

MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2026 AT 7.00 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE

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

**In attendance:** District Cllr Mansel (in part), County Cllr Mellen and Mrs Fuller, Clerk.

**1. Apologies for absence.** There were none.

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

**3. Public comment:** The owners of 1 Mill Lane would like to plant climbing plants in the verge of the village hall car park. This needs to be discussed by WRGC.

Mr Hardiman advised that mud at the rear of the church is higher than the drain. This could be levelled which may help alleviate the flooding issues.

Mr Hardiman advised that the latest playground inspection advises that signage is recommended. The Clerk stated that there are various issues raised in the report and she would make it an agenda item for the next meeting.

Mrs Osborne-Lomax advised that a kleptomaniac is becoming a nuisance at the village hall and she has been advised by the police to ask the District Council to issue a banning order. District Cllr Mansel will investigate this possibility.

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

**District Councillors' report:** There has been a Government U-turn and the County Council elections are now going ahead on 7 May. The pre-election moratorium period will begin on 27 March.

On 26 February Full Council met to discuss and agree the budget for 2026-27. The proposal is to raise the MSDC proportion of Council Tax by 2.99%. The budget assumes a gross expenditure of almost £40M (up about 15% from the current year) and gross income of £43M (up about 16% from current year). For the Housing Revenue account there is a proposal for a 4.8% (CPI + 1%) increase in social rents, and a 4.5% increase in garage rents. Utility charges and service charges in sheltered accommodation is continuing to increase to reach full recovery over 4 years.

Councils are publishing a map of all sites submitted during these Call for Sites exercises. This will be published on 27 February. This is not a list of preferred development options. Planning policy officers will begin work to assess all these sites for their suitability for development and inclusion in the joint local plan.

New recycling bins are now arriving in parts of the district. Every home across Mid Suffolk will be receiving a new blue lidded bin and a smaller food waste bin during the next 2-months. The blue-lidded bin will be for glass bottles, jars, tetra pak, plastic bags, cans and plastic bottles. Paper and card will go in the existing green-lidded bin. Collections of the new bins will commence in June.

Plans are beginning to take shape for Armed Forces Day, which will be held in Stowmarket on 27 June, supported by both Mid Suffolk District Council and Stowmarket Town Council. Armed Forces Day is a chance to show your support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community. There will be a number of attractions such as climbing wall, assault course, and hopefully a helicopter from Wattisham. It is shaping up to be a great family day out. Please support if you can. Monthly drop-in sessions are 10-12 Wednesday 1 April and Tuesday 28 April at the Wesley Café, Elmswell.

**County Councillor's report:** At the end of January, the government announced that a number of local elections around the country would be postponed, where councils had written to them saying it would be helpful for delivery of Local Government Reorganization (LGR). This included Suffolk County Council's elections, which were due to be held on 7 May 2026. However, following legal challenge, the government has reversed its plans and has now announced that county council elections – as

well as those due to be held by Ipswich Borough Council – will take place as originally planned. New councillors elected in May will hold office until the new unitary authority/ies are vested in 2028, with councillors for the new unitary authority/ies elected in 2027 and ‘shadowing’ the existing councillors for a year. The government is due to make an announcement by the end of March on how many unitary councils will be set up in Suffolk.

At Cabinet on 24 February, revisions to the council’s Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy were approved, including a change in the name of the policy to the Energy, Water, Transport, Commercial and Adaptive Infrastructure Policy. This policy details how the council will respond to large developments such as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), solar farms and data centres that may be attached to them, and changes to road systems in the county that may be needed following the projects. Suffolk County Council is a consultee on NSIP proposals, but it is not the decision-maker, and the policy sets out how the council will respond to such consultations, such as protecting best and most versatile agricultural land for food production, wellbeing of local communities where projects are disruptive and especially where there is cumulative impact of multiple projects, such as the coastal area around Sizewell C. The policy notes that solar farms may soon have data centres attached, so the council needs to have an agreed approach for developments that are large scale and energy-intensive. The policy also sets out that Suffolk County Council expects developers proposing projects to fund Planning Performance Agreements – this means that responding to the all the proposals for these developments does not come out of the council’s budget.

