

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

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

In attendance District Cllr Overett, County Cllr Patchett, Mrs Fuller, Clerk and 7 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Hammond and Mrs King.

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

3. Public comment: The Woolpit sign at Borley Green is missing, County Cllr Patchett will look into getting it replaced.

A resident asked the council to consider delegating powers to the clerk to decide some of the smaller issues so that councillors do not have to discuss these at meetings. This will not be considered for the time being.

Mr Hardiman asked if we could go back to not having a meeting in August. The Clerk pointed out that due to the number of issues that come before the council this was unlikely.

Dr Geake attended the MSDC Parish Liaison meeting in Elmswell on 29 July and will circulate a report shortly to councillors.

4. County & District Councillors reports.

District Councillors' report: At the recent cabinet meeting £430k of CIL funds were awarded to a number of local projects, including Tostock Village Hall, Old Fire Station Community space in Stowmarket, accessibility features such as a lift for the John Peel Centre and an upgrade to the play provision in Creting Road, Stowmarket, composting toilet for Bedfield Parish Church and improvements to bridleways in the Akenham area.

Needham Lake, owned by Mid Suffolk District Council, has been officially recognised as one of the country's best green spaces for a second-year running, after winning another prestigious Green Flag Award. Now in its 30th anniversary year, the award is the international quality mark for parks and green spaces.

The waste service is now operating much as intended. There are still a few issues, including for some residents who need assisted collection of their food caddies. This is improving as the new staff for food collections become more familiar with their route and with the location of homes needing assistance. The number of residents using the dedicated Better Recycling telephone line have significantly reduced.

Mid Suffolk District Council has been shortlisted in Nature 2030's Political Purpose Awards, in the Planning for Nature Recovery category. Some of the £1.8M nature recovery grant funding is now being spent in Thorndon, Palgrave and Stowmarket. Families across Babergh and Mid Suffolk can enjoy two free community fun days this summer, with a packed programme of activities on offer for all ages. The MSDC day will be at Stowupland Village Hall on Wednesday 19 August.

Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre has added a Wednesday gym class to their regular sessions for Mid Suffolk residents with physical or cognitive disabilities or long-term health issues. Other activities are swimming, bowls, table tennis and Inclusive Boccia.

There is still uncertainty around Local Government Review process, and until the Statutory Instrument is laid before parliament this will likely continue. Mid Suffolk District Council remains focused on the delivery of services and supporting businesses and communities who are based in Mid Suffolk. However, where activities are required to prepare for possible new authorities we are proactively supporting this as we are mindful that we need to be as prepared as possible.

We welcome applications for Locality Funding from any community group in Woolpit and Elmswell. We're always happy to advise on eligibility.

Monthly drop-in sessions - Thursday 13 August 10:00 – 12:00 at Green Wolf Café and Tuesday 29th September 10:00 – 12:00 Wesley Café, Elmswell.

County Councillor's report: At Full Council on 16 July, the administration at Suffolk County Council tabled a motion to reverse the Climate Emergency Declaration which the council had made in 2019 and then reaffirmed in 2023. They also proposed a review of environmental schemes at the council to make sure that they were making financial savings and not costing the council money. Opposition Councillors argued against the proposal, which came at a time when the county was facing extreme heat, drought and reduced farming yields due to the changing climate. It was also pointed out that the council has saved nearly £5m a year due to its carbon reduction programme, money that it badly needed. Despite these arguments this motion was passed.

A motion was proposed that the council should set out plans for a Universal Minimum Bus Service for all villages in Suffolk to ensure residents can get to their nearest town during commuting hours so they can access employment, education and health services. The county was recently awarded £564,000 to conduct a feasibility study on bus franchising, which would give the council greater control of bus networks, and regularly receives funding from the government to improve bus services which is currently allocated piecemeal to local communities who bid for it. This motion was voted down by the administration.

At Cabinet on Tuesday 14 July, proposals were outlined for £18.9m of High Needs Provision Capital Funding received by the council from the government for 2025-26 and 2026-27. This funding enables the council to increase the number of specialist education placements in the county for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The report outlined the following allocations: Specialist provision at secondary phase – £9.8m (168 places); satellite provision linked to special schools – £4m (80 places); mainstream inclusion capacity (ringfenced and flexible) – £2m; post-16 specialist provision – £1m and adaptations to mainstream schools – £2m. Demand for specialist school placements continues to rise in Suffolk, with a 17% increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the last year. A greater number of specialist school places across the county means children can be educated closer to home, and without the high costs of independent schools or out of county placements.

