

MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5 MARCH 2024 AT 7.30 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

**Present:** Dr Geake (Chair), Mr Gallagher, Mrs Jenkins, Mrs Walker, Mrs Robinson and Mr Hardiman.

**In attendance:** District Cllr Overett, County Cllr Mellen (in part), Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 8 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received and accepted from Mr Foster.

2. **Public comment:** Resident regarding issues at Abbots Green development and the MSDC car park. These had been passed to District Councillors by the Clerk. Cllr Overett advised she has spoken with two MSDC Officers about the issues and will respond to David Wilson Homes on some of the issues and keep the resident informed. Mr Hardiman advised that the three streetlights not working in Mitre Close are being replaced with LED units. The work is due to commence 27 March. SCC will be fitting sensors to the Give Way lights at the mini roundabout so they work correctly. Mrs Ewans thanked Mr Hardiman and Mr Beard for installing the SIDs.

3. **County & District Councillors reports.**

**District Councillors' report:** The first Green Administration budget was agreed by Council in February. There will be a 2% increase in Council Tax (lower than most authorities). The cost of services to residents and communities is expected to rise by £1.8M, and Core Government funding is not matching the inflationary pressures, so the modest council tax increase should help protect services and build on the new priorities of the Council. The Green Administration is putting environmental sustainability and social justice at the heart of all its activities. The housing revenue budget will have financial challenges ahead, most notably an increase of £1.1M in the cost to run the housing service. The housing revenue account and council general fund account are completely separate so there is no way to cross subsidise from one account to the other. There will be a 7.7% increase in housing rents this year just to keep pace with rising costs. There will also be increases in both service and utility charges for sheltered housing tenants. Advice and help for those struggling with finances is available from the Council. A new rural transport grants scheme has just been launched to help provide passenger transport options across the district. Existing community transport operators can apply for funding before 15<sup>th</sup> April. The Vertas Bus project is hoping to gain help from this fund. All parish and town councils across both districts have all been invited to complete a questionnaire about the services and facilities present in each area. This information is needed to prepare the next phase of the Joint Local Plan. Funding is available to help residents with the cost of installing loft insulation, in partnership with Travis Perkins. There are four product options available and residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery. According to The Energy Saving Trust, it is estimated that an uninsulated home loses a quarter of its heat through its roof. Correctly installed insulation should pay for itself many times over in its 40-year lifetime. A free event about making older properties more energy efficient is to take place at The Hold in Ipswich on 6 March. SCC has secured over £200K from the Government's local authority Treescapes Fund for over 1500 new trees in a bid on behalf of all Suffolk councils, including MSDC. The funding will go toward planting as well as maintaining the trees. The next drop-in sessions are 21 March Wesley Café and 25 April Teacups. Residents are encouraged to apply for Cosy Homes grants.

**County Councillor's report:** At Council on 15 February, Suffolk councillors met to discuss and vote on the administration's budget proposals for 2024/25. The council is borrowing heavily from its reserves to meet the growing demand for social care for adults and children, and council tax is due to rise by £74 annually for Band D properties from April this year. There will also be cuts to Family Hubs (children's centres) and Housing Related Support, which supports vulnerable people like care

leavers to find accommodation. Funding for arts and museums will be maintained for 2024-25 but not from SCC core funding, and subject to a bidding process for grants from April 2025. The Bury St Edmunds local archives will be moved to The Hold in Ipswich, which like the arts funding cuts has been controversial locally. The opposition group were concerned about the lack of core funding from Suffolk County Council to arts and museums, as this is how they secure funding from other sources, and an amendment to this effect was proposed. It was also suggested that some of the council's remaining Covid funding from the government be used to support young people not in education, employment or training, as this cohort had suffered a lot of upheaval in their final years of schooling and exams. Support for young people not in education, employment and training is one of the services that is due to be cut in the administration's budget plans. Both amendments were declined by the administration. As you may have read in the local press, Ofsted and CQC published their joint report into SEND services in Suffolk at the beginning of the month. The report was scathing about the county's SEND provision and detailed the failures of the council to communicate and work with parents and carers, improve the EHCP and annual review processes and waiting times, improve outcomes and reduce exclusions. The opposition group was disappointed and concerned that the services are yet to get to grips with improving a service that has now received a third poor inspection result in a row and offered assistance to the Local Area Partnership (Suffolk County Council and NHS teams) in preparing the Priority Action Plan they now need to submit to Ofsted and CQC by 7 March. The poor report led to the resignation of the Cabinet members for SEND, Education and Children's Services and prompted a reshuffle of the political leadership at the council. This report will be devastating for parents of children with special needs in Suffolk, and the council will need to work hard to make improvements quickly and build back trust.

