

## Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council

### Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 8 January 2024, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett.

**Present:** Cllrs Mrs E Cain (Chairman), Mrs L Drury, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, N Lingard, Mrs J Weir and Mrs K van Zyl.  
County and District Cllr A Stringer and 6 members of the public.

1. **Apologies and approval for absence** were received from Cllrs T Alston and Mrs E Aldred. County & District Cllr Stringer would be arriving late due to a prior meeting. It was reported Cllr Harvey had decided to resign from the Council, many thanks were recorded to him for his work on behalf of the Council and community.
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda** – none.
3. **Reports**
  1. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> – no queries were raised.
  2. County Councillor - deferred pending arrival.
  3. District Councillor – deferred pending arrival.
  4. Report on flood prevention measures and/or action following October 2023 floods – deferred pending arrival of Cllr Stringer.
  5. Footpaths – the Chair reported the Griffin Lane footbridge had been replaced and the No Horses sign on that footpath replaced and a litter pick carried out.
  6. Trees – no report.
  7. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** – deferred pending arrival of Cllr Stringer.

*Cllr Stringer arrived 7.09pm*

County Council report – Cllr Stringer presented his report (copy attached to the Minutes). He added the flooding issues were ongoing with 7 different locations identified in Wetheringsett and 2 in Brockford Street. One of the issues in Brockford Street would need to be addressed quickly.

Cllr Lacey raised damage to the highway verge and bank at Debenham Corner/Wetherup Street. The bank had collapsed following an incident with a fire engine leaving the road, this was now dangerous for passing traffic. Cllr Stringer would report to Suffolk Highways.

District Council report – Cllr Stringer presented his report (copy attached to the Minutes). There was no further news regarding the Town Lane enforcement notice. It was reported there was no further space available for containers on the site.

#### **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Flooding – a member of the public enquired as to the length of time for Suffolk CC to contact landowners regarding their responsibility to clear ditches and waterways. Cllr Stringer stated an initial letter would be sent to a landowner if no action had been taken by them within a few weeks this would be followed by s.17 enforcement notice. A number of blockages were reported by parishioners.

A water measure sign in Church Street was suggested, this would help motorists.

The large number of fallen tree branches and trees onto roads was raised, it was stated these should be reported to Suffolk Highways via the website reporting tool. A tree had fallen onto a footpath in the churchyard – the chair would report this to the Churchwarden.

A parishioner suggested the support of the parish council in requesting landowners carry out ditch maintenance.

A resident of Wetherup Street reported on flooding and damage to his property the Old Forge from Storm Babet. This appeared to be a water table and drainage issue there being a number of ponds in Wetherup Street. Clearance of the ditch at the rear of the property was suggested.

The meeting was informed a public meeting to discuss issues arising from the flood would be held at Debenham Leisure Centre on Friday 26 January 2024, two sessions would be held one at 1pm and the other 5pm. Representatives from Suffolk CC, the Environment Agency and MSDC would be in attendance.

Cllr Stringer stated the awaited report on the flood from Suffolk CC and action going forward should be available shortly.

The Chair thanked members of the public for their attendance and further updated reports.

4. **To consider for approval Minutes of the meeting held 4 December 2023**

The Chair proposed adoption of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Mrs van Zyl and agreed.
5. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report** – none.
6. **Wetheringsett cum Brockford Emergency Plan** – to review and appoint working group to prepare updated plan  
Councillors discussed the suggestion of approaching landowners on behalf of parishioners urging them to carry out ditch clearances where necessary. It was resolved the approach should be made through the formal process by reporting any issues to Suffolk CC via the website reporting tool.

Cllr Mrs van Zyl had circulated a draft model emergency plan document to councillors for consideration. Suggestions for inclusion were put forward, ie list members of a Community Response Group with contact details, location of tools, route/s to the village hall (rest centre), facilities that would be available at the hall, contacts for availability of rescue tractors.

Cllr Mrs van Zyl would review and include suggestions for further consideration at the next meeting.

In addition to the Emergency Plan, the Chair stated she would like to see a specific Flood Action Group set up with members representing different areas of the village, meeting at intervals to monitor waterways/ditches and general flood issues.

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

1. DC/23/05940: The Old Forge, Mendlesham Road, Brockford – Listed Building Consent – replace small section of soleplate on the north east section of property showing signs of degradation due to penetrating damp (and reinstatement of flood damaged wooden threshold). Internal works as per schedule of works. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and agreed.
2. DC/23/05660: Land at Norwich Road, Brockford – application under s.73a for removal or variation of a condition following grant of DC/20/00324 dated 6/10/20 Town & Country Planning Act (as amended) – erection of 9 dwellings with associated private amenities and parking – to vary condition 2 to allow revision/amalgamation of the SUDS areas as per landscaping plan 4957-01. In light of the need for additional drainage following the recent floods, Councillors agreed a response questioning the need for changing the structure of the pond.

