

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

Present: Dr Geake (Chair), Mrs Osborne-Lomax, Mr Hardiman and Mr Guyler.

In attendance: District Cllrs Mansel and Overett, Mrs Fuller, Clerk, and 3 members of the public.

The Chair advised that Ms Thomas has resigned on health grounds and thanked her for her work. We will miss her enthusiasm.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Hammond.

2. Co-option of a Councillor/Councillors. There were none.

3. Public comment: resident asked if the Neighbourhood Plan addendum will go for referendum and when will it be published. The Clerk advised that as it was just an addendum and doesn't change any policies it will not need to go to referendum. The Clerk will ask MSDC when it will be published.

Mr Hardiman advised that some parked cars along Old Stowmarket Road have had mirrors broken off. The Police have been informed and some signs have been put up.

4. County & District Councillors reports.

District Councillors' Report: As part of the work on the New Joint Local Plan, a 'Call for Sites' was opened on 20 October. This runs until 5pm on 9 January 2026.

This call invites submissions of land to be put forward for consideration to be included in the Local Plan - for uses such as housing, employment, sports and leisure and community purposes. It is important to note that the Call for Sites will not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for future development, and does not give it any planning status. All sites will need to be assessed further, and the overall strategy for the Local Plan will be informed by a range of evidence as well as feedback from consultations.

The planning appeal for the Care Home development on School Road, Elmswell has been dismissed. The Inspector's report focussing mainly on the heritage issues relating to the setting of St John's Church and the Almshouses as viewed from Parnell Lane. Also, policies from Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan were instrumental. Babergh and Mid Suffolk are the first rural councils to introduce a new Local Listed Building Consent Order. In the past, owners of listed buildings had to apply to the councils for Listed Building Consent to make upgrades to improve energy performance. They will now be able to replace some windows or install secondary double glazing without needing to make an application.

Our Sustainable Communities Food Fund provides grants to small scale food initiatives such as community pantries, fridges and food pop-ups. Between £250 and £5,000 is available and can be used for anything from the purchase of equipment and revenue costs to delivering training and workshops. Funding is awarded on a first come, first served basis.

During October and November, Everyone Active is encouraging a greater number of over 60s to become more physically and mentally active. This is part of the 'Age is just a Number campaign'. A number of activities are being held around the district – not just the main leisure centres.

We still have some funds available in our Locality budget. Applications from Community Groups need to be submitted by the end of January.

Our monthly drop-in sessions are ongoing, when we are available for residents to meet us and discuss local issues. Our next session is Wednesday 10 December at Green Wolf Café, Woolpit all 10-12.

Cllr Overett advised EV points, landscaping and flooding are still to be resolved at the car park off Old Stowmarket Road.

County Councillor's Report: At Council on 2 October, Suffolk County Council voted to give the government their consent to create the Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority, which will be led by a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk. Both Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council are involved in creating the new authority, which will have powers for the two counties including economic development, transport, skills and employment, public safety and housing and strategic planning. The authority will be led by the mayor, with four other members, two appointed by Suffolk County Council and two appointed by Norfolk County Council, and decisions will be made by majority, but the majority must include the vote of the mayor or the deputy mayor if the mayor is not present. The authority can also have associate members (for example, somebody from a local college or university) or a non-constituent member, for example from a district or borough council. As previously reported, the election of mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk will be held on Thursday 7 May 2026. So far, the candidates that have been announced are Caroline Topping (Green), who is currently the Leader of East Suffolk Council, and Tim Passmore (Conservative), who is currently the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk. The role of the Police and Crime Commissioner will be undertaken by the mayor after they are elected. It is likely that Labour, Liberal Democrat and Reform UK candidates will be announced in the next few months, plus any independent candidates who decide to stand.

On 2 October, Cabinet voted to approve the draft Get Suffolk Working plan which was prepared by the council's Skills team. This is the local version of the government's Get Britain Working initiative and aims to support people of working age who are not currently working to get into employment and address barriers they may face to employment, for example poor health, lack of transport, low qualifications and digital exclusion. Once the plan is approved by NHS partners in Suffolk and the Department of Work Pensions (DWP), a Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board will be created to oversee the work. The plan includes the launch of the Connect to Work programme, which will be funded by up to £9.5m from the DWP over five years (the amount of funding received depends on level of participation in the scheme). This programme is to provide tailored training, support and job placements and match people with suitable employers based on their preferences, strengths and previous work experience. Get Britain Working plans will become the responsibility of the mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk and the mayoral authority once in place, so Suffolk County Council is working with Norfolk County Council to make sure their plans are aligned.

