



Wickham Skeith Parish Council

MINUTES of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
held **MONDAY, 15 JANUARY 2024** at the Village Hall, Wickham Skeith

Present: Cllrs (Chair T Rowe), A Noller, R Palmer and T Thorogood
Suffolk County Cllr Andrew Stringer
Clerk: L Rogers
Also present: 9 members of the public.

1. 15/1/24 Cllr Rowe was elected as Chairman.
2. 15/1/24 Apologies received from Cllrs M Appleby, J Keable and District Cllr R Warboys
3. 15/1/24 a). To receive members' Declarations of Interest on Agenda items- None received b). To consider requests for dispensations. None received.
4. 15/1/24 **The minutes of the meeting** of the Council held on 13th November 2023 were approved and signed
5. 15/1/24 **County Cllr Stringer** – Suffolk County Council have received less grant from central government. This leaves the council having to cut grants to museums, arts and close two records offices (Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft). It will also impact adult social care leading to a diminished service. Flooding has occurred three times since October 2023 The river in Wickham Skeith is covered by the Environment Agency. There is a meeting in Debenham with the Environment Agency on 26th January. Cllr Stringer has been involved in checking flooding in Mendlesham and has found that much of the floods arise from houses where the ditches have been filled in with no pipes to allow the water to flow away. Highways are in the process of sending 1200 section 19 notices requiring land owners to unblock or pipe land in Suffolk. People should log any problems on the Highways reporting tool.
6. 15/1/24 **District Cllr Warboys** – report appendix 2 – was circulated to the Councillors.
7. 15/1/24 **Village Forum** – Flooding – a member of the public asked why the Suffolk County Council leaflet about Riparian Ownership has not been sent out to all households and landowners with riparian responsibilities. Anyone responsible for a water course should be made aware of their responsibilities. Many landowners/households have filled in ditches without putting in sufficient pipes to allow water to flow. It was agreed to put the Riparian Ownership leaflet on the Wickham Skeith website and a link to it in the newsletter. Various roads in the village have had repeated floods due to blocked pipes under the roads which need clearing. The bridge by the allotments is simply not large enough to allow the water to flow so always blocks and floods.
8. 15/1/24 **Planning Matters** – the following planning notices have been received:
 - a. DC/23/05694 Planning application – Erection of 1no single storey dwelling at land North of Bumbledown (forming part of previously, approved development site), Grange Road, Wickham Skeith
 - b. DC/23/05805 Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Formation, Alteration or Maintenance of Private Ways for Agricultural or Forestry use. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 6 - Creation of farm tracks. - Creation of farm tracks. Location: Land North Of, Thwaite Road, Wickham Skeith (part In the Parishes of Thwaite And Stoke Ash), Eye
 - c. Mid Suffolk District Council does not wish to object to the Application Reference: DC/23/05499 Notification of works to trees in a Conservation Area - Fell 1 No. Plum (T1) at The Twynings, The Entry, Wickham Skeith
9. 15/1/24 **Finance**
 - a. The councillors reviewed and agreed the RFO Report authorising payments made since the last meeting and to be made; noted income received since the last meeting; review the Reconciliation of Accounts against Bank Statement
 - b. The BT internet is working well at the village hall
 - c. The Councillors agreed the budget for 2024 -25 at £4594.00

