

# MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2025 AT 7.00 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

**Present:** Dr Geake (Chair), Mrs Osborne-Lomax, Mrs Hammond, Miss Tomlinson, and Mr Hardiman.

**In attendance:** County Cllr Mellen (in part), District Cllrs Mansel and Overett, Mrs Fuller, Clerk, Mrs Ewans, Deputy Clerk and 4 members of the public.

**1. Apologies for absence** were received from Mr Guyler and Ms Thomas.

**2. Public comment** There was none.

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

**County Councillor's report:** On 16 September, Suffolk County Council held an Extraordinary meeting to debate the business case produced by the council that one unitary council would be best for Suffolk after the two-tier system is abolished. Unitary councils run all services for a local area, and the government is planning for all remaining two-tier areas in the country to change to this model. Suffolk is part of the devolution priority programme, which means it will be one of the first counties to do so. The reorganization will also see the creation of a mayoral authority and mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk. The business case for One Suffolk was endorsed by the Conservative majority in the council meeting and was immediately afterwards tabled at a Cabinet meeting where the council's Cabinet voted to formally approve it. It will now be submitted to government by the end of September. An alternative proposal for three unitary councils for Suffolk has been developed by the district and borough councils and will also be submitted to government, who have said they will make a decision on the reorganization by March 2026 – this may be delayed though, as other parts have the process have been so far.

On 9 September, the council's Cabinet voted to approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was produced following a public consultation on the draft strategy between April and June this year. The strategy sets out priority species and habitats for nature conservation in the county, and gives advice on how different habitats can be improved by landowners to protect and encourage nature. Most of the area mapped out for Suffolk's nature priorities is private farmland, and the strategy does not make improvement mandatory, but the officers who have produced the strategy will now work with landowners to support them and work to find investment for measures in the strategy. Landowners can use areas mapped in the strategy to produce 'units' of biodiversity for purchase by developers, as they will be required to meet the government's new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which state that all development should be increasing biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. The units of biodiversity do not need to be onsite or near the development. The new strategy should also help Suffolk County Council to improve the land it owns in the county, and local planning authorities will have to take account of the strategy when development is considered. In the future, mayoral authorities like the one currently planned for Norfolk and Suffolk will be in charge of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their area. The strategy will now be shared with neighbouring authorities, Natural England and local partners like district and borough councils and the Broads Authority for their feedback.

Cabinet on 9 September also considered the most recent financial reporting from the council, which aimed to give a better forecast of how the council's spending might look for 2025-26. The council is predicting that it will overspend by £13.3m by the end of the year, which it will balance by taking £13.3m from its Risk Reserve. This is extremely worrying, as is the prediction that the council's Designated Schools Grant debt will rise over the year by £63.3m to a total of £161.2m deficit. Currently the government has agreed councils can hold this debt until March 2028, but a long term plan needs to be made as many councils are now carrying a level of debt related to SEND costs which would bankrupt them if it was called in by the government. Other

cost pressures for the council include placements for children in care, care purchasing and mental health services in adult social care. The council has also received £1.2m less than expected from dividends from Suffolk Group Holdings (companies owned by the council like Concertus and Vertas) and had to pay nearly a million more than budgeted for its annual staff pay award.

The Solar Together Suffolk scheme, which has so far installed 32,000 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households, is now open for registration for 2025. Registering is free and there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation. The scheme also includes battery storage and EV charge points, and customer who have already invested in solar panels can get quotes for these too. The scheme requires householders to register online, and pre-approved solar PV suppliers then take part in a 'reverse auction' to bid for the work. After this, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which they can choose to accept or not. Telephone and email helpdesks are available to support residents in making an informed decision. The scheme is run by Suffolk's councils in partnership with iChoosr, who have been working with UK councils on the Solar Together scheme since 2015.

Parents and carers can now apply for a place in the normal year of entry at a primary, infant or junior school and a secondary school for September 2026. The deadline for applications to secure a place at a secondary school is 31 October 2025 and for primary school places, including infant and junior schools, the deadline is 15 January 2026. All applications received by the relevant closing date are processed at the same time using the schools' oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications if necessary. Applications received late are processed after all of the applications received on time. Last year, 94% of applicants received offers for their first preference school, and 98.4% of applicants received an offer for one of their top three preferred schools. The council is keen that parents take into account how their child will travel to school when applying, as the nearest school for school transport purposes may not be the catchment area school.

Cllr Mellen advised he is trying to get the uneven tarmac outside the Co-op, The Street repaired from his own funding.

