

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council
Minutes of the virtual meeting held Monday 7 September 2020 at 7pm

Present: Cllrs C Harvey (Chairman), Mrs E Aldred, Mrs A Arnold, B Lacey, D Brown, Mrs E Cain, Mrs C Estcourt, Mrs S Gibbs, Mrs H Green and M Pease.
County & District Cllr A Stringer and one member of the public

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr T Alston
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda** – none.

3. **Reports:**

Police – available online. No queries were raised.

County Council – Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes).

District Council – Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes).

Cllr Stringer went on to report on the Brockford Road planning applications and appeals against enforcement notices and he gave some background information to the sites. One of the original sites had permission for stationing 13 caravans and more recently another had been granted permission for 10. All other sites in Brockford Road were either asking for planning permission or permission had been refused and were now subject to enforcement notices and appeals had been lodged against those notices. There were therefore 23 approved pitches in Brockford Road.

The long distances required to travel to obtain covid testing was raised, Cllr Stringer stated there was a part-time centre at Eye otherwise the nearest centre was Copdock.

Footpaths – Cllr Mrs Aldred reported footpath 27 leading to 55 had been reported as too narrow and vegetation needed cutting back.

Cllr Mrs Cain had reported a damaged fingerpost sign in Brockford to Public Rights of Way.

Trees – no report.

4. **TO RECEIVE/CONSIDER ITEMS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS**

Town Lane – stacked containers – concerns had been raised over the height of stacked containers. Cllr Stringer stated there were permitted heights and he had asked MSDC Planning to check whether the current heights were within the permitted planning permission.

Town Lane – parishioner Mr Mark Allen joined the meeting and stated the mood of residents in Town Lane was fairly relaxed. He understood the limited height of containers was 4, they were currently being stacked 4-6 high. There had over the last 10 days been a dramatic increase in use of the site, the majority of the containers appeared to be empty which increased the speed of the vehicles in use. For the benefit of members Mr Allen produced a presentation on use of the site and brought to the attention of the meeting encroachment on to the agricultural area by digger activity. The Chairman stated there appeared to be two issues, not just the height of the stacked containers but whether there had been encroachment onto the agricultural area of the site. Cllr Stringer stated he would also look into this with MSDC Planning.

5. **To consider for approval Minutes of the virtual Parish Council meeting held 3 August 2020**

Cllr Pease proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Mrs Estcourt and agreed.

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

7. **Planning applications for recommendation to MSDC**

1. DC/20/03577: The Acorns, Nursery Gardens – Outline Planning Permission for erection of 2 detached dwellings. Members considered the application - a recommendation of refusal was proposed and seconded on the following grounds:
A previous planning application had been refused
The proposed development site was outside the settlement boundary - contrary to MSDC policy SB1
The proposal was previously rejected on the grounds of additional traffic accessing directly on to the A140

The proposal would impact on the amenity of existing and surrounding residents - contrary to MSDC policy H16

Additional waste bins would obstruct access during waste collection days

MSDC had an existing 5 year land supply

2. DC/20/03386: Wetheringsett Primary School – erection of single storey extension/infill of the front south side of the building to provide a new lobby area for new school reception. A recommendation of approval was proposed, seconded and agreed.
3. DC/20/03368: Land east of The Laurels, Brockford Road, Mendlesham – change of use of land to one Gypsy/Traveller pitch with one residential static caravan and one touring caravan (permanent) establishment of access and formation of hardstanding for occupation by the applicants and their family.
Members considered the application and a recommendation of refusal was proposed, seconded and agreed on the following grounds:
MSDC had in place a 5 year land supply for gypsy/traveller sites and housing land supply
There were already 23 approved static caravan pitches in Bockford/Mendlesham Road
The site was within a level 3 flood plain
The proposal was outside the settlement boundary and would involve destruction of an historic water meadow adjacent the River Dove - H12, SB3 & Prop 1
The site was not sustainable, it being in open countryside with no safe pedestrian access to services
The access was one of many recent accesses made onto a 60mph stretch of road with no adequate visibility splay
Mendlesham/Brockford Road was unsuitable for the proposed increased vehicular activity, particularly touring caravans
Concerns had been raised over waste and sewage disposal in the flood plain
Waste collection would cause obstruction of the highway during collection days
The proposal compromised the amenity of existing neighbouring residents due to noise nuisance from the use of a generator, light pollution and visual impact.
4. DC/20/03369: Land off Brockford Road, Mendlesham (Plot 10) – change of use of land to Gypsy/Traveller pitch with two residential static caravans and two touring caravans (permanent), establishment of access and formation of hardstanding for occupation by the applicants and their family.
Members considered the application. A recommendation of refusal was proposed, seconded and agreed as per the recommendation at DC/20/03368 above.
5. APP/W3520/C/10/3238576 & APP/W3520/C/19/3238577: Plot 7, land east of Brockford Road, Mendlesham – Appeal against enforcement notice – without planning permission the change of use of agricultural land for stationing of a caravan and formation of new vehicular access off Brockford Road.
Members considered the appeal application. A recommendation of refusal and dismissal of the appeal was proposed, seconded and agreed as per the recommendation at DC/20/03368 above.
5. APP/W3520/C/19/3238574 & APP/W3520/C/19/3238575: Plot 8, One Acre Stables, land to east of Brockford Road, Mendlesham – Appeal against enforcement notice – without planning permission change of use of agricultural land for stationing of caravans for residential occupation, erection of building, laying hardstanding and formation of 2 new vehicular accesses off Brockford Road
Members considered the appeal application. A recommendation of refusal/dismissal of the appeal was proposed, seconded and agreed on the grounds as per DC/20/03368 above.
6. APPW3520/C19/3238578: Appeal against Enforcement Notice – Plot 6, Woodview, Land to the east of Brockford Road, Mendlesham – without planning permission change of use of agricultural land for stationing of a caravan for residential occupations, laying of hardstanding, erection of buildings, siting of a container and formation of a new vehicular access off Brockford Road.

