

**DRAFT** MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 APRIL 2026 AT 7.00 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

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

**In attendance:** District Cllr Overett, Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 2 members of the public.

**1. Apologies for absence** were received from Mrs King and Miss Tomlinson..

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

**3. Public comment** Mr R Baker was thanked for mowing the path between the allotments and the area for rewilding in Warren Lane. Two pairs of skylarks have been spotted and it is lovely to hear their song.

**4. County & District Councillors reports.**

**District Councillors' report:** The government has decided that there will be 3 unitary authorities in Suffolk. While detailed boundaries are still being finalised, the three unitary councils, West Suffolk, East Suffolk, and South Suffolk and Ipswich are planned to be in place from May 2028. Elections for the new shadow authorities will take place in May 2027, with the new councils formally taking over responsibilities from May 2028. The idea of the transition period is to enable detailed work for reorganisation to take place, and services will be delivered as usual throughout the process.

Government funding for Neighbourhood plans has been withdrawn. MSDC has now introduced funding to support Parish Councils in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans/Reviews, which seek to allocate sites for housing development that make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing needs. There is a limit of £20,000 for any specific Neighbourhood Development Plan.

This year, 10 organisations have received a share of £119,496 from the Mid Suffolk Culture Fund for projects covering a wide range of areas and all age groups, including Stowmarket Culture Group, which has been awarded £15,000 for the delivery of the 'Jubilant' youth summer arts festival, and Orchestras Live, which will use a grant of more than £8,000 to facilitate an intergenerational orchestral project in Eye and the surrounding areas.

Work has started on a clear up of the A14. Two trucks of rubbish were cleared from the side of the A14 between junctions 49 and 50 for Tot Hill and Stowmarket while the road was closed for work.

Works to deliver a brand new 3G football pitch and mini athletics track in Stowmarket are due to start in the coming weeks. The project is being funded by contributions from Mid Suffolk District Council, the Premier League, The FA, the Government's Football Foundation as well as S106 developer contributions. Being built in the grounds of Stowmarket High School, the 3G pitch and athletics track will be available for community use with Everyone Active managing the facilities and associated booking system outside of school times.

Mid Suffolk District Council has purchased almost eight acres of land in the heart of Stowmarket to preserve it as a future riverside haven for nature and wildlife for future generations. The land, between Takers Lane and the River Rat, adjoins the council's existing open space at Pikes Meadow – unlocking potential for a new riverside walk, connecting Combs Ford and Gipping Way. This is part of the Council's aim to enhance biodiversity and nature, but it also provides public green space, as well as safeguarding the land from future development.

The latest update from SCC colleagues regarding the Elmswell-Woolpit cycle link suggests the design of the scheme will be completed by Spring 2027. We are checking with MSDC infrastructure officers that this will not cause issues with funding deadlines.

The MSDC carpark off Beaker Place has now been landscaped, apart from one small section currently fenced off by Orbit for Health & Safety reasons. Orbit will prepare this area for planting once it's safe to do so, hopefully in time for the next planting season. The drains have been cleared and will be monitored regularly alongside other routine checks including weed control and shrub bed maintenance.

Monthly drop-in sessions are 10-12 Tuesdays 28 April and 19 May at the Wesley Café, Elmswell.

Mr Hardiman advised that concerns have been expressed regarding black bins smelling as they will only be collected every three weeks particularly with dog waste and nappies.

Mrs Osborne-Lomax advised that the quality of the workmanship for the landscaping in the car park was poor. There is no update on the EV points in the car park.

**County Councillor's report:** On 25 March the government announced that it had chosen a three unitary model for Suffolk following the Local Government Reorganization process which will see upper tier authority Suffolk County Council and lower tier authorities like districts and boroughs abolished in two years. Last year the government asked Suffolk councils to submit proposals on how many unitary councils they thought the county should have in the future. Suffolk County Council submitted a case for a single unitary council (One Suffolk) and the district and borough councils submitted one for three councils, which was the option chosen by ministers. These plans will see the county split into three areas: Western Suffolk, Central and Eastern Suffolk and Ipswich and Southern Suffolk, which includes the county town and Felixstowe. Elections for the new councils will be held next May, with the new councillors shadowing existing councillors until the new authorities are 'vested' from 1 April 2028.

At council on 19 March, a motion was proposed that the council release a statement of support for survivors of sexual harm and exploitation, on the basis that the near-constant media coverage of the 'Epstein files' was triggering for survivors of sexual harm of both genders, increasing the number of people seeking help. The motion also proposed that the council run a social media campaign signposting people to Survivors in Transition, a local charity which provides support and advice, and write to the government advocating for funding for support services. The motion was approved unanimously in the chamber. In the same meeting, motions were also passed in support of the Lowestoft flood barrier, and to look into how the costs of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) can be reduced. TROs are legal orders made by the council to amend speed limits, add road markings or make other changes to highways in the county.