At Health Scrutiny Committee on 8 October, colleagues from the NHS joined the meeting to update the committee on improving dental services in Suffolk. This is not a council service, and health partners from the two ICBs that cover the county (Suffolk and North East Essex, Norfolk and Waveney) ran through their progress to increase access to NHS dentists, increase the number of urgent appointments available and ensure that there are enough dental practices across the county. They are also undertaking outreach work on oral health and preventing issues with children and older adults. Both ICBs are reporting that they have managed to increase the number of adults and children seen by dentists, and they are working on changes to their contracts with dental providers to support a focus on highest priority patients. People who need a dentist appointment can contact NHS 111 to get one, as well as contacting dental practises directly. There are a lot of changes coming up in the health service soon, including the NHS 10 Year Plan which was published earlier this year, and from 1 April 2026, Norfolk and Suffolk will have one ICB. This means that plans for dentistry in the region, like other services, may be subject to review.

Re-use shops at Suffolk's recycling centres at Bury St Edmunds and Foxhall have raised over half a million pounds for local charity The Benjamin Foundation, which operates the shops and provides families with childcare, mental health, youth and

housing support. White goods play a key role, as The Benjamin Foundation repairs broken appliances and sells them on, which not only prolongs the life of the appliance, but also helps families access affordable household goods. The shop at Foxhall opened in 2016 and the one in Bury St Edmunds opened in 2020, and they have together repurposed over 4,200 tonnes of waste so far. Suffolk residents do not need to book a slot at the recycling centre to visit or donate to the shops.

The council has launched its annual budget survey where it asks Suffolk residents their opinions and priorities for how it should spend money in the 2026-2027 financial year. The consultation tries to provide some context on its financial position as well as asking for feedback which will be included in the budget-setting process. The first look at the new budget will be early January 2026, with councillors voting on the proposed budget in its February full council meeting. The consultation has been open since 14 October and will close on Tuesday 25 November

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

There were none.

6. To approve the minutes of the meeting 7 October 2025

The minutes were approved and signed.

7. Planning

a) to consider current applications

25/04372 Erection of single storey rear extension, single storey front extension and car port; exterior alterations including cladding, render, new flat roof with solar panels and rooflights, new fenestration; erection of front boundary fencing. Meadowside Lodge Warren Lane – no comment.

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

25/03119 Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: demolition of 4 No. buildings and partial demolition of 1 No. building) - Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Sch 2, Part 11, Class B. Loke Farm, Wood Road – prior approval given.

25/02739 Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses (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 3 No. agricultural buildings to 8no dwellings, involving the demolition of 2 No. buildings and partial demolition of 1 No. building. Loke Farm, Wood Road - prior approval given.

25/01832 Erection of self-build dwelling. Land North West side of Warren Lane – granted.

25/02867 Erection of tractor shed, The Outfield, Green Road has gone to appeal.

8. Clerk's Report

Scribe accounts – the annual fee will increase to £483.84 at next renewal based on a precept of £70,000.00 and will be reviewed again in three years time.

HR/Personnel committee – SALC recommends all parish councils has one with named councillors for communication.

Sign for The Street car park – the Clerk is meeting MSDC Parking Services Manager on 13 November on site.

SALC subscription 2026/7 – will increase by 3% and NALC 3.6%.

Meeting with Woolpit Cricket Club – has been arranged for 7 November to hear WCC proposal for the amenity land.

Locality funding – an application for £1500.00 has been submitted for a defibrillator at The Bull.

Bus shelter opposite Costcutter – SCC has issued the street furniture licence.

EV points Old Stowmarket Road car park – SCC supplier has pulled out of its commitment and SCC is trying to use another supplier and will update progress and time scales to District Cllr Overett.

EV points Village hall car park – a meeting has been arranged with SCC on 25 November which Mr Guyler, Dr Geake and the Clerk will attend.

Pot hole outside Hill House – SCC has advised work will be carried out by mid-November.

Unity Trust Bank – have made changes to their terms and conditions which are acceptable.

