

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2026 AT 7.00 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

Present: Dr Geake, Mrs Hammond, Mr Hardiman and Miss Tomlinson.
In the absence of Mr Guyler, Dr Geake took the chair.

In attendance: County Cllr Patchett (in part), District Cllrs Overett and Mansel, Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 9 members of the public.

The Clerk introduced Diana Bilverstone who has now commenced the role of Assistant Clerk.

Mrs King has resigned from the Parish Council having been a member since January. She was thanked for her work on the council.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Guyler.

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

3. Public comment: A resident spoke of their concerns about noise, view and loss of amenity due to the dog park and suggested some issues could be mitigated with thick hedge and tree planting. The applicant advised that a noise management plan has been submitted to MSDC today. Another resident spoke in support of the dog park and said that it was a much needed facility.

The Parker family were thanked for all their efforts at the Woolpit Cricket Club. The first team are now playing in the Premier League and all other teams have been promoted.

A resident asked for WPC to consider a crossing in The Street from the Institute to The Old Bakery as many elderly residents find it difficult to cross the road.

A resident asked regarding issues of parking at the Village Hall car park when there were not enough spaces for events. They were advised that it would be for the Village Hall Committee to contact Woolpit Recreation Ground Charity which might be able to arrange additional parking on the adjacent playing field.

4. County & District Councillors reports.

District Councillors' Report: The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into force in September. There remains a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as the Government are hoping to promote housing growth. There seems to be a greater emphasis on climate change and sustainability but 'settlement boundaries' have disappeared and the new policies just refer to settlements. There is also a new National Scheme of delegation which restricts Local Planning Authorities as to which applications can be determined by committee. MSDC has been working of their own scheme of delegation which needs to be amended in light of this new National Scheme. This will be brought to the next full Council for adoption. At the September meeting of MSDC it was agreed that the Leader write to the Government outlining MSDC's concerns over some of the changes.

Plans for a new multi-use games area at Stowmarket High School have been given the go-ahead after Mid Suffolk District Council agreed to fund the stalled project.

This is part of the SHELF project to improve sporting facilities in Stowmarket.

At the September Cabinet meeting it was agreed to extend the time limit for the CIL funding for the Woolpit – Elmswell Community path. The £3M funds had been agreed previously but SCC have not made sufficient progress to date, but now the team do seem to be moving this project forwards.

A partnership between Mid Suffolk District Council and e-bike provider Eezybike has been shortlisted for two national awards, recognising the innovative work done in the districts to create active and sustainable travel options.

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 - Tuesday 27 October 10:00 – 12:00 and Tuesday 23 November both at The Wesley Café, Elmswell, Thursday 10 December at Green Wolf Café, Woolpit.

Dr Geake expressed her concerns regarding the new NPPF and feels it is undemocratic and does not serve local people.

District Cllr Overett advised that The Mix has sent a report on the summer detached youth work. Despite being in the village on four separate occasions and at different times they did not encounter any young people to find out about the needs of local young people and the types of resources and services that would be most helpful to them. The Mix will deliver a pop-up youth work session at Woolpit Village Hall during October half term on 26 October 2026.

County Councillor's Report: At Cabinet on 17 September, the most recent financial forecasts for the council were discussed and the council is currently predicting that it will overspend by £7.8m by 31 March 2027. This overspend will need to be funded by the council withdrawing money from its risk reserve. The council is required to hold 5% of its annual revenue budget in unallocated reserves in order to be considered financially resilient, and the £7.8m drawdown means that the unallocated reserves would be £3.7m short of this 5% figure, at 4.6%. If this happens, the council will need to write to the government to inform them. The overspend at the council is in a number of areas, mostly in adult social care (care purchasing), children in care, inclusion (Special Education Needs and Disabilities or SEND), and home to school transport for pupils with SEND. The council needs to save as much money as it can between now and the end of the year to reduce the amount it will take out of its reserves. The council's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit, which funds education, is predicted to increase by £104.8m by the end of the year, mostly due to the high needs block which funds SEND education. The government has a statutory override in place for this debt until 31 March 2028, after which date the government is due to take over funding SEND provision from local authorities. The council also expects the government to write off £147.5m of this debt this autumn via High Needs Stability funding. However, the rate at which this debt continues to grow means that the council will still owe many millions to the government by March 2028, as even after the £147.5m is taken off the debt, the council is still predicting a deficit of £121.2m by March 2027. The council will be hoping that the government will provide more funding or write off more of this debt.

