

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council
Minutes of the Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council meeting held Monday 7 July 2025, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett

Present: Cllrs D Howard (Chairman), Mrs E Aldred, T Alston, S Alderton, S Dodgson, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, N Lingard and Mrs J Weir

1. **Apologies and Consent to absence** were received and consent to absence recorded from Cllrs Mrs K van Zyl, Mrs L Drury. County & District Cllr Stringer would be arriving late due to another meeting.
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda** – none.
3. **Reports**
 1. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> – no queries were raised.
 2. County Councillor – deferred pending arrival of Cllr Stringer.
 3. District Councillor - deferred pending arrival of Cllr Stringer.
 4. Footpaths – dog fouling of footpaths in the Park Green area was reported. This would be raised in the parish magazine report.
 5. Trees – Cllr Mrs Aldred reported on her attendance at the County Tree Warden annual general meeting at Butley, this included an interesting talk on ancient trees some being 920 years old. Sapling trees would be available for distribution in the village during the autumn.
 6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** - none.
5. **To consider for approval Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 2 June 2025**
Cllr Mrs Weir proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Lingard and unanimously agreed.
6. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report**
Cllr Alston enquired whether the batteries for the defibrillator were rechargeable. Cllr Mrs Leech reported the batteries were replaced over a 5 year period. They were currently low and were being monitored.
7. **Planning Applications for recommendation to MSDC**
 1. DC/25/02467: Mid Suffolk Light Railway, Hall Lane, Wetheringsett - Application under Section 73A of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - Variation of Condition 1 (Compliance Required - Operational Statement) of planning permission DC/24/04405 dated: 26/11/2024 – Continued use and operation of heritage railway museum as per Operational Statement. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.
 2. DC/25/02855: Sunhaven, Park Green, Station Road, Wetheringsett - Application under S73 for Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of Planning Permission DC/24/04248 dated 11.12.2024 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).- To vary Condition 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) to allow change to an approved window to a Juliette balcony and the addition of 2 No rooflights as per revised plans and documents. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.
8. **Planning Decisions received from MSDC**
 1. DC/25/02067: The Old Forge, Church Street - Application for Listed Building Consent - To replace two modern existing internal doors. Replace with doors that are in keeping with the majority of the other internal doors. **Listed Building Consent Granted**
9. **Planning correspondence**
MSDC: proposed revised Community Infrastructure Levy (Cil) Charging Schedule – six week consultation 26 May – 9 July 2025 – circulated. The meeting agreed No Comment to the circulation document.
10. **Wetheringsett Flood s.19 report**
 1. Report on Wetherup Street remedial work
Cllr Lacey reported the resident impacted by flood during Storm Babet was looking into obtaining a contractor to carry out clearance/drainage work. After the riparian work had been carried out there would probably need to be some clearance of the parish pond by the Parish Council.
10. **Wetheringsett Village Hall**
 1. Management Committee report
Cllr Lingard reported the VH finances were in good order. Income was being received from the solar panels, £500 to date. The summer solstice event had been very successful – it was hoped to repeat the event next year. The Council was asked to make a request for volunteers to help organize it in its next parish magazine report. Bookings for the Hall were going well with outside parties using the Hall.
 2. Report on School Licence Agreement and Diocesan Lease – it was reported Mr Charles Harvey was progressing both items.

11. Cemetery and Play Area Grasscutting report

It was reported the Cemetery was in good condition, there having been two cuts to date. The Manor School was currently cutting the play area on a regular basis with no fee involved.

12. Play Area report

Cllr Alderton reported an application had been made to the Lottery Fund for two new swings. The application decision would not be known for some 16 weeks. An application would also be made to Cllr Stringer's locality budget for a new bench.

12. Speed Equipment Report

Cllr Mrs Weir reported the data report was sent to Suffolk Constabulary on the monthly basis. The report had been circulated to parish councillors. Suffolk Constabulary was continuing to monitor Brockford Street. Funding of £5614.78 had been received from Cllr Stringer's locality budget for the two new solar speed signs to be located on Hockey Hill and south Brockford Street. Cllr Mrs Weir recorded thanks to Cllr Stringer for arranging the funding.

Two proposals were put forward: the purchase of the two solar speed devices, £5614.78 as per the quote, with the aid of the grant funding received: Cllr Alston proposed the purchase of the above, seconded Cllr Alderton – unanimously agreed.

The purchase of the clamp fixings, £105.95 and 2 padlocks at £10 each. Cllr Mrs Leech proposed the purchase of the above, seconded Cllr Lingard – unanimously agreed.

It was hoped the equipment would be installed before the next meeting. The Chair recorded thanks to Cllr Mrs Weir for her work on obtaining the grant funding, sourcing the equipment and installation. It was hoped these would be of much benefit in slowing down vehicles in the village and at Brockford Street.

