

MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY  
4 DECEMBER 2023 AT 7.30 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

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

**In attendance:** District Cllrs Mansel and Overett, Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 5 members of the public.

**1. Apologies for absence.**

These were received from Mrs Robinson and Mrs Jenkins and accepted by Cllrs.

**2. Public comment:** Resident asking that CIL money is spent to improve the footway along Heath Road from Mill Lane to Costcutter. County Cllr Mellen has requested a costing for the project from Highways Officers and until that is received, this cannot be considered. Large pothole in Pykotts Way has been reported to SCC.

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

**District Councillors' report:** Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils formally adopted the new Joint Local Plan Part 1, which is the blueprint for future development until 2037. There are a number of updated and new policies relating to housing, economic development, environment and infrastructure. The Councils also agreed the Local Development Framework which is a schedule for the production of several supplementary planning documents as well as the Part 2 of the Joint Local Plan, which will include the strategic site allocations and settlement hierarchy. MSDC has put aside £2M to be used to improve the Energy Performance Certificates of homes across the district. Under the Cosy Homes initiative homeowners are able to apply for funding for loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and draught proofing. Applicants must currently have an EPC rating below C, be in Council Tax bands A-D, have a household income below £60k and savings under £16k. MSDC has adopted a position statement for renewable energy developments outlining what developers need to do to make their proposals more acceptable. In order to balance the benefits of sustainable energy projects such as Solar Farms against local objection, developers are asked to take the concerns of local residents into consideration, and to make every effort to mitigate against those concerns. The new large warehouse at Gateway 14 has been completed and handed over to The Range, for their main distribution warehouse. It is a high specification building, with a number of sustainability features. Gateway 14 is part of Freeport East, which provides businesses with a range of benefits including tax relief. There is currently a consultation about applications for energy saving improvements in listed buildings across the district. The councils are considering the relaxation of the current requirement to apply for listed building consent. This would hopefully reduce the bureaucracy and time it takes for owners of listed buildings to make improvements to their properties. Last week was National Tree Week and MSDC are now working with The Woodland Trust. There is a call for land which could be planted or improved for nature. Of particular interest is land of low agricultural value which is near or close to existing natural habitats, or can help provide green corridors to link them up. MSDC currently has low tree cover so the Council is already actively planting more trees and changing the way that public open spaces are to be managed. Locality awards are still open for applications. The next drop in session are Tuesday 12 December Teacups Café, Tuesday 16 January Wesley Café.

Mr Foster asked Cllr Mansel on an update regarding the path from the new development into Rags Lane. MSDC are still looking into this but if it was not specified in the planning application that it must have public access then there is not much that MSDC can do if the owner has decided otherwise. Issues regarding the cyclepath/footpath in Abbots Green are still being investigated.

Cllrs Overett and Mansel were advised that the electricity distribution cabinet in the MSDC car park behind the Health Centre looked to have been forced open.

