

**Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council**  
**Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 3 March 2025, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett.**

Present: Cllrs D Howard (Chairman), T Alston, Mrs L Drury, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, N Lingard, Mrs J Weir, Mrs K van Zyl. County and District Councillor A Stringer

1. **Apologies and Consent to absence** were received from Mrs E Aldred.
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda**  
Item 7.1 – Cllr T Alston
3. **Report on revised Bank Mandate and Councillor position**  
Confirmation of the additional cheque signatories to the Council's account was still pending from Barclays. The Chairman reported on the resignation of Mrs Elizabeth Cain from the Council. Members recorded their huge thanks to Mrs Cain for her work on behalf of the Council and community during her time as a councillor, this had been much appreciated. A letter of thanks would be sent to Mrs Cain.
4. **Reports**
  1. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> – no queries were raised.
  2. County Councillor - Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes). Cllr Stringer gave a further update on the County Council's devolution process which would result in the county council elections due in May and the boundary review being postponed. An election for a Mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk would be held 2026. The County Council had hired a new Director to oversee the work.
  3. District Councillor – Cllr Stringer presented his written report – copy attached to the Minutes. There would be no increase in the District Council portion of Council Tax 2025/26. District Council staff would be available to deal with Council queries at Eye Library on Friday mornings. The proposed solar farm at Yaxley was raised, it was understood the area designated was best grade land. Cllr Stringer stated the A140 could become a solar farm corridor but land with best grade soil should not be used. A discussion took place on the proposed solar farms in the Eye and A140 area.
  4. Footpaths – no report.
  5. Trees – no report.
6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** – none present.
5. **To consider for approval Minutes of the meeting held 3 February 2025**  
Cllr Mrs K van Zyl proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Mrs Weir – unanimously agreed.
6. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report** – none.
7. **To consider Planning Applications for recommendation to MSDC**
  1. DC/25/00434: Brockford Railway Sidings, Brockford Green, Wetheringsett – change of use of agricultural land to campsite to provide 4 mobile camping pods and sanitary unit and open camping area (retention of). A recommendation of support was proposed and seconded, 7 in favour, 1 abstention – proposal carried.
  2. DC/25/00107: Northlea, Wetherup Street, Wetheringsett – construction of outbuilding to be used for Hairdressing. It was understood there had been no local objections. A recommendation of support was proposed and seconded – unanimously agreed
8. **Planning Decisions received from MSDC**
  1. DC/24/05340 & DC/24/05341: Deerbolts Cottage, Blacksmiths Green, Wetheringsett - Removal of existing lean to log store, relocation of existing oil tank, and erection of new ground floor extension to provide new bedroom and shower room, with solar PV array to rear roof slope. Planning & Listed Building **Consent Granted**
  2. DC/25/00053: Rectory Barn, Church Street – notification of works to Trees in Conservation Area – fell 1 Ash. **MSDC no objection**
  3. DC/24/05390: Land, Norwich Road, Brockford - Application under S73a for the Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of DC/20/00324 dated 06/10/2020 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Erection of 9 no dwellings with associated private amenities and parking. To vary Condition Number 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) to allow a revision/amalgamation of the SUDS areas as per revised drawing RS/4957/23/01. **Planning Permission without compliance Granted subject to Conditions**
  4. DC/24/05354: Ceva Logistics Ltd, Norwich Road, Wetheringsett - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/21/06605 - Condition 8 (Access Road and Footpaths), 12 (Shuttle Bus), 13 (Footpath Diversion) and 20 (Fire Hydrants) . **Approved and Refused with Conditions.**

5. DC/24/05390: Land at Norwich Road, Wetheringsett part in Stoke Ash & Thwaite - Application under S73a for the Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of DC/20/00324 dated 06/10/2020 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Erection of 9no dwellings with associated private amenities and parking. To vary Condition Number 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) to allow a revision/amalgamation of the SUDS areas as per revised drawing RS/4957/23/01. **Approved with Conditions**
9. **Planning Correspondence** – none.
10. **Wetheringsett Flood Investigation:**

Report following Church Street/Hockey Hill//Cedars Hill road closure works February 2025 relating to S.19 report There had been no reports of further flooding following the work carried out by Suffolk CC Highways, it was hoped the work had been successful.

Item to remain on agenda pending s.19 works required in Brockford Road and Brockford Street.