13. Proposed gov.uk Parish Council/Community Website report

Cllr Alderton reported the updated website was progressing, he and Cllr Dodgson were currently reaching out to community groups for information to put on the website. A further progress report would be given at the next meeting.

15. Finance

1. To consider s.137 donation requests

A funding request had been received from Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau based at Stowmarket.

It was believed this free service was of much benefit to Wetheringsett parishioners if required. Cllr Mrs Aldred proposed a donation of £100, seconded Cllr Alston – unanimously agreed.

2. Accounts for payments

SALC – internal audit fee 2024-25	£338.40
Elan City – two solar powered speed devices	£5614.78
Street Solutions UK Ltd – fixing clamps for speed devices	£105.95
Clerk – sal-expens June 2025	£350.80
Wetheringsett Summer Solstice event contribution	£250.00

Cllr Alston proposed payment of the above, seconded Cllr Mrs Leech – unanimously agreed.

3. Finance report

1. Review of Internal Audit Report for year end 31.3.25

The Internal Audit Report 2024-25 had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. Items raised by the internal auditor were noted by councillors, in particular ensuring all invoices for payment were in the name of the Parish Council and adoption of a General Reserves Policy. Items raised would be monitored going forward. As the Council's income and expenditure for the year 2024-25 exceeded £25,000 the necessary documentation had been sent to the external auditor PFK Littlejohn for the final stage of the audit process.

2. To consider declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator – deferred.

3. To approve Cil Report year end 31.3.25 – Cllr Lingard proposed approval of the CiL report 2024-25, seconded Cllr Alderton – unanimously agreed.

16. To consider for adoption the following policy documents:

1. Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020

The Model Code of Conduct had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. No queries were raised. Cllr Dodgson proposed acceptance of the Code, seconded Cllr Lingard – unanimously agreed.

2. Health & Safety 2025-26 – the Health & Safety document had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. No queries were raised. Cllr Mrs Weir proposed acceptance of the document, seconded Cllr Alderton – unanimously agreed.

Cllr Stringer arrived 7.50pm

Item 3 – Reports

County Council – Cllr Stringer presented his written report including a report on his attendance at the Local Government conference held in Liverpool – copy reports attached to the Minutes.

The Chair enquired whether Cllr Stringer had any further news regarding flooding issue at Wetherup Street. There was no further information from Cllr Stringer. Item deferred to next meeting pending report from Cllr Lacey.

Cllr Mrs Weir recorded further thanks to Cllr Stringer for the solar speed equipment funding.

Cllr Alston enquired whether the additional £8m funding for bus enhancement would also include the taxi bus service. Cllr Stringer stated the second launch of the service had taken place, this now included a wider area. There was however a problem in recruiting drivers. Further publicity was required to recruit drivers.

District Council – Cllr Stringer presented his written report – copy attached to the Minutes.

17. Clerk's report/correspondence

East Anglian Air Ambulance – a thank you letter for the recent donation of £100 had been circulated.

Notification of construction works for a new junction on the A140 near the existing Mendlesham industrial Estate at Ipswich side of Town Lane

18. Chair's Report

The Chair reported refuse thrown into village ditches had raised some concerns.

19. Any other business for information exchange/future agenda requests – none.

20. Date of next meeting: Monday 4 August 2025, 7pm at Wetheringsett Village Hall

Meeting closed 8.10pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

County Council and Local Government Conference Report

Health Inequalities session

NIHR (National Institute for Health & Care Research) PHIRST (Public Health Intervention Responsive Studies Team)

In affluent areas people live 10 years longer than most deprived areas. Schemes developed to reduce health inequalities, but how to know whether they were effective?

PHIRST evaluate public health schemes to see if they are working and represent value for money. They involve local people and voluntary sector organizations, for example:

- Housing retrofit in Liverpool
- Local welfare provision in Liverpool, including benefits maximisation who help people make sure they are receiving all the help they are entitled to, Discretionary Housing Payments which Liverpool is generous with, and Citizens Support Scheme (like Suffolk's LWAS, for essential items like white goods, small one off grants)

The areas using Citizens Support Scheme most matches best with Liverpool's areas of deprivation and poor mental health. Each £1 spent on than is associated with a £1.80 saving in mental healthcare costs.

- Free school meals in Hammersmith & Fulham – PHIRST's evidence was used to support the decision to roll out free school meals to all secondary schools in the area
- Addressing gambling harms in Greater Manchester

'In Conversation' on Solutions to Workforce Challenges

Calderdale council and Powys council presenting, with Commercial Services Group. Local authorities shortage of different types of workers – in Calderdale it's environmental health officers, but social workers are no problem.

Powys: putting workforce first. Used employee surveys to find out what would have the biggest impact, developed their 'People Strategy'.

- Prioritising local people and communities
- Turning temp staff into permanent roles
- Supply chain network of SMEs in the local area, supporting local economy

Powys using 'grow your own' initiative to retain social workers. Got involved in national networks, and LGA networks.

