



Wickham Skeith Parish Council

MINUTES of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
held **MONDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2023** at the Village Hall, Wickham Skeith.

Present: Cllrs (Chair) M Appleby, J Keable, A Noller, T Rowe and T Thorogood
Suffolk County Cllr Andrew Stringer and Mid Suffolk District Cllr R Warboys
Clerk: L Rogers
Also present: 7 members of the public.

1. 13/11/23 Cllr Appleby was elected as Chairman.
2. 13/11/23: Apologies received from Cllr R Palmer
3. 13/11/23: a). To receive members' Declarations of Interest on Agenda items- None received b). To consider requests for dispensations. None received.
4. **13/11/23 The minutes of the meeting** of the Council held on 11th September 2023 were approved and signed
5. **13/11/23 County Cllr Stringer** Both Councillors Stringer and Warboys reported their authorities' actions during and following the recent floods. Cllr Stringer was thanked for circulating an e-document: Guidance for Riparian Ownership in Suffolk. This led to a full discussion about the recent floods in Wickham Skeith. Anyone whose house was flooded should let the council know as financial and practical support is available. Councillors raised issues that need to be improved as well as some possible ways forward. These included - for immediate action - the Street needs to be cleaned of accumulated silt, gravel and debris as it is presenting a hazard. Councillors wish to see reinstatement and stabilisation of verges eroded by wash from cars and flood water. Going forward there should be regular clearance of road gullies. It is understood that this is currently scheduled to be done twice a year. Let Cllr Stringer know if any gullies are blocked or pipes collapsed. Councillors acknowledged that the Highways Reporting Tool had been helpful in reporting issues for attention.
Councillors asked about responsibilities and schedules for dredging of the river Dove to remove vegetation which is impeding water flow. Councillors also asked for consideration to widening the under-road channel where the river Dove crosses the Highway and which had once been a ford. The current pipe is insufficient to take high river flows.
Councillors wished to explore ways of managing and reducing flood impact in the future given the scenario for more events on this scale. For example councillors wished to have more ability to cope with traffic accessing the village during floods. Cllr Stringer explained that a Parish Council cannot close a road and Highways have to make decisions about priorities in emergencies. However the Council can purchase its own flood warning signs and put these up to deter/warn drivers. It was suggested that some way should be found of marking the location of road drains so that local people can attempt to clear blockages in emergencies. Might it be possible to develop a water level gauge, such as those found adjacent to fords, so that drivers could assess the height of flood water before entering. This should be nationally recognised.
The Parish Council has submitted questions to the Highways operational review with new contractors Milestone.
6. **13/11/23 District Cllr Warboys** – report appendix 2 – recent floods were also discussed.
7. **13/11/23 Village Forum** – no matters were raised
8. **13/11/23 Planning Matters** – the councillors have no objections to the two planning applications received:
 - a) APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION - DC/23/0435: Proposal: Householder Application. Erection of 26no ground mounted photovoltaic panels in garden. Location: The White House, Grange Road, Wickham Skeith
 - b) DISCHARGE OF CONDITION(S) TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 Proposal: Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/23/00903 - Condition 6 (Surface Water Discharge Details) Location: Land To North Of Bumbledown (& Forming Part Of Previously Approved Development Site), Grange Road, Wickham Skeith

9. **13/11/23: Management of the Grimmer** – The CIL Working party and Mark Legget have made a report to manage the Grimmer in zones. It was agreed to hold two working parties. Firstly a dry working party to remove the overgrown vegetation surrounding the Grimmer. This will take place in early February and Kevin Knights kindly agreed to help organise this. Cllr Appleby to advertise it the village magazine. The second working party will take place in Spring after the toads have hatched and will be to remove the overgrown weeds from the Grimmer so will be a wet working party. The weeds will be left at the sides of the Grimmer to allow invertebrates to get back to the water and to let the water drain. The Council agreed to review the management and use of the Grimmer in a year's time.

10.13/11/23 Thermal Camera – Cllr Appleby and Noller to work as a team to look at several houses and also at the village hall on quiz night

11. 13/11/23: Emergency Plan – It was agreed that this needs updating to include emergencies such as fire and flooding in the village. Clerk to ask for guidance from Suffolk County Council

12. 13/11/23: CIL Working Party – Work is in progress to obtain quotes to replace the village hall roof. Neighbourhood CIL cannot be used – Clerk to discuss alternative funding with Mid Suffolk District Council.

