

Present: Cllrs D Howard (Chairman), T Alston, S Dodgson, B Lacey, N Lingard, Mrs J Weir and S Wyse. County Cllr M Hicks and District Cllr A Stringer

1. Apologies and Consent to absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs S Alderton, Mrs R Leech and Mrs K van Zyl
Councillors agreed to approve the apologies

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 Hicks presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes). Queries were raised relating to the proposed Solar Farm between Mendlesham and Mellis and the Norwich to Tilbury Pylons. Cllr Hicks stated the County Council had objected to both projects, see item below in County Cllr report, but the final decision would be made by the Government.

3. District Councillor – Councillor Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes). The planning application for change of use of land for continued use as one gypsy/traveller pitch was raised. Cllr Stringer stated the application site was within Flood Zones 2 and 3 and in the absence of a Flood Risk Assessment report the District Council and Environment Agency had recommended refusal.

4. Footpaths - no report

5. Trees – no report

6. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC** – none.

4. To consider for approval Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 6 July 2026

Cllr Dodgson proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Alston – unanimously agreed.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes for report – none.

6. Planning Applications for recommendation to MSDC

1. DC/26/02748: Tollgate Farm Barn, Norwich Road, Mendlesham (part in the parish of Wetheringsett) – change of use of agricultural land to residential garden curtilage, erection of extension, new acoustic bund, cartlodge, acoustic gate and fence with additional landscaping. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.

2. DC/26/02030: Plot 3, Oaks Meadow, land north east of Latin Hall, Brockford Road, Mendlesham (part in the parish of Wetheringsett) – change of use of land for continued use of one gypsy/traveller pitch, siting one residential static caravan (permanent). The site being within a flood zone with potential flood implications, a recommendation of refusal was proposed and seconded. Six councillors in favour, one abstention – proposal carried.

7. Planning Decisions received from MSDC – none

8. Planning correspondence – none.

9. Town Lane smoke nuisance report

A response had been received from MSDC enforcement to the Parish Council's support of resident concerns over the bonfires and smoke nuisance, stating that enforcement action was progressing and the parish council would be kept updated.

10. Anti-Social Behaviour report

Following the concerns raised by parishioners at the last meeting at the lack of police support for anti-social behaviour incidents in the village, the Parish Council had sent an email to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Timothy Passmore, requesting action by local officers – response awaited. An article would again be included in the next Parish Magazine, requesting parishioners to record details of any anti-social behaviour suggesting these were reported direct to Suffolk Constabulary.

11. Wetheringsett Village Hall

1. To consider for approval quotations for management and/or removal of asbestos on the Village Hall lean-to roof. Three quotations for an asbestos survey had been obtained. Cllr Dodgson recommended accepting the quote totalling £384 plus vat for the cost of the initial survey. The recommendation was unanimously agreed.

There had been a recommendation the Village Hall should have an asbestos register, it was agreed this should be prepared after removal of the asbestos roof. It was further agreed a decision should be made

as to whether the lean-to building was demolished or re-roofed following removal of any asbestos. It was suggested re-roofing would be the cheaper option, decision deferred.

Cllr Dodgson reported on three drainage quotations for jet washing the village hall drainage system, this work was required to clear the system. The best quote being £395 plus vat. Cllr Alston proposed acceptance of £395, seconded Cllr Wyse – unanimously agreed.

2. Report on Village Hall fencing repairs – a date for commencing the work had yet to be confirmed.

3. Report on Village Hall/Parish Council representatives meeting re. future management – the representatives were due meet on 20 August 2026. Deferred to next meeting.

4. Management Committee report

Cllr Dodgson reported he had been appointed the Village Hall secretary. The Premises Licence had been transferred into the Village Hall name. The foyer area was due to be upgraded by Curtains Up.

5. School Licence Agreement – progress report. Still awaiting written confirmation from the School.

3. Renewal of Village Hall lease – progress report – awaiting draft lease from the agent.

12. **Grasscutting report** - grasscutting at the cemetery and play area was going to plan. A tidy up at the cemetery had recently been carried out.

13. **Play Area report** – no report.

14. **Speed Equipment Report**

1. Wetherup Street – siting solar speed sign – awaiting Suffolk Highways response to proposed location.

2. Relocation of speed sign post from Park Green – pending

3. Report on damaged solar speed sign South Brockford Street – awaiting repair by Suffolk Highways.

4. Mobile sign – new batteries for the equipment had been ordered.

5. Data report – the data report had been circulated. Cllr Mrs Weir reported on her meeting with the Enforcement officer on 7 July last. Enforcements had been issued for Brockford Street and Wetherup Street.

15. **Telephone Kiosk, Church Street** – Awaiting firm quote for the stained glass panel. An estimate of £250 – £360 had been given by the glazier.