Skills gaps in professional fields – various skills shortages across the UK (like Suffolk struggling to recruit Education Psychologists). Get council's profile out there, and promote the sector, esp with young people. Providing more information on the societal impact of council jobs – young people want to do meaningful work. NHS did a really good job of this post-Covid. Also, retaining young people. Calderdale has a high proportion of its workforce over 50. Activities like talking about pets, bring photos of pets in for day. 'Bring your whole self to work' is more of a thing now, which older council leadership teams wouldn't consider important.

LGR – don't assume people know who you are going to be, you'll have to work hard to create your new brand, even just so people know what to Google if they aren't sure.

Powys put branding and info on recruitment, link etc on vans, recycling trucks etc. Also looked at who is most removed from the labour market, for example armed forces covenant. Started a scheme for people who had been unemployed for a long time.

Succession planning – need to think about the future of teams.

In terms of young people, public sector can't afford (financially or politically) to take employees on the kind of jollies that the private sector does. Young people value work/life balance more than older generations.

But – private sector can be restrictive with the kinds of roles that are available, councils have loads of different areas but people aren't aware, they just think 'bins and potholes'. Find out what motivates the person and they can try a different role, then you can retain them.

Calderdale council have Wellbeing Wednesdays, and hula hoops in the office so people can 'Take 10' and pop out for a walk, or hula.

'Impact' programme at LGA for graduates, getting loads of applications every year. Lots of opportunities, even in small councils, that are good for CVs and transferable skills.

Legal services in Powys – put in apprenticeships and trainee positions to counteract a workforce that was 70% over 50 and therefore nearing retirement.

Take people risk as seriously as financial risk!

Open-Sourcing Local Nature Recovery

Significant new policy initiatives: Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Also changes to funding for farmers for nature and sustainability work.

Mayoral Combined Authority of West of England, who are presenting, created an LNRS toolkit to bring all the data together, then a web app, to show priority areas for nature recovery and species priorities for each area. Can zoom into a map on the app and see local funds available as well as the priorities for that area. Can click on 'habitat creation' and see suggestions dependent on that local area, taking into account soil type etc.

Have shared the code for creating the toolkit and app on github

Positive responses from Country Landowners Associations and Local Authorities but as it doesn't require a log in they can't measure the take up (this seems like a bit of an oversight). They will be doing it soon though.

Conference Plenary – Baroness Bennett (Green)

Rise of independents and small parties reflects loss of trust in big two parties.

How to keep democracy local post-LGR when districts are not around any more? Not to give up yet – still worth fighting. Govt U turns do happen. Parish councils in unitaries have stepped up and taken up big roles with little funding. In Shropshire they are doing brilliant green work. We'll need to rebuild from the ground up.

Councils and planning committees – ministers don't have to have any planning training or qualification. Sheffield adopted a committee system following a public referendum which govt decision re Cabinet system will overturn: [Campaigners oppose government move to return council to unpopular decision-making system – "Sheffield can't go back"](#) Also Leicestershire.

Likely that mayors will listen to their party leaders rather than the public.

Reform UK now quite quiet about electoral reform, because it is now working for them. How can we get better representation? Marianne says that she saw loads of people at the polling stations recently who she hadn't seen before – they were not engaged previously in the community. Councillors need to embed themselves in the community and make sure they are knocking on every door and talking to everyone.

Appetite for proportional representation – Baroness Bennett says people want their vote to matter.

Conference Plenary - Vikki Slade MP (Lib Dem)

Former councillor and council leader. Councils get things done, but funding is insufficient:

- Social care – 'the elephant in the NHS waiting room'. Delayed transfer of care, families who can't cope
- SEND and education – children not in school, or in schools that can't meet their needs. Teachers leaving the profession, need more support and funding
- Housing – social housing inadequate and too many families are homeless and in temporary accommodation

Devolution plans are not devolution – they are centralisation by stealth. Disrespectful to councillors and officers who work for local democracy every day. Need to trust local leaders, not strip them of their powers.

Social housing and suspension of right to buy; the last time the UK hit its housing targets was when local authorities were building social housing.

Council tax – based on 1991 property values, water rates are based on council tax band rather than use. Politically difficult to reform though.

Climate change – need to focus on what is happening locally and what to do about it, as net zero is becoming politically charged.

Roadmap to reform: a SEND system that supports all children

Catherine McKinnell MP, Minister for School Standards: inherited a very poor system- hollowing out of support in schools, Sure Start and loss of early help. SEND students – far more likely to be absent from school or excluded.

This autumn will set out their plans to reform SEND and improve the system for all students.

- Identify problems early and refer them to educational psychologists
- Properly resourced provision in their own communities
- Inclusion in age-appropriate classes

Not waiting for white paper – have released additional funds for inclusion to councils. Adapting classrooms or creating SEND units in schools. Widening inclusion in mainstream is the government direction, so councils should prioritise this if they can, though of course it is up to them how they spend the money.

