

# MINUTES OF THE WHATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT WHATFIELD VILLAGE HALL 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

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## 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 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023** Minutes of 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 meeting were accepted and signed. . Prop Roy Searl Sec: Simon Clifford Unanimous

**3. Correspondence** . I have received a letter from Marilyn. Tanya, Desi the Payne family with reference to planting trees in memory of their family. Sarah and Richard to discuss and Clerk to let family know... We have had several requests that the hedgerow on the entrance to Wheatfields be cut back to allow good visibility onto the Street the Chairman agreed to talk to the owner.

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

### **£1bn Highways contract awarded to Milestone Infrastructure**

The county's Highways maintenance contract with Kier Group is due to expire on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Kier failed to make the three-strong shortlist for the re-tendered contract which has now been awarded to Milestone, part of venture capital-owned M Group Services. Milestone's road maintenance business was created by buying Swedish group Skanska's UK facilities management arm. It will be responsible for maintenance of roads, pavements, rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, and construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

The contract is worth between £800 million and £1 billion and will last up to 20 years. The tender aimed to ensure Milestone uses local suppliers and services where possible. Milestone's parent M Group is one of the top rated business support services companies for environmental and social governance.

### **County reaffirms commitment to zero carbon by 2030, but not on track.**

The county council at its last meeting in March passed a motion proposed by my political group (Green, LibDem and independent) to reaffirm their commitment to zero carbon. However original wording which noted that the council was not on track with this goal so far was taken out by the Conservative administration before they would agree to vote for it.

### **Cabinet agrees £32m funding for new schools and walking and cycling bridges in Ipswich**

The Cabinet has agreed an additional £32m investment for 11 new schools as well as further maintenance and expansion of current schools.

In addition, £10.8m was agreed to help deliver new walking and cycling bridges in Ipswich.

My political group highlighted that there are infrastructure projects throughout the county that need investment urgently and that the Administration needs a more coherent delivery plan to address needs outside Ipswich.

### **SEND Report: Update**

A Government assessment of Special Educational Needs services in Suffolk has been described as 'reassuring' after the county's service adopted all recommendations given in a damning independent report it commissioned back in 2021.

The county council has hired a Special Advisor for SEND Services, to support existing improvements. As the main opposition my political group – Green, LibDem and Independent - will ensure via the Education Scrutiny Committee that this process is rigorously tested.

#### **Homes for Ukraine: SCC Commit to More Money**

Suffolk County Council has announced additional financial support for households hosting Ukrainian refugees.

Those who have homed a Ukrainian refugee for a minimum of 6 months will receive an additional £150 per month (in addition to the £350 monthly payment, which will rise to £500 after guests have stayed 12 months).

However, once the £500 monthly payment has been received, the council will stop its additional funding.

For more information, please visit: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/ukraine](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ukraine)

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

### **Budget News**

The current economic situation has put pressure on the Council to deliver a balanced budget this year. The net cost of delivering services is set to increase by almost 20% from £10.43m in 2022/3 to £12.45m in 2023/24, while the cost of running and maintaining the council's housing stock has already increased by 50%.

It was a difficult decision to agree to this year's budget because while the Council has been able to use savings and investments to balance the books, next year's budget will see a 2.99% increase to the district council's share of council tax - the equivalent of an extra £5.30 a year, or 10p a week for residents in a Band D property.

Council tenants will also see a 7% increase in rents to try to keep pace with increased costs and ensure necessary investment in repairs and maintenance across the council's social housing stock. This will mean average weekly social rent increasing by £6.68 a week from £95.47 to £102.15. For affordable housing, weekly rents would increase by £9.41 from £134.39 to £143.80.

Although the Council balanced the books this year, the outlook for the forthcoming years is much more challenging.

### **Housing**

Following an in-depth review of the Councils' Building Services the Council have self-referred themselves to the regulator for social housing. A number of properties were found to be failing Health & Safety compliance.