Devolution is something there has been a lot of talk about in Suffolk in recent years, and it looks like it may be happening from 2025. The deal the government is offering Suffolk is the same as the one for Norfolk and would give the county more freedom on decisions and funding for transport, skills and adult education, regenerating brownfield sites and retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient. If the deal is approved, the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk - every four years, residents will be given two votes, to elect their local county councillor AND the leader of the county council. The first election would take place in May 2025. The council will be consulting on the deal soon and residents will be able to give their opinions on the changes proposed. Following the recent controversial proposal in the county council's budget to move local records from Bury St Edmunds to The Hold in Ipswich, the council have announced that that they will be inviting community representatives from both Lowestoft and Bury St Edmund's to form two new Working Parties to consider local access to historical material. This could allow relevant collections to remain in the local area, but any proposals would need to be funded locally rather than by Suffolk County Council. This is not a reversal of the council's decision, and the majority of the records are still planned to move to The Hold, with the North-East and West Suffolk branches of the archive service to close. Cllr Mellen is continuing to follow up on a number of persistent flooding problems affecting parishes right across the division. Inevitably attention and resources have been targeted where homes have suffered interior flooding. Gardens and driveways have a lower priority; however, he is happy to follow up specific issues.

Cllr Mellen has received an estimate for the cost for the signs to the car park to be sited in Old Stowmarket Road of between £3600.00 and £4390.00. This seems ludicrously high. Cllr Mellen and will be looking to MSDC to make a contribution as it owns the car park.

#### **4. To receive declarations of interest**

Mr Gallagher declared a pecuniary interest in item 12 as he is a Director of Woolpit ARC and duly signed the interest book.

## 5. To approve the minutes of the meeting 6 February 2024

The minutes were approved and signed.

## 6. Planning

### a) to consider current applications

**24/00564** Conversion and extension of existing garage and outbuilding to form Annexe. Jocrosse Meadow, Rags Lane – no objection but request a condition that the annexe shall be occupied and used only as ancillary accommodation to the use of Jocrosse Meadow as a single dwelling.

**24/00746** Construction of a single storey rear white Upvc conservatory, 6 Wrights Way – no comment.

**24/00869** Erection of a single storey side extension (following part removal of existing side extension), Ship House, Borley Green – no comment.

**24/01013** Notification of work to trees in a Conservation Area. Proposal to re-coppice remaining standing stems, remove lodged stem and clear fallen stem of Ash tree (T7). Ladys Well, Elmswell Road – no comment.

**24/01016** Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Re-Pollard 2No. Ash Trees (T1 and (T2) and Fell 1No. Rowan (T3). Woolpit Playing Field, The Street – no comment.

**24/01056** Erection of InPost Parcel Locker to rear elevation including construction of block paving and bollards. East Of England Co-op Foodstore, The Street – no comment.

### b) to receive MSDC decisions.

**21/06333** Development of a petrol filling station, a drive-thru restaurant and coffee shop, together with various infrastructure and landscaping works. Land Off A14 Elmswell – granted on appeal. The Planning Inspector concludes that the proposal would not result in any unacceptable impact on highway safety and the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would not be severe.

**24/00117** Application under S73 for the Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of DC/22/04479 dated 21/11/2022 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Erection of 1No Class E(g) commercial building (revised application following planning permission granted under reference DC/22/00638) Revised position and size (Permission DC/22/00638 will not be constructed) To vary Condition 1 (Approved Plans and Documents) to introduce revised design. Land At Stag Café, Old A45 – granted.

**23/05804** Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/22/04067 - Condition 8 (Construction Management Plan), Condition 9 (Landscape Management Plan), Condition 10(Hard Landscaping Scheme and Boundary treatments), Condition 15 (Construction Surface Water Management Plan), Condition 16 (Footway Connection), Condition 17 (Access), Condition 18 (Surface Water), Condition 20 (EV Charging), Condition 23 (Tree Protection) O C Jewers And Sons Ltd Elmswell Road – Conditions 9, 10, 15 refused lack of information, Conditions 8, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23 acceptable.

