

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 8 April 2024, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett

Present: Cllrs Mrs E Cain (Chairman), T Alston, Mrs L Drury, D Howard, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech and Mrs J Weir. County and District Cllr A Stringer and 3 members of the public.

1. **Apologies and Consent to absence** – apologies had been received from Cllrs Mrs E Aldred, S Alderton, N Lingard and Mrs K van Zyl. Members confirmed consent to absence. Cllr Stringer would be arriving late due to another meeting.
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda**
Item 8.2 – Cllr D Howard
Item 6.3 - ditch clearance – Cllr T Alston
3. **Reports**
 1. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk>. No queries were raised.
 2. County Councillor - deferred.
 3. District Councillor – deferred.
 4. Footpaths – a fallen tree was obstructing the bridleway opposite Old Hall. Clerk to report via the Suffolk CC reporting facility.
 5. Trees – no report.
6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**
Church Street – a parishioner reported the blocked drain had not as yet been cleared. It was understood Cllr Stringer had been in contact with County Highways and the drain was due to be jetted.
4. **To consider for approval Minutes of the meeting held 4 March 2024** – the Chair proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Alston and unanimously agreed.
5. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report** – none.
6. **Wetheringsett cum Brockford Emergency Plan**
 1. To consider draft Emergency Plan document – a written report had been received from Cllr Mrs van Zyl on progress with the plan. This included a meeting with an Officer from the Suffolk CC Joint Emergency Planning Unit resulting in the need to form a Community Emergency Group ideally made up of seven people – a call for volunteers would need to go into the parish magazine. Creating a Call Tree within the Emergency Plan for communications during an emergency or when it is considered necessary to activate an emergency plan was also suggested.
Further highlights from the meeting included Suffolk Highways training for a Community Self Help Scheme whereby the council purchased road signs which could be placed appropriately, eg during times of flood risk; East of England Ambulance Services training based around emergencies where the community can assist before emergency services are on site and a Rest Centre training session. These items would be progressed when a Community Emergency Group had been set up.
Other items raised from the meeting included additional battery for the solar panels on the village hall to allow a closed battery source, liaising with the Primary School regarding use of the Village Hall as a rest centre, setting up a scheme to check on parishioners during an emergency, availability of first responders in the village. Thanks were recorded to Cllr Mrs van Zyl for her work on the plan to date.
 2. To appoint a Community Emergency Group – a note would go into the parish magazine asking for volunteers to join a working group.
 3. Report on flood prevention measures and action following October 2023 flooding – Cllr Alston stated it was still too wet to clear ditches. This would take place when the weather improved.
 4. To consider an Emergency Flood working group and Flood Resilience Plan – deferred.

Cllr Stringer arrived 7.25pm

7. **Church Street drainage** – report on two drainage problems reported at March 2024 meeting
The Chair stated she had made a site visit to the property, Hawthorns, to view the drainage problem raised. The water causing the problem appeared to be flowing from Hakluyt Close direction but it appeared plans showing the pipework at the development were not available. A camera had been inserted into the drain revealing a soakaway off the property concerned. It was reported the owners of the property would make further investigations.
Blocked Highway drain – see public session above.
Agenda Item 3 (2 and 3) County & District Reports
Cllr Stringer presented his County and District reports (copies attached to the Minutes). Items raised included the Suffolk Devolution Survey. Councillors were encouraged to view this and respond by 26 May 2024 via the

following link <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Cllr Alston enquired as to grants for electric charging points for commercial premises, currently only available to individuals. Cllr Stringer stated a grant could be available for village halls, Cllr Stringer would send the application link to Wetheringsett Village Hall.

8. Planning applications for recommendation to MSDC

1. DC/24/00468: Easter Cottage, The Street, Brockford – erection of first floor rear extension, relocation of garage door, 3 window size changes and internal floor changes on ground floor. A recommendation in support of the application was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.
2. DC/24/01524: Wetheringsett Manor School, Church Street – construction of Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). A recommendation of refusal on the grounds the proposed MUGA was a permanent structure in a Conservation area and the surface water run-off would contribute to the existing flooding issues in Church Street was proposed and seconded, 5 in favour, 2 abstentions – proposal carried.