Quotes needed for a projector screen and speakers for the village hall. Cllr Stringer to arrange a speaker demonstration at the hall

The council agreed to buy an improved SID from Elan at a cost of £2200. Cllr Appleby to ask Nigel Merriman if he can provide some data from the SID about traffic volume and speeds.

The council agreed to buy one green dog bin and an improved litter bin at a cost of £568.01.

The CIL working group agreed there are enough benches in the village

Village hall outdoor lighting has been improved. Thanks to those who arranged the work and for putting a light above the defibrillator. The council agreed to pay the cost of the work at £581.26

13. 13/11/23: Finance

13.1. The Councillors approved the finance report – Appendix 3

13.2. The Councillors agreed to continue to provide internet at the village hall. The new contract is with BT at £26.94 monthly for 24 months. A new BT hub to be delivered at a cost of £9.95

13.3. The Council was pleased to receive a ride in Place Grant of £164.40. This will be used to buy new bunting for the fete and other events, the trough at the village hall has been planted and looks good and a new header for the notice board will be ordered.

13.4 The Councillors reviewed and agreed the Financial Risk Assessment

13.5 The Councillors reviewed and approved the external audit and noted the Asset Register figure did not match that on the AGAR. Asset Register to be reviewed at the next meeting

13.5 The Councillors agreed to purchase a dog bin, litter bin, SID and to pay for the lighting improvements at the village hall

13.6 The Councillors viewed the draft budget and agreed to finalise at the January meeting

13.7 The Councillors agreed the annual pay increase for the Clerk at an extra £1.00per hour – now £13.50 with effect from 1st April 2023

13.8 The Councillors agreed to carry out required work to the Willow tree at the edge of the Grimmer at a cost of £750.00

14. 11/9/23: Councillor's Reports - The defibrillator has been checked and found to be in good working order after a report that it might have been used so might not be ready to use

15. 11/9/23: Next Parish Council meeting Monday 15th January 2024 at 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Signed: Date:

Appendix 1 County Councillor Andrew Stringer's Report

Supporting Suffolk Farmers

The council meeting on Thursday 19 October saw councillors vote to approve a motion supporting local farmers and food producers by ensuring that local meat and dairy, as well as plant-based produce, is served at council events. The council's facilities and catering arm, Vertas, has 68% of its spend with Suffolk suppliers and 86% with regional suppliers. In order to tackle the county's environmental priorities and boost the local economy, the council also pledged to encourage Suffolk residents to buy local produce and shop locally wherever possible.

Walking and Bridleway Access

At Cabinet on Tuesday 10 October, members of the Suffolk Local Access Forum joined the meeting to provide their annual report, which included the work they are doing to improve and maintain footways and access around the county, particularly with Network Rail and National Highways to make sure that new developments take foot traffic and walkers into account. They are keen for the council to promote the East Anglian sections of the newly named King Charles III England Coast Path. The forum expressed concern about the significant large-scale energy infrastructure projects planned for the county and could impact on Suffolk residents' enjoyment of the green access network and impact on the county's natural environment.

Suffolk Pharmacies

On 11 October, councillors from my group attended Health Scrutiny which was looking at the service provided by pharmacies in Suffolk and the challenges they face with funding, staff recruitment, medicine shortages and pharmacies closing. Representatives from the NHS, Suffolk GPs and the Suffolk Pharmaceutical Committee joined the meeting and recommendations were made to write to minister about funding, and work with local schools and the University of Suffolk to promote pharmacy as a career path. It was noted that in order to provide extra services (such as blood pressure checks, cholesterol tests and asthma advice) which take pressure off GP surgeries, more space and consulting rooms would be required than Suffolk pharmacies currently had available.

Budget Consultation

Suffolk County Council is keen to hear from Suffolk residents, businesses and local communities as it decides how it will spend money next year and has launched an online consultation to give Suffolk residents a say in budget setting for the financial year 2024-25. There will also be a number of focus groups to explain the council's current financial situation, along with the chance for Suffolk residents and businesses to have a say on Council Tax proposals.

There are three key questions, the first is on which services people have recently used, the second asks for thoughts on seeking a greater contribution to Council Tax to help fund public services, and the third on which service area you would like to see more money spent. The online survey can be found at the link below – please give us your views! http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget24_25/

Storm Babet/ Kieran Flooding

Suffolk County Council and my group would like to extend their thanks to those of you around the county who helped other residents whose homes and travel were affected by the rains and flooding that struck Suffolk on Friday 20 October. The way the emergency services, volunteers, farmers and local communities worked together to help children get home from school, move people to safety and protect buildings from flooding was truly inspirational.