Members considered the appeal application. A recommendation of refusal/dismissal of the appeal was proposed, seconded and agreed on the grounds as per DC/20/03368 above.

8. **Planning Decisions received from MSDC**

1. DC/20/02759: Dale Farm, Green Lane – application to determine whether approval is required for proposed erection, extension or alteration to a building for agricultural or forestry use – **Formal approval not required**
2. DC/19/05478: The Airfield, Norwich Road – Outline Planning Permission for erection of 3 warehouse units (Class B8) with new access from Norwich Road – **Outline Planning Permission Granted**

9. **Planning Correspondence**

1. **NPPF** - draft 5 year Housing Land Supply position statement for public consultation – document circulated, comments to MSDC by 12 noon Monday 14 September 2020. The Chairman proposed that councillors submit their comments to MSDC direct by the deadline date.
2. **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government** – Reform of the Planning System consultations:
Changes to the current planning system (NALC deadline for responses 17 September)
Planning for the future - the planning white paper (NALC deadline for responses 15 October)
Transparency and competition: a call for evidence on data on land control (NALC deadline for responses 16 October) 2020. All documents had been circulated. The Chairman proposed that councillors submitted their comments to the clerk by the deadline dates.

10. **Village Hall :**

1. Management Committee and Maintenance report

The refurbishment work on the kitchen had commenced with delivery of new units, the dishwasher and fridge. Cllr Pease gave a report on the high water consumption. It appeared following investigations by the water authority the wc cisterns had been running constantly. These would need to be corrected. A quote for the work had been obtained totalling £179.00. Cllr Mrs Gibbs proposed the parish council funded the work, seconded Cllr Mrs Arnold and agreed. A meter reading would be taken after the repair work and consumption monitored. The Village Hall/Parish Council were responsible for payment of the water used. It had already been agreed the parish council would fund the water loss invoice.

The committee had suggested the store cupboard floor was raised, this would make the room more accessible. The Village Hall would fund the work estimated at £476.00. An electrician to carry out electrical survey work had been organized and the Fire Regulation papers had been sent to the Fire Inspection Dept at the Suffolk Fire Service. Cllr Mrs Green had carried out a risk assessment for the Fire Regulation requirements. This would be displayed in the Hall. Following completion of the above work it should be possible to install hand sanitisers and the committee were looking to produce a photographic tour of the hall showing the improvement works.

2. Additional village hall items

Finance – Cllr Mrs Gibbs would produce a report for the next meeting including a report on the water consumption monitoring.

Book Exchange – following parishioners’ requests to retain the book exchange, Cllr Pease reported the area had been tidied and was now running well.

Sign Competition - Only one entry had been received to date. Cllr Pease would arrange further publicity to hopefully attract further entries.

11. **Play Area report**

Cllr Lacey reported the play area was now looking very tidy. He was still looking into removing the sleepers replacing them with a grassed slope.

12. **Cemetery and Play Area Grasscutting**

Cllr Lacey reported the cemetery was now looking quite tidy and he suggested one further cut and trim before the winter.

