

Wetheringsett cum Brockford Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 2 February 2026, 7pm at the Village Hall, Wetheringsett.

Present: Cllrs D Howard, S Alderton, S Dodgson, B Lacey, Mrs R Leech, N Lingard, Mrs K van Zyl, Mrs J Weir and S Wyse

1. **Apologies and Consent to absence** – apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Alston and County and District Cllr A Stringer. Councillors approved the apologies. Cllr Mrs L Drury – absent.
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 - Cllr Stringer's written report had been circulated (copy attached to the Minutes).
The Chair reported he had spoken to Cllr Stringer on the telephone. The following items had been raised:
Appeal – Gypsy & Traveller site Mendlesham Road – following dismissal of the appeal additional sites would not have to be found in the Parish; Development at Brockford sewage issues – planning enforcement were aware and were taking action; Wetherup Street flood issues – highways were due to clear the verge gullies; Hockey Hill drainage/flood following rain – the s.19 flood team were aware.
 3. District Councillor – written report circulated (copy attached to the Minutes).
 4. Footpaths - no report available. Cllr Mrs Leech offered to join the footpaths working group.
 5. Trees – no report. Cllr Mrs Leech offered to join the trees working group.
 6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** – none.
4. **To consider for approval Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 5 January 2026**
Cllr Dodgson proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Wyse – unanimously agreed.
5. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report** – none.
6. **Hockey Hill Trees**
 1. Report on requested maintenance via UK Power Network and BT – both UK Power Network and BT had inspected the Hockey Hill and Cedar Hill trees and had reported no action at the present time.
Councillors agreed no further action. The trees would continue to be monitored by Parish Council Tree Officers.
 2. Parishioner correspondence concerning falling deadwood from one of the Hockey Hill trees onto the highway. Cllr Mrs Leech would monitor and report back on any issues should they arise.
7. **Planning Applications for recommendation to MSDC** – none received
8. **Planning Decisions received from MSDC**
 1. Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/X/25/3370693 - Land at The Caravan Park, Mendlesham Road, Wetheringsett-cum-Brockford, Suffolk, IP14 5NU - Appeal against a refusal to grant a certificate of lawful use or development (LDC). Appeal Dismissed. The chair reported the site was to be used as a Gypsy and Traveller site only.
9. **Planning correspondence** – none.
10. **Report on Wetherup Street flood remedial work**
It was reported the main issue had been the lack of maintenance and clearance of ditches. The ditches surrounding the pond had now been cleared, the remedial work on the pond was pending. County Highways had inspected the section of highway prone to flood and would arrange for clearance of the verge gullies.
11. **Brockford Street development** – report on polluted ditch
MSDC Planning Control had issued an enforcement order on the developer to rectify the pollution issue. This was awaiting a response.
12. **Village Hall Lease** – report on correspondence with Diocesan Board Agent
Cllr Dodgson reported on the position with regard to negotiating a new lease with the Diocesan Board. The lease of 1966 and supplemental lease of 1987 had both expired. The Diocesan Board had asked their Agent to draw up a new lease. The query was raised with the Parish Council as to whether the Village Hall should take over the old school Kitchen and part of the playing field for additional car parking, if so this would need to be included in the new lease. Councillors took the view the additional area of the field for car parking should be included but due to the maintenance issues and cost that would be involved in rectifying them, had no wish to take over the old school kitchen. The additional land for car parking would increase the rent – this would be a consideration as to whether it was included.
Subject to clarification of the rental for the additional land the above recommendation was proposed and seconded, 7 in favour, 2 abstentions – proposal carried.
13. **Wetheringsett Village Hall**
 1. Management Committee report

The Diocesan Board had been asked for temporary permission to sell alcohol at events. This had been agreed and the Chair of the Village Hall was in the process of obtaining a personal alcohol licence. Various policies were being put in place and the constitution and charity items were progressing. Maintenance and the drainage issue were ongoing. Future events included Paddy's evening and the Summer Fete.

2. Report on School Licence Agreement – the licence with the school had been agreed.
3. Report on storage of Parish Council files at Village Hall – deferred.