Detailed investigations showed that some of homes were not compliant, and urgent action is being undertaken to resolve the issues.

In Babergh, of 3,502 properties

- 116 did not have an up-to-date electrical safety report.
- Seventy-two were overdue a gas safety inspection.
- Thirty-two were overdue asbestos re-inspection surveys.

A Regulatory Notice was issued for this breach of compliance. This means it will now monitor Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils and will meet with the Council regularly to ensure the necessary changes are made.

Also in housing, there are currently around 1000 homes across both districts sitting empty. To help bring these houses into use Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have introduced their Houses4Homes service, providing help and support for owners of properties that have been empty for six months or more.

Houses4Homes supports the councils' aim to reduce the number of long-term empty properties within the districts, by helping to bring them back into use and discourage owners from leaving them empty.

### **New Depot funding**

The councils have also sought agreement to add £6m to each budget to start the search for a single depot. The plan is to close three aging sites and consolidate them into a single 8-acre site at a location close to the A14, for the councils' two hundred shared operational staff and fleet – including waste services, public realm, and building services and repairs teams.

Now the councils have approved funding, the next stage of the project will involve developing a more detailed business case.

### **Babergh Funding**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have again been able to offer funding to community projects across the districts with money received from developers. More than £500,000 in funding was approved for the latest round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bids. 11 bids received support, including a 3G pitch for AFC Sudbury, an activity room and extension at Stutton Village Hall and a new play area in Capel St Mary.

### **May Elections**

The May elections will be the first where voters will be required to produce photo ID at the polling station. Many forms of ID can be used and even out of date driving licences and passports will be accepted as long as the picture is clear. Alternatively residents can also apply to the council for photo ID or register for a postal votes which does not require ID.

The council 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. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council will also be sharing the messages through the council's social media channels and invite our towns and parishes to do the same.

### **6. Reports**

i) **Footpaths** Footpaths all in good order albeit a bit wet and muddy, most are well used and clear of poo, dogs that is. No hedge cutting back this year as far as I'm aware along footpaths

ii) **Tree Wardens**

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

iii) **Conservation Report**

**Buckles Meadow** I am pleased to report that the 65 plus saplings we planted a year ago in the hedge line bordering Jane Appleby's field have almost all survived despite the dry conditions we had last summer. Richard did water them on several occasions which I am sure helped.

**The Drift Area.** Richard has taken down the sycamore tree and replanted with a few oak, silver birch and ash saplings and protected these with the brushwood leaving the larger wood to decompose and provide habitat.

**Hunty Meadow** The low and contained bramble area at the top of the field is just starting to take shape, I have planted some small teasel plants which I hope will manage to grow and attract finches. The exit at the bottom of this meadow leading onto the footpath is extremely slippery and steep. I mentioned this to Richard and we both think a rail at the very least would be a much safer way to get onto the footpath. (further down there is also a bank leading onto another footpath which had steps cut out and this also needs attention)

I have had two other requests for trees to be planted in the meadow and I wonder if the parish council would consider another small community orchard project perhaps using some part of the church farm land. Whilst I know the village do not own this amenity land, green spaces are being supported by local authorities.

**Questions from the Public – None**

### **6. Action Updates**

**Allotments** All allotments are fine.

**Playground** Annual Inspection has been booked for June

7. **Planning** - Erection of timber pergola (6m x 3m x 2.4m) in rear garden Location: 10 Church Farm Place, Whatfield, Ipswich, Suffolk IP7 6QQ

Erection of one and a half storey rear extension and front

Porch extension Location: Furno Cottages, The Street, Whatfield, Ipswich Suffolk IP7 6QP

8. **Health & Safety** –None

9. **Accounts and Payments** As of the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 we have a bank balance of £9,048.43 with no outstanding cheques. We have received the grant from Leigh for payment towards the SID

Next meeting 20th September 2023 at 7.45pm

Meeting closed at 8.50pm

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