

MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY
1 JULY 2025 AT 7.00 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

In attendance –Parish Councillors Helen Geake Chair (HG), John Guyler Vice-Chair (JG), Michael Hardiman (MH), Tracey Osborne-Lomax (TO-L), Hilary Hammond (HH) and Rebecca Tomlinson (RB)

Peggy Fuller Clerk, Julia Ewans Deputy Clerk

Jen Overett and Sarah Mansell District Councillors (both until 9.07pm)

No members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence. Received from Gayle Jenkins

2. Co-option of a Councillor. There being no other person coming forward for co-option Liz Thomas was welcomed as new WP Councillor

3. Public comment

- HG reminded everyone that Clerk now on leave for 3 weeks
- MH reported that the new 'No dogs' signs around the play area (which had been screwed to wood on the fence) had been removed once again. Cllrs agreed to look at a different approach to signage.
- HH asked about responsibility for wooden steps off Wrights Way. Confirmed as MSDC
- HH asked about responsibility for church yard maintenance. This is the church which organises working parties.
- HH asked about a litter bin behind Health Centre not being emptied. It is an MSDC bin and bin collector has been notified
- HH asked about land on footpath to Drinkstone adjacent to Bakers Piece which her son owns. People are moving corrugated iron etc off it and dumping it in stream. HG has information about this and will speak with HH.
- MH mentioned litter bin outside Co-op shop. The Co-op no longer provide a bin because of legislation about shop refuse and recycling. Cllr Overett has contacted MSDC about getting a bin. To be added to August agenda
- MH asked about getting defibrillator for centre of village. To be on August agenda

4. County & District Councillors reports.

County Councillor Andy Mellen was not able to attend but sent in the following report in advance:-

Funding for Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

On Tuesday 17 June, Cabinet approved allocating £1.9m from council reserves towards the cost of work the council needs to undertake to set up the new mayoral authority with Norfolk County Council and to prepare its business case for a single unitary council, which needs to be submitted to the government in September. Mayoral elections are due to be held in May 2026, with the mayoral authority set up a few months earlier, in February. The government has provided £1m towards the costs of the mayoral authority, which Suffolk County Council and Norfolk County Council have agreed to split between them. The government has also allocated £290k for Suffolk towards Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which is to be shared with the other councils who are also preparing their proposals for the government to consider in September. The council is not planning to use all of the £1.9m from reserves, which it is allocating as the financial outturn for 2024-25 was better than expected – it just wants to put aside some money it can use if necessary. The costs of setting up the mayoral authority and reorganising local councils is more likely to be tens of millions; it is the potential long-term savings that makes the process worthwhile to the government, who provide council funding.

Raising Educational Attainment in Suffolk

On Tuesday 24 June, the council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee considered the educational attainment of children in the county and how to improve it, as Suffolk is currently below national attainment figures at Key Stage 2 (year 6) and at Key Stage 4 (year 11). The council works closely with headteachers and the leaders of multi-academy trusts (MATs) so that schools can learn from each other via the Suffolk Education Partnership, which was established in January 2023. The Department for Education's RISE (Regional Improvement in Standards and Excellence) programme also undertakes targeted work with schools to help them improve grades, and council officers in the education team also provide support to all local authority-maintained schools, with mentoring and advice for governing bodies. Support is also offered to academy schools, although they do not have to engage with it; while the council still has statutory responsibility for school improvement for all of Suffolk, academies receive their funding directly from the government and not from local authorities. The meeting also noted that Suffolk still receives a low level of funding compared to other counties, and council leaders regularly lobby the government for fairer funding.

Suffolk Libraries Changes to Suffolk Community Libraries

From the 1 June, libraries across the county were taken back in-house by Suffolk County Council at the end of the contract with Suffolk Libraries, who had been running the libraries since 2012. This was a controversial decision which attracted a lot of public and press interest, including a petition against it which was signed by over 20,000 people. The new name for the service is Suffolk Community Libraries, with new branding, but the council's political administration has given assurances that all libraries will remain open, with no reduction in opening hours.