Review national qualifications so teachers have the right training to help SEND students.

Budget pressures – overwhelming burden for councils, without even seeing the right outcomes. They have announced the statutory override extension to April 2028 and will publish more plans in the autumn with the white paper.

Ofsted CQC inspections – will work more closely with families, inspection reports will make it clearer which organization in SEND partnerships are responsible for each service.

Susan Parsonage – CEX at Wokingham and SOLACE deputy spokesperson for Children & Families

- 43% of LAs will have deficits close to or exceeding their reserves in March 2026, extension of statutory override is not fixing this. £4.6bn cumulative deficit nationally
- Annual growth of 11.1% on pupils in England with an EHCP, increase of over 80% since 2014
- SEND support now continues to the age of 25 now
- Increase in demand means mainstream schools are unable to accommodate students which means costly specialist placements.
- Cost of deficit is paid for by the taxpayer – could change regulations so that interest costs can be added to DSG deficit (again not really a solution)
- Need the right conditions for children to thrive – the system is too fragmented, for example, councils have limited powers of intervention with academies over SEND support
- SEND free schools programme is delayed which is having a financial impact

Issues raised by delegates

- Small rural primaries and how they will cope with the number of SEND students with low resources, esp in deprived areas
- If we are spending this much money, why aren't we using temporary classrooms like during RAAC crisis?
- Academies and improving SEND support where they are not prioritising this
- ICBs streamlining their services and affect on waiting lists and support for SEND children

Bridging the digital divide: inclusion through partnerships

If people don't have the skills or confidence to use digital council services, people who are most vulnerable will not be able to access support and will be even further left behind. Digital inclusion needs to be baked in.

Partnership with industries to improve connectivity

Empowering people: during Covid, people weren't able to access health services because no connectivity or device at home, and children for home learning.

Manchester worked with Good Things foundation – not just no connectivity, many more had low access to connectivity – created a digital exclusion risk index so they could see where to focus their support.

Supporting disabled children and young people into adulthood

Moving to Adulthood pilot by Royal Borough of Greenwich. Too many children in placements out of area, and too many practitioners and assessment processes involved in transition between children's and adult service support.. Needed to change their culture.

They worked with Newton to develop a new process, transitions team moved into children's service with a single assessment and a move to adult services when the child was ready. One social worker for the whole process, family more involved in the process.

Barriers

- Silo approach as children's services and adult services have different leaders and directorates
- Fragmented system of schools, SEND, CAMHS, health teams etc, getting everyone to attend relevant meetings

Child now at the heart of the system – relational rather than transactional process.

New post 18 provision being developed in the borough

Lessons learned

- System leadership – leaders need to be committed to changing the process
- Cross-service collaboration

- Improving independence, including breaking the cycle of residential education provision where possible to support accommodation options within family and community
- **Questions**
- How to do provision in the community of residential out of area? Greenwich invested in local provision, some provision is in neighbouring counties – it's a long term plan
- How early to start conversations? Greenwich say at age 14 but transition process starts at 16
- Does starting earlier improve independence in the long term? Greenwich thinks so. Also really helpful to start discussions with the family earlier. Could also provide learning on how to work with parents on SEND support
- How to deal with council leaders' reluctance to change the system? Use data on outcomes to convince them. Took a few years for Greenwich to get people onside to make their changes.

Florence.kroll@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

LGA Independent Group Meeting: Learning from those who have been through LGR

Mayor will have money/disposable income rather than councils. Will be a challenge. Northants – failings of council lead to LGR, two unitaries formed. Public consultation responses were very against the proposals... but govt did it anyway.

171 councillors four years ago, boundary commission changes mean now 144 councillors.

Those councillors aren't double hatters will find it disorientating in a unitary because they won't be familiar with all the services. Had to meet in a theatre as no rooms were big enough for all the councillors to meet.

Council tax harmonisation: council tax went up as more due to unitaries than districts/boroughs – this was unpopular.

Planners – some paid different amounts depending on which council they had come from, took a while to sort that out.

Disaggregation of a county council leads to a massive bunfight re debt and mortgages on roads etc.

Will be a tough job politically in the current climate – need to get out there and put the work in door knocking.

Tips

- Don't do what Wiltshire districts did, and spend all their money before unitarization. It is going to happen, don't fight it, but do fight for smallest wards you can to keep the democracy local.
- Pushing back on councillor to residents ratio – they challenged boundary commission suggestion and got what they wanted. If you have a boundary commission review, you'll need to work together – the bigger parties will work hard to push you out. Also, boundary commission population size is based on voters – under 18s not taken into account despite being subject to council services too
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Questions

- Two or three years as 'walking dead' councils – how can we build resilience during that time?