#### **8. Planning Decisions received from MSDC**

1. DC/23/05235: Barns at Green Farm, Pages Green - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/23/03058 - Part discharge for Plot 2 only - Condition 4 (Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy). Condition 10 (Access Surface Treatment), Condition 12 (Surface Water Discharge). Condition 15 (Electric Charging Points) and Condition 16 (Construction Management Strategy). Part Approved.
2. DC/23/05056: Petrol Filling Station, Brockford Garage, Norwich Road - Full Planning Application - Erection of front extension to accommodate customer toilet and alterations to the main pitch roof to form shallow pitch roof and accommodate first floor construction for storage and manager's office; Siting 3No covered cycle storage units. Planning Permission Granted.
3. DC/23/04806: Deerbolts Cottage, Blacksmiths Green - Application for Listed Building Consent. Removal of existing lean to logstore, relocation of existing oil tank, and erection of new ground floor extension to provide new bedroom and shower room. LBC Refused.

#### **9. Planning correspondence - none.**

#### **10. Village Hall**

1. Management Committee report – no report available until next committee meeting.
2. Report on School Licence Agreement and Diocesan Lease – no report.
3. Proposed Solar Panels on part Hall roof report

Cllr Lingard reported he was pursuing match funding for the secured grant and had also submitted an application for Lottery funding, a decision would probably not be known until March.

#### **11. Grasscutting report**

Cllr Lacey stated he would contact the contractor with regard to continuing the contract for the 2024 grasscutting season.

#### **12. Play Area report**

Cllr Lacey reported one of the fence posts at the rear of the play area had rotted. He would look into arranging a replacement post.

#### **13. VAS speed equipment and ANPR report**

The reported the equipment was currently located in Brockford Street. A new battery had been purchased. A rota for relocating the equipment in the village would need to be agreed. The Chair would ask Mr Mike Pease whether he could download the data for reporting at meetings and whether he would be interested in editing the parish website.

#### **14. Community Speed Watch Scheme – Cllr Mrs Weir stated she would be interested in progressing the scheme and would obtain the relevant paperwork.**

#### **15. Report on Kill your Speed highway signs**

Cllr Mrs Weir reported she was now in a position to make a formal application for funding the signs from the County Council locality budget having obtained two quotations.

#### **16. To consider a community First Aid Course**

Cllr Mrs Drury had obtained estimated costs for running a course from both the Red Cross and St John Ambulance. The cost was approximately £40-£50 per person. It was agreed this was deferred until the next financial year.

#### 17. Finance

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

2. Accounts for payment

Cllr Mrs E Cain – reimbursement VAS battery	£53.36
Compass Point Planning – NP professional fees	£1350.00
Clerk sal/expen December 2023	£339.85

Cllr Lingard proposed payment of the above, seconded Cllr Mrs Leech – unanimously agreed.

3. Finance report including approval of Parish Council budget and precept 2024-25

The Parish Council community account stood at £15,425.97 at 19 December 2023.

Final draft figures as suggested at the December meeting had been circulated, this proposed a total precept of £12,980 an increase of £480 on last year. The Chair proposed acceptance of the revised precept proposal, seconded Cllr Lingard, 6 in favour, 1 abstention.

4. To consider review and adoption of Financial Internal Controls 2023/24

The Financial Internal Controls documents had been circulated to Councillors for review. Cllr Mrs Cain proposed adoption of the documents, seconded Cllr Lingard – unanimously agreed.

#### 18. Clerk's report/correspondence:

Parish Council Vacancies – there were now two vacancies. Statutory Notice of the recent vacancy had been notified to MSDC and the Vacancy Notice had been displayed on the village notice board, website and parish magazine.

Meeting Dates 2024 – the following meeting dates were agreed for April and May due to Bank Holiday Mondays: Monday 8 April 2024 and Tuesday 7 May 2024 for the joint Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Spring Litter Pick – a date of Sunday 7 April 2024 was agreed. Meet at the village hall at 9.45 am.

Notification of a potentially dangerous leaning tree at The Hawthorns, Hockey Hill had been received from the resident. The MSDC tree officer had given permission for removal of the tree.

Revised Bank Mandate – Cllrs Mrs Leech and Mrs van Zyl offered to become bank signatories.

19. **Chair's Report** – setting up a village working party to clear village ditches would help parishioners with their flood concerns.

