
The Chair welcomed Mrs Carol Garrett to the meeting. Mrs Garrett outlined her involvement with the Debenham Project set up to support dementia sufferers and their carers in the community. The Project covered Debenham and a 4 mile radius which included Wetheringsett. This was a community lead Project run by volunteers and the project was in the process of raising the awareness of the services and activities available to outlying villages. There was a Debenham Project website containing lots of information on the services available. It was suggested the Project may wish to include details of its services in the Wetheringsett Parish Magazine. The Chair thanked Mrs Garrett for taking the time to address the meeting to raise the awareness of such a worthwhile facility available to Wetheringsett parishioners.
3. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda** – none.
4. **To receive the following Reports**
 1. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> - no comments were raised.
 2. County Councillor - Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes). Items raised included the Park Green (Town Lane)/A140 sign. Cllr Stringer stated the sign should be reinstated during the spring.
 3. District Councillor – Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes). Additional items raised included the recent legal ruling relating to the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan. Judges had ruled on the wording of the Plan relating to housing development will be ‘focused’ on sites allocated. Cllr Lingard would pass this information on to the Wetheringsett NP Working Group.
Litter collection from the A140 was raised, Cllr Stringer stated this was carried out twice per year, he would report to MSDC waste collection. The Chair thanked Cllr Stringer for his help at the recent village litter pick.
 4. Footpaths
Foot 21 – it was reported the footpath sign had fallen into the ditch in the Wetheringsett Hall/Middy area. Cllr Mrs Leech would ask Cllr Mrs Aldred to replace the sign.
Cllr Stringer reported he would possibly have some locality funding available for replacement signs in the new financial year.
 5. Trees - no report.
6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** – none.
5. **To consider for approval Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 6 February 2023**
The Chair proposed adoption of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Mrs Leech, unanimously agreed.
6. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report** – none.
7. **Planning applications for recommendation to MSDC**
 1. DC/23/00632; Land off Pitman’s Corner – application for Outline Planning Permission (all matters reserved) – erection of One Retirement Dwelling and construction of new vehicular access off High Lane. A recommendation of refusal was proposed, seconded and agreed on the following grounds: the site was in an unsustainable location, it was outside the settlement boundary and MSDC had in excess of a 5 year land supply.
 2. Appeal Notification – DC/21/04476 – Land at Norwich Road, Wetheringsett part in the parish of Stoke Ash & Thwaite – application for Outline Planning Permission (access to be considered) – erection of 14 dwellings comprising five 2 bed units, seven 3 bed units and two 4 bed units. Councillors agreed to reiterate their previous objections to the application with additional comments: 14 dwellings represented overdevelopment of the site; 3 dwellings were already occupied with inadequate sewage and drainage facilities in place, ie this was running into the ditch at the rear of the site; contravention of working hours; additional vehicles accessing the A40; there was no provision for low cost housing despite an increase to 14 dwellings. The above was proposed, seconded and

unanimously agreed.

3. DC/23/00963: Deerbolts Cottage, Blacksmiths Green – Application for Listed Building Consent – removal of modern internal partitioning which appears to have been installed without approval. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and agreed.

8. **Planning Decisions received from MSDC**

1. DC/22/05881: Land adjacent to 1 Knaves Green, Brockford Green – erection of a new dwelling. Planning Permission Refused.

9. **Planning correspondence**

Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Lingard to pass on ‘focused’ comment to Neighbourhood Plan Group.

10. **Village Hall**

1. Management Committee report

Cllr Harvey reported on a successful Open Mic Night, £290 had been raised. Thanks were recorded to District Cllr Stringer for the lighting grant. The bank reserve currently stood at £2500. Smoke alarms were due to be fitted. Cllr Alston reported on the possibility of a Friday evening bar at the Village Hall subject to approval of the Diocesan Board. Cllr Harvey reported one volunteer had joined the committee.

2. To consider for payment by the Parish Council – VH Lighting and Scaffolding costs

Cllr Harvey reported the lighting which would be owned by the Parish Council had been installed. The invoice for the lighting totalled £2430.66 excl vat and scaffolding £485.95 excl vat were due for reimbursement to Cllr Harvey.

Cllr Alston proposed the above, seconded Cllr Mrs van Zyl – proposal carried.

3. Diocesan Lease and School Licence Agreement reports - Cllr Harvey reported the 3 year school licence ended this year, the PC lease would need to be agreed first.

11. **Wetheringsett Play Area**

1. To consider Annual Play Inspection Report – Cllr Lacey reported items raised had been mainly very low or low risk with the exception of the basket swing which was moderate risk. Cllr Lacey stated he would continue to monitor and compare the basket swing with other play areas and added a play area consultant from MSDC had previously inspected the basket swing and stated he believed there was no issue with it. Item to be monitored.

The rubber mats would need to be lifted and the grass would need to be cut which took approximately 2 hours. Cllr Mrs van Zyl stated she would carry out a further clean of the equipment.

12. **Grasscutting report** – deferred to next meeting.

13. **VAS speed equipment and ANPR report** – no report.

14. **Thermal Imaging Project report** – The Chair reported the imaging had to be carried out during the dark. Item deferred to the winter months.

15. **Wetheringsett Village Sign** – report on repairs to the sign damaged February 2022 – Cllr Alston reported the sign should be complete by the time of the next Parish Council meeting.

16. **Spring Litter Pick** – report on Litter Pick held Sunday 5 March 2023 – the event had been a successful litter pick, not too many volunteers but enough to collect some 17 bin bags full of litter.