Invest in your communities and invest in them – just have to carry on the day job. Northants till overspending significantly on adult & children's services, and DSG. Doesn't make savings you can do stuff with – it just holds off financial crisis.

North Yorkshire – still finding out issues two years on... long process. First year is key: only get that once so you need to do it right.

Impower session tomorrow on adult social care: learning from those who have already been through it.

- Essex large county, currently talking about 3 or 5 unitaries, really want smallest councils possible, what advice do you have?

If you are elected, you will be in control – lobbying and working together with your colleagues will help. It will be really difficult. First year is for the donkey work, officers will also be going through a hard time so bear that in mind.

Northants are on their fourth director of children's services in four years. Bigger is not necessarily better for councils, but hiring one director for children is easier than recruiting four.

- Leisure and community and culture – how to keep these services going?

Statutory stuff will take over and all that stuff will go – leisure centre in North Yorks just closed, swimming pools are expensive.

Northants: If it's viable for town councils to take things like that on, that is one option.

- Three member wards are very hard to win – has anyone lobbied Boundary Commission to try and get rid of them?
- Reform looking at how they can change boundaries to get rid of opposition – possible LGA panel to be put together to look at boundary changes?

North Yorkshire say – don't fight Reform UK, you won't win as they are a big machine. Just get on with your work and showing people you are getting on with it

DOGE coming to Northants (via Reform)! Read the constitution and fight out what you can do. Le backbenchers can submit items for committee agendas.

AI in Local Government: Empowering leaders, engaging communities and building trust

World is changing – can help how we provide services. About people as well as data. Digital transformation needs to be joined up for people to buy into it.

New AI hub has been set up MHCLG – very collaborative area, nobody is an expert yet. Councils are probably using more AI than central govt. What levers can central govt help you with? Money, market shaping?

Liverpool's director for Digital and Transformation: taking a place-based approach, 'problem first' approach (rather than adopting 'off the shelf' solutions) so focus is on filling the community's needs. Working with university and a digital innovation company. Also held an AI summit held here at ACC last year, hoping to double the size this year.

Use community and voluntary sector to engage with residents about digital inclusion and bring people on board.

Hoping to bring some solutions to SEND, also teachers' administrative workload. And hoping to look at a way help young children to be school-ready.

Prof Iain Buchan -form a national grid of AI that is socially-focused and progressive? Need to be shaping a large number of problem-solving solutions. If you go to local residents with specific problems, their responses are always very creative, and need their trust.

Those with 'complex lives' are using the largest proportion of council services. Blizzard of AI is unhelpful, particularly for people accessing multiple services. We can and should integrate them.

AI allies: voice commands to take out the issue of people not being able to type/navigate touchscreen.

Questions/suggestions

- 400 councils going off to do their own thing is worrying – need communication so we are not replicating effort
- SEND and home to school transport best place to start please, for councils. SEND = complex coordination needs and families feeling burnt out. How to tap into families' needs so we aren't trying to do the same thing five times over.
- Social care assessment records – pilot for this being trialled by 25 councils
- Swindon have developed language translation tools, lots of councils are picking this up and using it too
- MHCLG want to know what they can develop to help councils
- How can elected members set direction when they don't understand it well? AI literacy is an area Liverpool are looking at – workforce training initially but looking to roll out to members. Officers are there to support members
- What does it look like for residents to have ownership of AI? The Prof has been part of a programme offering AI literacy support to local entrepreneurs and demand was massive – 200 applicants for 8 places. Get people to pitch for where they need our input. Also, co-design, so people know how it works and trust it. Being able to use language to talk to computers instead of programming – makes it far more accessible. You can do so much now with ChatGPT. Game changer in how you work with communities, and if you speak to youngest employees, talking to their devices is how they are doing things.

Power Shift – Stronger Parish and Town Councils in the Age of Devolution and Reorganization

Better working between tiers, and collaborating with each other instead 'doing to'. LGR model – if it is fast, it is not going to be well understood. Also still so much to be confirmed.

Alex Norris MP: People feel most strongly about what they see when they leave their house in the morning -that grassroots work is very important. Community groups and some of the things they had done during Covid, it was all about what parish councils and town councils had done. They knew their community.

Cllr Louise Gittins from LGA – they can provide help and advice re asset transfer. Up to local areas what they want to do, LGA will support councils and work with NALC. How to build a Localism Strategy: Cornwall have published theirs.

Buckinghamshire, Somerset and Milton Keynes have experience of asset transfer – council saved money but communities raised money to update/improve the assets.

