

MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY
1 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 7.00 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

Present: Mr Guyler (Chair), Dr Geake, Mrs Hammond, Mrs King, Miss Tomlinson and Mr Hardiman.

In attendance District Cllrs Overett and Mansel, Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 9 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence. There were none.

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

3. Public comment: Mr Hardiman advised that he has been asked by several residents for a traffic light crossing near the double roundabouts by Costcutter. Residents voiced their concerns regarding speeding along Wood Road and Borley Green. They asked WPC to consider installing village gateways, replacing small 30 mph signs with larger ones, 30 roundels painted on the road. A local resident could make the gates and they will be asked for a quote per gate. SCC permission is probably needed to put the gates in the verge.

Residents have asked about the path between the housing behind the school and the public footpath. This was always intended so as to give pedestrians access to the footpath.

District Cllr Overett advised that there should be a link from the MSDC community car park to the Orbit Housing development and the developer has confirmed that this will be constructed by Orbit.

A resident has had a response to their official complaint to SCC regarding Mill Lane cycle path. Highways will clear overhanging vegetation by 14 September 2026.

4. County & District Councillors' reports.

District Councillors' Report: Mid Suffolk and Babergh urge people to have their say in fixing adult social care. This follows the landmark review from the 'Casey Commission'

The new 3G sports pitch and athletic track at Stowmarket High School were completed last week as part of the SHELF project. This received funding from the FA, Premier League and Football Foundation as well as MSDC. Everyone Active will be managing bookings for the use of these new facilities from next month.

A new solar-powered pod containing 2 electric bikes has been installed at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, giving residents the chance to explore the town using a different sustainable travel option. It is also a great idea to try out e-bikes before deciding to get one for yourself.

Dali-2 has committed £18.8 million in funding in the Skills and Innovation centre. Dali-2 has been incorporated for a lighting control system designed to improve energy management, simplify maintenance, and support the building's sustainability targets. MSDC Cabinet agreed to introduce a Parish Connection Priority for new affordable and social rented homes secured through S106 agreements.

Grants of up £9,000 are now available for households to convert older oil or gas heating systems with Heat Pump systems. Air source heat pumps typically use three to four times less energy than a traditional boiler to heat a home and produce fewer emissions than a gas, oil or LPG boiler, for a cleaner, more sustainable home.

MSDC has stepped in to install CCTV to deter anti-social behaviour at the derelict Fisons site in Bramford. There have been a number of serious fire and vandalism incidents over many years. The site owners, Paper Mill Lane Properties, are responsible for the security, but MSDC decided to take action themselves whilst exploring future options for the site with the owners. Unfortunately, the planning permission for redevelopment of this site has now lapsed and its future is uncertain.

The 2026-27 Locality budgets are now available so we would love to receive applications for funding from any community group in Woolpit and Elmswell.

Monthly drop-in sessions - and Tuesday 29th September and Tuesday 27 October 10:00 – 12:00 both at The Wesley Café, Elmswell.

Mr Hardiman asked for an update on the EV charger in the car park off Old Stowmarket Road. District Cllr Overett advised there is an indefinite delay.

County Councillor's Report: Only a week after the Reform UK administration at the council made the decision to scrap its Climate Emergency Declaration, a wildfire broke out on Dunwich Heath in east Suffolk which took several days to get under control and has caused an enormous amount of damage to rare heathland habitat in one of the most beautiful and much-loved parts of the county. Suffolk Fire and Rescue worked with firefighters from all over the country to get it under control, at the height of the fire there were 120 firefighters tackling this blaze, with displaced residents needing shelter and support. The local community rallied to open up village halls to help, and local farmers helped to bring in water by tractor to terrain that could not be reached by fire engines. This is only one of many climate change-related incidents attended by blue light services over the summer, where intense heat and lack of rain have made the Suffolk countryside a tinder box for fires. Whatever the cause of the fire, it is climate change that created the conditions for this fire and others to burn so quickly and for so long, and to be so difficult to get under control. There have also been claims in the press and online that rewilding causes wildfires, but the evidence shows the opposite – rewilded areas retain water better and remain green during hot weather. In any case, Dunwich Heath is a traditionally managed nature reserve and is not a rewilding site. The area that has been destroyed is the size of 210 football pitches. Following the fire, the Suffolk Fire Brigade Union wrote to the Prime Minister to explain that fire services need more investment in equipment in order to fight wildfires: systems to collect water and clothing that was less heavy and boots for outdoor terrain for when crews were required to walk for miles. He also highlighted the need to increase firefighter capacity in the light of the number of fires and that more 4x4 vehicles would be useful. Suffolk currently receives less than average funding from the government for its fire service, although it is one of the driest areas in the country and is therefore more likely to be hit by wildfires in our increasing hot, dry summers.