17. **Finance**

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

2. Accounts for Payment

Cllr C Harvey – reimbursement VH lighting & scaffolding	£3499.96
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MSDC – Annual Play Area Inspection fee	£62.47
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Clerk sal-expen Feb 2023	£321.44
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Cllr Alston proposed payment of the above accounts, seconded Cllr Mrs van Zyl – proposal carried.

3. Finance Report – no further report.

18. **Clerk’s report/correspondence** – none

19. **Chair’s Report** – the Chair reported the grant application made for village hall works had been turned down. It was suggested a Cil application for solar panels be considered. Item to be included on next agenda.

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

Cllr Alston mentioned election nomination papers, these would need to be returned to MSDC by 4 April 2023.

21. **Date of next meeting - Monday 3 April 2023, 7pm at the The Village Hall, Wetheringsett**

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

County Councillor Report – March 2023

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

Homes for Ukraine: One Year Anniversary of War

The 24th February marked the one-year anniversary since Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. Suffolk continues to do its part through the Homes for Ukraine programme – hosting refugees fleeing the war.

In total, 1256 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Suffolk through the programme. Currently, we have around 330 host families, supporting 750 Ukrainians – with others in private accommodation.

Suffolk is in need of new hosts, to continue to offer a safe haven for Ukrainian refugees who are not yet ready to enter private accommodation. Based on numbers, Suffolk needs 50 new hosts in the coming months.

If you think you can help, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/Ukraine.

Hosts are entitled to £350 per month, which increases to £500 after 12 months.

SCC Finance Budget

At the beginning of February, the Council's budget for 2023/24 was voted in. The budget will now increase tax by 2.99% - broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a .99% increase in general tax.

Council services have faced a gruelling year of demand and additional cost pressures. In addition, the Council is not on track to achieve Net Zero by 2030, our group proposed an additional 0.89% increase (19p weekly increase) to ensure vital care services were protected from cutting support to residents, and that more direct action is taken to close the gap on our carbon emissions.

Our Group proposed to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a stronger pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we proposed to facilitate a review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.

We proposed using £1m to actively recruit, retain and reward frontline staff in adult social care, as well as providing more for Suffolk Libraries to help maintain services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we wanted to invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through EV vehicle usage. The Conservatives voted against our budget amendments.

SCC Cabinet Meeting

Cabinet agreed to move the West Suffolk Archives in Bury St Edmunds to a new location in the town on Western Way. Our Group were concerned about the lack of sufficient public transport access to the new location – being far from the train station with an irregular bus service.

Finally, the Cabinet discussed the Fire & Rescue Service's new risk management plan. The plan outlines all foreseeable risks in Suffolk and indicates the service's priorities and proposals to improve the service. Currently, the service suffers from low recruitment, poor retainment of officers, unmet response targets, and an increase in demand through extreme heatwaves caused by climate change. Our Group support the plan, hoping more investment can now be provided to the essential and increasingly ever-needed service.

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 1st 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.paagetiger.com/cost-of-living-support/scc1>

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Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)

District Councillor's Report for Parish Councils - March 2023

Councillor Andrew Stringer, Mendlesham Ward

Budget Proposals for 2023/4	<p>The district council's finances are split into two parts: The general fund, which is in very good shape, and the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – which is not. The council debated the 2023/24 budgets for both parts on the 23rd Feb. We agreed a council tax freeze for residents. There will also be a reduction of up to 100% for residents with the lowest income and a simplification of the existing Council Tax reduction scheme for residents on Universal Credit. There has been an overspend of £893k on last year's budget but we are still able to put around £3m into reserves.</p> <p>Despite the difficulties of the most vulnerable, there is a proposed increase in council house rents by 7% to meet the rising costs of the Housing Revenue Account. This is less than the rate of inflation.</p> <p>The Council also agreed to set aside £2000,000.00 from reserves to help residents with insulation for homes.</p>
Housing issues	<p>MSDC referred themselves to the Regulator of Social Housing because there were found to be some issues relating to health and safety compliance. The RSH reported their findings and will continue to monitor the Council's housing until the issues are resolved. An action plan has been agreed to ensure that our housing becomes compliant in a timely manner.</p>
Gateway 14	<p>Construction of Suffolk's largest shed - a state-of-the-art distribution unit for retailer The Range is officially underway at Gateway 14, after a ground-breaking ceremony at the end of January. Gateway 14 Ltd will provide a new base for manufacturing, logistics and R&D businesses with a particular focus on innovation and sustainability, as well as providing space for smaller and start-up businesses. There is a lot of interest as the site is part of Freeport East, an onshore tax haven.</p>
Houses for Homes	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk are aiming to reduce the number of long-term empty properties, and bring them back into use. There are currently an estimated 600 empty homes across the two districts. Houses for homes is a re-branding of the service in the hope that people will engage better with the Councils to bring these homes into use. If you know of any empty properties please let me know and the team will investigate.</p>
SHELF project	<p>MSDC Cabinet have approved the next phase of the business case for the Stowmarket wellbeing and leisure hub. Since the initial plans were drafted last year the project now intends to include a new sports pavilion, a multi-use games area, four indoor sports courts and a multi-agency wellbeing hub.</p>
Elections in May	<p>The local elections for parishes and the district council are taking place on 4th May. The pre-election restriction period will begin on 23rd March.</p>

	This year for the first time voters will need to bring photographic ID when they attend a polling station to vote. Details of the types of ID which are acceptable can be found at https://www.babergh.gov.uk/elections/voter-id/ . Residents who do not have any form of acceptable ID need to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate or they can apply for a postal vote – where no ID is required.
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Cllr Andrew Stringer

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