

# MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023

---

## Present

Mr. P. Whittle	Chairman
Mr. D. Cross	Vice Chairman
Mr. G. Smith	Parish Councillor
Mr S Clifford	Parish Councillor
Mr. D. Dray	Parish Councillor
Mr R, Searl	Parish Councillor
Mrs Jilly. Harris	Parish Councillor
Mr. R Lindsay	County Councillor
Mr. L. Jameson	District Councillor
Sarah Eastman	Conservation Warden
Mrs. L. King	Parish Clerk

## **1, Apologies for Absence**

Mrs J. Green                      Tree Warden

**2. Matters arising from Minutes of meeting held 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022** Minutes of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 meeting were accepted and signed. . Prop David Cross Sec: Simon Clifford Unanimous

**3. Correspondence** . I have sent a letter of support to John Williams the Chairman of Whatfield Carpet Bowls Club. We have received a receipt from Monks Eleigh Parish Council for the purchase of the SID. Mrs Trish Whittle emailed the PC with reference to getting the Roundabout Magazine to Whatfield. Mrs Frances Williams has now organised 20 copies to be placed into the telephone box.

## **4. County Councillor's Report**

### **Floods and drainage backlog**

Due to a number of long-running flood issues in my division which are not being prioritised by the county's drainage team, I requested details of what jobs had been done. Just 17 of the nearly 1000 flood and drain problems on Suffolk county council's list have been completed. The extra £10m that was allocated in Dec 2021 to be spent over 3.5 years is being used for "low hanging fruit" – minor civil work – that are not in this list, and that work has been speeded up. Climate scientists have been predicting an increase in rain fall for some time so it is a shame the drainage appears to have been underfunded. Separately I have been told that four people have got their vehicles stuck in the ford on Rectory Road in the past two weeks, despite the new depth gauge. Drivers need to learn to check the gauge and take alternative route if it is too deep.

### **County budget**

For the 2023/24 budget the county council is proposing to increase the council tax precept by 4%, below the 5% cap they are allowed. There are growing pressures from inflation, social care and children's' services. By not going up to the full cap they are missing out on £3.78million which they will have to take from reserves.

The residents' budget survey found that when asked to choose one thing they'd like to see more money spent on, most chose the environment, including net zero and wildlife, with social care close behind and road maintenance coming third. However when asked to choose five things, net zero only came 8<sup>th</sup>, beaten by social care for children and adults, mental health, bus services and roads and pavements.

### **40mph signs on Union Hill Semer**

These were apparently put up without permission and Highways have removed them. I had repeatedly requested a 40mph limit more than a year ago but have been told there are not enough houses along this road to meet Suffolk's speed limit criteria.

### **Bus motion**

At the last full county council (1<sup>st</sup> December) I proposed a motion to try to get a proper strategy in place for investing in buses in the county, the county having failed to win a penny in its latest bid for “Bus Back Better” money. The motion also asked for proper promotion with community bus operators of these services. A key part of the motion was to refer the county’s failed Bus Improvement Plan to scrutiny committee to see how it could be improved for next time. Sadly it was voted down by the Conservative administration, though supported by all the opposition parties.

### **Special Educational Need services – Update**

Last year, Suffolk CC’s SEND services were criticised in a damning report conducted by Lincolnshire Council which contained 32 recommendations. This month our political group on the county was told that 22 of the 32 recommendations have been actioned, and the remaining 10 will be completed by the end of 2022.

The delivery of 1,317 new specialist school places by 2026 has been agreed and 826 of these places are now open. The number of Education Health Care Plans (EHP) has increased to 6,847 in September 2022, from 5,849 in September 2020.

### **Suffolk looks for more hosts for Ukrainian refugees**

New hosts coming forward to help accommodate guests that are already in Suffolk can sign up via the Suffolk County Council website, by **completing our online form** or emailing **refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk**.

Accommodation must be available to guests for a minimum of 6 months. Hosts will be eligible to receive the £350 thank you payment for up to 6 months or more, depending on the date your guests arrived in the UK (12 months starting from the date your guests first arrived in the UK). If you know anyone that might be interested, please encourage them to visit **Ukraine: Could you help a family in need? | Suffolk County Council**

### **Suffolk to have a “Directly Elected Leader”**

Suffolk County Council’s leader has agreed to a deal with central Government that will create the post of directly elected leader of the county council. This person will be able to appoint their own cabinet from existing county councillors. This does not affect the district councils, it is essentially a reshuffle of county council governance. The county is being handed about £16m extra a year for next 30 years but a lot of this is ring-fenced for particular items and is less than has been cut from grants over the years. It is hard to find a single firm promise of extra powers in the deal.

