

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.30 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

Present: Dr Geake (Chair), Mr Guyler and Mr Foster.

In attendance: District Cllrs Mansel and Overett, County Cllr Mellen (in part), Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 3 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence.

These were received from Mrs Jenkins, Mr Hardiman, Mr Gallagher and Mrs Osborne-Lomax.

2. Public comment: Mr Baker spoke of concerns that local roads are still in a poor condition having been used as rat runs during the rebuilding of the A14. County Cllr Mellen will take the matter up again with officers.

3. County & District Councillors reports

District Councillors' report: There will be a simultaneous extraordinary council meeting of both Mid Suffolk and Babergh on Monday 10 February, to debate the Devolution white paper. Each local authority will consider the same reports and undertake a common debate, but each Council will vote separately. With the new NPPF published alongside new increased housing targets, MSDC and Babergh have no real option other than to review the Joint Local plan part 1 which was adopted in November 2023. The existing plan may become superseded by new national policies if they are not updated. The councils will now build on the work already done on part 2 of the plan alongside reviewing part 1. The new timetable for the new plan will be brought to both councils in February. A Breach of Condition notice and an Enforcement notice were served on EG On the Move Elmswell services. The business is continuing to operate despite this. Officers are taking a close interest in the steps the operator is taking to address the planning and highway safety issues. The Tilia homes planning application was determined by planning committee in January. Planning permission with conditions was approved, and there will now be minimum-monthly ongoing meetings between planning enforcement officers and both Tilia and Hopkins Homes. 2024/25 Locality Budget has now been fully allocated. Monthly drop-in sessions are 10.30-12 Thursday 13 February and 10-12 Thursday 20 March, both at Teacups Café.

County Councillor's report: Following the publication of the government's White Paper on devolution in December, the council held an extraordinary meeting on Thursday 9 January, followed by a cabinet meeting which decided to request inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme. (Councils had to submit an application for this 'fast-track' devolution by Friday 10 January, including a request for local elections in May to be cancelled if this would assist them to prepare for an accelerated process including mayoral elections in May 2026). The result of these changes is likely to be a joint mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk, and amalgamation of the county council, districts and borough council in Suffolk into one or more unitary councils. Unitary councils undertake all local services and replace a 'two tier' system of county and district/borough councils. The government has stated it will make a decision on which areas will be in the Devolution Priority Programme and whether their local elections will be cancelled by the end of January. At Health and Wellbeing Board on Thursday 16 January, the council's Public Health & Communities attended to provide insights into the county's SEND needs and how they are being met. The report states that SEND needs in the county are rising and expected to rise further, and that delays in EHCP assessment, ADHD and autism assessment and support, and access to mental health services for young people were unsatisfactory and in some cases getting worse, like speech and language therapy. The report recommends engagement with families and young people, address inequalities in service provision and improve planning for future services. The report also noted that national data on SEND need was poor and lobbying the government to improve this would also help councils and health partners to better plan and support families. On 28 January, SCC Cabinet voted to approve the proposed budget for 2025-26. This included approving a maximum rise in council tax this year of 4.99%, including the 2% social care precept for adult care. The budget this year does not include borrowing from the council's reserves, which was a concern last year. Instead, the budget relies on delivering £28.4m of savings and mitigations across council services. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing for adult social care, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and placements for children in care. The level of debt the council is carrying from the Designated

Schools Grant is still extremely worrying – this is due to increase by £62.175m over the course of the year, with the council DSG deficit forecast to be £358.7m overall by March 2028. Currently this ‘negative reserve’ is allowed by the government, but this statutory override is due to end in March 2026. The government is yet to come up with a solution for this issue, which affects many local authorities, not just Suffolk. The DSG debt is largely down to the cost of services for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Aside from the financial risk of the DSG debt if it is called in by the government, the council is projecting significant budget ‘gaps’ in future: £33.1m for 2026-27 and £96.2m in 2028-29. This means that in the next few years, additional government funding or more savings or cuts to services will be needed to balance the books. At Cabinet on 28 January, the annual report was presented which details the council’s progress towards its target of net zero carbon by 2030. The council is not on track to achieve this target. It has achieved a 2% reduction in emissions overall during 2023-24, but Scope 3 – the largest scope and the one the council has least control over, as it includes the emissions of council suppliers (for example home to school transport) – has increased by 2% this year due to an increase in the standard conversion factor for bus travel emissions, and a rise in staff travel due to increased demand for care services. The council is trying to reduce Scope 3 emissions, and currently 40% of the council’s top 100 suppliers have a carbon reduction plan for their businesses. It is unlikely the council would be able to be completely carbon free in future as large vehicles like fire engines would require fossil fuels, but it is possible that the council could offset remaining carbon emissions by planting trees in the county. Suffolk County Council has joined with Ipswich Town Football Club to launch a new stop smoking campaign to encourage people to ‘*never stop trying*’ on their journey to quit smoking. The campaign directs people who are thinking about quitting to Feel Good Suffolk, the county’s stop smoking service. NHS figures show that smokers are up to three times more likely to quit with support from their local service. In Suffolk, smoking contributes to nearly 1,000 deaths a year and tobacco presents the single greatest risk for early death, more than other issues such as high blood pressure, obesity or alcohol. In 2024, smoking cost Suffolk an estimated £703m in health and social care costs, lost productivity and smoking related fires. The service offers various methods designed to assist people at every stage, including one-on-one coaching, phone support, or digital tools.