Local Businesses Celebrate Carbon Reduction

On 11 June, the council held its annual Carbon Charter event to recognise local businesses for their efforts at carbon reduction. The awards were set up by the council in 2010 and since that time more than 500 businesses of all sizes have been given Carbon Charter awards for taking action on climate, reducing their carbon emissions or developing green spaces. Speakers at the event included CNH Tractors, Groundwork East and Home Farm Nacton, and prizes were given to Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Shepherd Engineering, Kelling Heath Holiday Park and Woodhill Park. If you are a business owner and want to find out about how to reduce carbon and make your enterprise more environmentally friendly, please visit www.carboncharter.org where you can find advice, tips and webinars/local events.

Council Gains £8m for Bus Service Improvements

Suffolk County Council has been awarded a grant of £8m from the Department for Transport to fund new and enhanced bus services across the county. The new funding from the government's Local Authority Bus Grant can be used for the following:

- £2,805,076 revenue funding for new or enhanced services
- £5,229,805 capital funding for new and improved bus stops, bus stations or vehicle upgrades

The council plans to use the money to improve bus priority on congested streets, upgrade the Real Time Passenger Information system (giving live updates in bus arrival times), and improve bus stops and routes. It will also use some of the money to look into the journeys people take with a view to creating more innovative fare offers in future and get more people to use bus services. Previous funding has been used for projects such as the first Sunday and evenings service between Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury in over 20 years, and direct links from Haverhill and Mildenhall to West Suffolk Hospital. Details of successful local bids for the funding will be posted on the Suffolk on Board website, and if you are interested in putting forward a bid for future funding, you can find information on how to do that here: <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/news/2024/06/bus-service-improvement-plan-where-should-the-money-be-spent/>

Flood Team Wins Local Government Chronicle Award

The council's Flood Investigations and Grants Team are celebrating after winning a national award for its work supporting the communities affected by flooding caused by Storm Babet in October 2023. The team, which was set up in the immediate aftermath of the storm to help flood victims to apply for grants, won the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) award for Small Team of the Year at a recent awards ceremony at Grosvenor House in London. Over 900 homes and businesses were affected by Storm Babet, which caused the worst flooding in Suffolk for more than 70 years.

The District Councillors sent in the following report in advance :-

At June's MSDC Council meeting the annual reports from both Overview % Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Audit Committee were noted. There were also 2 motions by Councillors. The first was a motion from Cllr Overett, proposing for Mid Suffolk to adopt 20mph speed limits across residential areas to improve road safety, the second was from Cllr Carter, regarding the appointment of a disability champion to improve disability awareness within the council.

The recommendations put forward by the Joint CIL working group were agreed at MSDC Council meeting in June. The main changes included increasing the officer delegation level from £10k to £30k, the cessation of Bid rounds so that applications can be made at any time and a minimum threshold spend to be retained at £2k.

It was agreed to bring forward some of next year's budget spend on the depot at Creting Road in preparation for the weekly collection of food waste. There was a desire to find new joint premises for the Waste fleet but this has not proved possible and the existing site in Creting Road would not currently be able to cope with the new collections.

The Survey for residents to have their say in the future local government options is still available on the website <https://midsuffolk.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/have-your-say-suffolk>. Closing date is soon, and there is expected to be an update from national government within the next month.

The Haughley, Stowupland & Wetherden by-election took place on the 12th June, which saw Agnes Watson (Green) elected.

£3m as part of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding has been given to a new scheme linking Elmswell and Woolpit with a new foot/cycle path. This is to assist in connectivity and accessibility between the two villages without use of a car, including services such as local schools, Elmswell Rail station, and Woolpit Business Park.

£33k as part of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding has been given to Rattlesden Parochial Church council for a new heat and light chandelier for the church, allowing for a warmer, comfortable, and environmentally sustainable system for the church. Both this and the footpath were discussed and agreed upon in this month's council meeting

Jen and Sarah are regularly available for residents to come to meet us for a chat.

Next sessions are as follows.