The high water level in the Wetherup Street pond was raised, it was believed this was due to the debris in the surrounding ditches. Include item on next agenda.
11. **Wetheringsett cum Brockford Emergency Plan** – report on completion and distribution of plan  
It was reported the Look Out for your Neighbours item had been included in the Parish Magazine. Cllr Mrs van Zyl was in the process of obtaining prices for an A5 loose leaf Plan for inclusion in the Parish Magazine. Cllr Mrs van Zyl would hold a key to the Village Hall.
12. **Wetheringsett Village Hall**
  1. Management Committee report

Cllr Lingard reported there were still one or two maintenance issues outstanding including the sensor light at the front of the building and the smoke alarm in the kitchen would need to be replaced. Sections of flooring at the front door area was also in need of replacement. The Scottish Power electricity contract had been terminated. The new contractor, Octopus, was due to fit a smart meter. The Committee were looking to arrange a summer solstice afternoon tea event.
  2. Report on School Licence Agreement and Diocesan Lease

A meeting had been held with the School regarding the Licence Agreement. The School finances had been set for the forthcoming financial year so they were not keen on an increase but would discuss not using the Hall for certain days of the week. There would be a need to discuss a full review with effect from April 2026.
13. **Grasscutting**

Report on grasscutting contract 2025. An advertisement did not appear to have been placed in the parish magazine. Further enquiries would be made in the village.
14. **Play Area**
  1. Installation of re-cycled heavy duty plastic bench and picnic table update – Cllr Lacey stated the equipment had not been secured as yet.
  2. Report on Grant assistance to fund play equipment improvements. Deferred.
15. **VAS speed equipment**
  1. Report on provision of permanent VAS equipment at Hockey Hill and southern Brockford Street – the Chair reported the Manor School would need to defer the purchase of the two VAS machines until the new school financial year. Cllr Mrs Weir stated she would recommend the type of VAS equipment required to the school.
  2. To consider for approval purchase of VAS post for Hockey Hill at cost of £600 – The purchase of a post for the Hockey Hill equipment at cost of £600 was proposed by Cllr Mrs Leech, seconded Cllr Mrs van Zyl and unanimously agreed.
  3. Mobile VAS report – a data report had been circulated and forwarded to Suffolk Police.
  4. Wetherup Street – report on Suffolk Police Speed checks. Speed checks were continuing on a monthly basis.
16. **Wetheringsett Parish Council gov.uk domain name report** – no report.

A request to Cllr Alderton as to how to set up the email on Outlook and a mobile phone were suggested.
17. **Community Litter Pick – Saturday 26 April 2025 – meet 9.45am at Wetheringsett Village Hall** – arrangements were noted.
18. **Report on Wetheringsett Farm Shop and Café at Black Barn, Cedars Hill**

Cllr Alston reported the new Café and Farm Shop would be opening very shortly. Members agreed this would be a welcome addition to village facilities.
19. **Finance**
  1. To consider s.137 donation requests – none received.
  2. Accounts for payment

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| Clerk sal-expen Feb 2025                                                                 | £346.10 |
| The above was proposed for payment by Cllr Alston, seconded Cllr Mrs van Zyl and agreed. |         |

3. Finance Report

The Council's bank account balance as at 19 February 2025 stood at £13,754.68.

20. Clerk's report/correspondence

Details of the MSDC Liaison Meeting to be held via Teams on 5 or 10 March had been circulated.

21. Chair's Report – the Chair stated he would speak again to the Manor School regarding grasscutting and the VAS equipment.

22. Any other business for information exchange/future agenda requests

Cllr Mrs Weir gave her apologies for the April meeting, she would be unable to attend.

23. Date of next meeting : Monday 7 April 2025, 7pm at Wetheringsett Village Hall

Meeting closed 8pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

### County Councillor report – March 2025

#### Devolution and Local Government Reorganization Update

The government has now confirmed that Suffolk and Norfolk are included in the Devolution Priority Programme, and have agreed to the request from the Suffolk County Council administration to cancel this year's local elections in May. This means that councils in Suffolk now need to work on proposals for reorganisation to submit to the government by the autumn, with a view to one or more unitary councils serving the county instead of the current two tier system – a county council and several districts/borough councils performing different functions.