Transfer of land to Woolpit Village Hall – Aston Legal has asked if we wish to put the transfer of land to settle historic encroachment onto the recreation ground on hold. This was agreed.

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

The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: Rural Services Network newsletter 8, 15, 22 29 October. **NALC** Chief Executive bulletin 9, 16, 23, 30 October. **SALC** Training bulletin 14, 21, 28 October, 4 November, news bulletin 20, 27 October, 3 November, Norwich to Tilbury (NSIP) – opportunity to register as an interested party, Stronger foundations stronger futures, Babergh Mid Suffolk VCFSE organisation support programme, LGR – devolution update October, Super Forum – a focus on devolution 2 December. **SCC** residents summary now available for One Suffolk, One Suffolk empowering communities to lead, Pension Triennial Valuation results, October 2025 update – Woolpit to Elmswell footway, Pension Employers newsletter autumn 2025. **MSDC** Bramford to Twinstead National Grid project update October, BMSDC JLP call for sites 2025 and draft five year housing led supply position statements, Notice of Community Governance Review, NSIP and large scale energy developments update November, Town & Parish update November. **CAS** “Stronger Foundations Stronger Futures” programme. **Charity Commission** new Autumn 2025.

10. Finance

a) To receive a monthly financial report from the Clerk

The balance of the current account at the end of October was £46,325.93 and the balance of the savings account was £606,502.55. With £5,151.71 VAT reclaimable for the year to date the overall figure is £657,980.19 of which CIL £480,074.83 (£335,014.52 is allocated), earmarked reserves £69,970.34, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £70,935.02.

b) To approve accounts for payment.

Payment of £170.00 to SCC for the licence for the bus shelter was unanimously ratified. Payments to Mr Gardiner £592.20 Highways Ranger salary October, Mrs P Fuller £1,484.56 Clerk salary October, Suffolk County Council £500.63 pension payment October, Suffolk Cloud £120.0 website hosting and support annual fee, Mrs P Fuller £362.60 expenses January-September and Mr Hardiman £23.25 reimbursement for office keys were approved.

c) To begin discussion on 2025/6 precept which must be agreed at the January meeting

It was agreed that a sum of £10,000.00 needs to be included for the Clerk succession plan.

11. To consider grants to the following and take any necessary action.

a) Suffolk Accident Rescue Service

Mr Hardiman proposed a grant of £1000.00 which was not seconded. Mr Guyler proposed £900.00 which was seconded and approved.

b) Woolpit Village Hall

The Trustees have requested a grant of £910.00 to cover setting up a new website and for legionnaire testing. This was unanimously approved.

c) Mid Suffolk CAB

A grant of £1,500.00 was proposed but not seconded. A counter proposal of £1,450.00 was seconded and approved.

12. To discuss salt bins around the village and take any necessary action.

The wooden box for salt at the junction of Briar Hill and Bury Road is rotten and will be disposed of. It was agreed that a replacement was unnecessary.

13. To re-consider purchasing a litter bin to be sited outside the East of England Co-op following additional information and take any necessary action.

A new bin has appeared at the Co-op although it has not been bolted down. WPC therefore does not need to purchase a new bin for outside the store. The Clerk will write to head office to ask for a contribution towards a large bin rental to the rear of the Co-op which would cost £623 per annum. Co-op employees have agreed to empty the bin from the front to the large bin at the rear daily. *Action: the Clerk*

14. To consider Mid Suffolk District Council Community Governance Review and take any necessary action.

It was agreed that the number of councillors should remain at 9 and therefore no response is required.

15. To receive an update from the working group considering recruitment and retention of councillors and take any necessary action.

There are now three vacancies. A casual vacancy notice is currently displayed for the latest vacancy and any request for an election needs to be received by 17 November. Two vacancies can be filled by co-option. An advert will be included in the December/January Woolpit Diary. *Action: the Clerk*

16. To consider the following for the Christmas Carols event on 3 December 2025 and take any necessary action.**a) providing mulled wine**

It was agreed to provide this up to a maximum of £100.00.

b) a donation to the Salvation Army Band

The Clerk will investigate if a donation can be given to a religious charity.

Action: Clerk

It is hoped that the Christmas tree will be in situ from the weekend before the event.