## 7. Clerk's Report

**SALC & NALC subscriptions 2024/5** – will be increasing by 3% from April 2024.

**Tree work** – Langston Arboricultural will commence work end of February/early March. Only 3 trees require permission from MSDC.

**Free portrait of the King** – Cllrs agreed to order a framed picture.

**Flooding, The Street outside Rose Cottage** – SCC has advised they are waiting for the cracked gulley to be replaced and until this work is carried out no jetting order can be placed as if the gulley cover lifted to clean it may not go back in place. County Cllr Mellen is liaising with residents and SCC Highways.

**Casual vacancy** – Liz Thomas has decided not to accept her place on the Council due to a change in her circumstances. We therefore have two vacancies.

**Community Speedwatch** – the group has been operating for just over a year with 34 sessions, 6458 vehicles monitored and 335 vehicles reported to the Police (5.2%). The highest speed recorded was 48 mph on Heath Road. The group is now taking a break due to the road works on A14 has resulted in a camera van on Heath Road on a daily basis, works on the roundabout and footpath on Elmswell Road make it too dangerous to operation and two of the SIDs cover two of the sites. The group aim to recommence at the beginning of May.

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

**Resident** offering to fill potholes if they are provided with materials/tools. Whilst Cllrs are appreciative of the offer, this is not in the remit of WPC. County Cllr Mellen advised it is unlawful to carry out works to the public highway without permission. The Clerk will respond accordingly and send Cllr Mellen contact details as SCC Highways are responsible for the upkeep of roads in the village. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: Rural Services Network** Funding Digest February, Rural Bulletin 13, 20, 27 February, 5 March. **SALC** news bulletin 8, 12, 19, 26 February, 4 March, training bulletin 13, 20, 27 February, Suffolk devolution events, Mid Suffolk Area Forum 19 March, The Local Councillor February. **MSDC** Parish Services Survey 2024, Town & Parish update March. **St Elizabeth Hospice** compassionate conversations, **National Highways** A14 Haughley to Tothill reconstruction February newsletter, **Hedgehogs are us** Hedgehog Highways project. **Communities Together** new dates for Woolpit Communita Chinwag. **Suffolk Police** operation to tackle drug dealing in Mid Suffolk. **County Cllr Mellen** SCC response to hauliers concerns roundabout design.

#### **9. To approve accounts for payment.**

Mr K Harknett £65.55 Litter Picker February, Mr M Gardiner £713.95 Highways Ranger February, Suffolk County Council £357.36 February pension payment, Mrs J Ewans reimbursement for bankers boxes & mesh shelves. Under CIL Westcotec Ltd £19,656.00 4 SIDs, Mrs J Ewans £42.92 reimbursement for SID padlocks. Payment by Standing Orders Mrs P Fuller £1,056.91 February salary. All accounts were approved for payment.

#### **10. Finances**

##### **a) To receive a monthly financial report.**

The balance of the Current Account at the end of February was £512,240.85 of which CIL is £405,890.35, Recreation Ground £1,961.37, earmarked reserves £48,341.18 general reserve £30,336.81 and general funds £25,711.14. This has not been reconciled as the bank statement has not been received.

##### **b) To receive an update from the Clerk regarding banking arrangements and take any necessary action.**

The Unity Trust Bank account is now open and all funds have been transferred from Barclays. The Clerk has been successfully verified to input items for online payments. All Cllrs were asked to log in and verify for authorising payments. *Action: all Cllrs*

#### **11. To consider a donation to Lorelai and Caroline's just giving for Essex and Hertfordshire Air Ambulance in memory of their dad and take any necessary action.**

It was unanimously agreed to donate £200.00.

*Action: The Clerk*

#### **12. To consider an application for CIL funding from Woolpit ARC for replacement windows and doors and take any necessary action.**

Woolpit ARC has requested £12,745.38 to replace 4 windows, 1 outside door, repairs to the bathroom + a new door, interior and exterior painting. Woolpit ARC will provide the paint. An application was received last year for this work but WPC felt unable to fund further projects until WARC had completed the lease renewal with SCC. The new lease is now complete and therefore Cllrs agreed the full amount.