The new administration at the council have decided to spend around £18k to remodel the Leader's office at Endeavour House, claiming these works were needed as there was not enough room in the current Leader's office. The rationale given for this work is that there was not enough room for the group to work in the existing suite of rooms. The current administration has 41 councillors, but the previous administration had 54 councillors and found the rooms adequate. The money is being spent to enlarge the Leader's office into the meeting room next door. Only two people will have keycard access to this new large room, so it is not likely to be used by the rest of the group.

Suffolk public sector organisations (including all Suffolk councils) are partnering with Switch Together, a community group-buying scheme, to make it easier for Suffolk residents to replace ageing gas, oil or LPG boilers with heat pumps. Through the government's Boiler Upgrade Scheme, eligible homeowners in England can receive a grant of £7,500 toward an air source heat pump, or £9,000 for households currently heating with oil or LPG. The grant is applied for upfront by the installer, so residents do not need to claim it back or repay it. The scheme is open to homeowners and small business owners in England who are replacing a fossil fuel heating system and hold a valid Energy Performance Certificate with no outstanding major insulation recommendations. It is not means-tested, so there is no income threshold to qualify, and the scheme is currently scheduled to run until 31 December 2027. Switch Together works by bringing residents together so that installers compete to win their business which secures better prices than homeowners could negotiate individually. Once registered, residents receive a free, no-obligation personal offer, and their installer then handles the grant application on their behalf. Switch Together's group-

buying savings apply on top of the government grant. Every installation is carried out by a Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accredited installer.

Homeowners across Suffolk can now apply for a loan to help fund energy efficiency improvements to their homes, thanks to a partnership between Suffolk County Council and Lendology. The Warm Homes Suffolk Loan scheme offers eligible homeowners access to loans from £2k to £15k at a fixed interest rate of 2.2% Annual Percentage Rate (APR), with repayment terms of up to seven years. Borrowers may also repay their loan early without penalty, subject to eligibility and loan terms. The funding is designed to support residents who want to improve the energy performance of their homes while spreading the cost of installation over a manageable period. The loan can be used for a range of energy efficiency measures, including: • Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems • Solar battery storage • Solar thermal systems • Ground source heat pumps • Air source heat pumps • Double and triple glazed windows and doors • Loft, wall and floor insulation • Ventilation systems when installed alongside insulation measures The scheme aims to help residents reduce their energy bills and make their homes better insulated.

Suffolk County Council is offering extra support to small independent and hospitality businesses across the county via its new High Street Matter programme. This will offer 75 businesses a package of one-to one advice, funding opportunities and peer networking, with a view to help them become more resilient so high streets can thrive.

Finally, Suffolk County Council's public consultation on proposed changes to its Healthy Child Service has been extended for an extra month. The proposed changes include cessation of the Young Person Pathway and Family Nurse Partnership, which provides specialist support to parents under the age of 21 after they have a baby. The proposals also include removal of the Community Staff Nurse role from Health Visiting teams, and the School Nursing service becoming term-time only. The consultation now runs until 18 October, with a decision likely to be made at Cabinet in November.

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

There were none.

6. To approve the minutes of the meeting 4 August 2026.

The minutes were approved and signed.

7. Planning

a) to consider current applications

26/03623 & 26/03624 Installation of a 10 panel solar PV system. (Householder and Listed Buildings applications). 2 Swan Yard - support

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

26/02796 Discharge of Conditions Application for 25/01374 - Condition 3 (Contamination), Condition 5 (Monitoring and Maintenance Plan) and Condition 7 (Tank Installation). Petrol Station, Costcutter Supermarket, Church Street – approved.

8. Clerk's Report

30 mph repeaters in 20 mph zone – SCC has advised as WPC is part of The Self Help Scheme we can remove the repeaters ourselves which Mr Hardiman has completed.

Dead cherry tree on the playing field – MSDC Tree Officer has advised that dead trees are exempt from Conservation Area regulations so MSDC permission is not required.

White lines – the lines at the junction of Rags Lane and the pump area have been repainted. A further request has been made for other white lines in The Street and Masons Lane to be renewed.