- Tuesday 22nd August 10:00 – 12:00 at Green Wolf Café, Woolpit [NB this is incorrect should be 22nd July]

- Tuesday 9th September 10:00 – 12:00 at Wesley Café, Elmswell

Questions followed on SCC and MSDC matters

- Has weeding of car park behind Health Centre been ordered? Yes and Cllr Overett is chasing this.
- Cllrs Overett's 20 mph proposal was discussed at MSDC and motion passed to write to SCC for a better county wide approach
- Disability motion also passed
- WPC Cllrs also raised question of
 - Heath Road foot path (Clerk advised SCC has no money to resurface it and said WPC could pay £30k+ to have it done but this would not stop lorries mounting the kerb) and

- hedges obscuring view down Elmswell Road for safe turning on to roundabout from Old Stowmarket Rd (MH will ask Martin Baker if he can cut it as probably too big a job for Highway ranger and his equipment) and
- why there was a crossing point with dimpled pavement but no Zebra or other form of crossing (Chair advised that safety around the mini roundabouts was often raised with Highways and would be again especially when we could get an SCC officer to make a visit)
- residents should be encouraged to report bad drivers to the police
- MH thinks we need more 30mph reminder signs

5. To receive declarations of interest and requests for dispensation.

HG reported that two members of the public had requested that HG declare a non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to the village hall because she lives opposite to it.

The meeting decided that HG should declare such an interest in respect of the proposed works at the village hall but not in respect of the management and administration of the Village Hall and the charity which runs it.

6. To approve the minutes of the meeting 3 June 2025

Proposed by MH seconded by TO-L. Agreed

7. Planning

a) to consider current applications

- DC 25/02691 Location: 11 Clay Pit Close
Erection of an outbuilding.
Decision : 'No comment'
- DC/25/02739 - Loke Farm Wood Road Woolpit IP30
Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to Dwellings (C3) and for building operations reasonably necessary for the conversion. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 (as amended) Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q. Conversion of 3no agricultural buildings to 8no dwellings.
Decision : The conditions attaching to Planning Class Q are complicated and the Cllrs leave it to the MSDC planners to make sure this application complies. However, they note that the site is unsuitable for housing as residents amenity will be severely affected by proximity to A14. Any development will increase traffic on Wood Road and Warren Lane. The exit from the site is on a corner, close to the bridge and directly on to a de-restricted (60 mph) road. There is no pedestrian access to the site along the roads and no public transport close by.

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

- 25/01430 Aysgarth, Broomhill Lane – erection of detached garage
Refused - The proposal would, by reason of its overall height and siting forward of the host dwelling, fail to incorporate a high standard of design that would maintain the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene.
- 25/02208 Land North East Of Heath Road Woolpit Suffolk (aka site behind Abbots Green)
Granted Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/19/02656 - Condition 9 (Estate Roads and Footpaths) and Condition 15 (Surface Water Drainage)
- 25/02366 Land at Lawn Farm Warren Lane Woolpit Suffolk
Granted Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/19/03500 - Condition 19 (SUDS)
- 25/02055 - Land North East of Heath Road Woolpit Suffolk
Granted - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/19/02656 - Condition 17 (Construction Method Statement)

- 25/025576 - Plot 4 Land at Lawn Farm Warren Lane Woolpit IP30 9RS
Granted - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/24/05355 - Conditions 4 (Fire Hydrants), 16 (EV Charging) and 17 (Acoustic Fence)

8. Clerk's Report

- Clerk and deputy clerk are in correspondence with Charity commission about closing the Allotments for the Labouring Poort Charity
- Deputy clerk is looking into requirements for use of land as burial ground
- Clerk has sent account to external auditors
- New GDPR regs may mean changes to how AGAR is reported
- There have been complaints about the Orbit site for 40 homes between Abbots Green and the school. Especially relating to working times and dust. Cllr Mansell has reported this to planning enforcement and sent in photos. Resident has a meeting set up with site manager but does not yet have a date but has suggested they meet to work through concerns
- Fly tipping has been reported on Green Road ditch
- Richard Parmee MSDC Biodiversity officer has agreed to look at amenity land at 4pm on Tuesday 29th July
- Meeting to take place 1pm to 2.30 pm on Monday 7th July in Institute for local government officers to talk with WPCllrs about changes to local government structure
- Clerk to chase Tarmac about 30mph gate/signage for Elmswell Road