Questions

- How can we devolve powers to town and parish councils where there are significant governance issues?
A few bad examples should not put councils off devolving powers and assets – there's a real place for that community model. Peer mentoring and working with them to solve issues.
- Given we are being told there is an optimum size for a unitary, what is the optimum size for a town/parish council?
- What guidance will be given to town and parish councils who are using committee systems?
LGA & MP: Thinks the move away from committee systems is not directed to town or parish councils
- Please expand on roles – it's not obvious – what about areas that aren't parished?
Alex MP says it will be nuanced at community level, they will have different priorities. Will need to work in a slightly different way with communities that aren't parished.
- Councillor recruitment – lots of councillors in North Norfolk but hardly any elections. Clerks are also incredibly overworked already. How do we solve these problems?
SALC say they are aware of these issues, they are providing training for new councillors and new clerks. It can be a flexible job – need to get the word out to people. These are big challenges, esp in Suffolk with the big new energy projects – it's like David and Goliath for parish councils. SALC created guidance for parish councils for this.
- Mixed messages given to parish and town councils – when will govt recognise that parish and town councils as local authorities? We could work together and could be a huge opportunity. It's semantics but it does matter.
Alex Norris MP agrees that the wording matters, stressed how important he thinks parish and town councils are.

- Felixstowe don't want to be put in a unitary with Ipswich (although the councillor asking the question is pro). Need to get together to work it all out.
Comms is key – we don't really know yet what is going to happen, but need to collaborate together.
- What should Eastbourne do? It doesn't have a town council – are they supposed to set something up? People probably wouldn't be happy with the concurrent rise in their council tax.
MP says it will be up to the community what they want to do – not sure he would advocate setting up a town council until the LGR process is clearer.
- Parish councils still worried that LGR will affect them. They can precept what they want, and if they go bus the next council layer up will have to deal with it.
MP recognises the worry – landscape should become clearer in time. Calculation needs to be done with town and parish councils, depending what they want to do.

Building Climate Resilience

Not sufficiently prepared – national govt needs to prioritise

Need to move to 'Just in time' economy in favour of a 'just in case' economy

- **Adaptation & resilience – community engagement**

Asked residents what improvement they thought were needed – green skills at college, engagement with schools and nurseries. How to support people living in older heritage homes that can't be retrofitted. Community buy in is needed whatever we do!

Do we know what the worst-case scenarios are? Cornwall undertook a future model of the whole county and what it could be like in 10 years. Through planning policy have identified coastal areas at risk. How can we use nature-based solutions? (Christmas trees/coastal defences). Adaptation is an easier conversation to have than 'net zero,' which is more politicised.

Cornwall used DPH annual report to explore health-associated risks of climate change.

- **Climate adaptation & mitigation – effect on supply chain**

For example sustainable procurement. And examples such as localised flooding affecting delivery. Where will we see resource scarcity issues, and global supply issues, like fuel affected by Ukraine war.

Should you be stockpiling certain things? Do you have weaknesses, i.e. single supplier for lots of things increases risk. Network services providers – do they have back up/contingency plans in case something happens? Already seeing issues like NHS servers overheating, flooding affecting food deliveries to schools. Consider a climate change risk register.

- **Policy element**

Local authority don't really have climate change obligations, but do have biodiversity duty, adaptation, housing standards and floods (if lead flood authority). Water stress is an issue for south east. Use grey water if possible. Cornwall and Glasgow ahead with this stuff. Do climate risk assessment that appears in risk register and performance report. Climate proof developments like care homes and schools. Supporting small scale local food production to improve food security (Mid Suffolk!)

Also, can call it extreme weather to residents rather than climate change to avoid unhelpful political associations.

Residents want to see benefits from the changes. Sell it in words people understand.

Pathways Project Active Travel

Essex CC work with Pathways Project for pilots for national wayfinding system with walking, wheeling and cycling – they are using this term instead of active travel as it's less confusing for people. Using systems thinking across teams to design and develop their pilot.

Walkable neighbourhoods – how to make how they can make their pilot area in Colchester more walkable. Also Essex pedal power – giving bikes away in deprived areas. As people built confidence they want to cycle more and go to new places. Need systems so they can access other places as well as their neighbourhood. Behavioural change – has to be easy to use, so people feel confident. Living Streets' three levels of Infrastructure (add link).

Problems and barriers – Oversignage, impassable streets, confusion over sharing highways, missing links between pathways.

Emotional infrastructure – how to develop spaces that work well for people, since changing people doesn't really work. 'Place cells' when rats go to certain places in a maze, brain cells light up, same happens with people, in their hippocampus. Long, deep memory that helps the brain organize & recognise where it is. People go where they remember and feel safe.

People navigate using memory of landmarks. If we help people create a mental map, they will feel more confident to undertake active travel. Road names are not good for memory, too abstract... also the human brain doesn't really care what is north, south etc.

Yellow colour in a map for landmarks in London has increased the number of people walking (not sure how they know this!).