Cabinet on 14 July also reviewed the council's financial outturn for the financial year ending 31 March 2026. The council overspent last year by £15m overall, a figure which the council will need to take from its reserves to balance the books. The main areas of overspend for the council are in Care Purchasing for Adult Social Care, and Children in Care placements. Other areas in adult care did exceed their savings targets for the year, but the increase in demand was still greater than the money saved. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), a 'negative reserve' where the council holds its debt for overspending on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), increased by £70m over the year. The government recently announced it would pay off 90% of councils' DSG debt in autumn 2026, but this will still leave Suffolk County Council with £16m of DSG, which will continue to rise until the government takes over SEND funding from April 2028.

At the same meeting, Cabinet also agreed that the council would object to the EcoPower Suffolk Solar Farm planned for Mid Suffolk, and agreed that the council would submit a business plan to the Department for Transport (DfT) for improvements to the A12 between the Seven Hills roundabout and the Woods Lane roundabout. The cost of the scheme has increased from £57.46m in 2021 to £63.61m in 2026 due to the construction inflation, although funding from DfT and third parties will cover most of this, with the cost to the council currently calculated at £3.5m.

Suffolk County Council's social care services for adults were judged as 'Good' again by CQC following an inspection in December 2025. The rating given to the council

was 67%, with the threshold for 'Good' being 62%. Adult social care services are provided by the council to elderly and disabled adults, and those with learning disabilities and autism who need extra help. CQC stated that areas of strength included committed and compassionate staff, strong partnership working with health (NHS) and good multi-agency working to keep people safe. It also complimented the council on its focus on helping people remain independent and its use of digital technology to support people safely in their own homes. It also identified several areas for improvement, including better support for unpaid carers, staff capacity issues in some teams, reducing waiting times in parts of the system and ensuring care reviews were consistently person-centred.

Suffolk County Council has launched a public consultation on proposed changes to its Healthy Child Service, which is provided by the council's Public Health team. The changes include cessation of the Young Person Pathway and Family Nurse Partnership, who provide 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 to become term-time only. The consultation runs until 18 September, with a decision likely to be made at Cabinet after that.

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

There were none.

6. To approve the minutes of the meeting 7 July 2026.

The minutes were approved and signed.

7. Planning

a) to consider current applications

26/02955 Retention of an existing highways access to provide an emergency access only. Stag Park, Old A45 – comment that if MSDC are minded to consent, this must include a condition that the access should always be used by emergency vehicles only.

b) to receive MSDC decisions.

26/002537 Application for works to trees in a Conservation Area - T10 - sycamore - clear give way sign by 1.5m. T12 - goat willow - crown lift to 2.5m above ground level over the footpath. T13 - field maple - crown lift to 2.5m above ground level over the footpath. New Rectory, Rectory Lane – no objection.

26/02717 Notification of works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Remove lowest limb of 1 Sycamore (T1) and Fell 1 Sycamore (T2) Abbotswell, Rectory Lane – no objection.

26/02198 Application under Section 73 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for DC/23/04428 (1no dwelling outline planning permission) for the variation of Conditions 3 (Approved plans and documents) 4 (Vehicular access) 6 (Biodiversity) 7 (Construction management) and 11 (Dust management) to amend the proposed scheme, Acorns, The Heath – granted.

26/02300 for Approval of Reserved Matters following grant of Outline Permission DC/23/04428 dated 23/11/2023 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Submission of details for Layout, Scale, Appearance and Landscaping, Access points to be considered - Erection of 1No Single Storey Dwelling - As per accompanying statement, Acorns, The Heath – approved.

26/00363 Application for Approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Permission of Hybrid Planning Permission DC/22/04002 - Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale for Parcel 6 - 2no. commercial buildings; parking; and areas of Landscaping. Land At Lawn Park Business Centre, Warren Lane – approved.

26/02845 Application for Non-Material Amendment relating to DC/24/04207 - Condition 2 to amend brick types for specific plots and change of door colour to Plot 108 to black, land off Bury Road – approved.

26/01912 Outline application (access to be considered, all other matters reserved) Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) erection of 5 self-build dwellings, land north of Heath Road – refused; outside the Settlement Boundary, not supported by the Spatial Strategy of Development Plan and the site is within the designated Settlement Gap.

8. Clerk's Report

Overgrown hedge Cornmill Green – the resident will cut back when it gets cooler.

White Lines Rags Lane/The Street junction and between The Pump and David Burr – SCC has scheduled repairs to be carried out within 14 calendar weeks.

2025/26 CiL Annual Return – MSDC has confirmed receipt and there are no issues.