16. **Finance**

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

2. Accounts for payment

MSDC – Dog/Waste bin emptying 2026-27 £432.60

SALC – internal audit fee 2025-26 £348.00

Clerk – sal/expen July 2026 £366.11

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

3. Finance report

(i) Review of internal audit report 31.3.26 – report circulated to councillors.

Items raised by the internal auditor were noted by councillors as follows:

Councillor raised purchase invoices to be in name of Parish Council – Councilors aware - complete.

Policy documents to be adopted:

Website accessibility statement tested against WCAG2.2AA – complete

IT Policy, General Reserves, FOI Request Procedure & Data Protection Policy and Publication Scheme

Introduce a paye scheme

Review of Fidelity Guarantee cover

The above items to be actioned during the forthcoming financial year.

(ii) Barclays Bank balance as at 17 July 2026: £29,313.09.

17. **To consider for adoption** (documents circulated):

1. Standing Orders 2026-27 – proposed Cllr Dodgson, seconded Cllr Mrs Weir – unanimously agreed.

2. Financial Regulations 2026-27 – deferred to next meeting

3. Risk Assessment 2026-27 – deferred to next meeting

4. Website Accessibility Statement 2026-27 tested against WCAG2.2AA – proposed Cllr Wyse, seconded Cllr Lingard – unanimously agreed.

18. **Clerk's report/correspondence**

Slow Down Horse Rider signs – Cllr Wyse to discuss with parishioner suitable proposed locations

Potholes at Wetherup Street – it was reported these were being dealt with by Suffolk Highways

19. **Chair's Report**

The Chair reported he had spoken with the Police & Crime Commissioner regarding the anti-social behaviour issues. The Commissioner would be talking to local officers regarding the complaints.

An increase in taxi movements to and from the Manor School had been noted.

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

Rebuild costs for the village hall to be included as item on next agenda.

21. Date of next meeting: Monday 7 September 2026, 7pm at Wetheringsett Village Hall

Cllrs Wyse and Mrs Weir tendered their apologies for the September 2026 meeting.

Meeting closed 8.10pm

Signed:

Chair

Date:

August 2026 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Council sets out concerns over EcoPower Suffolk solar farm plans

EcoPower Suffolk's proposed development would cover a large area of Mid Suffolk and includes solar panels, battery storage facilities and associated infrastructure. While the council recognises the importance of renewable energy in helping to meet national climate and energy goals, it believes significant concerns remain that have not yet been adequately addressed by the developer.

The council's key concerns include:

- The loss of large areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.
- The impact of construction traffic on local roads and communities.
- Effects on the landscape, countryside views and public rights of way.
- Potential impacts on wildlife, heritage assets and the natural environment.
- Flood risk and water supply issues.
- The safety, design and operation of the proposed battery energy storage facilities.
- The combined impact of this project alongside other major infrastructure and energy developments planned across the area.

These concerns reflect a number of issues raised when the statutory consultation opened in June. At the time, Conservative councillors warned that important environmental information, including surveys on wildlife, archaeology and landscape, had not yet been published, making it difficult for residents to fully assess the proposals. They also highlighted concerns about the potential loss of almost 1,000 hectares of best and most versatile agricultural land, the suitability and safety of the proposed battery energy storage facilities, pressure on local water resources, and the cumulative impact on local communities, heritage assets, rights of way and the natural environment.

Under the Planning Act process, Suffolk County Council is a statutory consultee. Any final decision on the project will be made by the Secretary of State, not the County Council. The council's role is to assess the proposals, represent local interests and seek improvements where necessary.

Suffolk awarded £564,000 for major bus franchising study

Suffolk County Council has secured £564,000 in new Department for Transport (DfT) funding to conduct a full feasibility study into bus franchising across the county. The investment follows the high-profile roll-out of franchised bus services in Greater Manchester, alongside pilot studies in six other authorities. Suffolk is one of the first rural authorities to begin exploring whether greater public control over bus routes, fares and service levels could deliver better outcomes for passengers.

Scenarios to be explored include:

- A single countywide franchise - one unified system covering all Suffolk
- A joint Suffolk-Norfolk franchise - exploring efficiencies and cross-border connectivity

- Three franchises aligned to Local Government Reorganisation - reflecting the proposed administrative boundaries
- Smaller, targeted franchises - focused on key towns, corridors, or demand hotspots
- Alternative hybrid approaches - ensuring no promising model is overlooked

Franchising is increasingly viewed as a way for councils to take control of bus networks, determining where services run, how frequently they operate, and what fares are charged. Supporters say this approach ensures routes meet the needs of passengers and communities rather than prioritising commercial returns for operators. Crucially, the funding means Suffolk can carry out all research at no cost to local taxpayers. The feasibility study will include consultation with residents, bus companies, district and borough councils, businesses and other stakeholders. Details on how and when this engagement will take place will be confirmed as the project develops. Currently, bus services in Suffolk see the county council supplement the commercial network with supported routes, community transport schemes and demand responsive services.