Suffolk County Council has announced that it will be proposing one single unitary council for Suffolk, although district and borough councils have been clear that they would prefer two or three. All the councils need to submit their proposals to the government by 21 March 2025.

The plan is for a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk to be elected in May 2026, along with councillors for new authorities, so the timeline for these changes is very tight. The government has launched a public consultation on proposals to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk, and you can give your views on the proposals by using this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution>

#### Suffolk Fire and Rescue Inspection Report

On Monday 10 February, The Home Office published a report of its recent inspection of Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service. Although the inspection found that the service was good at preventing fires, protecting the public and that it met requirements for responding to major incidents, the report was also concerning as it several areas where the service needed to improve, including improving culture and morale, senior leaders to act as role models and show they are committed to the values of the service through their behaviour, improving communication between staff and senior leaders and making sure employees are confident raising concerns. You may have read in the press recently that the Fire Brigades Union is alleging that Suffolk County Council has made mistakes processing firefighter pay and pensions for years and has not addressed them or listened to employee concerns about the errors.

Suffolk County Council has subsequently announced additional investment of an extra £1.6 million over two years to improve the service, and this proposal will be decided at Cabinet in March. You can read the inspection report in full here: <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/uploads/frs-assessment-2023-25-suffolk.pdf>

#### Active Travel Fund Award

Suffolk County Council has been awarded £3.7 million from the government to encourage cycling, walking and active travel across the county, and to make journeys more accessible. This comprises £0.9 million from the Round 5 of the Active Travel Fund, and £2.8 million from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund. The money can be spent on the following schemes: footpaths and crossing points, maintaining existing walking and cycling infrastructure, improving cycle routes and Public Rights of Way, traffic calming, and rail station access improvements. The council is currently considering suitable local projects, which will be announced in the coming months.

### **Changes to Suffolk's Library Service are Moving Back In-House**

Suffolk County Council has announced that from 1 June 2025, its libraries service will be moved back in-house. Currently the libraries are run by a local charity, Suffolk Libraries, but negotiations on the new contract have now broken down. The council made the decision to divest its libraries in 2012 and they have been run by Suffolk Libraries ever since then. The council is reassuring residents and library employees and volunteers that no front-line jobs will be cut, that libraries will remain open and there will be no reduction to opening hours. Running the library service had been financially challenging in recent years, with the council agreeing to provide an extra £720k in May 2023 for that financial year. The council is also keen to reassure Friends groups that money raised for local libraries will still be used for those libraries.

Open letter to Suffolk residents about changes to the library service: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/an-open-letter-to-suffolk-residents.pdf>

Open letter to libraries staff and volunteers on changes to the library service: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/an-open-letter-to-libraries-staff.pdf>

### **Local Transport Plan and Area Transport Plans**

At Cabinet on Tuesday 25 February, a Local Transport Plan for the county from 2025-2040. The plan is needed by law to access funding from the government for active travel and major transport schemes, and details how the council plans to prioritise walking, cycling and wheeling in town centres to reduce congestion and air pollution. It also describes the projects that will be needed to improve transport links for Suffolk, such as works at Ely and Haughley railway junctions, better public transport, and how to manage the transition from fossil fuels. Also agreed were 15 Area Transport Plans detailing the council's transport ambitions for towns around Suffolk.

You can read the Local Transport Plan 2025-2040 and the fifteen Area Transport Plans here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/suffolks-local-transport-plan>

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Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