On 24 March, Cabinet agreed to allocate an additional £3.9m of capital funding to repair structures on Suffolk's Public Rights of Way network. Structures such as bridges and boardwalks have a limited lifespan, and the council undertook a review to create a priority list of structures that need replacing or repairing in the next five years. The additional funding is needed because the amount of money usually allocated for these works is no longer enough due to the increased costs of building materials and labour, which have gone up 50% in the last five years. The priority list includes the Bailey Bridge between Walberswick and Southwold, the Fen Bridge over the Stour at Debenham and Hempyard Bridge at Ixworth. If structures become unsafe for walkers the council has to close the Public Right of Way, with each closure costing £1,200 for a six month period (if a path was closed for a year, it would cost £2,400). The Cabinet also heard about the King Charles III Coastal Path, which contrary to national media reports is not yet fully open: sections between Manningtree and Shotley Gate, and north of Southwold, will not be open until later in the summer.

On 5 March, the council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met to discuss services and support provides for young people in Suffolk leaving care. The council has to offer support to young people leaving care up to the age of 25, and at the most recent Ofsted inspection in June 2024 this was highlighted as one of

the main areas where the council needed to improve. Since the inspection, the council has worked to improve planning with young people who are coming up to leaving care, making sure more young people knew what support was on offer, and making sure that support was accessible for them as they prepared for independence. In addition, the council received a visit from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in April 2025 which focused on youth homelessness and found that the council needed to immediately review its pathways for care leavers who presented as homeless. In response to these findings, the council increased the number of advisors working with 17 year olds to prepare for leaving care, and making sure they are aware of the help they can get such as reduction in council tax, and the 'Family Business' model the council uses to provide apprenticeships and jobs for young people who have been in care. The council has also nearly halved the number of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation, although they are still planning more work in this area, particularly for care leavers in custody.

Suffolk County Council has welcomed the additional £1.7m funding announced by the government to support households in the county facing increased oil heating costs. The council already provides cash payments to help residents with the cost of living through the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme, funded by the Household Support Fund. This scheme supports a range of essential costs, including utilities and energy, and has recently been updated to explicitly reference oil heating following the national announcement. From 1st April, Suffolk County Council will transition from the Household Support Fund to the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF). This transition had already been planned prior to the new funding announcement, and will enable residents experiencing a financial shock or crisis - including sharp increases in oil heating costs - to continue accessing cash support via the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme, using the same application route as before.

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

There were none.

#### **6. To approve the minutes of the meeting 3 March 2026.**

The minutes were approved and signed.

### **7. Planning**

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

**26/01111** Conversion of stable block into annexe (already semi-converted). The Cottage, Sharpes Row - If Officers are minded to consent, a condition should be that the annexe is ancillary to the main dwelling.

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

**26/00652** Householder Application - Erection of hipped roofs over existing flat roofs, minor extension to rear, raising of existing flat roof to smaller area of day room, fenestration alterations, replacement windows and doors, addition of carport, and alteration of driveway. Ilex Lodge – granted.

**26/00894:** Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Cut back overhanging branches on 1 No. Eucalyptus (T1) and 1 No. Sycamore (T2). Carry out general maintenance, prune out dead overcrowded branches from 1 No. Prunus Serrula (T3), 1 No. Prunus Nigra(T4), 2 No. Silver Birch (T5 and T6), 1 No. Variegated Maple (T7), 1 No. Amelanchier (T8) and 1 No. Ginko (T9). Ty Newydd, Masons Lane – no objection.

**26/00889:** Application for works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order MS305- Group of 7 mature oak trees, 1. Crown reduction by up to 50% of current crown volume, maintaining natural shape and balanced form, to reduce overall height and lateral spread in line with good arboricultural practice. 2. Crown thinning by up to 30% of leaf area to reduce density, wind loading and shading while retaining the main framework of branches. 3. Selective removal of branches overhanging the

dwelling, garden and adjoining neighbour's property. 4. General crown maintenance, including removal of dead, dying, diseased, crossing and rubbing branches.

Carvalho House, Borley Green – granted.

**26/00184** Discharge of conditions appl 19/02656 Condition 7 (residents travel pack). Land North East of Heath Road – acceptable.

**25/05372** Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/25/01832 - Condition 5 (Materials), 7(Construction Management Plan), 12 (Biodiversity Enhancements), 13 (Wildlife sensitive Lighting Scheme), 15 (Landscaping) and 22 (Air Source Heat Pump). Land North West side of Warren Lane – satisfied.