**District Councillors' report:** At last month's council meeting the business case for the district and borough's proposal for 3 unitary authorities across Suffolk was agreed. A full website on the 3-unitary model, including the proposed map effecting these changes, is available here on MSDC website. There was an interesting debate from both sides of the Council Chamber. The business case was submitted to the Government who will be reviewing both this submission and the County Council's. The Government proposal should be published in January ready for public consultation. In the meantime, district council officers will continue to work on LGR. The Council's grants and funding team are hosting summits in both districts in November. These are designed to help voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisation access the funding they need.

The second Schools Green Skills Summit will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> October. Around 90 students from across 11 schools in Babergh and Mid Suffolk will be involved in a COP-style event to encourage a better understanding of how climate change can be addressed.

Suffolk Recycles is currently running a social media campaign to prepare residents for the upcoming changes to bin collections in the area. It is important for us all to ensure that people get the correct information so please direct them to the [suffolkrecycling.org](https://suffolkrecycling.org) website where the facts are clearly laid out.

The Solar Together Suffolk scheme is now open for free 2025 registrations. The group-buying programme enables Suffolk residents to buy solar panels and battery storage, helping to save money on their energy bills and cut carbon emissions. More information can be found on Mid Suffolk District Council's website.

Funding from Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils has been granted for a third consecutive year of the Living Well in Winter grant, with grants of up to £2,000 being able to be applied for.

District Cllrs are willing to provide Locality Funding for an additional defibrillator and asked the Clerk to liaise with Woolpit Bull on this as it may be able to be sited on the outside wall of the pub.

EV points should have been installed in the car park behind the Health Centre in September, Cllr Overett will continue to liaise with officers to ensure these are installed.

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

There were none.

#### **5. To approve the minutes of the meeting 2 and 25 September 2025**

The Clerk advised that folio 1225 9a) of the minutes 2 September should read that the current account balance is at the end of August and not July. With this amendment it was proposed, seconded and carried to approve both sets of minutes.

#### **6. Planning**

##### **a) to consider current applications**

**25/01832** Re-consultation - Erection of self build dwelling. Land North West side of Warren Lane. Continue to object as per comments sent 7 May 2025.

**25/03169** Re-consultation - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/24/05355 - Condition 7 (Hours of use of Illumination), Condition 8 (Out of Hours Noise Restriction), Condition 9 (Hours of Operation), Condition 13 (HGV Delivery Management Plan) and Condition 15 (Details of Waste Strategy). Plot 4 land at Lawn Farm Warren Lane. Continue to object as per comments sent 6 August 2025.

**25/03177** Re-consultation - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/24/05355 - Condition 19 (Written Liaison Scheme). Plot 4 Lawn Farm Business Park. No comment.

##### **b) to receive MSDC decisions.**

**25/03380** Erection of a detached garage, Aysgarth, Broomhill Lane – granted.

**25/03688** Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/25/02691 - Condition 3 (Biodiversity Enhancement Measures) 11 Clay Pit Close – satisfied

**25/03190** Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/23/05380 - Condition 3 (Materials), Land South Of Old Stowmarket Road – satisfied

**25/03291** Application under S73 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) of Planning Permission DC/24/05369 dated: 14/04/2025 - Erection of a first floor extension and loft conversion with new roof lights. Wyverne Borley Green – granted.

**25/03791** Application for Works to Trees subject to Tree Preservation Order MS196/W1 - Fell 3 No. Pine (T1 - T3), Crown raise 3 No. Sycamore (Labelled 1,3 and 4 on plan), thin crowns of 4 No. Sycamore (Labelled 1,2,3 and 4 on plan), 5 Wades Wood – granted.

#### **7. Clerk's Report**

**Gate post MSDC car park** – new post has been erected and fence repaired.

**Zip wire** – a resident advised that the wire needs to be raised higher off the ground. Proludic will come and modify as appropriate.

**2026 meeting dates** – these will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month.

**Village Hall quiz** – our team The Nolan Principles came a creditable second.

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

**P.C. Stephens** would like to hold another pop up event on 28 October 1100-1230 hours to allow residents to speak to them on any issues. This was approved. **Mr**