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

A winter gritting and snow clearance service has contacted the Village Hall regarding the car park. As it is WPC as the landowner that needs to demonstrate care of the car park as part of winter procedure, the Clerk will request a quote. *Action: the Clerk.* **MSDC** requesting feedback for the Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus and Rural Contact services. Cllrs are unaware of whether it had been used much as we are already serviced by Dan's Coaches. **The Mix** has advised that the detached outreach work in Woolpit is taking place to build relationships, where young people are gathering, hear what they feel is missing in the village and identify how future youth work could best meet their needs. At the end of the summer The Mix will produce a report. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs:** NALC Star Council Awards 2026/7 – County Association of the Year, Clerk of the Year, CEO bulletin 6, 13, 20, 27 August. **SALC** Super Forum – LGR, what are the next steps 17 September, Code of Conduct factsheet – public participation, news bulleting 25 August, training bulletin 25 August. **Rural Services Network** newsletter 13, 21 August. **MSDC** Town & Parish Councils liaison meeting 29 July presentation. **Chrity Commission** news – sector risks, DBS rule change and latest research. **Suffolk Police** Suffolk Police and Crime Panel 2025/26 Annual Report. **Mid Suffolk CAB** Impact Report 2025/26, AGM invitation 23 October. Community Action Suffolk Connect with funders and support at the 2026 funding summits.

10. Finance

a) To receive a monthly report from the Clerk.

The balance of the current account at the end of August was £17,479.96 and the savings account was £560,573.48. With £3,839.35 VAT reclaimable, the overall figure is £581,892.79 of which CIL £407,111.67 (£300,646.68 is allocated), earmarked reserves £88,345.25, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £49,435.87.

b) To approve accounts for payment.

Payments of £5,202.65 to DBS Locksmiths for improved locks at the Village Hall, £3,745.44 to Flagship AV for the alarm system to the Village Hall were unanimously ratified. The Bull Inn has now got its funds together for the new defibrillator and therefore the Locality Grant of £1,500.00 which we were holding for the project has been paid over. This was ratified. Payments to Mr Gardiner £551.45 Highways Ranger August, Mrs Fuller £1,090.21 Clerk August, Suffolk County Council £409.72 August pension payment and Top Garden Services £294.38 grass cutting July were approved for payment.

c) To accept the LGA 2026 Local Government Pay Settlement of 3.3% for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk.

The pay settlement was unanimously accepted and will be back dated as part of the agreement to 1 April 2026.

11. To receive an update on the appointment of an Assistant Clerk and consider the proposed contract of employment and take any necessary action.

The interview panel of Mr Guyler, Dr Geake and the Clerk interviewed six candidates and have offered the position to Diana Silverstone. She has accepted the offer and will commence employment on 1 October. It was unanimously agreed to delegate powers to Mr Guyler, Dr Geake and the Clerk to produce and agree the contract of employment based on the NALC Model Contract.

Action: the Clerk, Mr Guyler, Dr Geake.

12. To consider the post of the Litter Picker and take any necessary action.

A resident has asked if there are any roles available such as the Litter Picker. When Mr Harknett retired, the Litter Picker role was incorporated into the duties of the Highways Ranger. It was agreed that if the Highways Ranger is in agreement then the Litter Picker will become a separate role once more. *Action: Mr Hardiman.*

13. To consider quotes to fell dead cherry tree on the playing field and take any necessary action.

Three quotes have now been received and it was unanimously agreed to instruct R & P Baker Farms at a cost of £200.00. They will leave an 18 inch high stump for a seat.

Action: the Clerk

14. To consider a request to transfer the land that the Village Hall previous extension has been built on to the WVHC and take any necessary action.

Three drawings have been prepared in consultation with WPC and WVHC and were submitted for councillors' consideration. The first shows the area that the extension was built on and also takes in the section of the fire escape on the car park. The other two show where drains/soakaways from the Village Hall were installed under the playing field without permission. Under the proposed land transfer agreement, the Village Hall Trustees will have the right to maintain services under the playing field. The WVHC will be responsible to pay for any works and to reinstate the field afterwards. Ashton Legal has the deeds for the WPC land and the Village Hall and it is hoped that, as there is no conflict of interest, Ashtons can act for both parties. A letter from WPC can be sent confirming no conflict of interest, if necessary. The cost of the conveyancing is expected to be about £3,000.00 and it was agreed that the legal charge would be split 50/50 between WPC and WVHC. Mrs Ewans will liaise with the solicitor on behalf of both parties. The CIO for the Village Hall Charity has been sent to the Charity Commission and then the assets will need to be transferred from the current charity.

Councillors approved the drawings and the 50/50 split on costs.

15. To consider temporary repairs to the Village Hall car park and take any necessary action.

WPC is responsible for the repair of the Village Hall car park as the landowner. Whilst it has been previously agreed to postpone major improvements to the car park until the refurbishment has been completed, there are a few areas where the surface is breaking up and becoming a trip hazard. It was agreed that Mr Hardiman will liaise with Mr Jenson WVHC to produce a specification and get quotes for temporary repairs.

Action: Mr Hardiman

16. To consider the management of the CCTV system and take any necessary action. This item was deferred to the next meeting.

17. To consider a proposal for a Community Gym and take any necessary action.

A gym instructor has put forward a business plan for community gym in Woolpit. Part of the plan would be for a weekend supervised youth group. WPC is being asked to consider funding towards the location/building.