**26/00681** Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/24/01506 - Conditions 7 (Sustainability Measures) and Part discharge for Condition 11 (Contamination) for part 1 only. Grassy Lane Farm, Grassy Lane – satisfied.

**26/00732** Application for a Non-Material Amendment to DC/25/03380 - Change of facing materials from brickwork to cream horizontal boarding. Aysgarth, Broomhill Lane – approved.

Appeals have been allowed for the two application for advertising consent below with lower illumination during the hours of darkness.

**25/01111** Application for Advertisement Consent - Erection of 1 no. 7 metre tall totem sign and 1 no. 10 metre tall totem sign. EG On The Move Kiln Lane Elmswell -

**25/00666** Application for Advertisement Consent - Construction of signage for service area 1 - Internally illuminated 24hr sign, 2 - Internally illuminated EG on the Move sign, 3 - Internally illuminated Spar Sign, 4 - Internally illuminated Greggs/Subway/Starbucks sign, 7/8/9 - Spar Fascia Sign, 10 - Elmswell Services Sign, 12 - Directional Post and panel, 15 - Banner Frame, 16 - Banner Frame, 24 - EV Directional Sign, 40 - Petrol pump canopy. EG On The Move Kiln Lane Elmswell

## 8. Clerk's Report

**Drain grill Elmswell Road** – SCC has confirmed that work has been ordered to repair the sunken cover.

**BT Cloud phone** – the contract doesn't run out until 2027; the Clerk will then investigate a mobile phone instead.

**Broadband** – this has been renewed with BT for a further 24 months at £35.95 per month (currently £40.83 per month).

**Paper shredder** – the current shredder is not working properly and making noises. As this is 15 years old, the Clerk will order an automatic shredder as a replacement. This will allow for 120 sheets to be shredded whilst the Clerk continues her work.

**Abandoned car, The Street** – this has been reported to MSDC.

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

**SCC** street lighting inventory. Mr Guyler has checked this and advised that although units 42 & 44 in Bury Road are switched off and not incurring energy costs, WPC is paying £16.01 annually for the maintenance of each unit. Cllrs may wish to consider their future and this will be an agenda item at the next meeting. **SCC** has advised that officers have spoken to the stock farmer regarding the electric fencing erected alongside footpath 2. They erected the electric fence as they had been experiencing problems with dogs not being kept on leads and owners not picking up dog excrement therefore ruining the silage and causing disease and calves being aborted. In terms of Rights of Way dogs are considered a usual accompaniment in legal terms only. They have no formal rights and there is no requirement by landowners or SCC to make provision for them. All dogs should be kept on a lead or under close control at all times. SCC has also advised that they would look for a 3m width where there are electric fences both sides of a footpath but it is not believed to be legally enforceable. Since this letter the electric fence has been removed from footpath 2 but remains beside footpath 5 in Drinkstone. **TNG Services Group** advising that they can provide a dog waste and litter bin emptying service, supply and install new bins, remove graffiti. The Clerk was asked to request a quote. *Action:*

*the Clerk.* MARPA membership renewal. It was agreed to continue for a further year and the Clerk will request an invoice.

*Action: the Clerk.* **MSDC** advising that following a site visit and risk assessment, operatives are able to litter pick the central roundabout itself but due to the layout of the junctions and traffic movements they cannot safely litter pick the approach roads without formal traffic management and road closures. Cllrs may need to review the areas covered by the Highways Ranger and the Clerk was asked to contact MSDC for advice on risk assessment. *Action: the Clerk.* **SCC** has a Community Rail Partnership Officer for the St Edmund's Line. The Partnership aims to increase the use of the line for work, education, leisure, retail and tourism as sustainable travel. It was suggested that the Officer is invited to speak at the 2027 Annual Parish Meeting. **Resident** requesting that WPC circulates details of a rogue trader in the area. Although CAS and Trading Standards advise it is generally acceptable for a Parish Council to do so this should be reported to Trading Standards and CAB and not make unsubstantiated accusations to avoid potential defamation issues. After discussion Cllrs agreed they would only do so if the report came from Trading Standards. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs:** **SALC** NSIPs bulletin March 26, news bulletin 16, 23, 30 March, training bulletin 24, 31 March, LGR in Suffolk – Government decision, summary notes of SALC area forum 17 March, training bulletin – Suffolk Highways Forums 2026, introducing SALC's HR advice service. **NALC** CEO bulletin 19, 26 March, 2 April, new toolkit to help engage with MPs and parliamentarians. **MSDC** Better Recycling poster, Spring Litter Pick 2026, LGR decision – 3 councils for Suffolk, Town & Parish update April, NSIP and large-scale energy development updates April. **SCC** Government announces outcome of LGR in Suffolk, a message from Cllr Hicks, Leader of SCC to Town & Parish Councils, Elmswell-Woolpit footway/cyclepath scheme update March, St Edmunds Line Community Rail Partnership. **Rural Services Network** newsletter 4, 11, 18, 25 March, 1 April. **MARPA** newsletter Spring 2026, AGM 21 March.