13. **VAS speed monitoring equipment report**

Cllr Harvey reported the equipment had been moved around the village revealing an increase in vehicle speeds and suggested members may want to consider some form of traffic calming measures. A permanent speed activated sign at Brockford was suggested. There had been no response as yet from Suffolk Constabulary or the Police Commissioner regarding the report submitted on the excessive Brockford speeding results. Cllr Harvey would speak to County Cllr Stringer regarding possible traffic calming measures.

14. Wetheringsett Neighbourhood Plan progress report

Cllr Mrs Green reported there had been no meeting since the parish council last met.

15. To consider action to repair road sign at Wetherup St/Debenham Road junction – Cllr Lacey to report on repairs required at the next meeting.

16. To consider a community collection point for plastic bottle fastenings

There appeared to be very little information available on the scheme via the website link. Further investigations would need to be made. Include on next agenda.

17. Finance

1. To consider s.137 donation request/s – none received

2. Accounts for payment:

M Pease – purchase of dishwasher/fridge/h Hoover for VH 692.85

RME Electrical – VH electrical repairs 942.79

APS – installation of dog bin – Joes Lane 50.00

PGM Home & Garden – cemetery/play area grasscutting
July 2020 250.00

Clerk sal/expen Aug 2020 280.05

CAS annual PC insurance premium 560.73

The Chairman suggested the Council accepted the three-year long term agreement premium totalling £560.73, this was £30 less than the annual one-year term premium. Proposed Cllr Pease, seconded Cllr Mrs Cain and agreed.

Cllr Mrs Arnold proposed payment of the above accounts, seconded Cllr Mrs Estcourt and agreed.

3. Finance Report - consideration and review of items raised in internal audit report year-end 31.3.20.

The report had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The auditor had highlighted the following items:

Cheque signatories to initial each invoice payment

Pension duties to be agreed

Completion of publication requirements: analysis of variances, year-end bank reconciliation and AGAR internal audit report

Actioning items raised in the internal audit report

Compliance with the Transparency Code for smaller authorities – publishing compliance documents on the parish council website.

Reserves – Council to be mindful of the guidance within Proper Practices that general reserves held should be maintained at between three and twelve months net revenue expenditure. Members noted the comment raised. This item would be look at further when the 2021/22 budget was considered. It was noted however that funds would be diminished following the parish council's financial support of the Village Hall refurbishment project.

Members noted the items raised, these would be progressed. Proposed Cllr Pease, seconded Cllr Mrs Estcourt and agreed.

4. To appoint internal auditor and RFO financial year 2020-21

Cllr Pease proposed the appointment of SALC to carry out the internal audit and the clerk as RFO, seconded Cllr Mrs Estcourt and agreed.

18. To review for adoption Parish Council Standing Orders 2020-21

The current standing orders with the SALC proposed amendment at section 18 had been circulated prior to the meeting. No amendments were suggested. Cllr Pease proposed adoption of the document, seconded Cllr Mrs Arnold and agreed.

19. Clerk's report/Correspondence

Website Accessibility Compliance to assist people with visual impairment effective 23 September 2020 – One Suffolk Website Hosts were assisting parish councils in carrying out an accessibility audit and scan of their website and producing a statement of compliance. The cost for the work was estimated at approx. £150.00. Cllr Pease proposed accepting the service offered by One Suffolk, seconded Cllr Mrs Aldred and agreed.

SARS – letter of thanks for the recent donation of £100.00.

20. Chairman's Urgent Business – none.

21. Any other business for information exchange/agenda requests

Cedars Hill – blocked roadside drain. Cllr Pease to report via the Suffolk CC Highways reporting tool.

Wetherup Street – Cllr Lacey reported on residents' concerns at the number of recent burglaries in the area. The Chairman would include a note in the parish magazine requesting residents to be vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour to Suffolk Constabulary.

23. **Date of next video link meeting: Monday 5 October 2020 at 7pm**
Meeting closed 9.10pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

County Council September Report

Changes to Children's Centres challenged by opposition

On 25 August, 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. However, I am very concerned that the loss of so many centres will have a detrimental effect on families, particularly those in rural areas who may now find it more difficult to access support.

My group worked with the Labour group to collectively challenge the Cabinet's decision. This challenge has been accepted as valid by the council's Monitoring Officer, and so the decision will be suspended until it has been looked at by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 September. The Scrutiny Committee will either confirm the Cabinet's decision or ask the Cabinet to reconsider the decision.

Update on school transport arrangements for September

Suffolk County Council has confirmed that it will initially not be offering spare seats on school transport. This is due to social distancing requirements, which have reduced the capacity on school buses. However, parents may be able to apply for a spare seat from October half term.