**County Councillor's report:** At Cabinet on 7 November Cllrs heard the details of the council's additional £10m investment in resurfacing urban and residential roads. SCC plans to use reporting of poor road surfacing on quieter residential roads and cul-de-sacs where residents live to plot a programme of repairs from now until the end of March 2025. The opposition group also had a recent meeting with the council's new contractor for highways to discuss how works would be undertaken in future. The council's new highways contractor is called Milestone, and the new contract began on 1 October 2023. They will be picking up works started by Kier in the last few months of the previous contract and finishing them as soon as possible. Cabinet reviewed the quarter two monitoring report for the council budget at Cabinet on Tuesday 7 November, with a net overspend of £11.4m now predicted for 2023-24. Budget pressures for the year include placements for children in care, special educational needs (SEND) and adult care. The council is worryingly overdrawn on its Dedicated Schools Grant fund, which will be at -£48m by the end of the financial year; this is because government funding for education is not enough to provide it. On the plus side, the council has predicted £7m more in business rate income than forecasted, and £10m of income is expected from the Energy from Waste facility at Great Blakenham from selling energy back to the National Grid. Following the recent Storm Babet flooding around the county, Suffolk County Council teams have pumped away 4.7m litres of water, cleared 8,412 drains of storm debris and removed over 100 trees blocking roads. In addition to this, as the lead local flood authority, Suffolk County Council has a duty to investigate the causes of flooding and take action to prevent future floods, and have announced that £1m will be spent on investigating the Storm Babet flooding and improving the county's resilience for further storms and excess rainfall. Additionally, it will be administering the funding recently announced by the government whereby owners of flooded properties are able to apply for up to £5,000 to protect their homes and business from future flooding. Details of how to apply will be shared once they are known. The council has submitted a second, extensive response to proposals for LionLink, an energy project which could see considerable impacts on Suffolk's coastal communities and natural environment. The council is opposed to the current proposed landing points at Southwold and Walberswick and has asked that better coordination be considered with other offshore energy projects like Sea Link to avoid unnecessary disruption to Suffolk communities and landscapes. At Scrutiny Committee on 23 November the opposition group had the opportunity to examine the new Highways contract with Milestone, which began on 1 October 2023. The contract promises better communication with councillors and Suffolk residents, and contains incentives for the new contractor to work efficiently – for example, undertaking other works needed in the same geographical area when they are called out. The committee agreed to review the performance of the contract in 12 months. Suffolk County Council's adult social services were inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in August and September, and the judgement is that services are good, with strengths in safeguarding, leadership, use of digital technologies and the way SCC works with other local partners to provide care. Areas for improvement included equity in experiences and outcomes, and gaps in dementia and nursing care provision. Delays in getting through to the Customer First phoneline – the main first point of contact for social care – were also highlighted for improvement. Suffolk County Council had a successful evening at this year's Social Worker of the Year Awards in London, including a Gold Award for Newly Qualified Adult Social Worker of the Year, and a Silver Award for the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Team, who work to keep Suffolk residents safe where they do not have capacity to make their own decisions about their care and treatment. SCC children's services also won a Silver

Award in the Children's Service of the Year category. Overall, the county council had six award nominations this year.

4. **To receive declarations of interest.** There were none.

5. **To approve the minutes of the meeting 6 November 2023.**

The minutes were approved and signed.

## 6. Planning

### a) to consider current applications

**23/04639** Erection of part two-storey, part single storey rear extension (following demolition of existing conservatory). Heather Cottage, Mill Lane – no comment.

**23/05380** Application for approval of reserved matters following outline approval app 19/02656 Town & Country Planning (Development Management (Procedure)(England) Order 2015 (as amended) Submission of details of appearance, scale, layout and landscaping for the erection of 40 affordable dwellings, associated works and infrastructure. Land South of Melvin Way and Old Stowmarket Road - Councillors wish to see plots 37 & 38 as bungalows to protect the privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties on Heath Road. There needs to be addition landscaping along the boundary of the site with all properties along Heath Road and in particular Oaklands to protect residents' amenity and to some degree privacy. All pedestrian and cycle links need to remain as public access in perpetuity as part of any Section 106 agreement or planning conditions.

**23/05369** Erection of a one and a half storey rear extension. Lawnswood, Warren Lane – support.

### b) to receive MSDC decisions.

**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 – granted.

**23/04620** Erection of extension to existing detached garage, 15 Clay Pit Lane – granted.

**23/04313** Application under S73a for Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of Planning Permission 0352/12 dated 12/04/2021. Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) Conversion of garage and store into guest accommodation and home office. - To remove Condition 3 (Restriction on Occupancy and Use). Annexe at The White House, The Street – granted. The subject converted outbuilding shall be occupied and used either as ancillary accommodation to the use of The White House as a single dwelling house, or, by occupiers under long or short term contractual arrangement and that their landlord shall be the occupier of The White House. Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to the scope of the permission granted and to safeguard against the establishment of a separate or independent dwelling unconnected to The White House at the site.

## 7. Clerk's Report

**HGV's Wood Road** – two residents have advised that HGV's are using Wood Lane and asked for the speed restriction to be enforced. The Clerk has responded and copied to County Cllr Mellen advising of the current situation and where the residents can report issues to.

**Highways Issues reported to SCC** – a resident has advised that SCC is asking them if SCC has carried out work or not. Not unreasonably, the resident suggests SCC should know whether it has done the work or not. This issue has been sent to County Cllr Mellen.

**Skate Park** – a family has offered to be on the sub-committee which is having a meeting later this week with some companies who supply and install skate parks.

**Tree survey** – this should commence 4 December depending on the weather.

**SID pole The Heath** – SCC has agreed to move the pole to the location requested by the resident at a cost to WPC of approx. £350.00.

