

MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 7.30 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTUTE

Present: Dr Geake (Chair), Mr Gallagher, Mrs Jenkins, Mrs Walker, Mrs Robinson and Mr Hardiman. Mr Foster joined the meeting at 8.22 p.m.

In attendance: District Cllr Mansel, County Cllr Mellen (in part), Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 7 members of the public.

Dr Geake advised that Mr Auchincloss has resigned from the Parish Council. Thanks were recorded for his work whilst a councillor. The Clerk advised that MSDC has been informed and it has produced a casual vacancy notice which has been posted on WPC noticeboard. If 10 voters do not call for an election by 15 November, the vacancy can be filled by co-option.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Symons.

2. Public comment Mr Hardiman and the Clerk were thanked by a resident for making the entrance onto the playing field from Mill Lane disabled access and hopes the tennis court area could be modified too. The Clerk advised that 3 wood panels have been removed and a disability scooter should be able to drive through. Concerns were expressed regarding safety on the footway from Mill Lane to Costcutters is being further compromised by MSDC approving planning permission for the bus depot in Rattlesden Road.

3. County & District Councillors reports.

District Councillors' report: After Storm Babet, the Council has been working hard to help residents in affected homes and businesses. Householders are being urged to report flood damage via Suffolk County Council's reporting tool. Government has announced some financial support and we are waiting to see how this can be distributed. At Mid Suffolk's Council meeting on 26 October, a position statement on Low Carbon Energy was agreed. In absence of Government policy, the Council cannot make planning policy regarding renewable energy such as solar farms or solar PV on roof-tops. MSDC can only provide a statement of intent in terms of how councillors wish to see developments proceed. This statement is an interim stage prior to the adoption of supplementary planning guidance in the New Year. At the same meeting it was agreed to form a working group to review sustainable integrated transport in the district – particularly for walking and cycling. It is hoped to review this in relation to commencing schemes in villages in the district. The *Cosy Homes* initiative is being launched on 15 November. Eligible households will be able to apply for energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including if privately rented. The new Administration at Mid Suffolk is focussing on the backlog of council housing repairs that are needed. This backlog will be dealt with via a separate contractor allowing the in-house team to concentrate on day-to-day repairs. The consultation to get residents' feedback on the planned priorities for the District is open until 15 November. We are hoping to engage with as wide a section of the district as possible, including some groups which seldom get involved, as well as businesses and Town and Parish Councils. The Councils are asking residents for feedback on polling arrangements. A reminder that this year's locality awards are still open for applications. Any group or organisation can apply for amounts of £250 or more. The next drop in sessions are Tuesday 14 November Wesley Cafe and Tuesday 12 December Teacups Café, both 10.am – 12 noon.

The Clerk has advised District Cllr Mansel that she has an email from Dellwood Homes advising that the path from the new development into Rags Lane is not public access. She will discuss this with the planning officer and has registered as an enforcement case.

County Councillor's report: The council meeting on Thursday 19 October saw councillors vote to approve a motion supporting local farmers and food producers by