On 7 September, the government announced that it was withdrawing plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in a number of areas including Suffolk. This means that the plans for three unitary councils for Suffolk are currently off the table and subject to a government review. The announcement follows decisions by several councils, including Suffolk, to mount legal challenges to the government over LGR decision-making. This means that there will no longer be elections to the unitary councils in May 2027, with the elections for districts and Ipswich Borough going ahead as they would have normally. At the moment, the mayoral election for the new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk is also due to go ahead, with the government announcing no changes to this programme. Councils in Suffolk will need to wait to hear from the government on the outcome of its LGR proposals review.

There is currently no confirmation on when this will be completed.

At Cabinet on 17 September, the council's legal breaches over the LGR challenge to the government were discussed, with the council maintaining that the breaches were 'minor and inadvertent'. The council was in breach of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 in two respects in June, when the Leader of the Council made an executive decision to lodge a legal challenge against the government. When an executive decision is made, it should be published as soon as 'reasonably practicable'. In this case, the decision was made on 18 June but not published until 26 June. This meant

councillors were not aware of the decision in time to formally challenge it (decisions have to be 'called in' for scrutiny by 4pm on the second working day after the decision was made). This meant the Leader's decision was effectively made behind closed doors and could not be challenged as per the council's constitution. When a member of the council's Scrutiny Committee requested information about the executive decision, they should have received the judicial review information within 10 days of their request, but this deadline was not met. The Cabinet decided that additional training on these processes would be a suitable measure to prevent future breaches. Section 5A reports are very rare and a serious matter for councils, as they are only produced when a council has admitted maladministration or breached the law.

The case for an Ipswich northern route or an alternative crossing over the River Orwell was also discussed at Cabinet on 17 September, with the council agreeing to pay consultants £300k to look again at the options for improving traffic in Ipswich when the Orwell Bridge is closed. The council last looked at options for this a few years ago, with plans for an Ipswich Northern Route scrapped by 2020 due to opposition from the communities where the routes were proposed, and the lack of funding. It is likely that any major infrastructure options, such a northern bypass, tunnel or second bridge, would cost between £500m to over £1bn. The A14 is a trunk road and the responsibility of National Highways rather than the council, and any major project would need government funding as the council would not be able to afford it. This funding is not guaranteed to become available. The Cabinet report also noted the importance of improving rail routes for the port, such as the long-promised works on junctions at Ely and Haughley. Improving the Ely junction would enable an additional 2,900 rail freight journeys, meaning 98,000 fewer lorry journeys for the port. Fewer lorries on the A14 would benefit communities all along the length of the A14 which suffer excess traffic when the road is closed.

Officers from SCC dealing with waste, have provided some data on Better Recycling and how the roll out of waste collection changes had been going in the county since June. While household waste and recycling are collected by district and borough councils, SCC is then responsible for processing the waste. Residual waste, which is waste that cannot be used for something else, dropped from 4,077 tonnes per week in April/May to 3,225 tonnes per week since June. Mostly this is due to food waste being collected separately and processed in anaerobic digestors. Over a year, that would equate to a reduction of over 40,000 tonnes for all of Suffolk. Due to the engagement work and publicity undertaken by councils about the changes, an increased amount of glass, plastics and cartons are also now being collected since June.