Suffolk County Council plans £18.9 million investment to expand SEND support

A report considered by Cabinet on July 14 recommends allocating £18.889 million of government High Needs Capital Funding to expand local specialist provision between 2026 and 2030. The investment aims to help more children access the support they need closer to home, while reducing pressure on the SEND system and improving outcomes for families across Suffolk. This new provision would be fairly spread across west, north and south Suffolk.

Over recent years, Suffolk County Council has already delivered significant growth in SEND provision, creating around 170 places in mainstream specialist settings and a further 289 places through special school expansions and satellite provision. However, demand continues to rise. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has increased by 17% in the past year, from 10,292 in April 2025 to 12,018 in April 2026. The proposed investment would provide:

- 168 new specialist places in secondary schools through specialist bases linked to mainstream schools
- 80 additional places through satellite provision connected to existing special schools
- £2 million to support inclusion in mainstream schools
- £2 million for adaptations and improvements to mainstream schools
- £1 million to develop specialist post-16 provision across Suffolk

The council plans to make use of existing school buildings where possible, helping new provision to be delivered more quickly and cost-effectively than building new schools. The programme will focus on areas where demand is highest, particularly for children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and Communication and Interaction needs, including autism.

The report highlights that increasing local provision will help reduce the need for children to travel long distances to access education, improve placement stability, and reduce reliance on expensive independent and out-of-county placements. The council says the investment will also help create a more financially sustainable SEND system while ensuring children and young people receive the right support in the right place.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

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District Councillor Report Mendlesham Ward – August 2026

Stradbroke Leisure Centre Pool Closure for Maintenance	Essential maintenance on the roof and inside the pool hall. Closed for two weeks.
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Approved upper funding limits totalling £350,000 for Stowmarket Town centre Gateway Fund – From the Community Infrastructure Levy	• £100,000 for MSVOF-led redevelopment of Lockington Road • £100,000 for Stowmarket Arts CIC conversion of 6 Old Fox Yard • £70,000 for a new coffee roastery and community activities • £80,000 for a new milkshake, ice cream and dessert business
Delivering Infrastructure – From the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	Additional funding directed to supporting local communities. John Peel centre platform lift and associated work projects, old fire station community space project in Stowmarket, St Nicholas church Bedfield accessible composting toilet and pathway, creeting road Stowmarket “big park” play area upgrade project.
Council named as national finalist for nature recovery work	Mid Suffolk District Council has been shortlisted in Nature 2030's Political Purpose Awards, in the Planning for Nature Recovery category. A £1.8m Nature Recovery Budget and investing in 30 hectares of land in Thorndon, Palgrave and Stowmarket, specifically for nature recovery, with extensive public engagement helping to shape local management agreements.
Free community days out	Families across Babergh and Mid Suffolk can enjoy two free community fun days this summer, with a packed programme of activities on offer for all ages. Delivered by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, the events will take place between 10am and 2pm at Belle Vue Park in Sudbury on Wednesday 12 August, and at Stowupland Village Hall on Wednesday 19 August.
Mid Suffolk Police initiatives	Teamed up with local officer for ASB awareness, on Ipswich Street and Brett Drive, completing various tasks and patrols to counter anti-social behaviour
Home Plans approved	Mid Suffolk District Council approved the reserved matters for the former Bacton Middle School site, in Wyverstone Road Bacton. A joint venture between Suffolk County Council and Lovell Partnerships. It follows outline permission in 2020 for 50 homes, 10 of which affordable and a 3G football pitch alongside reserving land for primary and pre-school buildings.
Bin Collection	The service is now operating pretty much as intended, with all scheduled rounds completed. The food waste service collected 153 tonnes last week. Contact volumes on the dedicated Better Recycling telephone line have reduced, if anyone still has issues please let me know.
Equans investing in Babergh and Mid Suffolk	Babergh and Mid Suffolk have secured £3 million in funding, working with energy and regeneration contractor Equans, to improve efficiency in 168 more council homes, with completion expected by March 2027.
Water Stress	Water use is very much in the media at the moment, just a reminder that msdc declared a water stress zone in the Hartismere water catchment 3 years ago, meaning that new industrial or agricultural uses that have a high water use need to demonstrate where the water needs for the proposed operation will come from, this has already lead to new ponds etc ahead of the new reservoirs and desalination plants now being proposed in our region.
Skills and Innovation Centre opened	The £18,400,000.00 skills centre has now been opened at Gateway 14 Stowmarket, with over £16,000,000.00 of government funding, this centre has been built to a very high standard, with a living hybrid solar roof, the centre is available for local businesses start-ups etc to rent from a single desk to a conference suite, or anyone can visit for a coffee etc, with a focus on skills and training, we hope this centre will help address the level of average wages in Mid Suffolk as at present they are £5,500.00 less than the national average.