**Vertas Bus Initiative** – a meeting was held on 15 November between the 4 participating villages. The shortfall over the last five months is £1,176.96. County Cllr Mellen has provided £500.00 funding reducing the deficit to £676.96, split between the 4 parishes is £169.24 each (£33.94 per month). This is within the £200.00 ring-fenced for the project and includes admin fees being charged by Elmswell PC. It is felt that the project should continue after 31 December. Thurston PC is to apply for funding from the SCC Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). District Cllr Mansel advised that the 4 District Cllrs for the parishes involved are to contribute £500.00 to the project from their Locality budgets.

**Rags Lane incident** – a resident was hit by a car probably the wing mirror on 29 November. This has been reported to the Police but without a registration there is very little they can do. The Clerk has contacted the SNT to see if they can arrange for a speed check in the area.

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

**Resident** requesting WPC to apply for funding from BSIP for a regular timetabled bus service to Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket. The Clerk will advise of the application from the Vertas bus initiative group. **SARS** thanks for the donation of £750.00. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs:** **SCC** streetlighting information November 2023, pension employers' newsletter Autumn, grants and funding plus National Lottery Awards for All, community energy survey. **MSDC** invitation to participate on local Listed Buildings Consent Orders, Councils launch new winter grant to tackle social isolation, Mid Suffolk new Cosy Homes initiative, notice of adoption of Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan part 12018-2037, update on flood support payments, formal adoption of Elmswell NP, Town & Parish update December, Christmas holiday activities programme. **Suffolk Police** new Suffolk police model forging closer links with the community. **Rural Services Network** Rural Bulletin 7, 14, 21, 28 November. **SALC** Training Bulletin 7, 14, 21 November, News Bulletin 13, 20 November, 4 December, staffing update, do you have a question to ask the new Suffolk Highways partner – Milestone Infrastructure?, SALC conference 29 November + workshop recordings, new social club for young people living with dementia. **Charity Commission** November newsletter. **Suffolk Community Foundation** surviving winter appeal 2023/24. **Resident** copy of a letter to GTM regarding closure of Rags Lane for works. **Resident** response to report of blocked drains – copied to County Cllr Mellen, **2 residents** regarding HGV's Wood Road. **2 residents** copies of letters sent to MSDC objection to application 23/05380.

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

Mr K Harknett £65.35 litter picking November, Suffolk County Council £337.09 pension payment, Society of Local Council Clerks £229.00 annual subscription, Mr R Raisey £114.20 edit December/January Diary, Gipping Press £387.00 printing December/January Diary, Woolpit Institute £704.00 office rent August-December. CIL payments Suffolk County Council £1,710.00 SID Solar SID poles. All accounts were approved and cheques issued. Payment by standing order Mrs P Fuller £1,056.91 November salary.

#### 10. Finances

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

The balance of the Community Account at the end of November was £555,125.17 of which CIL is £450,607.07, Recreation Ground £1,961.37, earmarked reserves £47,962.84, general reserve £30,336.81 and general funds £24,257.08

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

The Clerk has completed the application form to open an account with Unity Trust Bank and all Cllrs need to provide a signature before it can be sent off.

**c) To ratify the LGA and National Joint Council for Local Government Services agreed rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.**

Cllrs agreed to new rate to be backdated to 1 April 2023.

**d) To begin discussion on 2024/5 precept which must be agreed at the January meeting.**

Cllrs were asked to advise the Clerk of any items that they wish to be included in the budget for 2024/5.

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

Mrs Symons advised that the Charity Commission has changed charity status and will have to be registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which would mean quantifying the people who would be using the facility. She is currently working on the wording to send to the Charity Commission.

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

It was unanimously agreed to purchase 160 ltr Slimline Grit Bin from Glasdon at a cost of £179.72 + VAT. A shovel and icemelt will also be ordered. *Action: The Clerk*

**13. To discuss re-siting the beacon on the edge of Woolpit Cricket Club ground and take any necessary action.**

It was agreed to write to WCC and ask for the beacon to be sited on the edge of the Cricket Ground and for WCC to suggest a suitable site. There was discussion whether to repair and resite the current beacon for a cost of £850.00 or have a new galvanised beacon made which would last for 50 years for £1600.00, either option would cost £250.00 to install. It was agreed to make that decision once WCC agree to the re-siting. *Action: the Clerk*

**14. To discuss responsibility for maintenance of the ditches by Green Road near the Stackyard development and take any necessary action.**

