

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 3 June 2024, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett

Present: Cllrs D Howard (Chairman), Mrs E Aldred, S Alderton, Mrs E Cain, Mrs R Leech and Mrs J Weir. County & District Cllr A Stringer and 6 members of the public

1. **Apologies and Consent to absence were received from the following:** Cllrs T Alston, Mrs L Drury, B Lacey, N Lingard and Mrs K van Zyl.
2. **Declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda**
Item 8.2 – Cllr D Howard
3. **Election of Vice Chairman** – deferred to next meeting
4. **Reports**
 1. Police available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> – report online. No queries were raised
 2. County Councillor – Cllr Stringer presented his report (copy attached to the Minutes). Questions raised included highway flooding near Gateway 14 – Cllr Stringer stated that would be resolved before the site opened. The damaged highway sign at the Town Lane/A140 junction had been reported to Suffolk CC Highways.
 3. District Councillor – Cllr Stringer presented his report (copy attached to the Minutes).
 4. Footpaths – Cllr Mrs Aldred stated overgrowth on a number of footpaths did need cutting back, it was hoped this would be dealt with over the next few weeks. Dog fouling was still an issue, dog owners did not appear to be using the bin near the Church.
 5. Trees – no report.

6. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A member of the public had raised the two items listed at no. 7 below:

Hockey Hill traffic calming – the parishioner stated he would like the opportunity to assess speeding on Hockey Hill following erection of the Kill Your Speed Signs coupled with the Community Speed Watch Scheme.

Cllr Mrs Cain added the Manor School hoped to be increasing the number of pupils and staff at the school which would involve an additional 100 vehicles travelling through the village each day. Following the reports of speeding taxis, the school would be prepared to fund three further speed signs in the village and the school was in contact with the taxi firms and had requested their drivers adhere to the village speed limits.

Highway flooding at Knaves Green – it was believed this was due to blocked ditches alongside the road. The meeting was informed the ditches were due to be cleared when the weather improved.

Church Street – a resident of Church Street reported sewer backing up through the drains during rainfall, the area in question being near the former telephone kiosk and pumping station, the pump had been known to trip at least three times since October 2023 during rainfall, the infrastructure could not cope with the additional waterflow and concern was raised as to whether a surface water connection had been made to the sewage system. The Parish Council would ask Anglian Water to make an inspection.

Clay Cottage – a member of the public stated he was present to answer any questions relating to the workshop extension if required.

5. **To consider for approval Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held 13 May 2024**
Cllr S Alderton proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Mrs Cain – unanimously agreed.
6. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report**
Cllr Alderton reported he was looking into the options and costs for a parish council gov.uk domain name and email address. A report would be available for consideration at the next meeting.
7. **To consider items raised by a parishioner:**
 1. Flooding at Knaves Green (Borley Hill) area – request to clear ditches and put in verge gulley's
 2. Traffic Calming near Primary School, Hockey Hill(See items discussed and action above during public session)
8. **To consider Planning Applications for recommendation to MSDC**
 1. DC/24/01447: Clay Cottage, Pitman's Corner – erection of extension to workshop with canopied roof (following removal of existing lean-to extension). Notification of an objection to the application had been received from a neighbouring resident on the grounds of contradictory documentation, contrary to the original planning permission and emission of fumes/dust from the site. The objection had been circulated to councillors for their information. Following consideration of the application a query was raised as to the nature of the storage and whether there was an intention to develop the business. To clarify the query the Chairman proposed the meeting was opened to the applicant to comment, proposal unanimously agreed.

Meeting opened to the public

The applicant stated there was no intention to increase the size of the business, there was one employee and the application was to increase the storage thereby reducing the number of deliveries to the site. The applicant and his wife also worked at the site also reducing the number of cars to and from the site. There would be no additional emissions or noise. The extension would be 3m wider than the existing storage, some 1m from the public footpath.

Meeting closed to the public

Councillors queried the proximity of the proposed extension to the public footpath.

Having considered the application papers and taken all other comments into consideration a proposal of support was recommended on the grounds the Planning Officer was satisfied that the proposed extension would not be too close to the public footpath, proposal seconded and unanimously agreed.