Cllr Mellen has attended the site visit to Lawn Farm Quarry and whilst all concerns were raised these were not material considerations and therefore both applications were approved. The oak bollard in The Street is to be replaced from Cllr Mellen’s budget. The repairs to Stowlangtoft bridge should be completed shortly and the bridge reopened the first week of March.

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

There were none.

5. To approve the minutes of the meeting 7 January 2025

The minutes were approved and signed.

6. Planning

a) to consider current applications

25/00093 Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/18/04247 - Condition 17 (Construction Management Plan) and Condition 28 (Construction Management Plan Highways and Traffic). Land off Bury Road – no comment

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

24/05397 & 24/05399 L/B Construction of five bar gate including fencing and posts. Sunnyridge Cottage, Rags Lane – granted

24/04207 Application under S73 for the Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of DC/21/01132 dated 21/01/2022 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Reserved Matters for Erection of up to 300 dwellings, construction of a new spine road, land for a new primary school, burial ground extension, village car park and associated infrastructure. - To vary Condition 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) to allow amendments to alter house types for 40 of the homes as per revised details submitted. Land off Bury Road – granted

7. Clerk's Report

Plaque on bench in Heath Road – this has been installed.

Road markings Bury Road – SCC has ordered the work to repaint road markings at the junctions with White Elm Road and Broomhill Lane

Fire in the youth shelter – reported to Stowmarket Community Policing Team. There was no damage to the structure.

Broken Steeles Road name sign – reported to MSDC who has advised it will be replaced.

Retaining councillors training – it was agreed that Dr Geake and the Clerk will attend on 19 February.

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

Resident regarding drivers blocking roads and access to the village whilst waiting to access Woolpit Garage and the state on the area on the corner being driven over. Also, the upkeep of roads and paths, lorries cutting up grass area at the entrance to Saffrons Close, potholes. These issues will be raised with the Community Policing Team and SCC. **The following**

items have been circulated to Cllrs: SCC Update 4 A1088 Bridge Farm bridge, Stowlangtoft, Elmswell/Woolpit path vegetation clearance along route week commencing 3 February. MSDC Joint Local Plan and devolution, MSDC Tax Base 2025-26 confirmation, Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus January promotion, Well people, Health Places fund now open, Mid Suffolk Town And Parish Liaison meeting 22 January and presentation PowerPoint, Spring litter pick, Town & Parish update February. SALC Training Bulletin 23 January, devolution update, calculating holiday pay, News Bulletin 13, 20 January, 3 February, devolution SALC activities update 23 January, NSIPs bulletin January. Rural Services Network Funding Digest January, Rural Bulletin 14, 21 January, 4 February. CAS Rural Community Led Housing Zoom event 12 February. NALC Chief Executive newsletter 30 January.

Wetherden PC draft minutes of villages joint meeting 14 January.

9. Finance

a) To receive a monthly financial report from the Clerk

The current account balance at the end of January was £16,360.16 and savings account is £608,225.96. The total of both accounts is £624,586.12. Of this CIL is £496,511.50, Recreation Ground £326.67, earmarked reserves £58,318.45, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £32,429.50. As the bank account for Woolpit Recreation Ground Charity has now been opened the reserve of £326.67 will be moved over.

b) To approve accounts for payment.

The following payment was unanimously ratified from CIL – Chris Schramm £10,854.69 balance of ARC garden refurbishment. The following invoices were approved for payment Mr M Gardiner £552.00 Highways Ranger January, Mrs P Fuller £1205.72 Clerk salary January, Suffolk County Council £419.37 pension payment January, Stuart Langston £200.00 clear fallen tree Recreation Ground, Gipping Press £380.00 Woolpit Diary February/March printing, Mr R Raisey £124.40 Woolpit Diary February/March editing. Payment by Direct Debit BT £199.80 quarterly bill.

c) To consider the appointment of an internal auditor for 2024/5 accounts and take any necessary action

Our usual person has retired. SALC provide a service but as some of their team has left they are unable to confirm whether they can take on new parishes. The cost for income/expenditure of £200k-£300k would be £490.00. Heelis and Lodge also provide this service at a cost of £400.00 for the same parameters. This was deemed to be expensive since last year we paid £100 for the same work. The Clerk was asked to contact two local accountants to see if they were prepared to carry out the audit and what they would charge.