Bus Shelter insurance claim - £1,145.00 has been received.

Woolpit Diary – someone has come forward to take on the role of Distribution Manager and will receive a handover from the current Manager.

Youth Initiative – posters have been put up by The Mix and there are no activities in Woolpit during the summer.

District Cllr Overett is very concerned regarding this and will contact The Mix to find out what is going on.

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

Two residents asking if change of use planning permission is required for the recently opened Woolpit Dog Park. District Cllr Overett will take this up with officers.

The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: Rural Services Network newsletter 8, 15, 22, 30 July. **NALC** CEO bulletin 9, 16, 23 July, Star Council Awards 2026/27 – Council of the Year, Councillor of the Year, Climate response of the Year. **SALC** Suffolk Community Awards nominations closed 12 July, temporary hosepipe ban in the East of England, news bulletin 20, 27 July, 3 August, training bulletin 21, 28 July, 4 August, SALC Superforum LGR what are the next steps 17 September, NALC launches Neighbourhood Planning survey. **MSDC** Babergh Mid Suffolk JLP Scoping Consultation, Babergh Mid Suffolk JLP update presentation and summary of the meeting 10 July, Media statement Ijtima at Shrublands Estate, Barham, Counter Terrorism Police statement regarding Ijtima at Shrubland Hall. NSIP drop-in surgery cancelled, Town & Parish Liaison meeting 29 July, Wildflower meadowland management and reducing fire risk during hot weather, NSIPs and large scale energy developments update August, Town & Parish update August. **SPS** Neighbourhood Plan online workshop 19 September.

10. Finance

a) To receive a monthly report from the Clerk.

The balance of the current account at the end of July was £37,526.06 which includes £1,145.00 insurance claim and £3,965.52 Cleansing grant from MSDC. The balance of the savings account was £560,573.48. With £2,238.16 VAT reclaimable, the overall figure is £600,337.70 of which CIL £415,435.52 (£300,646.68 is allocated), earmarked reserves £88,345.25, general reserve £37,000.00 and general funds £59,556.93.

b) To approve accounts for payment.

The following accounts were authorised for payment: Mr M Gardiner £659.05 Highways Ranger July, Mrs P Fuller £1,748.85 Clerk salary July, Suffolk County Council £409.72 pension payment July, Top Garden Services £1,471.52 hedge cutting February, grass cutting March-June, Flagship AV £506.50 replacement of damaged CCTV camera, Mid Suffolk DC £1,854.00 dog & litter bin emptying 2026/27, Equity pc £81.00 virus/malware removal, Mrs T Osborne-Lomax £37.80 reimburse flash drive for CCTV, Mrs J Ewans £14.00 reimbursement for land search,

Shelter Solutions £1,674.00 repairs to bus shelter, Mr R Raisey £137.10 editing August/September Diary, Gipping Press £446.00 print August/September Diary, Local Authority Technology CIC £120.00 Parish Online annual subscription, Pear space (Suffolk.cloud) £300.00 domain reg/mailbox/web hosting & support annual subscription, Suffolk County Council £75.00 advert for assistant to Clerk, Viking Office UK Ltd £140.38 shredder, Michael Hardiman £14.99 reimbursement for graffiti remover. Payments by Direct Debit BT £199.80 quarterly bill, E-on Next £54.10 pump light 1/5/26-31/7/26.

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

We are still awaiting a third quote. It was agreed that the tree should be cut down to a height which will provide a seat and make it easier for grass cutting. The Clerk will contact MSDC Tree Officer to ask if permission is required as it is in the Conservation Area.

Action: the Clerk

12. To consider a request to transfer the land that the Village Hall previous extension has been built on to the WVHC including to receive a report on a meeting between Mr Guyler and representatives of the Woolpit Village Hall Committee on 20 July and take any necessary action.

A report of the meeting 20 July has been circulated to Cllrs. The land transfer is required to ensure that the freehold of all the land that WVH occupies is owned by WVH. Correct land ownership will be required before WVH is able to complete the conversion of its charity legal structure to that of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The final step of the conversion is the transfer of land ownership to the CIO. It will also allow WVH to apply for grants from funding organisations. Two drawings are being prepared which will be used with the legal documents required for the transfers. One will show the boundaries of land ownership. The other will show drainage infrastructure.

A further meeting was held on 3 August and it was agreed that the drawings need some modifications. Once the drawings have been agreed by the working group they will be passed to the WVH committee and WPC for approval. Following approval, WPC will engage with its lawyers to prepare the legal documents. The land to be transferred is part of the lease held by the Woolpit Recreation Ground charity. The WRGC will have to surrender part of the lease which will require Charity Commission permission.