The wildfires occurring across the county this summer due to dry weather and extreme heat have highlighted shortfalls in the equipment needed by Suffolk Fire and Rescue. The current budget for equipping fire and rescue workers covers replacing the standard equipment they use, but wildfires such as the one at Dunwich Heath require different and specialist equipment for the fire service to fight them safely and effectively, including an off-road fleet for areas their existing vehicles cannot access, clothing and personal equipment (PPE) for firefighters that can protect them for prolonged incidents, and boots with better grip for outdoor terrain. The fire service is still calculating the cost and preparing a debrief on the Dunwich Heath fire and this may mean they require more investment to be adequately prepared for future wildfires, given the hot summers are likely to continue or worsen. It is also possible that they may need more investment for equipment used in flooding incidents, as these are also likely to increase in number and severity. The Fire Brigades Union in Suffolk has written to the government to request increased funding for fire services across the country to deal with the new dangers they are facing.

Suffolk County Council acts as a 'Corporate Parent' to the children and young people who are taken into its care, and as many young people in care miss out on events like their school prom, the council is holding a Winter Ball for its care leavers on 27

November during National Care Leavers Month. The council is requesting donations of prom dresses, suits/formalwear, shoes and accessories and financial contributions towards the evening, and the Leaving Care service have set up a Go Fund Me so residents and businesses can donate.

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

There were none.

6. To approve the minutes of the meeting 1 September 2026.

The minutes were approved and signed.

7. Planning

a) to consider current applications

26/04051 Installation of 2no. signs to the front (South) and rear (North) elevations. As per the Design and Access Statement /drawings. Woolpit Village Hall, Mill Lane – no comment.

26/04052 Enhancements to front (south) elevation including addition of composite timber-effect cladding to porch, wider entrance door with vision panels for improved accessibility, a new first-floor fire escape door, and redecoration of external fire escape stair. Woolpit Village Hall, Mill Lane – no comment.

26/04074 Demolition of a derelict building and erection of a replacement storage building ancillary to Moulton House. Land to the East of Moulton House, Wood Road – comment that if officers are minded to consent there must be a condition that the annexe remains ancillary to the main dwelling.

26/04161 Retrospective change of use of land to dog walking field. Woolpit Dog Park Green Road – comment Councillors do not object in principle, but cannot support at present as they agree with the Environmental Protection concerns about the number of dogs and slot timings. Woolpit PC cannot support the application unless there is a condition that it must have sufficient soft dense landscape screening, in keeping with the current hedging to the south, to reduce noise to neighbours, perhaps including temporary screening until vegetation is mature.

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

26/02955 Retention of an existing highways access to provide an emergency access only. Stag Park, Old A45 - granted with condition the approved access shall only be used for emergency purposes and only by emergency service vehicles. The gates shall otherwise remain closed and secured with a standard FB padlock or GERDA key. The gates shall not be opened unless an emergency service vehicle requires entry to or egress from the site.

26/03387 Application for Non-Material Amendment relating to DC/19/05196 - Amendment to the orientation of the pump station and associated service path. Pump Station East Of Claypit Close, Old Stowmarket Road – approved.

8. Clerk's Report

White lines – SCC has advised that lines in Masons Lane, outside Tudor Rose and Clandore House do not meet SCC safety criteria for repainting.

Community Emergency Plan (CEP) – Kathy Parker is meeting MSDC CEP Support Officer on 13 October to help with the new template for the review of Woolpit plan.

Resignation of Highways Warden – The Warden is moving away and his last working day is 30 November.

Abandoned car in the car park – this has been removed by MSDC.

Community gym – the correspondent has given permission to pass their email and business plan to the Village Hall Trustees.

Scribe Accounts – have introduced a new feature of a budget worksheet.

Woolpit Diary – the Distribution Manager handover has taken place. Thanks have been sent to Mr & Mrs Bailey for their work and support over the last few years.

Insurance renewal – this has been renewed with CAS Insurance Services as we have a 3 year long term undertaking with them. This does not mean that the premium will remain the same over that period.