ensuring that local meat and dairy, as well as plant-based produce, is served at council events. The council's facilities and catering arm, Vertas, has 68% of its spend with Suffolk suppliers and 86% with regional suppliers. In order to tackle the county's environmental priorities and boost the local economy, the council also pledged to encourage Suffolk residents to buy local produce and shop locally wherever possible. At Cabinet on Tuesday 10 October, members of the Suffolk Local Access Forum joined the meeting to provide their annual report, which included the work they are doing to improve and maintain footways and access around the county, particularly with Network Rail and National Highways to make sure that new developments take foot traffic and walkers into account. They are keen for the council to promote the East Anglian sections of the newly named King Charles III England Coast Path. The forum expressed concern about the significant large-scale energy infrastructure projects planned for the county and could impact on Suffolk residents' enjoyment of the green access network and impact on the county's natural environment. On 11 October, some councillors attended Health Scrutiny which was looking at the service provided by pharmacies in Suffolk and the challenges they face with funding, staff recruitment, medicine shortages and pharmacies closing. Representatives from the NHS, Suffolk GPs and the Suffolk Pharmaceutical Committee joined the meeting and recommendations were made to write to minister about funding, and work with local schools and the University of Suffolk to promote pharmacy as a career path. It was noted that in order to provide extra services (such as blood pressure checks, cholesterol tests and asthma advice) which take pressure off GP surgeries, more space and consulting rooms would be required than Suffolk pharmacies currently had available. Suffolk County Council is keen to hear from Suffolk residents, businesses and local communities as it decides how it will spend money next year and has launched an online consultation to give Suffolk residents a say in budget setting for the financial year 2024-25. There will also be a number of focus groups to explain the council's current financial situation, along with the chance for Suffolk residents and businesses to have a say on Council Tax proposals. There are three key questions, the first is on which services people have recently used, the second asks for thoughts on seeking a greater contribution to Council Tax to help fund public services, and the third on which service area you would like to see more money spent. The council would like to extend thanks to residents around the county who helped other residents whose homes and travel were affected by the rains and flooding that struck Suffolk on Friday 20 October. The way the emergency services, volunteers, farmers and local communities worked together to help children get home from school, move people to safety and protect buildings from flooding was truly inspirational. A liaison group has been formed between affected parishes, councillors, hauliers and highways staff, the first meeting took place on 31 October where plans and a timeline for the reconstruction work of the A1088 bridge at Stowlangtoft was discussed. This will involve a full closure of the A1088 for 4 months while the bridge is demolished and rebuilt on new foundations. Work is proposed to start late May 2024 but timing may be dependent on when the A14 works are completed. SCC Highways has looked at the footway from Mill Lane to Costcutters there are no defects at this point reactively although there is a level difference due to vehicle overrun. This will now be passed to LHB team to send Cllr Mellen a cost as this is a large project, with a full road closure due to the road width.

4. To receive declarations of interest

Dr Geake declared a pecuniary interest in planning application 23/04933 I Mill Lane as she lives opposite.

5. To approve the minutes of the meeting 3 October 2023.

The minutes were approved and signed.

6. Planning

a) to consider current applications

23/04620 Erection of extension to existing detached garage, 15 Clay Pit Lane – no comment.

23/04645 Erection of 6 dwellings (following the demolition of the existing house and barn), Clopton Dower House, Clopton Green, Rattlesden – object. The character of Rattlesden Road, unlit, narrow, without footpaths and bound by vegetation is consistent with that of a rural lane. The additional traffic generated by these large houses will contribute to traffic issues with lorries and buses to the industrial units. Councillors consider this unsustainable development reliant on the use of private car due to the lack footpaths and no public transport.

23/04428 Application for Outline Planning Permission Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (Access Points to be considered, details of Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be reserved) - Erection of 1 No single storey Dwelling. Acorns, The Heath – object. The route to facilities in Woolpit does not provide safe and suitable pedestrian access, resulting in the likely reliance on private motor vehicle use and increase in traffic, cramped and is over development of the site, the access opposite two already well-established entrance/driveways is a matter of concern, recent issues of flooding in this area are of concern and needs to be investigated.

Dr Geake left the meeting at 8.02 p.m. and Mr Hardiman took the chair for the next application.

23/04933 Erection of two storey side extension and single storey rear extension, 1 Mill Lane – support.

Dr Geake re-joined the meeting and continued as chair at 8.05 p.m.

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

23/04830 Discharge of Conditions appl 23/03021 Condition 4 (access and surface treatment) and Condition 7 (discharge of surface water prevention). 1 Oak Lane – acceptable.

23/04696 Discharge of Conditions appl 21/06725 Condition 5 (EV charging points). 1 Oak Lane – acceptable.

23/04493 Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Reduce height of 1 Walnut (T1) by 3m and prune side branches by up to 2m. Reduce height of 1 Ash (T2) by 5m and prune side branches by up to 2m. Reduce height of 1 Oak (T3) by 5m and prune side branches by up to 2m. Remove 2 lowest limbs of 1 Sycamore (T4). Spring Lodge, Church Street – no objection.