14. Cemetery and Play Area Grasscutting report

The Cemetery Grasscutting contractor had confirmed cutting arrangements for 2026 – as per last year at the annual cost of £950.

A letter of thanks would be sent to the Manor School for cutting the play area 2025 and confirming arrangements for 2026.

15 . Play Area report

The new equipment had been installed and ready for use. Cllr Alderton was progressing the sale of some parts of the old equipment, ie the swing. A new picnic bench had been ordered. The double gates were in need of some maintenance. The Annual Play Inspection was still due to take place.

16. Speed Equipment Report

1. Report on proposed location of solar speed sign Wetherup Street/Park Green – before deciding on a location it had been agreed local residents would be asked for their views.
2. Data report had been circulated. The report did seem to show the solar signs were having an impact. The enforcement team had agreed to include Hockey Hill and would monitor every six weeks.
3. Brockford Street south – request to Suffolk Highways to move 30mph sign south and/or speed calming measures

The response from Suffolk Highways had stated any speed limit changes would need to meet Highways Policy – see link:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/speed-limit-policy.pdf>.

It was unlikely to meet all criteria to justify a speed limit change and there was insufficient highway width to undertake any improvements. Even if all criterions were met, a funding source would need to be sought, the costs involved would be £10,000+ and Suffolk CC did not currently have a budget for that sum.

Where the full criteria was not met, a decision would need to be made by a panel made up of the Head of Transport Strategy and the Cabinet Member responsible for Transport Strategy. This required a speed limit report to be written at a cost of £750 plus the cost of a speed survey.

This would be a factual report to enable the local parish councils and local county councillor to provide comments in support of the request.

An alternative suggestion could be to install slow markings adjacent to the junction to warn drivers to slow down. This again would need to be funded.

Councillors considered the response above. It was agreed at this stage the junction would continue to be monitored.

17. Wetherup Street – report on proposed Ducks Crossing sign

Cllr Wyse reported he had sourced two signs at approximate cost of £30. He did not anticipate there would be any objection to the signs from Wetherup Street residents. Cllr Alderton suggested the signs were gifted to the residents. Cllr Mrs van Zyl proposed the signs were purchased and installed on the above basis, seconded Cllr Dodgson – unanimously agreed. When installed a photograph of the signs would be included in the parish magazine for information of parishioners.

18. Bus Service Improvement Plan – to consider SuffolkonBoard response

Suffolk CC' SuffolkonBoard had confirmed it would be prepared to consider grant funding for a formal bid for a bus through Wetheringsett village. The bid would need to show that the route would be supported by local residents as well as demonstrate the potential to continue at minimal cost once the initial grant was spent and include information on how residents would be encouraged to use the bus.

Cllr Mrs Leech offered to prepare a piece for the parish magazine/village facebook page asking for residents' views as to whether a bus through the village would be supported.

19. To consider a Spring Litter Pick

A date of Saturday 18 April 2026 was agreed. Meet at the Village Hall car park at 9.15am for a risk assessment briefing, litter picking from 9.30am. Refreshments would be available during the morning at the Village Hall.

20. Finance

1. To consider s.137 donation requests – none.
2. Accounts for payments
Suffolk Accident Rescue – donation £100.00
Clerk sal-expen Jan 2026 £363.57
3. Finance report – confirmation of the Parish Council precept request of £14,408 had been received from MSDC.

21. To consider for adoption Financial Regulations

Model NALC financial regulations revised March 2025 had been circulated prior to the meeting. No queries were raised. Cllr Alderton proposed adoption, seconded Cllr Lingard – unanimously agreed.

22. Clerk's report/correspondence

SALC – Chair nomination for Buckingham Palace Garden Party May 2026 – the Chair confirmed he would be pleased to be nominated on behalf of the Parish Council.

Wetheringsett Manor enquiry – request for assistance with funding raising activities in Wetheringsett via coffee mornings etc. Cllr Dodgson stated he would respond on behalf of the Village Hall.

23. Chair's Report

The Chair reported on litter from flood waters and dog waste in plastic bags thrown away in various areas of the village.

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

The condition of the fence between the School and Village Hall was in need of some maintenance. This had been raised with the Diocesan representative.