**Guyler** will be joining the Emergency Management Team to replace Mrs Storey. This was approved. **Resident** asking if WPC has considered getting rid of the Millennium Garden. Dr Geake advised that the working group has arranged to remove brambles and nettles on 29 November with a view to follow up with further working parties for several months. This will then allow them to make recommendations to WPC for the future of the area. **Resident** complaining about the state of the bottle bank area. This

is usually kept tidy by MSDC operative when the bins are emptied. Mr Hardiman offered to have a look and see what needs to be done. **MSDC** JLP review: publication of the Draft Babergh and Mid Suffolk strategic housing land availability assessment and forthcoming call for sites. The Clerk advised that this has been published which identifies potential sites for housing development that were submitted following the Call for Sites in January 2024. MSDC is undertaking a further Call for Sites October 2025-January 2026 which will invite site submissions for multiple land uses. Whilst this does not allocate sites for development it does identify areas which are being considered. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs:** **MSDC** electrical recycling bins, District and Borough councils publish plans to restructure Suffolk council services, Mid Suffolk Grant Funding 'Live Well' winter grants, Town and Parish Update October, NSIP and large scale energy development update October. **SCC** Suffolk Emergency Planning – community rest centre training, One Suffolk: a message to all Town & Parish Councils, Suffolk Pension Fund annual employer meeting 14 October, Update: advanced notice of road closure of various roads in Woolpit, Elmswell, Wetherden and Haughley, important Parish Council update on LGR. **Rural Services Network** weekly news 3, 10, 17, 24 September, 1 October. **SALC** LGR & devolution September update and details of meetings, training bulletin 9, 16, 23, 30 September and 7 October, news bulletin 8, 15, 22, 29 September, 6 October, Babergh & Mid Suffolk Area Forum 30 September and recording of speakers, winners of Suffolk Community Awards 2025, People Power – why every council needs an HR/employment/personnel committee. **NALC** Chief Executive bulletin 4, 11, 18, 25 September, 2 October. **Suffolk Police** Police & Crime Commissioner's update September. **Care Choices** Suffolk Care Service directory 2026. **Lendology** Warm Home Suffolk loan scheme – now closed for new applications. **CAS** Community led Housing Zoom events 6 October. **Mid Suffolk CAB** invitation to AGM 31 October. **Woolpit Health Centre** open evening 14 October. **Suffolkonboard** bus timetable update 20 September.

## 9. Finance

### a) To receive a monthly financial report from the Clerk

The balance of the current account at the end of September was £57,319.98 which includes the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the precept. The balance of the savings account was £606,502.55 including £3,420.22 quarterly interest. With £4,292.54 VAT reclaimable for the year to date the overall figure is £668,215.07 of which CIL £480,244.83 (£335,014.52 is allocated), earmarked reserves £70,127.84, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £80,842.40.

### b) To approve accounts for payment.

Payment of £117.82 allotment water 5/6/25-4/9/25 was unanimously ratified. Mr M Gardiner £579.60 September salary, Mrs P Fuller £1,397.87 September Salary, Suffolk County Council £408.29 September pension contributions, HM Revenue & Customs £1,702.19 tax & N/I July-September, Business Services at CAS Ltd £1,506.16 insurance renewal 2025/6, PKF Littlejohn LLP £756.00 external audit of accounts 2024/25. Starboard Systems Ltd £414.72 Scribe accounts package renewal, SALC £79.20 Cllr Basic Training Ms Thomas, Woolpit Institute £455.00 office rent July-September, Woolpit Institute £60.00 meeting room hire July-September, Mr R Raisey £132.10 edit October/November Woolpit Diary, Gipping Press £395.00 printing October/November Diary, Woolpit Cricket Club £352.50 burgers and sausages for VJ Day event, Top Garden Services £3,090.99 grass cutting July 2024-August 2025. All accounts were approved and payments authorised.

### c) To receive the external auditor report for 2024/25 following the conclusion of audit

The auditor has advised that based on their review it is their opinion the information given in Sections 1 & 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern. Relevant legislation regulatory requirements have been met and there are no other matters

to bring to the attention of the Parish Council. Councillors unanimously accepted the report.

**d) To accept the Local Government pay rates for 2025/26**

Since the pay rates have been agreed and finalised for 2025/26, Cllrs unanimously agreed an increase for the Clerk from £18.26 to £18.85 per hour for salary scale SCP 25.

**10. To confirm meetings to start at 7.00 p.m. following the trial period.**

Cllrs confirmed that meetings would commence at 7.00 p.m.

**11. To discuss a request from Woolpit Cricket Club and Sporting 87 to develop amenity land beside the Cricket Club (once it has been transferred to Woolpit Parish Council from Hopkins Homes) into high quality football pitches and parking facilities and take any necessary action.**

It was agreed to ask for a meeting with Woolpit Cricket Club to discuss all possibilities.

*Action: the Clerk*

**12. To discuss the letter dated 31 August 2025 from Woolpit Village Hall Trustees regarding Woolpit Village Hall – CIO development and take any necessary action.**

Following The Village Hall AGM last night and the change of Trustees, no further action is required at this time.