Suffolk Highways have announced that they will trial removing vehicles that have not been removed for planned resurfacing works. The council plans to make sure that residents are made aware at least two weeks in advance of any works, with cards placed under windscreens and put through residents’ doors. Two days before the works are due to begin, cones will be put out along with signage to say when the works are due to be begin. If there are still cars parked on the road on the day works are due to start, officers will knock on doors to try and find the owner to move it, but as a last resort, vehicles will be moved, ideally nearby where they are still in sight, but if this is not possible, they may be moved to a facility in Bury St Edmunds with a £70 fine issued. As with other Penalty Charge Notices, the amount payable is halved if the fine is paid promptly. Although it has long had the power to remove vehicles for planned works, until now Suffolk County Council has not exercised it – compared to Essex County Council, for example, who have been doing this for about a decade. This approach will be adopted by the council for a period between March to June 2026 initially, with a report prepared on the trial and making recommendations for the future.

On 13 February, it was announced that Nicola Beach, the Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council, would be leaving her role. Nicola has been Chief Executive since 2018 when she replaced Deborah Cadman, and will be stepping down at the end of March 2026. The council proposes to appoint two existing directors – Andrew Cook and Mark Ash – into new joint chief executive roles for the remaining two years of the council’s existence. As these directors’ existing posts would not be recruited into, the number of senior staff at the council will reduce by one, saving up to £92k a year. This decision must be ratified by councillors at the next meeting of full council on 19 March 2026.

Suffolk County Council has been nominated for a national award for its work on energy and sustainability. Only 24 local authorities in the UK have been shortlisted for the first APSE Energy Awards, which are held in partnership with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The awards celebrate innovation and the role local authorities play in responding to the challenges of energy transition, climate change and long-term sustainability. The ‘Accessing & Managing Finance’ category recognises Suffolk County Council’s Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme (administered by Lendology CIC), and the Suffolk

Public Sector Leaders group's Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Scheme (administered by Reed In Partnership). The loan scheme offers an interest-free loan to make energy efficient improvements, such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps. Through countywide Sustainable Suffolk initiatives, the county is also up for a second award, in the 'Working in Collaboration' category which involves a range of projects such as a study into supporting taxi drivers to move to electric vehicles, and launching the Suffolk Sustainable Schools Network.

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

There were none.

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

The minutes were approved and signed.

### **7. Planning**

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

**26/00363** Application for Approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Permission of Hybrid Planning Landscaping, Layout and Scale for Parcel 6 - 2no. commercial buildings; parking; and areas of Landscaping. Land At Lawn Park Business Centre Warren Lane - object

**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, The Green – no comment.

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

**25/05630** Erection of new garden room and shower room (following removal of existing conservatory). 12 Roman Fields – granted.

**25/05025** Proposed conversion of residential garden to open air commercial storage. Lawn Farm, Warren Lane – granted.

**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 – approved.

**25/02867** Land rear of The Outfield, Green Road – the appeal lodged after MSDC refused permission has been dismissed by the Planning Inspector. Due to the public benefit of biodiversity gain does not outweigh the harm to heritage assets.

### **8. Clerk's Report**

**20 mph zone** – the invoice for construction has been paid and site work should be completed within 14 weeks (by the end of May).

**Ashton Legal** – has been updated on the stalled position of the amenity land transfer and the land the village hall extension was built on.

**FSCS limit** – has been increased to £120,000.00.

**Youth session** – The Mix organised an event on 20 February at the village hall. Those that attended enjoyed it but there were not too many there. Nobody had seen any advertising locally. Ms Tomlinson is meeting Josh from The Mix next week as it is likely that he will want to organise another event.

**Street rubbish and dog bin emptying fees 2026/7** – will increase to £51.50 per bin per annum from £50 per bin.

**BT Cloud phone** – the contract ends 4 April 2026. The Clerk advised that there are often issues with it and wondered if it would be better to have a pay as you go phone. The Clerk was asked to investigate costs. *Action: the Clerk*