A large area of road on the north of Town Lane (opposite manure patch) had collapsed. Clerk would report to Suffolk Highways.

A large pothole on Wetheringsett Road also to be reported to Suffolk Highways.

25. Date of next meeting: Monday 9 March 2026, 7pm at Wetheringsett Village Hall

Meeting closed 8.05pm

Signed:

Chair

Date:

County Councillor Report – February 2026

Local elections in May 2026 postponed (again!)

At council on Monday 12 January, a debate was held in the morning about the resource implications of an election in May on the delivery of Local Government Reorganization in Suffolk. The Conservative administration unanimously voted down an amendment proposed by my group that the council was in favour of the elections going ahead, although we spoke passionately about the importance of Suffolk voters getting to have their say. A Cabinet meeting was held following the council debate, where the administration voted unanimously to write to the government outlining capacity concerns that might be felt if elections were to go ahead. On 22 January, the government announced that the elections in Suffolk, and in 28 other councils around the country, would not take place in May this year.

The elections were postponed already in May 2025, so this second postponement means county councillors will be serving a seven-year term instead of four years. As part of the Local Government Reorganization process, unitary councils are due to have elections in 2027 and to take control of all services in the county from April 2028

Council budget 2026-27

At Cabinet on Tuesday 27 January, the budget for the 2026-27 financial year was presented for approval. The council is planning to raise council tax by the maximum 4.99% this year, reflecting the serious financial concerns it is facing. The budget for 2026-27 is forecast to overspend by £5.9m and the council will need to draw that from its reserves to

balance the books. It is also planning savings of £46.5m across the council to make ends meet, and is predicting a budget 'gap' of £23.4m for 2027-28 and £24.6m by 2028-29 which it will need to fund by savings. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing in adult social care, high-cost social care placements for children and young people and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Regarding SEND, the council holds a 'negative reserve', a debt of education funding under the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that the government allows it to hold until 31 March 2028. This is a national issue rather than just relating to Suffolk County Council, but the council will not be able to repay it if the government calls it in: by the end of 2027-27 it is forecast to be -£252.3m. Although the council is allowed to hold the debt, it is spending millions on interest costs to service the debt, by 2027-28 the cost of that will be £8.9m. There are also concerns about the amount of money the Local Government Reorganisation will cost the council. This is currently estimated as £47.8m overall, but will be divided between all Suffolk councils.

Net Zero Carbon Report

Also coming to Cabinet on Tuesday 27 January was the annual report on the council's efforts to reach net zero carbon by 2030. In view of the Local Government Reorganisation and Suffolk County Council not existing past 2028, the target has been adjusted to a 63% reduction in emissions by 2027-28 and will only include scopes of emissions that the council is in direct control of – that is, excluding things like its supply chain, or staff commuting to work. In addition, to reflect the financial position of the council, any measures taken by the council towards this will now have to create an in-year financial saving: this means that the financial benefit from it must be greater than the cost. The work undertaken so far for the net zero programme has saved the council many thousands of pounds, for example changes to the heating controls in Endeavour House should reduce energy costs by £30k each year, and a new car park solar array and battery storage at Beacon House is expect to save more than £50k a year. The council is also involved in a heat network project in Ipswich to heat large buildings using energy from the River Gipping. This term the carbon saving budget has lead to cost saving of over £4.5 million pounds per annum, had SCC not pursued, we would have been another council writing to government for emergency funding.

Suffolk Roads Rated Red by UK Government

The government recently released RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings each county based on how effectively they use the government's highways maintenance funding. Suffolk's road maintenance was rated as Red, the worst category. This has struck a chord with residents in the county, who have been clear that they agree and want the quality of Suffolk's roads to improve. Suffolk County Council's administration, however, has denied that the rating is accurate, saying that overall the condition of Suffolk's roads are rated Amber, with the overall Red rating being arrived at because the Department for Transport did not include in its assessment £10m of highways funding that it brought forward from the 2025-26 financial year and invested early in a resurfacing programme in 2024-25. The council has met with the Department for Transport to press for the Suffolk rating to be raised to Amber, pointing out that Department for Transport data shows that only 3% of the county's A roads is in poor condition, which is better than the England average. In addition, in December the council received £2.9m from the Department for Transport's Incentive Fund, which rewards authorities with a record of good performance in highway maintenance.