The Clerk was asked to respond that we do not own any building and that this might be something to discuss with the Village Hall Trustees to see if there is a suitable room there. She will also ask what experience he has working with youth groups. It may be possible for him to apply to MSDC Infrastructure fund for a start-up grant.

Action: the Clerk

18. To consider upgrading the website to the advanced version through Pear Space and take any necessary action.

This was carried forward to the next meeting.

19. To consider the play equipment inspection report 11 May 2026 and take any necessary action.

Mr Hardiman advised that some items are repaired by Proludic but the swings are not part of this. A copy of the findings of the report regarding the swings has been sent to Mr G Baker and he and Mr Hardiman will look at the recommendations for the swings.

Signage is required for the play area giving emergency details and it is also recommended that a sign is put on the MUGA 'not to be used by children under 3 years old'. Dr Geake advised that the report is only recommendations and WPC does not have to carry out every recommendation. *Action: Mr Hardiman*

20. To receive an update regarding the transfer of amenity land from Hopkins Homes to Woolpit Parish Council including

a) current position regarding the plan to divert the cyclepath/footpath

WPC has agreed the revised cyclepath/footpath route and asked for a revised plan showing the fencing around the stays on 9 June 2026. Questions were also posed to Hopkins Homes regarding the proposed streetlight LP108. No reply has been received and the Clerk was asked to contact Hopkins Homes for a response. There are still a lot of shrubs and a few trees to be replaced in the landscaped area by the roundabout. Cllrs are not prepared to take on that section until the shrubs and trees are replaced and thriving. The Clerk will suggest to Hopkins Homes that the main amenity land and the landscaped area are split for conveyancing as WPC is keen to progress the ownership of the main amenity area. *Action: the Clerk*

Correspondence has been received from a resident in Abbots Green regarding the lack of facilities for youth and highlighting a problem that youths are using a small hill on the Abbots Green development to practice bike jumps which has caused friction between some residents. The writer has shown a willingness to be involved in a working group to help with consultations and applying for external grants. This offer is welcomed by Cllrs and the Clerk was asked to arrange a meeting between them and the working group of Dr Geake, Miss Tomlinson and Mr Guyler.

Action: the Clerk

b) receive a report from the working group regarding a request that part is leased to Woolpit Cricket Club and Sporting 87 to develop amenity land beside the Cricket Club into high quality football pitches and parking facilities and take any necessary action.

The working group is still awaiting the information from Sporting 87 who are contacting the FA to find out what is required in the lease for the FA to provide funding for the project. Woolpit CC is aware that nothing can progress until this information is received and are contacting Sporting 87 for the information.

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

As the deadline for submitting claims to draw down CIL monies for the project is 10 June 2027, a report is being taken to Mid Suffolk's Cabinet on 8 September for them to consider an extension to the project completion date to 31 March 2028. This extension would allow time for contractual payments to be settled up to the end of March 2028.

The detailed design stage is progressing and the project team continues to engage with utility providers to establish whether any diversions or protection measures will be required. Suffolk County Archaeology Services have advised that archaeology excavation and evaluation will be required on the land for the route behind St John's Church, Elmswell. Work relating to the A14 overbridge parapet is continuing, including the development of proposals for the new parapet and its new anchorages. Documentation is being prepared for submission to National Highways for review in September.

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 defective SID serial number has been identified and Westcotec will be contacted as the unit is still under warranty.

b)to receive an update on 20 mph zone

A number of drivers are not adhering to the 20 mph. Any vegetation obscuring signs will be cut back.

As County Cllr Patchett has not been able to attend the meeting it was agreed that District Cllr Overett would contact him with the concerns of the residents in Wood Road. It is hoped to have a site meeting with Cllr Patchett to discuss speeding, improved/additional signage for the 30 mph area

Meanwhile WPC will get quotes for village gates for various areas of the parish.

23. Completed training details for August 2026. There were none.**24. To receive an update on the Bury Road development and take any necessary action.** Nothing to report.**25. To receive a report from Woolpit Parish Council's Village Hall Committee representative and Trustee.**

Registration for the new CIO has been sent to the Charity Commission. The Trustees are working very hard sorting matters following the recent spate of vandalism. An alarm system has been installed and all the locks upgraded. The Treasurer has advised that income is adequate and all hirers wish to continue to hire the hall despite some misgivings following the recent disturbances during their hire session. The refurbishment is on track and planning permission has to be sought for the new external signage as the building is within the conservation Area. The drawings for the toilets are being finalised.

26. Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 6 October 2026 at 7.00 p.m. There will be a CIL meeting 15 September 2026 at 7.00 p.m. Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.07 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....