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

There has been interest and two application forms for councillors have been sent out this week. Mrs Osborne-Lomax attended a course on 'How to Boost your Council's Identity'. This suggested putting photos of councillors on the website with a resumé of their interests together with details of what the parish council is currently working on in order to get information into the public domain and improve public knowledge of the parish council's activities. Mrs Osborne-Lomax, Mr Hardiman and Mr Guyler will put a proposal together for discussion at the next meeting.

*Action: Mrs Osborne-Lomax, Mr Hardiman, Mr Guyler*

**14. To consider an evening of Christmas Carols with the Salvation Army Band on 3 December 2025 and take any necessary action.**

It was unanimously agreed to hold this in the Pump area at 7.00 p.m. It would be good if the Christmas tree was in situ and Mr Hardiman will liaise with Woolpit Nurseries if this is possible. Tea Cups would be invited to provide refreshments. The Clerk was asked to put on the agenda to discuss a donation to the Salvation Army.

*Action: the Clerk*

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

This will need to be discussed with the new trustees of Woolpit Village Hall Charity. Cllrs were happy to approve the policy if the new trustees are happy with the content.

*Action: Mrs Osborne-Lomax*

**16. To consider the standard sign for the MSDC leased car park opposite the Church and take any necessary action.**

Cllrs agreed that the standard sign is not suitable for the car park as the bays are not marked and there are no EV points. The Clerk was asked to request a simple fingerpost with public car park and the MSDC logo.

*Action: the Clerk*

**17. 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.**

No revised drawing has been received. We await contact from the new VH trustees.

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

The revised plan has been circulated to Cllrs who agree it is correct. The covering letter from Hopkins Homes answers questions which were raised. Most of the issues now are with the land by the roundabout and the Clerk was asked to write to SCC Highways to see when the roundabout is to be adopted and confirm that the wooden fence is part of the highway and also to ask if they have given permission for the advertising which has appeared on the fence. The Clerk will contact our solicitor to pass on the information received from Hopkins Homes and to see if the amenity land can be transferred in two parts, leaving the area near the roundabout for the time being whilst the landscaping issues are resolved. *Action: the Clerk*

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

The first of the bi-monthly update meetings took place 23 September. The timeline of the project (both phases) with key milestones and commitments of funding from CIL and Active Travel England will be provided at next face to face meeting in November 2025. Heath Road to Rectory Lane section is in Phase 2 which has not yet received funding although a grant has been applied for. There is still no information how the section by the garage and across the A14 will be achieved. A map board with the route on was left with each of the Parish Councils to display and use to update their residents.

**20. 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**

There have been no requests to move any SIDs. The pole in Green Road has still not been reinstalled.

**b) to receive an update on 20 mph zone**

The formal legal advertisement has been completed and the formal Traffic Regulation Order Report written which then goes to the Portfolio Holder for Highways and the Head of Transport Strategy. This has now been approved and officers will be able to put together the job pack for the delivery of this project. Officers hope to complete this by mid-October for their contractor review. At this point SCC will be able to finalise the construction cost for the project and be able to send us the final cost for construction which will have to be paid before the work is ordered. The contractor then has 14 weeks to complete the project and SCC expect completion in February 2026.

**21. Completed training details for September 2025.**

Mrs Osborne-Lomax and the Clerk have attended Clarity on Assertion 10 Compliance & understanding the Practitioners Guide. Also Getting to Grips with the Latest Website Accessibility Regulations. This requires an IT Policy and updating the website with accessibility and Data Protection information. They will put an information pack together for discussion at the next meeting.

*Action: Mrs Osborne-Lomax/the Clerk*

Mrs Osborne-Lomax has also attended Boosting your Council's Identity course and Good Governance of Village Halls.

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

District Cllr Overett advised there are ongoing concerns regarding the waste area by 'Clear View'. It is appreciated that they are covered but there is a lot of noise when they are emptied. Tilia Homes are aware and will move to another area of the site once the nearby properties have been completed.

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

A few plots are untidy and this will be advised to the tenants when renewals are sent out later this month. A request has been received from a tenant to transfer their plot to their brother who has worked with them on it for the last 3 years. The brother lives in the village but the tenant has now moved away. Cllrs accepted this and a new tenancy agreement will be sent out.

*Action: the Clerk*

**24. To receive a report from Woolpit Parish Council Village Hall representative.**

At the Village Hall AGM, the current trustees did not stand for election. Mrs Osborne-Lomax as representative of Woolpit PC and Mrs Ewans as representative of WRGC were automatically elected. Several residents put themselves forward for election so the charity could continue. Some village organisations are asking if they can nominate a representative trustee and this will be looked into. The first meeting of the new trustees will be held on 9 October.

**25. Date and time of the next meeting – Tuesday 4 November 2025 at 7.00 p.m. Noted.**

The meeting closed at 8.31 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....