2. DC/24/02412: Wetheringsett Lodge, Church Street – Application of works to trees in a Conservation Area. High pollard No.1 Horse Chestnut (T1) to reduce weight on structurally poor stem. Reduce No.1 Oak (T3) low over extended limbs on north side by 2m to relieve leverage/weight. Following the Chairman's declaration of interest in this item, Cllrs Mrs Leech chaired the discussion

It was stated there was fungus on some of the trees in question and a split in the horse chestnut, the trees were in the conservation area but not subject to TPO's. All work involved pollarding and not removal. A recommendation of approval was proposed and seconded, 5 members in favour, 1 abstention, proposal carried.

9. Planning Decisions received from MSDC

1. DC/24/01425: Rectory Cottage, Church Street - Discharge of Conditions Application DC/23/03402 - Condition 4 (Brickwork). Approved with conditions
2. DC/24/00468: Easter Cottage, The Street, Wetheringsett – erection of first floor rear extension, relocation of garage door, three window size changes and internal floor changes to ground floor. Planning Permission Granted

10. Planning Correspondence

MSDC – Supplementary Planning Documents Consultation – comments to be submitted by 4pm 19 June 2024. Consultation documents had been circulated to councillors. No comments were raised.

Babergh Mid Suffolk – call for gypsy/traveller/show traveller sites consultation. Response date 28 June 2024. The consultation documents had been circulated. No comments were offered.

11. Neighbourhood Plan Report

The latest report from the Working Group had been circulated for information. No comments were raised,

12. Wetheringsett cum Brockford Emergency Plan

1. Report on draft Emergency Plan document including flood prevention measures and purchase of radio communication equipment. The plan was progressing with 5 members so far making up the working group. In the availability of equipment section of the plan it was reported the use of a chainsaw would not be allowed unless the user had attended a course in the use of chainsaws.
2. To confirm members of the Community Emergency Group – currently five members but additional would be welcome. A call for further volunteers had been included in the parish magazine report.
3. To consider a Flood Monitoring Working Group – deferred.

13. Church Street flooding – report on remedial work to highway drainage system

A report on the Suffolk CC investigations into the wider drainage system was pending.

14. To consider expansion project at Wetheringsett Manor

The school would like to incorporate a Key Stage II centre for up to 20 pupils at the school. There were currently 40 pupils with 30 staff. Another 20 pupils plus 10 staff would potentially increase traffic movement to 100 vehicles per day. It was reported a car park for taxis to pick up and drop off pupils would be included in the scheme if approved. Some concerns were raised there having already been complaints of speeding taxis delivering children to and from the school.

Surface water running from the Manor to Church Street was also raised, this appeared to have occurred over the last 4 years. It was understood the School had commissioned a survey on the improvement works. The Chair would ask the school for an update on its progress.

15. Village Hall

1. Management Committee report – it was reported the finances were currently in a good position. Following a flood in the School building due to damaged underfloor pipes the school was having to use the Village Hall full time at present. It was reported a portacabin on the school field would be available for use by the school shortly until the flood problem had been resolved.

2. Report on School Licence Agreement and Diocesan Lease – no progress to report.
3. Report on Solar Panels installation – the work was complete and electricity already going into the national grid.

16. Grasscutting report

A request was made that the June cut in the cemetery was carried out before 11 June for the benefit of visitors attending a funeral and burial in the cemetery that day. Request would be forwarded on to the contractor.

17. Play Area report

1. To consider applying for a MSDC Capital Grant to fund play equipment improvements
Cllr Alderton stated he would like to look at updating some of the existing play equipment, to provide for wider age ranges, with the assistance of grant funding. Before looking into funding Cllr Alderton would investigate whether there were covenants on the play area and field restricting its use.
2. Items arising from annual inspection report – deferred pending Cllr Lacey report.

18. Report on installation of Radar Speed Sign for Brockford Street

Cllr Mrs Weir reported there had been no objection from Thwaite to installation of the equipment just north of the garage. Suffolk CC Highways were putting together a work package for the equipment and had indicated they would fund the cost of the post.

19. VAS speed equipment report

No data figures were available. The equipment was currently located at Wetherup Street. A rota would need to be set up for moving the equipment.

20. Community Speed Watch Scheme – progress report

There were some delays in setting up the scheme due to changes at Suffolk Constabulary. Six volunteers had registered to take part, ideally eight would be preferable. Cllr Mrs Weir asked the Parish Council whether it would be willing to fund the hire of the village hall for occasional volunteer meetings. Include on next agenda.