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

Abbots Green resident happy to have a meeting regarding the skatepark. Dr Geake and Miss Tomlinson will advise some dates that they are available so that the Clerk can arrange a meeting. **Walk Wheel Cycle Trust** advising they are in the process of developing the final concept designs for the Onehouse to Woolpit Quietway and will share details in due course. **MSDC** important changes following the new NPPF which will be discussed further at the Parish Liaison meeting 19 October which Dr Geake hopes to attend. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: MSDC 2026 funding summit for Mid Suffolk Voluntary, Charity Faith and Social Enterprise Sector, NSIP and large scale energy development September update, Government announces review of LGR programme, CIL draft charging schedule examination notification 2026, Town & Parish Liaison meeting 19 October, Town & Parish update September. Suffolk Highways** Elmswell to Woolpit footway/cycle scheme interim update September. **SCC** Employers pension newsletter autumn 2026. **Rural Services Network** newsletter 4, 9, 16, 24 September, 1 October. **NALC** Star Council awards 2026/27 young councillor of the year, county association of the year, climate response of the year, CEO Bulletin 3, 10, 17, 24 September, 1 October. **SALC** LGR Suffolk update, news bulletin 8, 21, 28 September, training bulletin 22, 29 September, Planning Briefing – what the latest NPPF changes mean to your council, Super Forum – LGA 17 September change of speaker, NSIPs bulletin September, changes to NSIP webinar 13 October. **Breakthrough Communications** events bulletin. **MARPA** newsletter Autumn 2026, **Suffolkonboard** Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus services cancelled. **Future Suffolk Implementation Board** LGR in Suffolk.

10. Finance

a) To receive a monthly report from the Clerk.

The balance of the current account at the end of September was £50,259.20 which includes £35,000.00 second half precept and the savings account was £563,328.74 due to interest of £2,755.26. With £3,888.41 VAT reclaimable, the overall figure is £617,476.35 of which CIL £407,111.67 (£300,646.68 is allocated), earmarked reserves £112,695.25, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £60,669.43.

b) To approve accounts for payment.

Payments to Mr Gardiner £396.78 Highways Ranger September, Mrs Fuller £1,395.88 Clerk September, Suffolk County Council £490.58 September pension payment, HM Revenue & Customs £2,047.70 Tax & N/I July-September, Stuart Langston Arboricultural £40.00 remove dead branches lime tree in the Pump area, Shelter Solutions £318.00 replacement panel bus shelter, Woolpit Institute £520.00 office rent July-September, Woolpit Institute £80.00 meeting room hire July-September, PKF Littlejohn LLP £504.00 external audit of accounts 2025/26, CAS Insurance Services £1,537.79 annual premium, Glasdon UK Ltd £48.72 spare clips for dog bins, Gipping Press £479.00 printing Woolpit Diary October/November issue, Mr R Raisey £137.10 editing October/November Woolpit Diary, Printerland £289.10 printer cartridges, Starboard Systems Ltd £580.61 annual subscription Scribe Accounts, Paul Raven £35.00 annual renovation War Memorial and PC noticeboard, Mr M Hardiman £7.76 reimbursement 20mph vinyl signs, Mrs P Fuller £163.94 expenses July-September were approved for payment.

c) To receive the external auditor report for 2025/26 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.

11. To consider a request for a pedestrian crossing in Elmswell Road and take any necessary action.

This will be raised with SCC Design Engineer during the meeting 14 October.

12. To consider the visibility when exiting old Stowmarket Road and take any necessary action.

This too will be raised with SCC Design Engineer on 14 October. County Cllr Patchett advised that residents need to report issues and near misses on the SCC website.

13 To consider a request that WPC pay for hall hire for Our Boy Danny, a play about the impact of knife crime and take any necessary action.

Cllrs agreed to pay the cost up to a maximum of £70.00. *Action: the Clerk*

14. To consider the evening of Christmas Carols with the Salvation Army Band on 8 December 2026 and take any necessary action.

This went very well last year. It has been advertised with mulled wine and mince pies and a budget will be set at the next meeting.