9. Planning Decisions received from MSDC

1. DC/24/00772: Rectory Barn, Church Street – notification of tree works in Conservation Area – reduce Ash within 2m of domestic garage (T1); Lime (T2) reduce one limb to prevent damage to domestic garage; Oak (T3) reduce to prevent damage to stable building. MSDC does not wish to object.
2. DC/24/00551: Rectory Cottage, Church Street - Application for works to Tree subject to Tree Preservation Order - Re-pollard two lime trees on the rear boundary of property to previous points, reducing height by 30-40 %. and remove 2 branches on Sycamore Tree on land immediately to rear of property. MSDC does not wish to object.
3. DC/24/00426: Willow Cottage, Pitman's Corner – erection of single storey rear/side extension with porch, installation of package sewage treatment plant (following demolition of existing sunroom and extension). Planning Permission Granted.

10. Planning correspondence - none.

11. Village Hall

1. Management Committee report – it was reported some further bookings for the year had been secured.
2. Report on School Licence Agreement and Diocesan Lease – no report available.
3. Report on installation of Solar Panels on part Hall roof – the first stage of the solar panel project, the installation of a new meter panel, was complete. The invoice for that stage of the work would be sent to the Parish Council. Installation of the solar panels was due to commence 14 April 2024.
An enquiry was made as to whether electricity going back to the grid would be paid to the Village Hall. It was understood a recommendation to change the supply to Octopus was to be discussed by the committee. The Volt invoice of £3694.00, 25% of the total charge, was approved for payment.
The Chair stated she would enquire at MSDC whether the remaining funding from the Warm Space grant, approximately £1,000, could be used to contribute to the new meter panel.

12. To confirm Grasscutting arrangements 2024 – Cllr Lacey reported the play area grass had been cut.

Confirmation of cutting arrangements from the contractor for 2024 would be supplied shortly.

13. Play Area report – to consider items arising from annual inspection report. Cllr Lacey was following up items raised in the report relating to the basket swing and frame.

14. To consider Parish Council contribution to cost of portable Radar Speed Sign for Brockford Street

The total cost for the radar speed sign amounted to £2250 plus the cost of the solar post £570. The Chair confirmed a grant of £1,766.80 had been obtained from Cllr Stringer's locality budget towards the cost and proposed councillors consider a contribution of £1000 from parish council funds to cover the remaining cost, the proposal was seconded by Cllr Mrs Leech and unanimously agreed. Thanks were recorded to County Cllr Stringer for the contribution from his locality budget. The Chair and Cllr Mrs Weir would contact Suffolk Highways for details of the suitable post for the equipment.

15. VAS speed equipment report – no report available.

16. Community Speed Watch Scheme – Five applications had been submitted to Suffolk Constabulary. The group would try to recruit further volunteers a minimum of six was required to progress the scheme.

17. To consider siting of Kill your Speed highway signs – despite requests to Suffolk CC Highways it had not been possible to obtain specific guidance on siting the signs. Wetherup Street, Park Green, Hockey Hill and Church Street were identified initially as suitable locations. The Chair and Cllr Mrs Weir would make a tour of the village to identify safe locations.

18. Village Website – to consider a review/change of website host

It was agreed to remain with the current website host, onesuffolk.net.

19. Report on Spring Litter Pick held Sunday 7 April 2024

A successful litter pick had been attended by a number of volunteers. The full waste bags had as yet to be collected by Mid Suffolk Public Realm. It was suggested a litter pick at other times of the year could be considered. Cllr Mrs Drury offered to submit a report on the litter pick to the parish magazine.

20. Finance

1. To consider s.137 donation requests – none received.

2. Accounts for payment

Compass Point Planning – professional assistance stage 5 payment £2160.00

SALC – annual subscription 2024-25 £339.08

Clerk sal-expen March 2024 £337.60

Volt Electrical – first 25% payment £3694.00

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

4. Finance report – the bank reconciliation at 19 March 2024 stood at £15,287.84. Draft year end accounts to 19.3.24 had been circulated showing a general reserve at that date of £9055.54. Final accounts would be presented at the May meeting following receipt of bank statements to 31.3.24.

21. Clerk's report/correspondence – none.

22. Chair's Report - none

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

Mid Suffolk Light Railway – on behalf of the Parish Council Cllr Mrs Leech reported she had attended a presentation at the Middy on Sunday 24 March 2024 on the arrangements for running trains on the new extended track. Trains would run Easter – September plus the six Santa Specials. At the footpath crossing (46) the train would run at 5mph and red and green flags would be used plus signs on the gates. Cllr Mrs Leech added it had been an interesting and welcoming afternoon.