*Action: The Clerk*

**13. To receive an update on EV Chargers and take any necessary action.**

A previous sales manager at Anglia Car Charging estimated the cost of connection by UK Power networks rather than going to them for a quote. Figures being quoted now are much higher. WPC has been grossly misled and has asked for the money paid to be returned. No communication was received for two months. It appears that other parishes along with SCC and MSDC are also having issues with Anglia Car Charging. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk have met with the SCC Project Manager and she advised that the current scheme has been abandoned and starting again in a different format. Woolpit could be eligible for phase 2 as we have many houses which front directly onto the pavement with no place to put a private charger. If we are eligible, the chargers for the car park opposite the Church would be funded entirely. Katy Hampshire, SCC will attend the CIL meeting 19 March to explain the new scheme to Cllrs.

**14. To receive an update on the Vertas Taxi-bus service and take any necessary action.**

Dr Geake attended a recent meeting. Elmswell PC runs the project and will be billing each parish for £27.11 per month for the shortfall of the project to the end of March 2024. The four parishes have secured a grant from BSIP but a criteria stipulates that bus passes have to be taken. There is also a possibility of Locality Funding but this may have to be for a separate and new service to qualify. Elmswell PC are looking into matters on our behalf.

**15. To consider becoming a corporate member of Mid Anglia Rail Passenger Association (MARPA) and take any necessary action.**

WPC has been approached to join as a corporate member. This will allow us to receive information and possibly to have some influence on services. The annual cost is £25.00. It was unanimously agreed to join. MARPA AGM will be on 23 March in Bury St Edmunds.

*Action: The Clerk*

**16. To discuss relocating the beacon to Woolpit Cricket Club ground, commission a new beacon or upgrading current beacon and take any necessary action.**

WCC has two possible sites and has asked for a meeting. Mr Hardiman, Mrs Robinson and the Clerk will attend. Once the site has been agreed the Clerk will contact MSDC regarding planning permission. It was agreed to have a new beacon which will be galvanised and should last at least 50 years. Possible uses for the old beacon will be explored.

*Action: The Clerk*

**17. To consider a training audit for Councillors and take any necessary action.**

Cllrs are asked to report what training they have undertaken each month. Mrs Robinson and Mr Hardiman have attended Councillor Basic Training and Mrs Walker is booked for her course at the end of March. The Clerk will look into have a gov.uk web address and email addresses for councillors with Suffolk.cloud.

*Action: The Clerk*

**18. To review Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Data Retention Policy, Subject Access Request Policy and Procedure and update as necessary.**

The increase in procurement amounts need to be changed to above £30,000.00. These are the only updates needed.

*Action: The Clerk*

**19. To receive an update on benches on some footpaths and take any necessary action.**

The Clerk has received permission from Long Farms Ltd for a bench along the footpath by Poplar Farm at either of the suggested locations. It was agreed to have five benches and purchase materials at a cost of up to £100.00. This will come from CIL funding.

*Action: Mr Hardiman*

**20. To receive an update on possible land for a dog park and take any necessary action.**

Mrs Walker and Mr Hardiman have met with Martin Baker and produced a chart of information for Cllrs. Mr Baker will be looking for a 5-year lease at a cost of £300.00 per annum. Mr Baker is prepared to mow the area for £10 per cut. WPC Public Liability insurance will cover the people but not dogs. Three differing quotes have been received for gates and fencing which need to be investigated. A meeting will be arranged with the Clerk to firm up lease conditions and legal costs will need to be investigated further as WPC will be expected to pay for both parties. Wording for signs also needs to be agreed.

*Action: The Clerk*

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

No report.

**22. To consider a response to SCC Local Transport Plan 2024-2040 consultation and take any necessary action (response by 8 April).**

It was agreed that there would be no response from WPC as a corporate body but Cllrs may complete as individuals.

**23. To discuss traffic issues in the parish**

**a) A14 roadworks**

There has been a lot of damage to the road edges (haunching) along all the roads being used as rat runs and it is hoped that National Highways will provide funding to carry out repairs.

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

Still with Richard Smith SCC Portfolio holder for a decision.

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

Mr Hardiman and Mr Beard were thanked for installing the SIDs. Bury Road is shortly to be closed for the construction of the roundabout and the SIDs in the vicinity may be moved to other poles. There will also be a SID on private land in The Street/Church Street.

**24. To receive an update on the Bury Road development.**

Sales literature from Hopkins Homes for the phase being worked on shows other areas around the site as being built by others.

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

Nothing to report.

**26. To receive a report from the Village Hall Committee.** No report received.

**27. Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 2 April 2024.**

Noted. The quarterly CIL meeting will be held 19 March.

The meeting closed at 9.16 p.m.

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

Dated.....2 April 2024.....