## **5. District Councillor’s Report**

Firstly I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and I hope that you had a good Christmas period.

**Church Farm Place** Following confirmation from Babergh that the Open Space has now been adopted, I have spoken to the public realm team regarding the way forward. In terms of future maintenance of the site I am awaiting a meeting with our countryside officer and the council’s biodiversity officer.

**Footpath** I have been speaking to the Sustainable Travel Officer at Babergh regarding possible funding for an extension of the footpath in The Street, if the village are keen. This particular segment of missing footway hadn’t been picked up in the LCWIP consultation.

**Naughton Road** I am working with the housing team in Babergh to try to get some repairs on the driveway of number 11, which has become quite treacherous.

Recently the council has received applications from 178 groups for grants to enable them to provide “Warm Spaces” within their parishes.

### **Councils’ successful bid for housing fund pot**

Babergh District Council was amongst a number of local authorities to win funding from the Local Government Association to commission a vital, county-wide housing strategy review. The £20,000 pot will kick start a county-wide programme aiming to increase the number of genuinely affordable properties available to meet those in housing need.

### **Solar Panels**

Babergh has finished building solar carports over 40 of their existing car parking spaces to help power the leisure centre in Sudbury, providing over 16% of the centre’s annual electricity demand

The Council is among the UK’s first rural local authorities to trial the technology, which will reduce the centres’ reliance on the grid and cut carbon emissions.

### **Solar Farm appeal**

The Enso Solar farm that is looking to be built between Elmsett and Flowton has submitted an appeal to the planning inspectorate due to non-determination by both councils. The site which is mostly within Babergh also spans part of Mid Suffolk. Both Councils will now have urgent planning committee meetings so that a decision can be made available for the inspector.

### **What’s been done?**

Babergh has compiled a 23 page report detailing all the achievements that have been made since 2019. You can view the report online here - <https://bmsdhosting.net/End-of-Term-Report/Babergh-District-Council-2019-2022/>

## **6. Reports**

i) **Footpaths** OK, muddy in places as you would expect but generally good. Footpath 3 hopefully will be reinstated in the better weather.

ii) **Tree Wardens**

I have received an email from "David Appleton "who is the new Suffolk tree warden network coordinator. He has informed about a hedge laying course on the 11 and 12 of February. It's at Great Waldingfield, the course is led by a professional hedge layer, "Alison Marchant". If anyone is interested in attending the course it will cost non tree warden £70. (Tree planting)

I understand that local residents would like to plant a memorial tree for Joy Wellings and husband Jerry who passed away few months ago.

I understand there's few spots left in Hunty's meadow that might be suitable, I have also made few suggestions to "Sarah" our conversation manager of other planting areas.

This would mean a conciliation with the local landowners.

I hope this will be acceptable to "Whatfield parish councillors".

Joy and Jerry lived in Whatfield for more than 20 years and contributed a lot of their time to local clubs and community activities.

So think the tree planting in their memories is well deserved!

(Interesting fact - for netting of fruit trees and vegetables)

We are being asked to be more careful what size netting we use in our vegetable gardens and on our fruit trees, so the "birds and wildlife" doesn't get trapped in the netting.

Apparently the criteria for the netting must be a 5mmx5mm or less this applies to allotmenters as well.

(Tree Issue)

I haven't received any complaints from local residents of any tree issues.

iii) **Conservation Report** . It is again cold and frosty but despite this catkins have emerged on the hazels in both meadows and the drift, and there was plenty of small birds in and around the conservation areas today .I also heard fieldfares and saw a couple of redwings and have regularly been seeing red kites and buzzards around the meadows. I have taken a few pictures of Hunty's meadow which show open areas, rough grass and the fruit trees.

Paul Whittle raised a concern that the ancient meadow that is 'Hunty's Vale' is on the verge of having too many new fruit trees added on the meadow which will essentially change the rare conservation nature of the meadow itself. A vote was held to plant the new apple tree for Joy Wellings. The vote was carried, but Sarah Eastman, Conservation Coordinator, has agreed that this will be the last commemorative fruit tree to be accepted into the meadow.

**Questions from the Public – None**

**6. Action Updates**

**Allotments** All allotments are fine.

**Playground** Obviously our low season with visitor numbers down. My last inspection a couple of weeks back was satisfactory with some minor issues (weeds under cattle grid) that will need to be addressed in the spring before the crowds return.

**7. Planning - None**

**8. Health & Safety –None**

**9. Accounts and Payments** As of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 we have a bank balance of £9,505.73 with an outstanding cheque for £450.00 for the SID.

Next meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 at 7.45pm

Meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed ..... Date.....