

STOWLANGTOFT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**MONDAY 20 MARCH 2023 AT 7.30 PM
THE 'COMMON ROOM', ST GEORGE'S RD, STOWLANGTOFT**

Present: Cllrs D'Lima (Chair), Catchpole, Cuff, Suggett and White. A Osman (clerk) was also in attendance along with 3 members of the public.

85 **Apologies for absence.** Cllr Cassidy sent his apologies which were accepted by the meeting.

86 **Declarations of Interest.** None declared.

87 **Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023.** Cllr Suggett proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January be approved. Cllr Cuff seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

The February 2023 planning/urgent issues meeting was cancelled due to there being no planning applications or urgent issues to consider.

88 **Matters arising from the last meeting:**

Minute 76: 16 January 2023: Elections. The Clerk had provided a briefing note to Councillors following the SALC/Mid Suffolk District Council elections presentation held on 30 January.

Minute 77: 16 January 2023: Church Clock Repair. The Clerk confirmed that Clockwise Restorations had been paid for the repair of the clock and Cllr Ruff confirmed that the Community Fund had agreed to reimburse the Parish Council for the repairs.

Minute 81: 16 January 2023: Village Recorder. The Clerk confirmed that the village recorder position had been filled by the current village recorder at Norton. No further advertisement action was required.

89 **County Councillors Report.** The Parish Council noted the contents of the report previously circulated.

90 **District Councillors Report.** The meeting noted the contents of the District Councillors reports that had been previously circulated.

91 **Clerk's report:**

'The Common Room' Usage. The Clerk reported that he had contacted Mid Suffolk District Council to clarify arrangements for the use of 'The Common Room'. This work was ongoing due to lack of records around historic arrangements.

White line painting, The Street. The Clerk had hastened this work in February with Suffolk Highways who had apologised for the delay and stated that the road marking works require the use of the extrusion machine, and this is not ideal for installation until late March.

Replacement Village Sign. The Clerk indicated that the replacement village sign for the eastern end of The Street had been damaged in Suffolk Highways stores and a new sign was currently being made by Suffolk Highways. The existing sign would soon be removed by Suffolk Highways to allow the white gates to be repainted by the Street Cleansing Operative prior to the new sign being installed.

Printing. In light of the Clerk taking up another Clerk role in another parish, it was agreed that printing costs needed to be disaggregated and that from 1 April hard copy printing by the Clerk would be reimbursed at 7p per page.

VAS Post Move. It was **agreed that the Clerk would hasten the works** to move the VAS post at the western end of The Street.

92 **St George's Church.** Cllr Ruff reported that a Friends of St George's Church Committee had been formed to carry on fund raising work following the end of the Churches Conservation Trust agreement at the end of March. The Parochial Church Council would continue to look after church maintenance.

93 **Finance:**

Finance Report. Cllrs noted the financial report (current bank balance of £3450.49 and the projected outturn at the end of the FY of £2,450) and approved payments for:

Clerks Salary - £620.97
SALC Payroll Service - £22.80

Cllr Suggett agreed to authorised payment via BACS

Clerk Salary. The meeting agreed to a small increase in the Clerk's hourly rate from 1 April.

94 **Planning matters:** The meeting agreed not to provide any comment on DC/22/06199 – Discharge of Condition Pine House Company.

95 **Highways matters:**

Potholes. The meeting noted that most potholes reported via the Suffolk Highways reporting tool had been completed. The **Chair agreed to report a pothole by the pillbox and to hasten the rodding of drainage in Kiln Lane** previously reported on the reporting tool.

Parking. Cllr Ruff **agreed to clarify the situation with parking on St Georges Street and a potential abandoned vehicle** by the recycling bin.

SpeedWatch. Cllr Cuff provided an update on the village SpeedWatch activity.

96 **Correspondence.** The Clerk highlighted the ongoing Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Modifications Consultation, which does not relate to any changes Stowlangtoft, and confirmed that he would continue to monitor.

97 **Councillors' Forum.** None

98 **Public Forum:**

Coronation Event. The meeting agreed to provide a grant of £250 towards the planned village Coronation Event in May.

Crime Prevention. In light of recent crimes reported within the village, **Cllr Ruff agreed to raise the opportunity for a village Crime Prevention Meeting** in St George's Church with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team.

99 **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting on Monday 15 May 2023 at 7.45pm in St George's Church, Stowlangtoft. This meeting will follow the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.15pm

If any new planning applications or urgent actions are identified after the March 2023 meeting, a short meeting will be held on 17 April 2023 at 7.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.17pm.

