

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

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

In attendance: County Cllr Mellen (in part), District Cllrs Mansel and Overett, Mrs Fuller Clerk, Mrs Ewans Deputy Clerk and 2 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence.

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

It was unanimously agreed to bring forward item 22 to after item 10.

2. Public comment Resident commented on how lovely the Christmas tree looked this year. Mrs Wortley, Footpath Warden advised that the footpath from Steeles Road to The Green is very flooded where it dips and she will report to SCC with the suggestion that the dip is filled with rubble and topped with the grass to provide a soakaway. The footpath from Wrights Way to the junction with Bury Road needs more bark chippings as the heavy rain has washed away. The pools in the development off Old Stowmarket Road are filling up rapidly and with only a small barrier with one level of wood is a health and safety issue. Cllrs will have a site meeting to see what can be done. Meanwhile the Harris fencing has been removed from the site. Cllr Mansel has advised that the footpath in Old Stowmarket Road from the development is surfaced so that it can flood in very heavy rain.

Mr Hardiman advised that the bricks in the Millennium Garden are slippery in Winter. The Highways Ranger will be asked to clean them.

The insurance company are making arrangements to remove the damaged car by Costcutters.

There are still no signs advising people to use the car park for the Health Centre via Old Stowmarket Road. District Cllr Mansel advised that the Health Centre could be encouraged to message all patients advising them to use the Old Stowmarket Road entrance to save congestion and turning around at the Heath Road entrance. MSDC and SCC will liaise to get permanent signs.

Mrs Walker advised that some residents are asking for a crossing by the roundabouts on Elmswell Road as many are finding it difficult to cross there. It was agreed to look at this after the A14 roadworks have been completed as this is causing increased traffic along Elmswell Road.

Dr Geake advised Cllrs that they should all complete Councillor training and we should record this. Dr Geake, Mr Hardiman and Mrs Robinson have completed the Council basic training sessions.

3. County & District Councillors reports.

District Councillors' Report: 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) year, 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. The *Cosy Homes* 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. 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. 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. Affected households may also be eligible for a discount on council tax. 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. A planning application has been submitted for a 'Care Village' on School Road', Elmswell. This includes a 66 bed care home, 36 sheltered bungalow units and 4 almshouses located on the left hand side of Parnell Lane. The land between the development and the Church would become public open space and include the extension of the cycle path behind Elmswell Church. The next drop in sessions are 16 January Wesley Café and 8 February Teacups.

County Councillor's report: 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. 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 via SCC website with applications from January 2024. 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. 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. 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. Cllr Mellen has received an estimated cost of between £13,330 and £16,290 to resurface the footway in Heath Road. This seems cheap and further information will be sought to ensure it is the whole length from Mill Lane junction and Church Street junction and able to resist damage from lorries driving on it. This will be an agenda item for the February meeting including co-financing.

4. To receive declarations of interest.

Mr Gallagher advised he is now a Trustee of the Village Hall charity.

5. To approve the minutes of the meeting 4 December 2023.

The minutes were approved and signed.

6. Planning

a) to consider current applications

There were no current applications to consider

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

23/04933 Erection of a two storey side and single storey rear extension. I Mill Lane – granted.

23/04639 Erection of part two storey and part single storey rear extension (following demolition of existing conservatory). Heather Cottage, Mill Lane -granted.

7. Clerk's Report

Street lights – It had been agreed for these to be on all night Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Rags Lane pedestrian/cyclepath – MSDC has confirmed that the path has not been put forward for adoption to SCC Highways so remains a private pathway. Also planning permission did not remove private development rights, so those available for gates and fences remain in tact and available to the developer. There is no action that can be taken.

The Street, road signs – these were ordered in January 2023 and have not been installed. MSDC has now found that they found at the depot and will be installed shortly.

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

Land Registry has asked WPC if it wishes to comment regarding a claim over part of Oak Road. Mrs Ewans has perused these and there is no reason for WPC to object.

A note will be sent to say WPC has access to our allotment field from Oak Lane which is currently let to the applicant. **The following items have been circulated to**

Cllrs: Rural Services Network Rural Bulletin 5, 12 December, Funding Digest December. **SALC** training bulletin 5, 12, 19 December, news bulletin 11, 13, 18, 21 December, Christmas greetings and office closures 2023, NSIPs bulletin 21 December. **SCC** festive edition Greenest County community newsletter, Suffolk Pension fund employers meeting 19 January, Suffolkonboard bus timetable updates 384 & 385 Stephenson service. **MSDC** call for land to support nature recovery, Christmas and New Year waste collections, new neighbourhood policing model

booklet. **National Highways** A14 Haughley to Tothill reconstruction scheme overnight closures, November/December newsletter. **Mid Suffolk CAB** letter of thanks for donation.