23/04004 Erection of workshop for the storage and maintenance of buses. Corern, Rattlesden Road – granted.

23/03346 Application for Outline planning permission (Access points to be considered, appearance, layout, landscaping and scale to be reserved). Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Erection of 1 self-build bungalow (following demolition of existing buildings). Spooners, The Heath – refused, outside the settlement boundary, does not represent good design.

22/06268 two storey rear extension. 1 Mill Lane. – Appeal dismissed, oppressive and overbearing outlook and loss of natural light from the rear facing first floor bedroom at 3 Mill Lane.

21/06333 Full Planning Application - Development of a petrol filling station, a drive-thru restaurant and coffee shop, together with various infrastructure and landscaping works. Location: Land Off A14, Elmswell – gone to appeal which will be decided by written representations.

c) to consider proposed base station installation upgrade at cornerstone 10711437, Ticehurst Farm, Cellnet radio tower, Tostock NGR: E: 596155 N: 263080 pre planning consultation and take any necessary action.

Councillors have no comment as there is no change to the height and visibility of the mast. It is hoped that coverage and signal will improve with this upgrade.

7. Clerk's Report

Gate, fence with dog bin, Heath Road – the landowner is aware that they are broken and is arranging repairs.

New Police Model – the Clerk attended the public meeting 17 October. The new model, which aims to improve community engagement will go live 4 December. The new model will be comprised of three parts: Community Policing Teams, Response Investigation Teams, and a County Partnership and Prevention Hub. There are 50 new Community Policing Areas with 80 Community Policing Officers. They will be more visible and have local ownership of the areas they serve.

Flooding of footpath, Old Stowmarket Road development – this has been reported to David Wilson Homes but they say everything is working correctly and is just due to severe rain. However, a further week on it has not drained away. There is water in the attenuation basin too. On the masterplan this path states it is an emergency link. District Cllr Mansel will talk to the planning officer as this may be an enforcement issue.

Trees in Ladyswell – The Clerk has received a quote from Urban Forestry for a tree condition survey of Ladyswell, allotments and pump garden for £550 + VAT. Due to the diseased oak by the boundary with Goldstar it was agreed to approve the quote under emergency powers. A further quote for the Recreation Ground trees is £590.84 + VAT this is for a full survey and trees are recorded irrespective of whether any remedial work is required. This is due to higher usage and proximity to residential properties. *Action: the Clerk*

8. To receive correspondence/communications and deal with any matters.

A letter from **a resident** regarding the relationship of the Parish Council with Woolpit Cricket Club and Councillor's understanding of the set up and community links. From this correspondence a meeting was held and Cllrs learnt a lot about the resources of the club, space, enthusiasm, volunteers and good will and how well supported the Club is. In the past WPC has failed to recognise the WCC as a village resource. It has been suggested that an event for the village could be held at WCC next summer. The number of members, youth and school involvement has been shared with WPC. It has been suggested that the beacon could be re-sited on the edge of the Cricket Club for safety of residents and also better view of any firework displays. This will be considered at the next meeting. **Resident** regarding clearing of ditches beside Green Road at the new development and who is responsible for maintenance. It is understood that the land has not yet been handed over to the management company. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: Rural Services Network

Funding Digest October, November, Rural Bulletin 10, 17, 24, 31 October. **SALC** news bulletin 4, 9, 23, 30 October, 1 November, training bulletin 10, 24, 31 October, SALC conference 29 November, Getting to Grips with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP's), The Local Councillor Autumn 2023, do you have a question or issue to raise with Suffolk Highways? **MSDC** Town & Parish update October and November, review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations 2023/24, October half term activity programme, free trees, hedgerow and wildflowers scheme, Town & Parish Liaison meeting 19 October – priorities for Corporate Plan workshop, Pride in your Place funding deadline 30 November. **SCC** networking event 8 November, community networks events, Storm Babet information, Community Energy webinars –in collaboration with Younity. **Communities Together** Autumn newsletter. **National Highways** A14 Haughley-Tothill reconstruction programme – contraflow switch, temporary speed limits, contraflow change update, October

newsletter, emergency closure update, emergency repairs. **Jo Churchill MP** Dementia awareness event 27 October. **Suffolk Police** new operating model information, Police & Crime Commissioner update November. **Groundwork East** Net Zero delivering support in your area. **London Hearts** defibrillator fund now open.