### **District Councillor report – March 2025**

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| <b>February Council meeting - annual budget</b> | <p>The Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February approved the council's annual budget for 2025/26. Details can be found here: <a href="#">(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Mid Suffolk Council, 27/02/2025 17:30</a></p> <p><b>No increase in Council Tax:</b> The council tax bill for a Band D property remains at £175.03. That works out under £3.37 a week to cover all district council services, including waste collection, licensing, planning, public realm and supporting the local economy, culture and communities. (Council Tax overall is expected to rise, however, as MSDC only sets and receives a small portion, with the bulk going to the County Council.)</p> <p><b>MSDC expects a budget surplus of £2.4m in 2025/26:</b> This is down from last year, due to factors including rising employee costs and costs for services, and the ending of the government's Rural Services Delivery Grant.</p> <p><b>Capital programme agreed:</b> The Council committed to a capital programme of £36.3m (£26m committed, with another £10m proposed 'capital ambition' projects), partly funded from reserves. This will deliver an ambitious pipeline of projects across the district.</p> <p>Among other things, expenditure includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- investment in sports and health facilities in Stowmarket and in Stradbroke (with a £540k investment in Stradbroke's leisure centre.)</li> <li>- major investment in the new Skills and Innovation Centre to upskill the District</li> <li>- £1.5m fund to support High Street regeneration in our largest town, Stowmarket</li> <li>- £300k per year funding pot for projects in other market towns and rural communities</li> <li>- investment in cycling and walking infrastructure</li> <li>- an increase in the Locality Award to £10,000 per Ward, giving an annual total of £340,000 in Locality grants to fund smaller projects around the District</li> <li>- ongoing support for range of other grant schemes to fund community projects</li> </ul> |
| <b>Local Government reform</b>                  | <p>As noted in the last report, the government has announced major changes to the way local government is organised. This includes the creation of new mayoral authorities, and the combining of District and County Councils into unitary authorities.</p> <p>In January, Suffolk County Council voted to apply to the 'fast track' version of these changes. The government accepted this, resulting in the cancellation of the May 2025 County Council elections.</p> <p><b>Mayoral authorities – the government has opened a consultation until April 13<sup>th</sup>.</b> To share your views, see: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation</a></p> <p><b>Creation of unitaries:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial plans are to be sent to the government by 21st March 2025.</li> <li>- MSDC is concerned about the lack of public consultation on this aspect of the reforms.</li> <li>- An Extraordinary meeting of Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils to discuss the issues was rescheduled from Feb 10<sup>th</sup> to April 10<sup>th</sup> to allow more time to review emerging details.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Planning Policy updates</b>                  | <p>As noted in the last report, the Joint Local Plan (JLP) for Babergh and Mid Suffolk is being reviewed, to make sure it stays compliant with the government's increased new targets for housebuilding. The timeline for this work was approved at the February Council meeting. Further information can be found here: <a href="#">babergh-and-mid-suffolk-joint-local-plan-review</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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|                                                     | As Cabinet member for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure, I have highlighted the importance of Neighbourhood Plans, which form part of the district's local plans, and are part of the National Planning Policy framework.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>EcoPower Suffolk: solar application</b>          | <p>EcoPower Suffolk (a subsidiary of Eenergy International Ltd) has announced plans for a 600 ha solar project in our area: <a href="https://ecopowersuffolk.com/">https://ecopowersuffolk.com/</a></p> <p>The project includes parcels of land along the B1077 between Occold and Eye, and around Brome Avenue (Eye), as well as several other villages.</p> <p>Because of the project's size, it is classified as a National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and so the government (not the Local Authority) will decide if it goes ahead.</p> <p>The <b>first consultation period will run from 10 March to 22 April 2025. For details see: <a href="#">Have Your Say   EcoPower Suffolk</a></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- webinar on March 17th</li> <li>- consultation event at Occold Village Hall on March 20<sup>th</sup> 3pm to 7pm</li> <li>- feedback can be submitted via the website from March 10<sup>th</sup></li> </ul> <p>Mid Suffolk Council leader Cllr Andy Mellen and Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure, Cllr Andrew Stringer, have urged the government to take a more coordinated approach to such large-scale infrastructure projects in the District: <a href="#">Energy infrastructure 'must be coordinated' to minimise impact on Mid Suffolk communities - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk.</a></p> |
| <b>New way to reach the District Council in Eye</b> | <p>From March, you will be able to drop in to Eye Library on Fridays to get help from Council staff.</p> <p>MSDC is opening its first joint customer-access point at Eye Library, alongside Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice, starting 28th March. Staff from both organisations will be on hand to help residents between 9.15am and 12pm every Friday.</p> <p>This aims to make life easier for residents who prefer face-to-face contact. The Council can also be contacted about many issues by phone and through the website: <a href="http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk">www.midsuffolk.gov.uk</a> or phone <b>0300 123 4000</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Funding for community projects</b>               | <p>Details of Mid Suffolk Council's community funding can be found at: <a href="http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk">www.midsuffolk.gov.uk</a> – click on the 'Access community funding' button.</p> <p>For advice or further information, please email the grants team at: <a href="mailto:BMSDCgrants@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk">BMSDCgrants@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

Please get in touch if I can be of help:

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