17. To consider a succession plan for the Clerk and take any necessary action.

It is likely that the Clerk will wish to retire in May 2028. It is therefore prudent to plan to employ a deputy within the next financial year to train up ready to take over as Clerk when Mrs Fuller retires. It was agreed initially for 10 hours per week increasing over time to 20 hours which is the Clerk's current contracted hours but in future the role could become a full time post.

The Clerk was asked to investigate advertising with Suffolk Jobs Direct as well as SALC and suggest a suitable starting salary scale.

Action: the Clerk

18. To consider the adoption of the revised CCTV policy and new signage and take any necessary action.

The Village Hall Trustees have accepted the policy. The hardware will need to be renewed in due course. It was agreed to adopt the policy and install new signage.

Action: the Clerk/Mr Hardiman

19. To consider a request to transfer the land that the Village Hall previous extension has been built on to the WVHC following receipt of a revised drawing following the joint meeting 12 September 2025 and take any necessary action.

This is now on hold until the new Village Hall Trustees can provide a revised drawing.

20. To receive an update regarding the transfer of amenity land from Hopkins Homes to Woolpit Parish Council and take any necessary action.

Further information on the landscaping and ownership of the fencing has been received today from Hopkins Homes but the Clerk has not yet had time to look at this to see if it is the correct information to be sent to our solicitor. *Action: the Clerk*

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

The preferred option for Church Lane Elmswell is a cycle route cut through the embankment (Bunkers Hill), across Church Lane with a staged interchange and the route continuing across the other side of Church Lane. Costs are currently coming in higher than expected with M Group, so MSDC may look at an alternative framework. We are aware of the timescales though and commitments for funding. The Woolpit section will be designed/delivered separately from the Elmswell part of the project so neither section /part of the project delays delivery of the other. The preferred option for the Woolpit section, is for the footway and cycleway to continue along Heath Road on the same side as the Cricket Club.

22. 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 pole in Green Road was reinstalled on 3 November and the SID from Bury Road will be moved shortly.

A resident has requested further SIDs on Elmswell Road but SCC rejected our request due to the curve of the road. We will investigate gates at the entrance to the village and the Clerk will contact Badwell Ash PC again for information of where they obtained theirs and who they used to install them. *Action: the Clerk*

b) to receive an update on 20 mph zone

No update received from SCC.

23. Completed training details for October 2025.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk have completed the first day of the Cemetery Management course, the second day is tomorrow. Mrs Osborne-Lomax has completed Roles and Responsibilities of Trustees.

24. To receive an update on the Bury Road development and take any necessary action.

The skips previously close to Clear View have been moved to another area of the site.

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

Renewals have been sent out and two half plots have been returned which the Clerk will re-let to those on the waiting list. The garden club has negotiated a bulk seed purchase which has been advertised by sign to the allotment holders. The Greener Woolpit group has arranged a meeting for 21 January 2026.

26. To receive a report from Woolpit Parish Council's Village Hall representative.

Mrs Osborne-Lomax is WPC's representative on the Village Hall Committee and has taken over the role of treasurer. At the beginning of the financial period the Charity had assets of £25,447.00. By the end of the third quarter, total income amounted to

£20,701.31, of which £14,769.00 is from hall hire. Just over £3,700 of the total income has been raised through fund raising events and will be moved to the BMM account. Grant funding totalling £1,536.44 may have to be repaid to MSDC unless the village hall is able to progress with some development within the next few months. Expenditure totals £21,894.22, most significant costs are for the cleaner and gas & electricity although the gas account has a significant amount of credit owing. The trustees are now managing bookings themselves which will reduce outgoings as the charity is no longer paying a booking clerk.

Quarter 3 invoices have been mostly settled. Files handed over seem to suggest £1000 of hire charges have been outstanding for more than 12 months, with some longer than 24 months. There are no hire invoices in the files so there is no way to know who they are. Mrs Osborne-Lomax does not think the charity will be successful in recovering money that has been owing for more than 12 months.

At the 31 October, the village hall is currently at a loss for the year of £1,192.91. This is not going to improve in the very near future. The previous treasurer predicted a loss of £2,000 at year end, and it is expected that the figure will be greater. Repairs of over £1,200 have been carried out on the toilets over the past 10 months and that is just to keep them in a usable condition. Much more needs to be done to get to a break-even point.

27. Date and time of the next meeting – Tuesday 2 December 2025 at 7.00 p.m. Noted. There will be a CIL meeting on 16 December 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

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

Dated.....2 December 2025.....