Matrix of useability x systemisation: to make wayfinding more inclusive. Lots of London boroughs have adopted 'Legible London' (with the landmarks in yellow): [Legible London - Transport for London](#). Now working with Essex to do the same for Colchester.

www.inclusivewayfindingtoolkit.com

Pilots in rural areas? Currently 12 pilots – urban, peri-urban, rural... road sign system is totally consistent in the UK, give way signs all work the same way, people don't even think about it. Need to put in the walking and cycling systems that are missing. Good information and signage means that people can use active travel, even if part of the journey is by public transport. Cycling signage is confusing so everyone does what they want. Need clear rules, like standing on the right on escalators, that people understand. No rule that bikes have to have bells for example.

4 Day Week Trial results from South Cambridgeshire

123% increase in job applications – the point was to retain staff and attract them

reduce agency workers = lower costs. They achieved a £500k annual cost reduction

Did health & wellbeing survey of staff, scores much higher after 4 day trial

No impact on services, 22 out of 24 KPIs maintained or improved over the trial (KPIs that did not improve were % housing rent collected and average days to re-let all

housing stock)

Out of hours services still available

Stopped collecting rubbish on Mondays, avoids confusion re Bank Holiday collections

3 month trial initially, then extended to 12 months

Baselines - need to understand performance first to measure difference

Start small and build up - start with desk-based staff then roll out, can work with all staff

Took into account post covid slump in council performance

improved physical health, emotional health, sleep quality, work life balance (staff survey)

Working hours haven't changed since 1980s despite all our new tech

In a private sector trial of 4 day week, 92% stuck with 4 day week

Scottish government results will be out soon

Seems a win-win for workers and employers - results always so positive and makes people's lives better

For the first time, work-life balance is more important to workers than money.

Link to report: [South Cambridgeshire District Council 4 Day Working Week Trial](#)

Creating the right organizational culture and building connections post-LGR

Westmoreland & Furness council, est April 2023, merged 4 organizational cultures: county councils, three districts.

- Keep the best (what is working well) but not the rest
- Strong comms teams with 'One Team' ethos
- It is a new organization – it will not be the same as what you had before
- Connect with new leaders to build the right culture
- Clear pre and post LGR employee engagement: staff surveys, Q&As
- Get building blocks right, including values. Strong brand identity
- Clear narrative – 'Together We Are...', also a 'you said, we did' culture: focus on winning hearts and minds

Year 2:

- Refreshed internal comms
- Shift in narrative: 'Doing It the W&F Way' (Westmoreland and Furness)
- Building connections between teams that aren't used to working with each other and aren't sure what each other do
- Recognition: launched a peer to peer 'thank you' system
- Staff Conference and Expo – needed to bring all employees together in one place but with a limited budget, so they can get to know each other. They modelled it on the LGA conference! To build staff culture and their values – as a caring council. They have two so far, one in 2024 and one in 2025. Used W&F buildings to keep cost down.

Prospects & pitfalls of devolution

Mostly pitfalls!

- Read the constitution – some mayors have power of veto on all decisions
- Built relationships with MPs
- Rumours govt might not do a next 'batch' for devo as the Priority Programme is already behind schedule. They might do each area individually
- Unlikely they will get the Devo/LGR programme done during their term of govt
- Leader of Boston Council particularly pessimistic as she has Richard Tice as her MP and also a Reform mayor
- The idea that this will be better for residents is gaslighting – it serves only the government
- Loss of community assets will be devastating
- Councils will get the blame for rise in council tax, suits the govt because they don't want to raise taxes
- Neighbourhood Area Committees will have no statutory powers, no power to tax
- Possible that health will become a key part of Neighbourhood Area Committees, which could be helpful
- LGR not the big issue – they should be looking at how to fund local govt properly instead

Angela Rayner/Jim McMahon

- Fairer funding review – apparently will take rurality into account, also deprivation
- Mystery email that will be sent to leaders after the session!
- Lots about the housing targets, reducing temporary accommodation
- New law re mould and damp in houses – needs to be fixed urgently. Further measures on overcrowding will come later
- New procurement guidance is on the way so councils can do more in house, and use local suppliers
- Child poverty taskforce report due soon
- Say they will make sure developers deliver re S106 funds so the new homes will have essential infrastructure like GP surgeries etc

Leading Through Change and Challenge in Children's Services

- 2016-2023 – listening to voice/lived experience of children taken into account more during changes to children's service
- Who are the nearby partners you could work with?
- Look at what proposed changes will mean to children in the area – not just moving boxes around on a diagram
- Have a good narrative – what you are doing and why? Engage as many people to do that and get them invested, the story will circulate. 'The grapevine is faster than the internet'
- Employees will be anxious and possibly fearful of change – you need to support them
- LGR – do a lot of scenario planning now, as so much is still unknown. Need to try and be prepared
- LGR - start with good, safe and legal and then try for excellence. Keep staff on board with comms and support, also schools and governing bodies, for LA schools staff will need to be TUPed across
- LGR - be wary of 'optimism bias' at all levels of implementation
- Ofsted inspections during periods of change: strong leadership, corporate support, relationships with partners. ICB reorganization also in progress. Show us where you are on the journey to good practice. Managing risk and children getting the right care should remain your focus
- Alternative Delivery Model –

Setting up Adult Social Care for success in new unitary councils (session on DCN report, link here:

Scale is important for asc, need to make sure you are working at different scales

Can consider 'Shared service' between multiple new unitary to gain economy of scale. But ties up a lot of your budget. Don't just jump into it

LGR: Can't go around it, have to go through it, and it will be difficult

Strengths districts bring to the mix – embedded in local area. Integrated by design – housing and social care can work well together but need to design the service, can't just plonk them in the same place.