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Chair

DRAFT

Parish Report – March 2023

Councillor: Andy Mellen

Division: Thedwastre North

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For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving

Homes for Ukraine: One Year Anniversary of War

The 24th February marked the one-year anniversary since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Suffolk continues to do its part through the Homes for Ukraine programme – hosting refugees fleeing the war. In total, 1256 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Suffolk through the programme. Currently, we have around 330 host families, supporting 750 Ukrainians – with others in private accommodation.

Suffolk is in need of new hosts, to continue to offer a safe haven for Ukrainian refugees who are not yet ready to enter private accommodation. Based on numbers, Suffolk needs 50 new hosts in the coming months. Hosts are entitled to £350 per month, which increases to £500 after 12 months.

If you think you can help, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/Ukraine.

SCC Financial Budget

At the beginning of February, the Council's budget for 2023/24 was voted in, confirming an increase in council tax by 3.99% - broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in general tax. Council services have faced a gruelling year of demand and additional cost pressures. In addition, the Council is not on track to achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2030, as they have promised to do so.

The opposition group proposed an additional 0.89% increase (19p weekly increase) to ensure vital services were protected from cutting support to residents. We pressed for this money to be used in the following ways:

1. To invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to develop a stronger pathway towards Net Zero.
2. To facilitate a review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.
3. Using £1m to actively recruit, retain and reward frontline staff in adult social care.
4. Providing more for Suffolk Libraries to help maintain services
5. To invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through EV vehicle usage.

The Conservatives voted against our budget amendments, saying our proposals were ill thought-out and inappropriate. The five Labour councillors did not submit a budget response, nor did they vote in the budget meeting, as a protest against the whole system of local authority funding.

SCC Cabinet Meeting

The Cabinet met in February to discuss the forecasts for the Council's current budget. The latest forecasts show that SCC is having to use more Reserves than anticipated to cover additional costs in running its services.

In addition, the Cabinet agreed to move the West Suffolk Archives in Bury St Edmunds to a new location in the town on Western Way. Our Group were concerned about the lack of sufficient public transport access to the new location – being far from the train station with an irregular bus service.

Finally, the Cabinet discussed the Fire & Rescue Service's new risk management plan. The plan outlines all foreseeable risks in Suffolk and indicates the service's priorities and proposals to improve the service.

New Highways Services: Contract Agreed

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded SCC's new highways services contract. The contract will last over 20 years and will be worth between £800m-£1bn, will begin 1st October 2023. The service will provide maintenance of roads, pavements, Rights of Way, drainage, hedges, construction of new roads, and snow clearing – this is not an exhaustive list.

Our Group campaigned last year for Suffolk Highways maintenance to be brought back in-house. This was due to the extortionate prices the previous provider, Kier, gave for simple jobs such as tree cutting and speed bump designs (i.e., £5,000 for a pair of dropped kerbs, £7,500 to cut down a single tree, £10,000 to design four humps in a road).

We have been given reassurance from Suffolk Highways that the same mistakes will not be repeated, and that the contract is more robust to deal with the inflated quotes previously received. We will closely monitor the new contract to ensure this is the case.

Household Support Fund: Extension Granted by Government

The Government has agreed to extend the Household Support Fund, meaning local authorities will continue to receive funding to help residents through the current cost-of-living crisis. The grant is distributed through small payments to support vulnerable household meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.

To apply for help, visit Suffolk's Cost-of-Living support leaflet at: <https://suffolk.pagetiger.com/cost-of-living-support/scc1>

District Cllr Report Thurston Ward

Beyton, Norton, Thurston, Tostock, Stowlangtoft

February 2023

MSDC Meeting.

Mid Suffolk District Council financial officers explained that the 2022/23 predicted surplus would be reduced by approx. £1 million to £3 million For 2023/24 the proposed budget was amended to include our Green Party proposal to make £2 million worth of grants for energy saving measures available for our district householders. Our project to make 2 electric buses available schedule services for rural villages continues. The budget was passed unanimously.

There will be a zero increase in our District Council Tax element. However, rents on our council houses will be increased by 7%. Councillors argued that since benefits were being increased by approximately 10% our tenants would be able to manage. This decision was not passed unanimously.

It was decided to increase the budget of our Communities and Wellness section. So from April grants would be made available for local organisations and communities to develop, improve and expand their building and activities. These grants can also be used for appropriate feasibility studies.

Thurston Community College/Beyton Sixth Form.

Held meetings with appropriate representatives of both sites exploring opportunities for improved community access to the above facilities such as meeting rooms, dance studios, football pitches, Netball courts, fitness studios and performance areas.

Planning

Thurston Parish Councils lost the case against MSDC/Bloor homes. Discussion now moves to reserved matters for the 210 house development off Beyton Road in Thurston.

Planning officers are minded to refuse the Gladman Homes proposed development off Ixworth Road.

Gateway 14 - The 'Range' has paid our MSDC subsidiary the initial £30 million.