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

- A resident has asked about road safety on Heath Road
- A resident had thanks WPC for moving the SID back to the White Elm end of Bury Road but did not think that drivers were taking any notice of it. She asked about a 'Speed watch group'. Deputy Clerk to reply and advise of the previous group and how police had to be involved. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: SCC** advance notice of road closure – various Wetherden, Haughley, Elmswell and Woolpit, residents survey -Local Government Reorganisation, briefings on LGR July. MSDC Town & Parish Liasion meeting presentation on LGR, SCC CIL application for Elmswell/Woolpit path approved, Town & Parish update July. **Suffolkonboard** bus timetable update. **Community Action Suffolk** Rural Housing Event 2025 10 July. **Rural Services Network** weekly news 4, 11, 18, 25 June. **NALC** Chief Executive bulletin 5, 12, 19, 26 June, Local Councils Explained digital edition. SALC Council and Community action – climate action pilot survey, training bulletin 3, 17, 24 June, New bulletin 9, 16, 23 June, SALC AGM and 75th Anniversary 1 July. Annual report for AGM, LGR update – press release scc – budget/consultation, supporting parishes through Neighbourhood Planning and Biodiversity webinar 24 June, Suffolk Community Awards nominations open, Mid Suffolk Sr Forum 26 June, live stream link to AGM. Brave Future thanks for donation.

10. Finance

a) To receive a monthly financial report from the Clerk

£33,197.07 in current a/c, £603,082.33 in savings a/c (interest £3507.10)

Of these funds £588,295.84 is CIL + reserves and £47,983.56 is general funds

b) To approve accounts for payment.

The following were ratified :-

Anglian Water Business -£119.25 allotment water 5/3 – 4/6/25

Authorised by T Osborne-Lomax and J Guyler - 17 June

SALC(Training Courses) -£126.00 Recruiting & retaining Cllrs £84.00 and Finance £42.00

Brave Futures - £ 120.00 Grant approved at 3 June meeting

Authorised by T Osborne-Lomax and J Guyler 12/13 June

The following Invoices were authorised for payment:-

Mr M Gardiner	£ 585.90	Highways Ranger June
Mrs P Fuller	£ 1,371.92	Clerk salary June
Suffolk County Council	£ 408.29	pension payment June
HM Revenue & Customs	£ 1,694.58	Tax & N/I April-June
Woolpit Institute	£ 455.00	office rent April-June
Woolpit Institute	£ 120.00	meeting room hire April-June
SALC	£ 282.00	Cemetery Management training 4/5
November Julia Ewans	£114.00	and 4 Planning webinars £168.00
Stuart Langston	£ 760.00	Millennium Garden major cutting
Mrs Osborne-Lomax	£ 49.99	Reimbursement Wi-Fi booster
Mr R Raisey	£ 132.10	editing June/July Diary
Mid Suffolk District Council	£ 64.00	garden waste collection annual fee
Mr M Hardiman	£ 240.22	Reimburse VJ80 flags £19.97,
keys to shed rear of Village Hall	£18.65,	Wood for staging at events £201.60
Total	£ 6,164.00	

11. To receive an update from the working group consider filling the casual vacancy by co-option and take any necessary action.

WPC has one vacancy. The time for notice of vacancy had expired and we await to learn if an election is required or can co-opt .

on 24th June - JG had been available to talk to anyone interested about being a parish councillor. No one attended. MH is to write a piece for The Diary about 'Why I became a Parish Councillor'.

12. To receive an update on arrangements of an event to commemorate VJ 80 and take any necessary action.

MH reports he has it all in hand for Friday 15th August.

10am Proclamation by St Mary's Church flagpole followed by church service.

Evening BBG and bar on cricket ground, music, lighting of beacon and film show 'Mary Poppins Returns'.

Posters in hand

13. To receive an update from the CCTV control group and take any necessary action.

TO-L reported that CCTV control group now formed (TO-L and MH for WPC with David Mallion and Adrian Munteanu for VH). Working through issues. Waiting to hear from Tom Gallagher.

14. To review Grievance Procedures, Disciplinary Procedure and Disciplinary Rules for Employees and take any necessary action.

Approved to include amendments suggested by TO-L save that 'Chair' is to be used instead of 'chairman' or 'chairperson'. Deputy clerk to deal with tidying up documents accordingly

15. To review insurance cover in preparation for renewal due 1 October and take any necessary action.

Agreed that must be on September agenda. Agreed probably not necessary to look for other quotes but Clerk to check with broker that this is best policy and price for WPC.

Will need to look at 'fidelity cover' and ensure appropriate level of cover.

Risk assessments should be reviewed generally and for Highway Ranger in particular. Deputy clerk, RB and TO-L to look at this.

16. To discuss road names for Orbit development off Abbots Green and take any necessary action.

Clerk has been in touch with families of Eburne, Lomax and Prior who are happy to have names put forward. Deputy clerk has spoken with Miki

Lavender who also happy. Four names to go forward. JG asked if Melvin Way did not simply continue?