Village Fete – an enquiry was made as to whether there would be a village fete this year. The Chair reported there would not be a fete there having been no response for volunteers to help with an event.

24. Date of next meetings :

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Annual Parish Meeting – Monday 13 May 2024, 7pm at the The Village Hall, Wetheringsett

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Annual Parish Council meeting – Monday 13 May 2024, 7.45pm at The Village Hall, Wetheringsett

Meeting closed 8.40pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

County Councillor Report – April 2024

Energy Developments

At Council on 21 March, the council debated the impact of the various Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) planned for the county and voted that its strategic vision for the county would be to prioritise offshore rather than onshore coordination of schemes, undergrounding of cables rather than pylons, and protection of best quality agricultural land from solar development. NSIP energy projects are approved by the Secretary of State rather than local councils, which only act as statutory consultees. Councils can and do formally object or support proposed projects in the region, however, as East Suffolk have done with the recent Sea Link proposals affecting Friston and the nearby coast. There is also an NSIP scale solar farm proposed in the Mendlesham, Cotton, Wickham Skeith & Thwaite area, named White Elm Solar The capacity is designed for 300 MW and the land area is 750 acres. Community consultations begin this autumn, with statutory consultations in summer 2025.

Libraries Consultation

On Tuesday 25 March, Cabinet reviewed the results of the recent consultation about the Suffolk library service, which is due to go out to procurement in the summer. Broadly, the members of the public who responded to the survey agreed with what libraries currently provided, including community and digital services, and the mobile library and home library services for people who were housebound. Recent pop-up libraries in village halls did not score highly in the consultation and it is unlikely these will form part of the service in future. It is also likely that mobile libraries will run from smaller vehicles in future. The successful bidder for the new libraries contract is likely to be announced in November, with the new contract starting from June 2025.

New Suffolk Business Board

At Cabinet on Tuesday 25 March the future of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was discussed. Since 2012, government funding for economic growth in the county would be awarded via the New Anglia LEP, but the government has recently ruled that LEPs must now be integrated into county councils. The New Anglia LEP was established by SCC and Norfolk County Council jointly, but it will be divided between the two. Suffolk County Council will be establishing a new Business Board made up of local business owners, representatives from councils and other organizations to take over LEP functions such as deciding how future government funding for growth should be used, to undertake mentoring of small businesses and building skills in the workforce. The council has been advertising for local business owners interested to be part of the new Board in the last few months, and the transition from the LEP to the new arrangements is due to be complete in August 2024.

Growing Biodiversity

At Cabinet at the end of February we heard about the council's new responsibilities for planning and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain (or increase) from April 2024. This means that developers must protect natural habitats or compensate for the loss of it when they build – for example, if a woodland is destroyed by a road, they need to create another one, either onsite or elsewhere, or enhance the natural habitat onsite so that the effect of the development is to increase nature rather than decrease it. This has been introduced to try and combat the biodiversity crisis in the UK; since 1970 UK wildlife species have declined by 19% on average, with near one in six species threatened with extinction. For more information about the new scheme, please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain>

Update on SEND Investment

Cabinet on 27 February also reviewed the new £4.4m investment in SEND services at the council will be spent on how the new funding will be used to increase capacity and recruit to extra roles in the SEND service, particularly around clearing the backlog of EHCPs and annual reviews. Since the poor SEND inspection report was published, the council has worked with health to create a priority action plan which was submitted to Ofsted/CQC on 7 March. This plan addresses two priority actions from the report (working better together to improve systems and outcomes for children and young people, and to improve quality and timeliness of EHCPs and annual reviews) and three areas for improvement (using performance data and information to plan and commission SEND services, engaging and communicating with children, young people and their families to reduce dissatisfaction, and working with providers of services for social, emotional and mental health and neurodiverse conditions to improve outcomes in these areas for children with SEND).

There has also been a recent announcement that Suffolk County Council is set to receive an additional £10.9million to create new specialist school places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in the county.