Environment

Our district now has a 'Climate Change Manager'. One of the roles for this officer is to develop a plan for Electric Vehicle charging points. Accompanied Suffolk Wildlife trust officer and the 33 acre project lead on a tour of the site. Continued to push for the Cycle Route 51 change between School Road and Church Road in Thurston.

Locality Fund - Some of the equipment needed to set up a pickle ball club was the last 2022/23 grant.

Austin Davies

Mid Suffolk District Councillor

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March 2023

- **Council tax freeze plus £2m for energy saving measures**

Mid Suffolk District Council has confirmed a council tax freeze for residents and ringfenced £2m for household energy-saving measures for those most in need, despite rising costs and increased demands on services. [More information](#)

- **New £12m depot would 'future-proof' services for residents**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are exploring plans to consolidate three aging operational sites into a shared £12m depot – future-proofing services for residents and improving conditions for their staff. [More information](#)

- **New service aims to turn more than 1,000 empty houses into homes**

With over a thousand homes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts currently classified as empty, 'Houses4Homes' encourages owners of vacant residential properties to come forward for advice and support in turning their property into a home for another family.

[More information](#)

- **First look at culture, heritage and visitor economy strategy for Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

The first steps towards a dedicated cultural, heritage and visitor economy strategy could be taken should proposals be approved by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' cabinets in March. [More information](#)

Food network approved to help people through cost-of-living challenges Action to support even more people through the cost-of-living challenges will be taken in Suffolk as food bank usage rises. [More information](#)

VCFSE Resilience Fund: Councils launch third sector funding 'lifeline' Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are delivering vital support to incredible organisations already helping those in our communities most exposed to the cost-of-living crisis. [More information](#)

- **Target to end rough sleeping in Suffolk**

Suffolk's public sector leaders, including those from Babergh and Mid Suffolk, are targeting an end to rough sleeping across the county by 2027. [More information](#)

- **Suffolk's Exemplary Commitment to Retrofitting Homes**

Commendable efforts are being made across Suffolk to ensure the retrofit of energy inefficient homes. [More information](#)

- **Suffolk councils secure £2.2m to improve tenants' quality of life**

Suffolk's district and borough councils have secured £2.2m of Government funding to improve the standard of private rented homes in the county – tackling poor housing conditions and improving tenants' wellbeing. [More information](#)

- **Gateway 14 officially opens main estate road**

Mid Suffolk District Councillors joined representatives from Jaynic, town and parish councillors and partners involved in the Gateway 14 development for a ribbon cutting ceremony to officially open the first road on the site built by the infrastructure contractor Jackson Civil Engineering Ltd. [More information](#)

- **Community supports Chairman's Civic Service**

Civic dignitaries from across Suffolk joined Mid Suffolk District Council's Chairman and local community representatives for a special service at St Mary's the Virgin Church in Bramford earlier this month. [More information](#)

- **Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Land Charges team shortlisted for new national award**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are in the running for a national award, for making a critical step in the house buying process as easy as possible for residents. [More information](#)

- **Half-term activities for schoolchildren in Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

A week of swimming, sports and fun activities for children of all ages was staged for half term in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. [More information](#)

- **Supporting the elections this May**

As you will know, the local and parish elections are due to be held on Thursday 4 May. You can [see a full election timetable on our website](#).

- **Voter registration**

We will be supporting the Electoral Commission's 'Got 5?' campaign running through March and April to raise awareness of upcoming elections and drive voter registration. The Commission will be advertising across a combination of channels including TV, radio, posters, social media, website banners, cinema advertising, and Google search. We will also be sharing the messages through the council's social media channels and invite our towns and parishes to do the same.

- **Staffing**

There are still positions that need to be filled to ensure the elections are run smoothly across the districts. If you want to get involved, or know someone else who is interested please [see our website](#) or [email the Babergh and Mid Suffolk elections team](#) to find out more.

- **Voter ID**

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station, which will be implemented in the upcoming local and Parish elections in May. [More information](#). We will continue to support the Electoral Commission's national awareness campaign through all available council channels and ask that you also help where possible. You can find Electoral Commission resources, including posters and social media, here: [Voter ID resources | Electoral Commission](#)

- **Webinar by the Electoral Commission**

The Electoral Commission is hosting a pre-election webinar on **Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 12pm – 1pm** for candidates and agents taking part in the upcoming elections.

The webinar will provide an opportunity to gain essential information on the nomination process and the spending and donation rules, including information on:

- standing for election
- the nominations process
- when the spending rules apply
- how much you can spend
- notional spending rules
- who you can accept donations from
- what you need to report after the election

- There will also be a chance to ask questions. **To confirm attendance please email Stuart Butler on sbutler@electoralcommission.org.uk**

For those unable to attend, we understand the Commission plans to publish slides from the webinar after the event.