Action: then Clerk

10. To consider the nomination of a Trustee to The Poor Lands Trust and take any necessary action.

Mrs Symons cannot commit to this and has suggested someone else. The Clerk will invite them to meet councillors before a decision is made to nominate them as a trustee.

Action: the Clerk

11. To consider the purchase of outdoor cinema equipment and take any necessary action.

This was deferred to the next meeting.

12. To consider framing an old map of Woolpit for public display and take any necessary action.

The measurements and where to hang it with permission of the Institute Committee is required for the next meeting. The Village Hall could be an alternative site.

Action: the Clerk/Deputy Clerk

13. To consider filling the casual vacancies by co-option and take any necessary action.

An application was received by the Clerk on 3 February. This was too late to make a decision at this meeting. The Clerk was asked to contact the applicant and ask them to attend the next meeting where they will be co-opted on the council.

Action: the Clerk

14. To adopt a CCTV policy and procedure and take any necessary action.

The draft has been agreed by the Village Hall Committee with some amendments. Cllrs are awaiting the revised draft document before they can adopt the policy and procedures.

15. To consider a quote from SCC for a new pole, modified lantern and connection for a new streetlight in The Street and removal of one lantern from Bury Road due to the proximity of the lights by the new roundabout and take any necessary action.

This was deferred as the quote has not been received.

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

Vegetation clearance has commenced this week to enable Officers to see land levels and physical restraints to help with the design of the shared path. It has been confirmed that the path does not require planning permission. The outcome of the CIL bid is awaited but this may not be ready until the next round in October/November. We are awaiting the date of the next meeting of the working group.

17. To receive an update regarding an additional entrance to Lady's Well and take any necessary action.

Still awaiting quotes, deferred.

18. To receive an update on a Village Event including an Organisations Fair and take any necessary action.

A further meeting of the working group has taken place. Events for VE 80 will be: Thursday 8 May 9.00 am a proclamation for VE 80 to take place in the centre of the village and raising the VE 80 commemorative flag at St Mary's Church. 19.30 pm BBQ and music on the cricket ground (BBQ funded by WPC), pay bar in the pavilion.

21.30 pm Lighting of the beacon preceded by a bugle call for silence in memory of those who perished, followed by the hymn 'I Vow to Thee My Country'

Saturday 10 May: Village Hall 19.30-23.30 p.m. evening entertainment in the village hall comprising dancing to 'Swing Machine' offering 40s/50s music in keeping with the event.

Swing dancing lessons will be available. Tickets (nominal charge) £5, under 12s free. Pay bar, Fish & Chips van or Mac n Cheese van. It was felt that it is too late to arrange the organisations fair in May and this could be combined with the fruit and veg show later in the year. Mr R Baker confirmed that Drinkstone Mill will have sails fitted before VE80 day.

19. 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

The SID's will be left in their current positions this month.

b) to receive an update on 20 mph zone

The initial fees have been paid and we are awaiting the next step from SCC.

20. To consider the Proludic Annual Play Equipment Inspection report 10 January 2025 and take any necessary action.

Cllrs have been sent the latest report. Most issues are low risk. The issues with the matting and ground surfaces need to be looked at and plan of action decided at the next meeting.

The wooden swings are regularly monitored as they are not included in the Proludic Gold contract. Dr Geake is to advise words for the signage which will include the postcode, contact details and "What Three Words".

Action: DR Geake/all councillors

21. Completed training details for January 2025.

Mrs Osborne-Lomax has completed section 1 of Councillors basic training.

22. To receive an update on the Bury Road development including transfer of land between the area earmarked for a new school and the sports field and take any necessary action.

It was agreed to take on the land between the area earmarked for a new school and the sports field this year as offered by Hopkins Homes. The burial ground area is now owned by Tilia who will liaise directly with WPC when the properties adjacent to the area have been built.

Action: the Clerk

23. To receive a report on the allotments including consideration of closing the Allotment for the Labouring Poor, Woolpit Charity and take any necessary action.

Mrs Ewans, Deputy Clerk has produced a comprehensive report on the history of the allotments and where we are now. As only 3 councillors were in attendance it was agreed to defer any decision to close the Allotment for the Labouring Poor Charity to the next meeting. The Clerk advised that there are 2 plots available which have been offered to people on the waiting list.

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

The Village Hall is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and the old charity is being wound up. The architect has been working on the three options for the refurbishment project. The Bronze drawings were promised for the end of January but now will not be available until end of February. The VH Committee want to discuss the plans with regular users and then with the wider community before looking into funding sources.

25. Date and time of the next meeting – Tuesday 4 March 2025 at 7.30 p.m. Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.16 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....