New 20mph Policy

At Cabinet on Friday 9 January, a new 20mph speed limit policy was approved with the aim of making the process for communities to apply for a 20mph speed limit easier and more streamlined. From now on, any application for a new 20mph limit in an area where recorded average traffic speeds are 28mph and under is likely to be approved by the council. The local county councillor must also be in favour of the change, and there should be majority support from residents. My group pointed out that the new requirement to prove majority support for the new speed limit was likely to make the process more onerous for town and parish councils rather than less. The council states that local engagement needs to be carried in the community, for example a survey or consultation of residents living on the roads/in the area. Any new 20mph limits will also still need local funding to be in place, unless the scheme aligns with a council programme as part of the Local Transport Plan. The new policy is based on recording speeds as follows:

- Below 28mph – likely to be accepted, with a speed limit sign only, although signs warning that a 20mph zone is ahead may be required
- Between 28 - 32mph - unlikely to be acceptable with signing alone. Gateway signing and traffic calming throughout the area may be required

- Above 32mph - Unlikely to be acceptable without extensive traffic calming measures such as road humps, plus night-time lighting. It would also be subject to a Road Safety Audit

You can read the new policy here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/20mph-speed-limit-policy-criteria.pdf>

Social Media and Helpful Links

Follow us on:

Twitter - [Suffolk Green, Lib Dem & Independent Group \(@SuffolkGLI\) / Twitter](#)

Instagram – https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/

Facebook - [Suffolk GLI - Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent Group | Facebook](#)

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

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/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: February 2026

Mendlesham Ward (Mendlesham, Thorndon, Wetheringsett Parishes)

Norwich to Tilbury	The drop in surgery with officers will continue although now on a monthly basis. The meeting time is 11am to midday as a drop in session and this will repeat monthly on Thursdays for a while. If the surgery sessions are helpful, officers will look to continue to offer them throughout the examination and beyond but the regularity of sessions may change depending on officer availability. Questions can be emailed in advance to planningpink@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk but this is not essential. The next session will be on Thursday 5th February at 11am via Teams.
Biodiversity and nature recovery scheme	At its November meeting, Mid Suffolk District Council approved a package of funding of £1.8m over the next three years for nature recovery and biodiversity. The funding will be used to carry out the plans of the cross-party biodiversity working group, as well as meeting government proposals for biodiversity and nature recovery. Around half of the funding is going towards a new community Nature Recovery Grant fund. The fund will be split equally between both community-led projects and projects for the restoration of rivers and their catchments. The funds will support communities to create and manage habitat and nature recovery schemes, including natural flood management. For more on the new funding see:

	£2 million for Mid Suffolk biodiversity and nature recovery - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk The action plan can be found here: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/biodiversity-action-plan
Sewage Sludge Motion	Mid Suffolk District Council has called for urgent action by the Government to tighten regulations governing the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land, triggering serious concerns for public health, farming and the environment. Sewage sludge contains a mixture of harmful contaminants, including so-called “forever chemicals” (PFAS) and microplastics – many of which are not regulated or routinely tested for under current legislation dating back to 1989. It follows growing concern in Suffolk after independent testing in late 2025 found water at a sewage sludge processing site near Wattisham air base contained more than 170 homes
Upcoming changes to bin collections	Suffolk Recycles is currently running a social media campaign to prepare residents for the upcoming changes to bin collections in the area from 2026. It is important for us all to ensure that people get the correct information - please do direct residents to this website https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/recycling-composting/recycling-at-home/better-recycling where the facts are clearly laid out.
New Funding for community groups	A new Gateway 14 Community Benefit Fund has been launched to support community groups to deliver activities that make a meaningful difference in their area. The fund will run for three years, with £30,000 available each year. Organisations based within a five-mile radius of Gateway 14 can apply for up to £5,000 to cover either revenue or capital costs, with these grants able to fund up to 100% of total project expenditure. Applications can be submitted via https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/community-funding .

Cllr Andrew Stringer andrew.stringer@midsuffolk.gov.uk