This was deferred to the next meeting

**15. To consider a request that the names on the war memorial are painted black so they are easier to read and take any necessary action.**

This was approved and Mrs Walker will do this. *Action: Mrs Walker*

**16. To consider a grant request from Mid Suffolk CAB and take any necessary action.**

Mid Suffolk CAB has advised that they have helped 63 residents with 717 issues in the last 12 months. It was proposed, seconded and carried to increase the grant to £1,200.00 this year. *Action: the Clerk*

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

The five sites have been plotted on Parish Online. Four are on land owned by Mr R Baker who has given permission along with Woods for Woolpit who look after one site. The Clerk was asked to write to the landowner of the other site to see if a bench can be sited near the footpath on their land. The Clerk was asked to contact our insurers to check that the benches are covered by WPC Third Party Liability cover if they are on someone else's land. Mr Hardiman will get prices for outdoor timber planks. *Action: Mr Hardiman/the Clerk*

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

Mrs Walker and Mr Hardiman have met with Mr M Baker regarding the possible site by The Brickfield Business Park. Mr Baker is happy to lease the land at the same amount as the subsidy he receives from the Government. Mrs Walker has been in contact with Bacton PC who have an established public dog park. The area is fenced with a gate, there is no charge for using the area. The main problem is getting rid of the dog waste if you have a bin as MSDC will not collect if more than 2 metres from a road. Other issues to consider are how are dogs going to be with each other, cost of fencing and gate, grass cutting, insurance and the cost of a lease. Mr Foster asked for Mrs Walker and Mr Hardiman to produce a report of pros and cons, all costings including the lease and terms of the lease for Cllrs to read before the next meeting.

*Action: Mrs Walker/Mr Hardiman*

Mrs Symons left the meeting at 9.33 p.m.

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

Mr Hardiman has spoken with Mr M Baker who is not averse to an extension of a footpath across his land. This item was deferred to the next meeting to allow time to investigate procedures needed to extend a footpath.

**20. To review Reserves, Lone Worker, Data Protection, Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety and Complaints policies and update as necessary.**

It was agreed that no amendments are required and these policies will be reviewed again in 12 months.

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

**a) A14 roadworks**

Broomhill Lane is being well used as a short cut and has several pot holes requiring attention. Sisk Ltd who are carry out the work on A14 have filled the pot holes on the car park by the tennis courts with hogging and levelled the surface free of charge.

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

This was deferred to the next meeting

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

deferred to the CIL meeting 18 December

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

The police have advised that unless the cars are being left in a dangerous position (i.e stuck out in the middle of a fast road) or are causing an obstruction (whereby NO vehicles can navigate through), then there may not be a lot they can do. Residents can telephone 101 if they witness a particular problem.

**22. To consider a response to MSDC consultation on Local Listed Building Consent Orders and take any necessary action (ends 29 December 2023)**

Cllrs agreed to delegate a response to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. *Action: the Clerk*

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

Hopkins Homes has advised that they are not under any obligation to pass over any of the land until the last dwelling is occupied. Mr Foster asked if WPC could contact HH to see if trees can be planted around the area of the burial ground now so they will have matured by the time the land is used. Dr Geake felt it would be better to put pressure on once we know how much land we need for the skate park area. It was agreed to let the sub-committee have the meeting with an organisation who prepare and install skate parks next week before going back to HH.

**24. To receive a report on the allotments, including to decide if WPC is to take back the field in Warren Lane which is currently rented to Mr Howlett and take any necessary action.**

The Clerk advised that annual rents are being paid and any outstanding will be sent a reminder. It was agreed to have a discussion with Mr Howlett to see if he would plant a hay crop next year whilst not paying rent for the field so that the fertility of the soil starts to diminish. Dr Geake advised that an advert should be placed in the next issue of Woolpit Diary for volunteers for Woods for Woolpit and wildlife group for the Warren Lane area. This was unanimously agreed. The Clerk was asked to circulate the report received from Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the report that Mrs Ewans produced for the wildlife area in Warren Lane.

*Action: the Clerk*

**25. To receive a report from the Village Hall Committee.**

The consultation of residents regarding refurbishment/redevelopment of the Village Hall closed 30 November. 120 responses were received and are now being analysed. There have been positive responses on most issues and Mr Foster is confident that there is a groundswell of support for large sums to be spent on the Village Hall.

**26. Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 2 January 2024.** Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.53 p.m.

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

Noted.....2 January 2024.....