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

**MSDC** has asked for suggestions of areas of land they mow which can be left for meadow management. Areas to be put forward are the area behind flint wall at Meadowlands, verge at entry to Mitre Close west of Rags Lane, corner of Old Stowmarket Road, end of Lower Broom Road and empty plot in Briar Hill although

this may be privately owned. MSDC will be made aware that local consultation would be its responsibility. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: SALC** Planning reform and what it means for local councils, new blog – planning reforms consultation, news bulletin 9, 23 February and 3 March, training bulletin 10 February, 3 March, joint Mid Suffolk & Babergh area forum 17 March. **NALC** CEO bulletin 5, 12, 19 February. **Rural Services Network** weekly newsletter 4.11.18, 25 February. **SCC** One Suffolk Shadow authorities and vesting day, LGPS Triennial valuation draft valuation results and contributions rates 2026/7, 2027/8, 2028/9, 2025/26 streetlight inventory and costs. **MSDC** BMSDC Joint Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Consultation 2026, Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant - Launch Event 4 March, SCC elections to go ahead as scheduled in May, Better Recycling briefing pack, Town & Parish update March, NSIPs and large scale energy development update March, MSDC Parish Liaison meeting 25 March. **Charity Commission** news Winter 2026. **Suffolk Preservation Society** Neighbourhood Planning study day 16 May. **MARPA** Ipswich-Cambridge CRP naming competition. **Suffolk Police** PCC update February 2026. Thanks for donation from EAAA and St Nicholas Hospice.

## 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 £574,844.96 as £20,000.00 was transferred to the current account. With £7,460.13 VAT reclaimable for the year to date, the overall figure is £601,021.10 of which CIL £440,026.92 (£342,304.52 is allocated), earmarked reserves £67,771.28, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £56,222.90.

### b) To approve accounts for payment.

The following payments were ratified Austen Group £135.95 cart for Highways Ranger, T Seeley Elite Fencing £66.00 refund of duplicate payment for advert, Woolpit Village Hall £2,607.00 CCTV/ Wi-Fi, under CIL Shelter Solutions £5,652.00 bus shelter Suffolk County Council £ 6,756.07 20 mph speed limit construction under Section 137 St Nicholas Hospice £250.00 and East Anglian Air Ambulance £250.00. The following payments were authorised for payment Mr M Gardiner £548.10 Highways Ranger February, Mrs P Fuller £1,185.82 Clerk salary February, Suffolk County Council £463.63 pension payment February and under CIL Classroom 365 Ltd £11,289.60 32 iPads/accessories for Woolpit Primary School.

### c) To consider the appointment of an internal auditor for 2025/6 accounts and take any necessary action.

It was unanimously agreed to appoint Tania Jones.

## 11. To discuss Assertion 10 in preparation for the audit of 2025/26 accounts including adopting an IT policy, amended Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice and take any necessary action.

The website has been checked for accessibility rules and an accessibility statement has been uploaded. It was agreed to adopt the drafted IT Policy, amended Data Protection Policy and amended Privacy Notice.

## 12. To review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and take any necessary action.

The Clerk advised that WPC should adopt the amended Model Standing Orders. New Financial Regulations were adopted last year and no changes are required. Cllrs unanimously adopted amended Model Standing Orders.

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

Mrs Osborne-Lomax has several suggested amendments and will liaise with the Clerk to present revised documents at the next meeting.

*Action: the Clerk/Mrs Osborne-Lomax*

**14. To consider a response to Suffolk Highways Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings survey and take any necessary action.**

It was agreed that the Clerk would complete this.

*Action: The Clerk*

**15. To consider a response to Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Consultation 2026 and take any necessary action.**

Cllrs do not wish to comment.

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

The Clerk had distributed a draft of a possible advert and job description which was felt to be too lengthy. A working group of Mr Guyler, Mrs Osborne-Lomax and Dr Geake was set up to re-write something more suitable.

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

There is no update this month,

**18. 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**

The revised map has not been provided by Hopkins Homes. The Clerk will contact Hopkins homes again for this and advise that the dead trees and shrubs still have not been replaced.

**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 working group has met and reported back to council. They are now waiting for a date to be advised by WCC for a meeting of WPC, WCC and Sporting 87.

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

There does not appear to be any progress as SCC has advised it is still in the design stage.

**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**

It was suggested to turn the SID near Briar Hill.

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

Awaiting construction on site.

**21. Completed training details for February 2026.** There were none.

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

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

The AGM will be held on 27 March. The accounts have been independently examined with no concerns. A CIL bid is being submitted. The new CCTV and Wi-Fi are now working. The Trustees are organising an event each month.

**24. Date and time of the next meetings, CIL applications - Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 7.00 p.m. and Full Council – Tuesday 7 April 2026 at 7.00 p.m.** Noted.

The meeting closed at 8,58 p.m.

Signed...approved.....Dated...7 April 2026.