13. To consider Woolpit Parish Council's representation to Woolpit Village Hall Charity and take any necessary action.

Julia Ewans has agreed to represent Woolpit PC on Woolpit VH Committee. This was unanimously approved.

14. To consider a request that Woolpit PC considers creating a cool space in the village for people to seek refuge in extreme temperatures and take any necessary action.

After discussion, which included WPC's experience of providing a warm space with no one attending, it was agreed that WPC would not action this request. It is noted that WPC would consider a grant if one of the committees who own a building in the village wished to provide a cool space.

Action: the Clerk

15. To consider a request that Woolpit PC reconsider the erection of signage warning of hedgehogs crossing the road in The Street and Bury Road and take any necessary action.

Whilst Cllrs understand the resident's concerns, it is not practical to have additional signs and particularly in the Conservation Area.

Action: the Clerk

16. To consider a request that Woolpit PC provides parasols in the play park and take any necessary action.

Cllrs agreed that this was not advisable particularly with the current vandalism being experienced in the area.

17. To consider delegating powers to the interview panel to offer the post of Assistant to the Parish Clerk to the most suitable candidate and take any necessary action.

This was unanimously agreed. The panel (Mr Guyler as Chair, Dr Geake as Vice-chair and the Clerk) will be conducting seven interviews this week.

Action: Interview panel

18. To consider a quote from Proludic for Gold Protect Package for 206/27 and take any necessary action.

As the quote for the play equipment is the same as last year at £1,785.00, this was unanimously agreed.

Action: the Clerk

19. To consider the play equipment inspection report 11 May 2026 and take any necessary action. This was deferred to the September meeting.

20. To consider recent vandalism in the parish and take any necessary action.

Various areas of the village have been experiencing considerable vandalism. The allotments, bus shelter, Recreation Ground, the Church, business parks and the Village Hall have all been targeted. The Village Hall has particularly suffered with hirers being disturbed and the hall broken into 12 times by the same individuals. There has been substantial damage in the hall which has had to close for the time being due to this. CCTV has been supplied but the response from the police has been poor. County Councillor Patchett will take this matter up with his contacts at Suffolk Constabulary and District Cllr Mansel who is Chair of the Police Scrutiny Panel will be informed. Meanwhile a new security system is to be fitted to the village hall.

21. To consider a quote for a replacement side panel to the bus shelter and take any necessary action.

A quote of £265.00 for a poly-carbon panel is accepted but will not be installed until the autumn due to the current vandalism.

Action: the Clerk

22. To discuss the condition of the cycle lane markings in Mill Lane and take any necessary action.

A resident had asked Suffolk Highways to inspect the line markings and subsequently made a Freedom of Information request for more details about the report as the information they received had said that no action is necessary. It would appear that the inspection was conducted from a vehicle at the end of Mill Lane and the resident has now submitted a formal complaint. County Cllr Patchett asked for copies of all correspondence.

23. 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

No update has been received since our agreement to the diversion of the path.

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. No update received.

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

SCC design team has carried out a detailed review of the existing utilities and their impacts on the project. Site clearance drawings and schedules have been prepared. form the works information during the construction phase. It has started preparing the traffic signs and road markings detailed design drawings and specification for an arboricultural survey throughout the site. SCC have instructed their streetlighting and traffic signals team to review the preliminary design and undertake the necessary streetlighting design amendments and design for the installation of the new signalised toucan crossing on the north arm of the A1088 roundabout. Conversations with the landowner have taken place, allowing SCC to pursue the design strategy and granted permission to secure the additional land behind St John's Church, Elmswell which is needed to successfully deliver this section. Ecologists will undertake a Pre-Geotechnical Ground Investigation Ecological Walkover in August. The project's geotechnical consultants are preparing the ground investigation specification.

25. 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

A SID has been moved from The Heath to Churchgate House to reinforce the 20 mph zone. The Clerk will contact Westcotec as the sign is not showing the correct lights for the number 2.

Action: the Clerk

b)to receive an update on 20 mph zone

The 30 mph repeater roundels in the 20 mph zone have not been removed. This was requested in May 2026. County Cllr Patchett asked for copies of correspondence with officers.

Action: the Clerk

26. Completed training details for July 2026. There was none.

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

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

No report received as Mrs Ewans has only just accepted the role.

29. Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting - Tuesday 1 September 2026 at 7.00 p.m. Noted.

The meeting closed at 8.55 p.m.

Signed.....approved.....

Dated.....1 September 2026.....