You can read the priority action plan here: <https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/asset-library/suffolk-priority-action-and-improvement-plan-final.pdf>

Water Management in Suffolk

At Scrutiny Committee we heard how despite the wet winter this year, East Anglia is considered a Serious Water Stressed Area by the Environment Agency. By 2050, the demand will be 2538Ml/d (mega litres per day) but the amount available will be only 1700Ml/d. This will affect water bill prices - and limit economic growth in the region, as although housing developments are always guaranteed a water supply, this is not the case for commercial/industrial developments. The report included plans to preserve water or generate new supplies, including reducing water company leaks, two new reservoirs in South Lincolnshire and the Cambridgeshire fens, plus a small new reservoir in North Suffolk, and an increase in water transferred around the region. The councillors were very concerned about the likelihood of water becoming scarce in the county in the near future, especially as the public seemed unaware. They talked about how the profile of this issue could be raised to prevent people using too much water. It was noted that Essex and Suffolk Water had already declared a moratorium for new industrial/commercial connections to the supply in the Hartismere area of Mid Suffolk.

Public Consultation on Suffolk Devolution

Following an extensive informal engagement period throughout January, February and early March, Suffolk County Council's formal consultation for the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal was launched on 18 March. The consultation and associated materials have been informed by feedback received during the engagement sessions the council held with staff, local businesses, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organizations, county, district and borough and town and parish councillors. The public consultation will run for 10 weeks (closing on 26 May) and has been designed with the help of advice from the Consultation Institute. Once the consultation has completed, the analysed results will be presented in detail to Cabinet in summer 2024.

To read about the proposals and fill out the public consultation survey, please visit:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Consultation on Suffolk's next Local Transport Plan (LTP)

Another Suffolk County Council consultation which has recently been launched is for the next version of the Suffolk Local Transport Plan. The LTP sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk and covers key themes such as decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices. Many people's travel habits have changed over the past few years and since the Covid pandemic, so it is an excellent time to refresh the plan. Public feedback will help Suffolk County Council to draft something new, which will be subject to further consultation later in the year.

Learn more and complete the LTP consultation survey: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ltp4>

New EV Funding

Suffolk County Council has been awarded a £7.3m investment for Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure following successful bids to the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, which supports local authorities to plan and deliver charging infrastructure for residents who do not have off-street parking. Suffolk residents without off-street parking will benefit from £5.9 million to support EV charging, and a further £1.4 million will be used to develop the county's existing EV charging network in community locations.

Suffolk residents are invited to 'nominate' their street for consideration for on-street charging points with this online form: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/requestchargepoint/>

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Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkqli.wordpress.com\)](#)

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/preparing-for-flooding>

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

District Councillors' Report – April 2024

Devolution in Suffolk	While Suffolk County Council has commenced a consultation exercise on Devolution (from 18 th March), the District Council debated this at Council on 20 th March. Mid Suffolk District Council is a consultee only but councillors feel it is important to debate this publicly and to put forward all comments and concerns from the district's perspective.
MSDC 2024/25 Budgets	The budget for 2024/25 was agreed on 22nd February. This includes a 2% council tax increase to ensure financial stability for day to day services in the wake of shrinking government grants while ensuring social and environmental responsibilities are at the heart of everything we do. In the housing budget, in order to be able to fund improvements to the Council's housing stock, rents will increase by 7.7% (in line with the Government formula – CPI+1%). To ensure tenants, and other residents, can feel secure with increased costs, we are looking at further ways to provide financial and non financial support for the stresses with the increased cost of living.
Rural bus transport	A new rural transport grants scheme with a pot of £600,000 has just been launched to help provide passenger transport options across the district. Existing community transport operators can apply for funding before 15th April. More details are available here: https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/rural-transport-grants-scheme.
Joint Local Plan (part 2) evidence	All parish and town councils across both districts have been invited to complete a questionnaire about the services and facilities present in each area. This information is needed to input into the next phase of the Joint Local Plan.
Home insulation	The <i>Cosy Homes</i> home insulation initiative is still open for applications. Eligible households can apply for free energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including if privately rented. A contractor has been secured to deliver this programme and they have been able to access further grant funding to contribute to this scheme. Full details are available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk Particularly vulnerable households can continue to access this via the wider Suffolk scheme, www.warmhomessuffolk.org There is also funding available to help residents with the cost of installing loft insulation, in partnership with Travis Perkins. Residents can receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200). See https://www.greensuffolk.org/at-home/grants/.

Council of the Year Award	The councils of Mid Suffolk, with a Green Party administration, and Babergh, that is Independently led, have just been jointly awarded <i>Council of the Year</i> for their collaboration with different partners, working to improve services and focus on communities. This was awarded by the iESE, a not-for-profit organisation created by local authorities as a shared resource to transform public services and retain experience within the sector.
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