9. To approve accounts for payment.

Mr K Harknett £65.35 litter picking October, Mr M Gardiner £457.80 Highways Ranger October, Suffolk County Council £454.99 pension payment, SALC £244.00 councillor training for Mrs Robinson and Mrs Walker, Mrs Fuller £522.23 salary increase due to change of salary scale agreed for 2024 onwards and expenses July – September, Starboard Systems £414.72 Scribe accounts package annual fee, Mr Hardiman £69.98 reimbursement for spare batteries for strimmer and hedge cutter, Suffolk.cloud website annual fee. CIL payments - Gipping Press £99.60 Village Hall consultation questionnaires, Exel Heating £898.80 Woolpit Institute heating improvements, Mr M Woodhouse £136.59 reimbursement for Shor Mt Bowls pulley system, Woolpit Short Mat Bowls Club £125.98 pulley system and light. All accounts were approved and cheques issued. Payment by standing order Mrs P Fuller £1,056.91 October salary, BT £184.75 quarterly bill.

10. Finances

a) To receive a monthly financial report.

The balance of the Community Account at the end of October was £560,182.50 of which CIL is £436,936.82, Recreation Ground £2,011.37, earmarked reserves £47,902.84, general reserve £30,336.81 and general funds £42,994.66

b) To consider a report from the Clerk regarding banking arrangements and take any necessary action.

The Clerk has issued a report of the interminable difficulties encountered with Barclays Bank over the last year, lack of customer service, time it takes to get through to anyone by phone, changing mandates, returned cheques saying signatories not as mandate when they are. This has culminated in them closing the account without advising us of this which the Clerk has managed to stop and has filed a complaint. A lot of Parish Councils are now changing to Unity Trust Bank as it seems to understand the needs of Parish Councils. There is a £6 monthly fee and because our turnover is currently over £100k due to CIL, 15p per individual transaction. However this is more than offset by the Clerk's time dealing with all the issues with Barclays. It was unanimously agreed to switch our account to Unity Trust Bank.

Action: the Clerk

c) To consider giving the Clerk discretion to increase CIL grants up to a maximum of £500.00 if original quotes have increased.

Due to constant price increases at the moment by the time quotes have been discussed and approved and the order placed the costs have gone up. Therefore it was agreed to give the Clerk authority to agree any increases up to a maximum of £500.00 on all business including CIL. Anything above that will be brought back to full council for consideration.

11. To receive an update on the community larder and take any necessary action.

In the absence of Mrs Symons, this was deferred until the next meeting.

12. To consider the purchase of a new trolley for the Highways Ranger and take any necessary action.

A more robust trolley is required and it was agreed to purchase a Workhorse Industrial Truck with Mesh Sides, Puncture Proof REACH Compliant Wheels - 500kg at a cost of £316.63 + VAT.

Action: the Clerk

13. To consider dates for meetings in 2024 and take any necessary action.

It was agreed that from January 2024 meetings would be held on the first Tuesday of the month in the upstairs room.

Action: the Clerk

14. To appoint a Parish Council representative to SALC

Mrs Robinson kindly volunteered to be our SALC representative following the resignation of Mrs Ewans earlier this year.

15. To consider a request for a skate park and take any necessary action.

This has been investigated on two previous occasions. One of the issues is that they are not permitted outside of developed areas without lighting being installed and emergency access. There is a possibility that a micro-park can be installed on amenity land which will come from the Bury Road development. It was agreed to set up a sub-committee to investigate what would be suitable and visit other local micro-parks. Mr Gallagher and Mrs Walker volunteered to steer the sub-committee and get members of the public involved. Mrs Ewans will be asked to contact Hopkins Homes to try to ascertain when the amenity land will be released to the parish.