17. To consider the renewal of the maintenance contract for the play equipment with Proludic and take any necessary action.

Agreed to renew contract

18. To receive an update on the Vertas Taxi Bus and take any necessary action.

The Deputy Clerk has submitted written reports. She gave a verbal history of the scheme and where we are now because Elmswell PC had withdrawn administration services. Cllrs agreed that WPC should try to keep it going - which Deputy Clerk and Mrs T Gardiner will try to do. Deputy Clerk is in correspondence with SCC as grant funder and both Vertas and another minibus company.

Clerk advised that we still had money in the budget for subsidising the scheme.

Constant updates are to be given to WPC.

19. To receive an update on the Elmswell to Woolpit cycle/footpath and take any necessary action.

No further news since funding obtained. Now in planning /design stages

20. To consider a review of Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan and take any necessary action.

Deputy Clerk has been in touch with planning officer. Advice appears to be that if NP simply brought up to date with a new plan and description of Woolpit and recent changes then no need to go through the whole process. However, if there are to be changes to policies or land use designations then would have to begin again. Agreed no need for major changes at present especially with Local Government changes coming. Deputy Clerk to produce draft addendum.

21. To consider work carried out by the Highways Ranger with regard to Health and Safety and Risk Assessment and take any necessary action.

Agreed WPC to look at Risk Assessment (see Item 15) , if he should be taking refresher courses and safe working practises, for example use of strimmer.

22. To consider damage to the Village Hall window following strimming work and take any necessary action.

MH had been advised by VH manager that a hole had appeared in a kitchen window which might have been the result of highway Ranger strimming. No formal complaint made to Clerk

23. To consider losing appointment rights to the Woolpit Village Hall Committee if Woolpit Village Hall changes to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and take any necessary action.

Nick Foster Chair of Village Hall had recently brought to the Clerk a letter dated 13th June from the Charity Commission about the VH Charity converting to a CIO. The letter asked the VH to confirm that the organisations listed in the VH Charity governing document (a 1978 Conveyance) have agreed to give up being Trustees of the VH under the new CIO. The letter refers to a draft order but it was not attached.

Contact has been made with other organisation and successor organisations, name in the Conveyance to see if they know about this. Village organisations, including the WPC should be working closer together in many areas of concern and interest to the residents.

Whilst the consensus amongst Cllrs was that the WPC should not relinquish any such right to appoint, it was being asked to decide without knowing the full

picture. The VH should be asked to provide the draft order. Also to be invited to the next WPC meeting to explain how it sees the VH Charity being managed and administered in the future.

Deputy Clerk to draft emails for approval and to copy to Charity Commission.

24. To discuss traffic issues in the parish

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

MH reported that all SIDs working properly on solar power. SID now on Bury Road near White Elm. The Green Road post has yet to be re-erected.

b) to receive an update on 20 mph zone

we await news of the TRO public consultation period

25. To consider installing a new pole, modified lantern and connection for a new streetlight in The Street following consultation and take any necessary action.

The Clerk reported that letters had been written to the five houses closest to the proposed site of the light. Three had replied one against, one with many concerns about light through bedroom windows and one OK with proposal. Cllrs agreed 6 to 2 not to proceed with the new light.

26. Completed training details for June 2025.

Clerk has been on courses for 'Communications without Headaches' and GDPR

27. To receive an update on the Bury Road development including to appoint a solicitor to act for Woolpit Parish Council in the transfer of amenity land from Hopkins Homes and take any necessary action.

- Liaison meetings had stopped by mutual agreement. They can be reinstated if needed
- The Deputy Clerk had circulated a report on conveyancing figures/fees provided by Bury St Edmunds Solicitors. Agreed that Ashtons Legal to be appointed
- Having been advised that some Sect 106 Agreements include a contribution from the developer to legal costs, Hopkins were asked. Hopkins has offered £2000 towards WPC costs.

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

HH has been to look at the allotments. One is very untidy. A further report when GJ returns

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

TO-L who is the WPC representative at the village hall is very unclear about when meetings are to take place. Next probably not until October. AGM also in October.

30. Date and time of the next meeting

– Tuesday 5 August 2025 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 9.53 p.m.

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

Dated.....5 August 2025.....