If you have been affected by the Storm Babet and the recent flooding, please use link below for SCC support and advice: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

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>

Appendix 2 Report from District Councillor Warbouys

Flooding	<p>After Storm Babet, the Council has been working hard to help residents in affected homes and businesses.</p> <p>Householders are being urged to report flood damage via Suffolk County Council's reporting tool.</p> <p>The government has announced some financial support and we are waiting to see how this can be distributed.</p> <p>Mid Suffolk District Council will be reviewing their processes that are currently in place for dealing with this type of emergency situation.</p> <p>Affected businesses should also contact Mid Suffolk to register for support. Please visit www.midsuffolk.gov.uk for full details.</p>
Solar farms	<p>At Mid Suffolk's Council meeting on 26th October, a position statement on Solar Farms was agreed. This stated that solar farms should not be based on prime agricultural land and the landscape impact on our communities needed to be taken into account. In the absence of clear Government policy, the Council cannot make planning policy regarding renewable energy such as solar farms or solar PV on roof tops. We can only provide a statement of intent in terms of how we wish to see developments proceed. In January next year we expect to produce a full Supplementary Planning Document on this which takes longer to put together as it has to be consulted on and provide relevant evidence.</p>
Sustainable transport	<p>At the Council meeting it was also agreed to form a working group to review sustainable integrated transport in the district – particularly for walking and cycling. It is hoped to review this in relation to commencing schemes in villages in the district.</p>
	<p>The Cosy Homes initiative is being launched on 15th November. Eligible households will be able to apply for energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including if privately rented. This insulation assistance will be free of charge to the resident.</p> <p>Full details to be available soon.</p> <p>Our message is helping people to save energy, save money and reduce their carbon footprint. Particularly vulnerable households can continue to access this via the wider Suffolk scheme, www.warmhomessuffolk.org</p>

Council Housing	<p>The Council currently provides a very poor level of service for maintaining our housing stock and have a very low level of tenant satisfaction.</p> <p>The new Administration at Mid Suffolk is focussing on the backlog of housing repairs that are needed. This backlog will be dealt with via a separate contractor allowing the in-house team to concentrate on day-to-day repairs.</p> <p>We are also investing heavily in the repairs and maintenance service for our Council stock. We have engaged external partners to monitor our service moving forward.</p>
Homelessness strategy	<p>District Councils have duties with respect to homelessness and rough sleeping. It is our ambition that rough sleeping is rare, brief and non-recurring and that homelessness is routinely prevented through early upstream intervention.</p> <p>We are carrying out a general review of our service which will be validated by Shelter to ensure we offer the best service possible.</p> <p>To combat homelessness and rough sleeping the Council uses its own temporary accommodation, in so doing we don't incur additional costs faced by other authorities.</p>

Mid Suffolk District Council's consultation seeking resident feedback on the planned priorities for the District is still in progress. We are hoping to engage with as wide a section of the district as possible, including some groups which seldom get involved, as well as businesses and Town and Parish Councils. There is an online survey gives you the opportunity to have your say about our initial ideas – see link below.

<https://baberghandmidsuffolk.citizenlab.co/en-GB/projects/setting-the-future-direction-of-your-councils>

Financial Report

WICKHAM SKEITH PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCIAL REPORT 13 NOVEMBER 2023

Receipts since 11.9.23

4.9.23	Interest	3.01
11.9.23	MSDC Precept	2,017.50
		<u>2,020.51</u>

Expenditure (movement since 11.9.23)

Schedule of verified invoices agreed for payment

10.9.23	L Rogers expenses	15.45
19.9.23	Laptop & software	369.79
19.9.23	CAS Insurance	385.33
25.9.23	Plusnet	39.36
16.10.23	L Rogers October wages	175.00
19.10.23	Village hall hire July/September	30.00
25.10.23	Plusnet	39.36
2.11.23	External audit	252.00
7.11.23	L Rogers November wages	175.00

8.11.23	L Rogers back pay from 1.4.23	112.00
		<u>1,593.29</u>

Unpresented cheques

16.10.23	L Rogers October wages	175.00
19.10.23	Village hall hire July/September	30.00
25.10.23	Plusnet	39.36
2.11.23	External audit	252.00
7.11.23	L Rogers November wages	175.00
8.11.23	L Rogers back pay from 1.4.23	112.00
		<u>783.36</u>

Bank

Reconciliation

Account	statement date	statement balance	actual balance	unpresented cheques
Community a/c	12.10.23	£31,074.26	£31,074.26	783.36
Business reserve	12.10.23	£1,125.99	£1,125.99	0.00
		£32,200.25	<u>£31,416.89</u>	