Dorset – some shared services for care delivery. His directorate does adults, health and housing. They don't hold housing stock though. Utilise a lot of the assets from districts and housing and adults teams work well together. Safeguarding board is ICB area. Used member networks and worked with residents to fix the market, but it was hard work and developing a co-designed strategy takes time. You need investment – social care burns through money, so take time to get the strategy right.

Cumberland – disaggregated their social care. Focus on external market for social care. Unitarised just after pandemic, had a huge impact on care home population. Their council leader challenged the unitarization decision via judicial review which delayed things for a year. Use shadow years to get stakeholders familiar with the sector and local picture – keep them updated. Self-funding care placements used by homes to offset the council funded places, so be aware of that. Can design things with fresh eyes which can be helpful. Multi-unitaries: cost of disaggregating

will be in addition to your usual workload. IT systems and aligning them is really important – they underestimated this and the cost. Staff sickness and agency costs have reduced – smaller can be good.

Better Care fund and integration with health – agreed it is helpful to only be working with one ICB area as it's less work! If they aren't doing well, LGR won't make anything better. Shouldn't be a major deciding factor though, for multiple unitaries.

Preventative agenda – move to a more centralised system could leave these things behind, with a focus on care markets and response to demand. Need to get out there and see what is delivered on the ground, day centres etc, to protect that local infrastructure. Good leadership makes a real difference too.

Mid Suffolk District Council Report for Mendlesham Ward – July 2025

Motions pass on 20mph zones and new Disability Champion role	Two motions gained cross-party support at the June 26th meeting of Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC). The first motion calls on Suffolk County Council to review its criteria on speed limits and to make the process for applying for 20mph zones simpler and more cost effective - in areas where 20mph zones have community support. The motion highlighted the benefits of speed reductions, including safer roads and an easier transition to active travel. A second motion - to appoint a disability champion for Mid Suffolk - was unanimously supported. The role will seek to raise awareness and to improve accessibility to public buildings and services.
By-election result	The Haughley, Stowupland & Wetherden by-election took place on the 12 th June, which saw Agnes Watson (Green) elected.
Future of local government survey	The survey for residents to express their views on the reorganisation of local government is still available on the Mid Suffolk District Council https://midsuffolk.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/have-your-say-suffolk Please do let us know your views.
CIL expenditure framework review	The recommendations put forward by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) working group were agreed at MSDC meeting in June. CIL is a charge that planning authorities can levy on new developments to help deliver community infrastructure in the district. The Council annually reviews the guidelines on how CIL is spent to ensure it continues to meet the priorities of our communities. The new changes make CIL applications more responsive - by ending the 'bid round windows' and enabling CIL bids to be put in all-year-round. The scope for CIL spending has also been broadened to include community farming projects and community run pubs and cafes.
Elmswell & Woolpit footpath and cycle link	A new CIL-funded cycleway and footpath to connect Woolpit with services in Elmswell will enable residents to access crucial services without the use of a car. The scheme is a key piece of active travel infrastructure for the district, and is supported in both Suffolk County Council and MSDC's Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans. SCC will adopt and maintain the path once constructed.
Creting Road Depot	It was agreed to bring forward some of next year's budget spend on the waste depot at Creting Road in preparation for the weekly collection of food waste from 2026 (part of the national Simpler Recycling scheme.) Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils had sought a new, joint premises for the Waste fleet, but it has not proved possible to find a suitable site. As a result, the decision was taken to upgrade the existing site (which would not be able to cope with the new collections without this work).

Pride in Your Place grant reopens	<p>The fund which originally launched in 2023 to promote local identity and tidy up the environment is again open for applications. Parish Councils, voluntary and community groups can apply for grants between £250 - £5,000. The fund can be used for community planting schemes, local heritage and cultural initiatives, new signage, benches and seating areas for public use, equipment for litter picks and community clean-up among other supported initiatives. For more information please visit our Community Funding page - https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/community-funding</p>
Planning: Energy projects update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EcoPower Suffolk (Econergy) have confirmed plans to hold regular community liaison meetings with representatives from the County, District and Parish/Town Councils, plus residents' groups. • The Field Yaxley Battery Energy Storage System project at Eye Airfield was approved by the planning committee in June, with conditions requiring enhanced emergency planning.

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Mid Suffolk District Council services: see www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or phone **0300 123 4000**