15. To consider the changes to the BT cloud phone and take any necessary action.

The Clerk advised that BT are changing the Cloud phone and a new contract for 36 months needs to be signed. It will be possible for the Assistant Clerk to have the app on her computer at no extra cost. The Clerk was asked to sign the contract on behalf of Woolpit PC. *Action: the Clerk*

16. To consider the post of the Highways Ranger, Street Cleaner and Litter Picker and take any necessary action.

Currently all three roles are carried out by the Highways Ranger. After discussion it was agreed to advertise all three roles separately and ask applicants to state which roles or combination of roles they would like to apply for. An advert will be placed in the December/January Woolpit Diary. *Action: the Clerk*

17. To consider a tree survey and take any necessary action.

Due to the complexities of the veteran beech tree, it was unanimously agreed to ask Urban Forestry to carry out the tree survey. *Action: the Clerk*

18. To receive a Management Plan from Greener Woolpit for the Warren Lane project and take any necessary action.

The report was received and noted with thanks to the group. It is hoped that the area will be seeded this autumn.

19. 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

Hopkins Homes have not yet responded to our latest email. This is becoming a concern and the Clerk will arrange to meet with Hopkins Homes representative.

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.

There has been no further correspondence from either Sporting 87 or Woolpit Cricket Club.

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

MSDC Cabinet has agreed to an extension for the CIL grant until March 2028 when the project should be completed.

It seems that the route has now changed again to the front of Elmswell Church, which was rejected in the initial stages of planning, and keeping Bunkers Hill open. The Clerk was asked to request an in-person meeting of the stakeholder group to discuss these matters as they are of serious concern.

Action: the Clerk

21. 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 faulty SID is waiting for Westcotech to collect it and rectify the problems.

b) to receive an update on 20 mph zone

branches obscuring the 20 mph zone signs have been cut back and the vinyl 20 mph signs have been attached to repeater signs.

c) to receive any update on the speeding and signage for the 30 mph areas in Wood Road and Borley Green

A site meeting has been arranged for 14 October with SCC Highways Community Liaison Officer to discuss options. The results of this meeting will be discussed at the November meeting.

22. Completed training details for September 2026.

The Clerk has attended a SALC Clerks session on Community Emergency Planning and a Scribe Accounts webinar on budgeting and forecasting.

23. To receive an update on the Bury Road development and take any necessary action. Nothing to report.

24. To consider upgrading the website to the advanced version through Pear Space and take any necessary action. Deferred to the next meeting.

25. To consider the management of the CCTV system and take any necessary action.

Cllrs approved the content of the Woolpit Village Hall CCTV policy, which was approved by the Trustees on 23 September, and agreed that the joint Woolpit PC and Woolpit Village Hall CCTV policy be replaced by the new WVH policy.

26. To receive an update/quotes for temporary repairs to the Village Hall car park and take any necessary action. Deferred to the next meeting.

27. To receive an update on the transfer of land that the Village Hall previous extension has been built on to the WVHC and take any necessary action.

Deferred to the next meeting.

28. To receive a report from Woolpit Parish Council's Village Hall Committee representative and Trustee.

Mrs Osborne-Lomax has stepped away from the village hall for a well-earned rest. She has performed incredible work to rescue the hall from the position it was in this time last year. Sadly, as a result of the reporting the vandalism, Anti-Social Behaviour and break in at the village hall and liaising with the police and Youth Justice service she has received ASB specifically directed at her in her own home. This has, understandably, soured her relationship with the hall. She is however supporting the trustees as they take on her tasks.

The one big issue was to hire a new cleaner which has already been achieved.

Next was handling the bookings and Mrs Ewans has taken this on.

There is a lot of work for WVH trustees to cover and they could do with many more trustees. Most tasks are what might be expected of a 'hall manager'. There are no funds for paying for a manager at present. Many village halls are not separate charities but owned and run by parish councils. In modern times sustaining this position may need attention.

As to refurbishment. Planning applications have gone into MSDC for signage and work to the porch and replacing the front door.

The proposed works to the toilets and entrance hall are progressing and the Trustees are meeting the architect on the 16 October. Schedules of works are being prepared and possible contractors sounded out. As usual VAT is the killer on the budget.

Booking is holding up well but the trustees feel that they may have to review agreeing to late night opening for private parties.

The Charity Commission are not being very quick with the CIO registration and say it could be another 26 weeks! Woolpit Village Hall Charity does not fit any category for expediting the application.

29. Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting – Tuesday 3 November 2026 at 7.00 p.m. Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.24 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....