21. Report on siting further Kill Your Speed Signs

The query raised regarding the sign located at Cedars Hill/A140 - Cllr Mrs Weir reported she had made an inspection and believed that after the bank and overgrowth had been cut back the sign was ideally situated at that location.

Another would be located near the No Entry sign for Brockford Road. Any suggestions for the remaining signs would be welcome.

22. Finance

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

2. Accounts for payment

Groundworks UK – Neighbourhood Plan grant refund	£427.23
Volt Electrical – village hall solar panels final payment (reissued)	£10,901.99
B Reeve Grasscutting – May 2024	£166.66
Clerk sal-expen May 2024	£340.30
MSDC – annual play inspection fee	£63.78
Elan City – Radar speed equipment – Brockford Street	£2807.99

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

3. Finance Report – the bank mandate to increase the number of signatories had yet to be completed.

23. Clerk's report/correspondence

Notification of an extension to the Norwich to Tilbury pylon consultation – new date 26 July 2026.

Go Compare had requested a link to its company on the village website for residents looking for flood guidance including insurance advice. Members were of the view it should not be seen to be promoting one supplier, if included other options would need to be listed.

24. Chair's Report – the chair would contact the Manor School regarding the proposed expansion survey.

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

Give Way sign at Cedars Hill/A140 – the damaged sign had been reported to Suffolk CC Highways

Fallen tree in river next the Church – Cllr Mrs Aldred would report to the Church Warden.

26. Date of next meeting : Monday 1 July 2024, 7pm at Wetheringsett Village Hall

Meeting closed: 8.40pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

Funding for Local Government

Our group proposed a motion for council on Thursday 23 May to lobby the government for improved funding for local authorities, which was seconded by the Conservative administration and voted through unanimously in the chamber. Politicians of all parties are concerned by the £4 billion funding 'gap' predicted for councils in the next few years, particularly for social care. To balance the books this year, Suffolk County Council had to withdraw £15.9 million from its reserves - the equivalent of council savings accounts – but this is not a sustainable approach. Councils that have become bankrupt have to cut services back to the minimum they have to provide by law, and seek to raise revenue by increasing council tax and other avenues they have such as charges for parking or social care.

Norwich to Tilbury Pylons

At Cabinet on Tuesday 21 May, two reports were tabled on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in the region. The first was our response to the Five Estuaries wind farm proposals, this will have landfall in Essex but will be visible from the Suffolk coast and the developers are paying for a wildlife project on Orford Ness as environmental compensation. The second report detailed the council's response to the proposed Norwich to Tilbury 400kV grid reinforcement, and the Cabinet voted that the council should object and call for a pause until alternative options have been explored. The proposals include 183 kilometres of pylons, with four sections of underground cabling running through and near to the Dedham Vale National Landscape and the Waveney valley, but the council wants to see alternative options explored for additional undergrounding in the Waveney valley, and expressed concerns about the route which see pylons placed close to several Suffolk airfields. The council also discussed how to make sure that energy projects in the county were coordinated, as it was agreed that the impact of all the proposed projects in a similar timeframe would have a massive impact on the county, its landscape, economy and transport routes.

Transport for Post-16 Students

Cabinet also considered a paper on recommendations for charges for post-16 school transport. Although students now have to be in education or training up to the age of 18, the council receives no funding from the government to pay for their transport. This means the council asks parents and carers to pay for part of the cost with the rest subsidised by the council. In 2023-24, the average cost for a mainstream seat was £1,701 and the average cost for a SEND student seat is £11,819.

The proposal approved by Cabinet was for the charge for a mainstream seat to rise to £1,050 a year, which is a steep £90 increase from last year. There will be no increase for SEND students so their seats will remain at £780 a year. The 50% reduction in charge for families on a low income and in receipt of free school meals will continue for another year. The council will continue to signpost families to public transport routes where these may be cheaper and in addition, many schools have bursaries for travel which students can apply for.

SEND Strategy 2024-29

On Tuesday 21 May, Cabinet approved the new SEND Strategy for the Local Area SEND Partnership, which is made up of the council's inclusion service and relevant NHS services. The new strategy takes on board recommendations from the recent Ofsted/CQC inspection to set the Partnership's direction for SEND services for the next five years. The strategy was co-produced with children, parents, carers and members of staff who work in SEND services and aims to improve services in several areas: communication, outcomes for SEND children and improved timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and Annual Reviews. The strategy still requires some formatting/design work but will soon be available to view on the council's website.