The council has also confirmed the arrangements for masks and social distancing on school transport. The rules vary depending on the type of transport used:

- Dedicated closed routes (vehicle only carries school children) – social distancing will not apply, face coverings are recommended for children aged 11+
- Shared routes (most passengers are pupils, but may be some members of the public) – pupils should observe social distancing guidelines with members of the public but they can sit next to members of their family or school, face coverings are mandatory unless a child is exempt from wearing one
- Public transport – social distancing will apply, face coverings are mandatory unless a child is exempt from wearing one

Cabinet agrees to £65m loan to cover costs of Lowestoft Third Crossing

The Cabinet has given final approval for the Lowestoft Lake Lothing Third Crossing, and revealed that the name of the new bridge will be "Gull Wing Lowestoft".

However, the cost of the bridge is now much higher than originally estimated. The report prepared for Cabinet estimated that the total cost of delivering the bridge is £126.75m, with an additional £19m allocated as a contingency for any unforeseen risks. The original estimate was £91.73m.

To fund the building of the bridge, Suffolk County Council will spend £6.9m of its own money, receive £73.39m of funding from the Department of Transport and borrow up to £64.96m.

It is expected that construction work will begin in Spring 2021.

Infrastructure Board established to oversee costs of large projects

It has emerged that Suffolk County Council established an Infrastructure Board in November 2019 to oversee large infrastructure projects and ensure they remain within budget. This is in response to a number of recent projects where costs have increased dramatically, including the Upper Orwell Crossings which was eventually abandoned after costs increased by £43m.

The board is currently only made up of officers.

District Councillor Report – September 2020

MSDC Council meeting	The first full Council meeting since February 2020 was held virtually on 23 July and broadcast live via YouTube. The next meeting will be on 24 September; this will be the delayed Annual Meeting at which the Chair is elected; and committees and outside appointments are agreed. The meeting will be held virtually and can be viewed on YouTube.
Environment and Climate Change	The Environment and Climate Change Task Force put forward their proposals to the July meeting of Cabinet and they resolved to approve in principle the Carbon Reduction Management Plan. The Cabinet Member for Environment and the Cabinet Member for Finance now have delegated authority to consider business cases for each proposal and approve expenditure up to a total of £500,000.
Green and Liberal Democrat Group	The Green Group and the Liberal Democrat Group of Councillors have joined forces to become ‘The Green and Liberal Democrat Group’ in order to more effectively hold the current administration to account. The new group has 17 members, one more than the Conservatives who will need to rely upon the Independent member and Chairman’s casting vote. Rachel Eburne is the Leader of the new group; she approached the Conservative Leader with a request that the two groups work collaboratively for the benefit of residents of the District. A response is awaited.
CIFCO	A motion put forward by our group to halt all future investment in the Councils’ commercial property investment arm, CIFCO, fell by one vote. The Green and Liberal Democrat Group proposed that any remaining borrowing of around £13 million be used to provide housing within Mid Suffolk for rent or sale on the open market.
MSDC out of county investments	Council debated CIFCO’s business and trading and performance report and business plan for 2020/21. Councillors questioned the directors on the current situation, raising concerns around the risks in investing in out of town offices, fitness centres, retail premises and car showrooms, given the current and predicted future downturn in the economy. The report showed that for 2019/20 there was a combined income to the two councils of £1.6 million and an ‘impairment’ of £3.5 million, which is made up of costs (such as professional advice) and a revaluation of the properties held.
Joint Local Plan	A new timetable was agreed detailing the next steps for the Joint Local Plan. It is now likely to be published in the autumn, followed by a six-week consultation period. The plan is not likely to be adopted before late 2021 or early 2022 leaving the Councils vulnerable to speculative development in the meantime.
Sustainable Travel Action Plan	Council approved a joint ‘Sustainable Travel Action Plan’ along with Babergh Council. This was proposed by Green Councillor Daniel Pratt and received cross party support. Its aim is to ensure that investment be targeted towards cycling and walking.
MSDC to install solar carport	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are to share a £800,000 grant from the “Getting Building Fund” for the introduction of micro-generation and electricity storage solar carports in Sudbury and Stowmarket. The funding will provide 50% of the budget for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council to install multifunctional solar carports which will generate and store electricity and provide a point for electric vehicle charging. The locations currently being assessed are surface carparks at Station Road, Sudbury and Gainsborough Road, Stowmarket. A detailed feasibility study is expected to be complete by

Andrew Stringer