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

21. **Date of next meeting - Monday 5 February 2024, 7pm at the The Village Hall, Wetheringsett**

Meeting closed 9pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

#### County Councillor Report – January 2024

##### Budget Setting

The draft budget papers for 2024/2025 were made public on the 3.1.2024, The settlement this year from central government has been disappointing, and has lead the administration to draft a budget with a series of cuts, on top of a proposed maximum increase in council tax. The Budget scrutiny papers agree that despite the increased overall funding for adult social care, that complaints will rise, while we are proposing doing less for those not in education training etc (needs) other than collect data on their number, finding apprenticeships, helping finding work etc will no longer be budgeted for.

The draft budget also proposes Suffolk County Council closing two records offices, one in Bury St Edmunds one in Lowestoft, centralising all Suffolks records in The Hold in Ipswich.

The draft budget also includes the withdrawal of £500,000.00 from the Arts,

##### Flooding in Suffolk

Recent high rainfall has led to many Suffolk residents' homes being flooded, and flooding more generally on roads. At Council on 7 December, a motion was passed for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding, and to work closely with districts and boroughs, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to help prevent future flooding. My group had hoped to introduce further measures on regularity of maintenance, but this was not supported by the Conservative administration. The motion that was passed was preceded by an announcement by the council of £1m in extra funding to investigate flooding incidents in the county.

Details of a government-funded scheme from DEFRA whereby Suffolk residents can apply for up to £5,000 to help protect their property from future flooding can be found at this link, with applications from January 2024:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

### **Sea Link Consultation Response**

On Tuesday 12 December, Suffolk County Council Cabinet reviewed their proposed response to the National Grid's proposals to link up Suffolk and Kent with undersea cables and landfall at Aldeburgh and a substation at nearby Friston. Councillors in these areas were particularly concerned about the impact on the natural environment and the Suffolk coastline, with most councillors agreeing that engagement with the community about the proposals had been poor, and the timing of the construction coinciding with Sizewell C to create even more pressure on the county's transport routes and tourism industry. Cabinet decided that they would not lodge a holding objection at this stage, but their response to the National Grid consultation outlined their concerns and the possibility of objecting in future once more details were known.

### **SCC Carbon Net Zero Ambitions**

The council's Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 11 December to review the council's progress towards becoming carbon net zero by 2030. Overall there had been a 10% reduction in emissions in 2022/23, due to reduced energy use for street lighting (a recent upgrade programme) and reduced gas consumption at SCC property and schools.

However, the council is not on target to be carbon neutral by 2030, at least partially due to the third scope of indirect emissions – this includes emissions by suppliers and contractors used by the council which are difficult to measure accurately and control. The supply chain represents 91% of the council's total footprint, and it has updated its contract terms and conditions to include annual reporting on reducing carbon emissions, and also requires suppliers to sign up to its Carbon Charter and Climate Change Commercial Ask.

### **Getting Children Ready for Education**

On Thursday 14 December, the council's Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee met to review the support the council provides to prepare children for school. This includes the county's nurseries and early years providers, health services for 0–5-year-olds and Family Hubs (formerly children's centres). In recent years the council has worked with the National Literacy Hub to try and engage children with reading, after research in 2020 concluded that educational attainment for Suffolk children was much lower than it should be.

The Committee acknowledged the good work that was going on in a challenging area and urged that recruitment of health visitors be prioritised by SCC to fill the current vacancies (21%). There were also plans to improve the council's digital platform - in partnership with parents - so they were able to find information and support more easily.

### **DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant**

As well as the initial £500 grant payment and council tax/business rate discounts, residents whose homes have been flooded may also be eligible for up to £5,000 from the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant, which the government requires Suffolk County Council to administer on their behalf. The application process 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>

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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 Councillors' Report – January 2024

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>There had been the opportunity to increase some of these from 2019 but the previous Administration did not take this up.</p>
Greenhouse gas emissions	<p>MSDC has published its Greenhouse Gas Emissions report for 2022/23 which shows a reduction in emissions against 2018/19 when the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to be carbon neutral by 2030.</p> <p>The leisure centres are the biggest cause of emissions. As the first reductions made are the "low-hanging fruit", there will be a lot more work to continue this downward trend.</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 is proposing approval of 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. If Council approves this, 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 <a href="http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk">www.midsuffolk.gov.uk</a></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, <a href="http://www.warmhomessuffolk.org">www.warmhomessuffolk.org</a></p>
Flooding	<p>Flood payments (of £500 for residents and £2,500 for businesses) are being processed by Mid Suffolk on the basis of information from the SCC highways reporting tool and information submitted to MSDC.</p> <p>Affected households may also be eligible for a discount on council tax.</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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