## 10. Finance

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

The balance of the current account at the end of February was £18,716.01 and the balance of the savings account was £557,861.36 as £20,000.00 was transferred to the current account and £3,016.40 interest has been received in March. With £9,341.73 VAT reclaimable for the year to date, the overall figure is £586,960.92 of which CIL £423,977.84 (£310,723.00 is allocated), earmarked reserves £67,771.28, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £58,211.80.

### b) To approve accounts for payment.

The following payments were authorised for payment Mr M Gardiner £459.90 Highways Ranger March, Mrs P Fuller £2,007.47 Clerk salary March, Suffolk County Council £463.63 pension payment March, HM Revenue & Customs £2,250.82 PAYE January-March, Gipping Press £507.00 printing April/May Diary, Mr R Raisey £158.52 editing April/May Diary, Suffolk County Council £1,611.74 street lighting energy & maintenance 2025/26, Woolpit Institute £520.00 office rent January-March, Woolpit Institute £64.00 meeting room hire January – March, Mrs P Fuller £118.80 expenses January-March, JGH Garden Services £502.00 repairs to playing field fence and under CIL Mrs Ewans £2,133.99 reimbursement for wildflower seeds for the Warren Lane rewilding project. Payment by Direct Debit Information Commissioner £47.00 annual subscription.

## 11. To review Data Retention Policy, Subject Access Policy and Procedures and take any necessary action.

The minor amendments were approved.

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

The working group presented a job description and role overview which were approved by full council. These will be advertised with SALC and Suffolk Jobs Direct

once the Clerk returns from holiday. The closing date will be 24 July with interviews ideally during the week commencing 3 August.

**13. To consider the play equipment inspection report 9 February 2026 and take any necessary action.**

Dr Geake will remove the algae on the equipment and consider suitable wording for signage. All other issues are noted and the zip wire and matting will be regularly checked. The Clerk was asked to look into a play equipment inspection course.

*Action: the Clerk*

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

A new advert was included in the April/May Diary. It was agreed to remove the adverts around the village for the time being.

**15. 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**

A revised map of the position of the stays has been received from Hopkins Homes which was accepted by WPC. The Clerk was asked to find out the proposed cable route to street light LP108 from Hopkins Homes.

*Action: the Clerk*

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

The Clerk will contact Woolpit Cricket Club again for a date for a meeting with the working group, WCC and Sport 87.

*Action: the Clerk*

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

SCC has advised that the detailed design is not likely to be completed until autumn/winter 2026/7 which is very disappointing. Cllr Mellen is investigating if the CIL funding can be extended to cover this. A stakeholders meeting is to be arranged shortly.

**17. To consider a request from MSDC for suitable areas for meadow management in the parish and take any necessary action.**

Although this was discussed last month two further areas have been identified to put forward – alongside 8 Mill Close and at the entrance to Mill Close next to Chatsworth. These will be added to the list for MSDC to investigate further.

*Action: the Clerk*

**18. 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**

All are in working order.

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

Still awaiting construction on site.

**19. Completed training details for March 2026.**

Mrs Osborne-Lomax and the Clerk attended a cybersecurity workshop. The recommendation is not to have the same passwords on accounts but to have three random words and a number and they mentioned password managers. It was also recommended to have cloud storage. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

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

A complaint has been received regarding the variety of the exterior appearance of the houses being built by Tilia Homes and the contrast with the Hopkins Homes

section of the development. Another resident has sent a copy correspondence with MSDC regarding the positioning of a home behind their property which does not appear to be as per the plans. MSDC has advised that an Enforcement case has been raised for an investigation on both issues.

**21. To receive a report from Woolpit Parish Council’s Village Hall Committee representative and Trustee.**

The AGM was held on 27 March and there was a reasonable turn out. Some new people were elected as trustees and various user groups have shown an interest in having a representative. The finances remain stable and the development plans are being discussed and progressed.

**22. Date and time of the Annual Parish Council meeting - Tuesday 5 May 2026 at 7.00 p.m. Noted.**

The meeting closed at 9.12 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....