16. To consider a grant request from Suffolk Accident Rescue Service and take any necessary action.

It was unanimously agreed to make a grant of £750.00.

Action: the Clerk

17. To consider benches on some footpaths and take any necessary action.

Mrs Wortley, Footpath Warden has identified several sites which would be suitable and these now need to be plotted on Parish on Line so that Cllrs can consider the sites. Most of the land is owned by Mr R Baker who is happy for the benches to be installed on his land. There are two others, one on land that was leased to New Woods for Woolpit which will need investigating before proceeding. The other landowner will also need to be contacted for agreement before a bench is installed. It was unanimously agreed that the benches would not be visually intrusive in the countryside and made of wooden planks.

Action: Mrs Wortley & Mrs Ewans

18. To consider a dog park and take any necessary action.

Mrs Wortley has identified a possibly area which could be used as a dog park. This would be a fenced area where people pay for exclusive use for an hour which funds the upkeep of the site. The land is owned by Mr M Baker and it was agreed that Mr Hardiman and Mrs Walker would approach Mr M Baker to see if he would consider leasing the land to the Parish Council on a commercial basis. In the meantime Mrs Wortley will liaise with Mrs Ewans to identify any other areas in the village that could be used as a dog park and that WPC could approach the landowner to lease on a commercial basis.

Action: Mr Hardiman/ Mrs Walker and Mrs Wortley/Mrs Ewans.

19. To receive a report on footpaths and take any necessary action.

Mrs Wortley has produced a report on paths and footpaths, however this needs to be based on the definitive map. A sub-committee of Mrs Wortley, Mrs Ewans and Mr Hardiman will get the footpaths on the Parish on Line mapping for further discussion at a subsequent meeting.

20. To discuss traffic issues in the parish**a) A14 roadworks**

There have been closures so that potholes can be repaired on the new east lane

b) To receive an update on 20 mph in the centre of the village.

Amendments have been made to the report and County Cllr Mellen will find out who will now consider the report.

c) to receive an update on solar powered Speed Indicator signs and locations and take any necessary action

The Clerk and Mr Hardiman will take photos of the current position of the pole opposite Southleigh, The Heath and the proposed new position requested by the resident. This will allow SCC to consider the impact on the forward visibility of the SID unit to detect on-coming vehicles and the nearby tree which could potentially impact on the Solar Panel.

d)congestion around the double roundabouts due to cars queueing for the petrol station.

A resident has email concerns regarding traffic queueing to get into the petrol station and the impact on road safety. The Clerk was asked to forward the email to SCC and the police as the relevant authorities. The garage will be advised that a complaint has been made. *Action: the Clerk*

21. To consider the purchase of a grit bin and salt for the Village Hall car park and take any necessary action.

The Clerk will provide a report to Cllrs on sizes and costs so that a decision can be made at the December meeting. *Action: the Clerk*

22. To receive an update on the Bury Road development.

No response has been received from Hopkins Homes regarding our questions raised regarding amenity areas, burial ground and car park. Mrs Ewans will be asked to contact HH for an update. *Action: Mrs Ewans*

23. To receive a report on the allotments and take any necessary action.

Renewal letters have been sent to tenants and annual rents are being received.

24. To receive a report from the Village Hall Committee.

The new committee has been in place since May. The trustees (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary) have had a meeting and then another meeting has been held between the trustees and user group representatives. The consultation questionnaire has been distributed with a cut-off date the end of November. It is hoped to analyse the responses by January 2024. Architect plans have been drawn up for costing of the extension and refurbishment of the Village Hall. There are issues regarding the management of the recreation ground and village hall car park. Mrs Ewans will be asked to produce a list of who owns what land, any leases on the land to allow further discussions at the next meeting. *Action: Mrs Ewans*

25. Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting – Monday 4 December 2023. Noted.

The meeting closed at 10.00 p.m.

Signed.....approved.....

Dated.....4 December 2023.....