9. To approve accounts for payment.

To ratify the following payments Mr M Gardiner £495.95 November salary, eon £37.55 pump light, Mid Suffolk CAB £1200.00 donation, Anglian Water Business (National) Ltd £22.66 allotment water 05/09-04/12/23. Under CIL Woolpit Carpet Bowls £600.00 grant towards a new set of club bowls, Woolpit ARC £3,250.00 reimbursement for doors. To approve the following payments Mr K Harknett £78.50 December salary, Mr M Gardiner £525.84 salary December, Suffolk County Council £519.42 pension payment, Mrs Fuller £745.55 back dated pay increase and expenses October-December, HM Revenue & Customs £850.95 PAYE, Equity pc £1,381.80 new computer, Woolpit Institute £432.64 office rent January-March, Woolpit Institute £437.50 meeting room hire 2023, Glasdon UK £374.93 salt bin/salt, Woolpit Nurseries Ltd £235.00 Christmas Tree and filling planters, Urban Forestry £1369.01 tree condition survey. Under CIL Ms L Hicks £330.00 Village Hall questionnaire data entry and presentation. All accounts were approved and cheques issued. Payment by Standing Order Mrs Fuller £1056.91 December salary.

10. Finances

a) To receive a monthly financial report.

The balance of the Community Account at the end of December was £548,765.46 of which CIL is £428,474.57, Recreation Ground £1,961.37, earmarked reserves £47,940.18, general reserve £30,336.81 and general funds £40,052.53

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

The forms and documentation are almost complete and will be sent off this week.

c) To consider the budget, set the precept for 2024/25 and take any necessary action.

Cllrs were presented with actual WPC costs for 2023/24 and current reserves along with predicted costs for 2024/25. After discussion it was proposed, seconded and carried to set the precept at £65,000.00, the same as last year. This will result in a reduction of 5.24% for residents due to the additional occupied dwellings in the village.

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

A questionnaire was sent out to residents in the autumn. 800-900 were sent out with a response received from 100 which is approx. 12%. Mr Foster took Cllrs through the PowerPoint of the results. Cllrs now need an electronic copy of the questionnaire to look at along with the results. A user group survey needs to be carried out and a business plan will then follow. Dr Geake offered some assistance with the business plan. This will allow the VH Committee to look at setting an amount to request CIL funding from both MSDC and WPC. A meeting is to be arranged for the end of January/early February with MSDC Infrastructure Team, WPC, WRGC and WVH. Mr Gallagher offered to become WPC representative on the WVHC which was accepted by Cllrs and will be the liaison between WPC and WVHC.

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

Mrs Symons has advised there is no update on this matter.

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

Planning documentation shows that these are part of the Stackyard development and become part of the responsibilities of the management company.

13. To consider tree work required following receipt of tree reports and take any necessary action.

The report from Urban Forestry was received as a sensible, conservative report. The Clerk was asked to investigate who owns the Swedish Whitebeam beside the recreation ground. It was agreed that the Clerk should contact Langstone Arboricultural Services for a quote on all the high priority items and then look to have the medium priority items completed within a year. *Action: The Clerk*

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

The Clerk has not yet written to the landowner of one area for permission to put a bench on the land but will do so this month. *Action: The Clerk*

Mr Hardiman has calculated that 10 ft of timber will be required for each bench with 18 inches going into the ground, this converts to a total of 15.25 metres. Timber is £5.00 per metre therefore overall cost for the wood is £76.25. This will be considered further at the next meeting.

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

Mr M Baker would be looking at charging £250.00 per annum to lease the land but he has concerns regarding insurance and who would be liable. This needs to be investigated. *Action: The Clerk*

Mr Hardiman has received one estimate for 200 metres fencing along with a 10 ft field gate at £3913.78. That is still a lot to be considered for this project including how to manage the area. Bacton PC has advised that their dog park has been very successful. Mrs Walker will draft a specification for the dog park and circulate to Cllrs before the next meeting. Mrs Walker feels it is important to have a contained space for residents to train and socialise their dogs. *Action: Mrs Walker*

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

There is no written report but Mrs Wortley has raised issues during public comment. Mr M Baker has agreed to a permissive footpath to continue the circular walk on Mr R Baker's land. WPC should pay for signage.

17. To discuss traffic issues in the parish

a) A14 roadworks work

This has recommenced following the Christmas break and is on schedule to be completed in summer 2024.

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

Nothing further has been received since returning the wording of the report. The Clerk will ask County Cllr Mellen to look into when a response will be received.

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

4 SIDS have been ordered and we are waiting confirmation from Westcotech regarding delivery.

18. To consider a response to MSDC consultation on Draft Scrap Metal policy 2024-2029 and take any necessary action (ends 5 February 2024)

It was agreed not to respond.

19. To consider a response to MSDC consultation on Draft Sexual Entertainment policy 2024-2029 and take any necessary action (ends 5 February 2024)

It was agreed not to respond.

20. To receive an update on the Bury Road development. Nothing to report.

21. To receive a report on the allotments, including setting rent for the horse paddock rented to Mr Howlett and take any necessary action.

Most rents for 2023/4 have been received and the one outstanding will be reminded again. Currently there is a half plot to relet.

Mrs Ewans advised that she has received an email from MSDC Biodiversity team supporting the returning the land to nature scheme we are hoping to achieve at Warren Lane and they wish to have a site visit. Once this meeting has taken place it was agreed to call a public meeting in the spring/summer to get thoughts and volunteers to move the scheme forward.

Councillors agreed to set the rent for the paddock at £75.00 per annum.

23. Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 6 February 2024. Noted.

The meeting closed at 21.28 p.m.

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

Dated.....6 February 2024