Children's Services Inspection

The council has just received notification that Ofsted will be coming for a two week inspection of its children's services. This inspection is focused on social care, youth justice, corporate parenting, family services and safeguarding. It will also look at partnership working with other council teams and external partners to support children and keep them safe. Suffolk County Council had its last children's services Ofsted inspection five years ago and was rated as Outstanding.

Dementia Strategy

Suffolk County Council, NHS partners and adult social care organisations have launched a dementia strategy. The number of people with dementia in the UK was estimated to be close to one million in 2021, but by 2050 this figure is expected to rise to 1.6 million people. In Suffolk, a predominantly rural county with an ageing population where 23.6% of Suffolk residents are 65 years or over - higher than the England average - the number of people who develop dementia is likely to be higher, so having a robust and effective strategy to manage this is essential. The strategy has been co-produced with people with dementia and their carers, and will look to promote early diagnosis, providing better information about care and treatment options, and focus on improved signposting for people of all ages with dementia, their carers and families, to help them get the support they want and need to enable them to live well with dementia within their own community. You can read the new dementia strategy here: suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/digital-version-suffolk-dementia-strategy-2024-20292.pdf

New Vehicles and Equipment for Suffolk Fire and Rescue

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has unveiled a £3.5 million investment in new firefighting vehicles and equipment, including a 32m turntable ladder vehicle, a specialist rescue tender, six new fire engines, a driver trainer vehicle plus a fleet of electric pool cars. The new vehicles will be on the road by summer 2024. The new vehicles are part of a planned replacement programme whereby fire engines are replaced every 15 years, and include the latest technology to help keep Suffolk residents safe. They also support the council's net zero targets as officer and pool cars will now be electric vehicles. Fire engines are generally diesel vehicles, although there are some electric-hybrid vehicles currently being trialled in London.

Nature survey

In order to prepare Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the council has launched a public survey so residents can share their favourite nature spots and which habitats they think should be protected. Farmers, landowners and land managers are also encouraged to submit practical, achievable proposals to support nature conservation, as well as sharing how land is currently managed and any challenges faced applying for government funding schemes. The strategy will form a plan to help reverse the decline in nature across the county, and to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and the landscape.

You can share your thoughts in the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy Survey by visiting <https://www.nsnrp.org/get-involved>. It closes on 30 June 2024.

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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/preparing-for-flooding>

District Councillors' Report – June 2024

Working together	At the Annual Council meeting in May, we continued our ethos of working together with all political parties across the Council by ensuring formal roles are shared out amongst different groups. This year we have gone even further, and given the vice Chairman roll to an opposition group member.
Skills and Innovation Centre at Gateway 14	The final funding proposal for developing the Skills and Innovation Centre site on Gateway 14 was agreed. This is an £18 million plus investment that will help to address green skills and innovation across the district working with local companies and educational facilities. Of the total amount, £6 million is Government funding and just under £11 million is from Freeport-related business rates with the remainder an investment from the Council.
Climate and Ecology Bill motion	Council also agreed in May to support the Climate and Ecology Bill, which is currently supported by a range of cross-party MPs, and to write to local MPs to urge them to support it. The Bill would require the UK Government to develop a new environmental strategy which would include delivering a joined-up environmental plan that considers the deeply intertwined crises of climate and nature.
Norwich to Tilbury pylons consultation	The deadline for this consultation has been extended until 26 th July due to the General Election. In the meantime, Mid Suffolk has sent their draft consultation response to all Parish Clerks. The response will be discussed by Cabinet on 15 th July before agreeing and submitting.
Call for Sites – Gypsies & Travellers	As part of the ongoing work with the Joint Local Plan, Mid Suffolk has launched a Call for Sites exercise for sites intended for use by Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Submissions can be made until 28 th June.
Energy efficient housing	The Council was successful in gaining an £800k grant for decarbonising council housing stock. Mid Suffolk will add to this to ensure as comprehensive programme as possible.
Capital grants available	Community groups can apply to Mid Suffolk for a capital grant up to a maximum of £10,000. The next round of grants is now open and £240,000 was paid out last year. See www.midsuffolk.gov.uk and search <i>Grants and funding</i> .
Locality Awards 2024/25	Applications for this year's Locality Awards grants are now open, so we would welcome applications from any community organisation or group. Do get in touch with either of us to discuss options. Information and application forms are available on the website and completed forms should be sent to either of us. https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/web/mid-suffolk/w/locality-awards

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