- d. The Councillors agree to set the precept for 2024-2025 at £4,600. This is an increase of £4.01 for a Band D council tax property from £29.53 to £33.54 and will prevent running from reserves. The Chairman and Clerk signed the precept demand.
 - e. The Councillors agreed to transfer £15,000 to the deposit account to earn interest.
 - f. The Councillors reviewed and approved the Asset Register
 - g. The Councillors agreed to appoint Heelis & Lodge as Internal Auditor
 - h. The Councillors approved the increase in Fidelity cover insurance
10. 15/1/24 **Management of the Grimmer** – It was agreed to hold the dry working party to remove the overgrown vegetation surrounding the Grimmer on Saturday 3rd February at 9.30am – meet at the village hall. Kevin Knights kindly agreed to organise this. A second working party led by Mark Leggett will take place in April/May after the toads have hatched and will be to remove the overgrown weeds from the Grimmer so will be a wet working party. The Council will hire a skip to remove the waste.
 11. 15/1/24 **Scrap Metal Policy** – It was agreed there is no need to make comment
 12. 15/1/24 **Mid Suffolk District Council Call for Sites** – It was agreed that there are no development sites in the village to put forward to Mid Suffolk District Council
 13. 15/1/24 **Essex, Suffolk & Norfolk Pylons** – The information about the new power line technology has been sent on to Dan Poulter MP as an alternative to the new pylon lines. The proposed power lines and pylons will blight the village with an additional line of 50ft pylons to the existing powerlines and pylons. It was agreed to ask Rosie Pearson from the Pylons East Anglia pressure group to come to a public meeting in the village. Debbie Scarff to arrange a date with Rosie. Debbie Scarff to forward the invitation to list heritage sites and important views in the village to the Clerk to list in the magazine and on the website. It was agreed to send a leaflet to invite people to the meeting.
 14. 15/1/24 **Thermal Camera** – Twelve house and the village hall were assessed with the camera with interesting results. The results have been sent to Mid Suffolk District Council. Thanks to Cllrs Appleby and Noller
 15. 15/1/24 **Litter Pick** – it was agreed to hold the annual Litter Pick on Saturday 2nd March – meet at 9.30am at the village hall
 16. 15/1/24 **Trees in the Village** – Kevin Knights and Nigel Merrimanto look at the willow trees and feedback to the council. The trees to the rear of the village hall have been assessed and will have work carried out in the next few months. The trees leaning on cables on the bend have been reported to BT as they are phone lines. Cllr Appleby has actioned this.
 17. 15/1/24 **SID Camera Update** – The new SID is working well and has not needed the batteries charged in the 7 weeks it has been up as the solar panel is keeping it charged. It shows up well to oncoming motorist and is definitely slowing the traffic. Nigel watched 20 vehicles and only one went through on red – the others were all on green. It has recorded 1600 cars on average each weekday. 2350 on Thursday down to 1200 on Sundays. Its busy during the week. Cars are speeding up as they leave the village.
 18. 15/1/24 **D-Day 80 Years** – It was agreed to not hold any celebrations for the event. The bell ringing from Thornham will be welcomed.
 19. 15/1/24 **Greenest County Network** – The Councillors agreed to join the Greenest County Network and add the thermal imaging, flood management, increasing biodiversity and litter picking.
 19. 15/1/24 **Emergency Plan** –Clerk to follow up with Suffolk County Council
 20. 15/1/24 **CIL Working Party** – Two quotes have been obtained to replace the village hall roof. A further quote is needed. Some solar panel quotes have also come in. Further quotes needed. The cost of Bose speakers, cabling, desk to equalise sound and trolley is about £2,500. The screen is fine but a projector is required. Clerk to ask District Cllr Warboys if he can donate a grant towards the expected cost of £2,500.
- The improved SID from Elan at a cost of £2200 is up and running – thanks to Nigel Merriman
The CIL group are seeking advice to make a plan to upgrade the kitchen.

21. 15/1/24 **Councillor's Reports** – No matters raised

22. 15/1/24 **Next Parish Council meeting** Monday 29th April 2024 at 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Signed: Date:

Appendix 1 County Councillor Andrew Stringer's Report

Budget Setting - The draft budget papers for 2024/2025 were made public on the 3.1.2024, The settlement this year from central government has been disappointing, and has lead the administration to draft a budget with a series of cuts, on top of a proposed maximum increase in council tax. The Budget scrutiny papers agree that despite the increased overall funding for adult social care, that complaints will rise, while we are proposing doing less for those not in education training etc (neets) other than collect data on their number, finding apprenticeships, helping finding work etc will no longer be budgeted for. The draft budget also proposes Suffolk County Council closing two records offices, one in Bury St Edmunds one in Lowestoft, centralising all Suffolks records in The Hold in Ipswich. The draft budget also includes the withdrawal of £500,000.00 from the Arts. **Flooding in Suffolk** - Recent high rainfall has led to many Suffolk residents' homes being flooded, and flooding more generally on roads. At Council on 7 December, a motion was passed for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding, and to work closely with districts and boroughs, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to help prevent future flooding. My group had hoped to introduce further measures on regularity of maintenance, but this was not supported by the Conservative administration. The motion that was passed was preceded by an announcement by the council of £1m in extra funding to investigate flooding incidents in the county. Details of a government-funded scheme from DEFRA whereby Suffolk residents can apply for up to £5,000 to help protect their property from future flooding can be found at this link, with applications from January 2024:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk> **Sea Link Consultation Response** - On Tuesday 12 December, Suffolk County Council Cabinet reviewed their proposed response to the National Grid's proposals to link up Suffolk and Kent with undersea cables and landfall at Aldeburgh and a substation at nearby Friston. Councillors in these areas were particularly concerned about the impact on the natural environment and the Suffolk coastline, with most councillors agreeing that engagement with the community about the proposals had been poor, and the timing of the construction coinciding with Sizewell C to create even more pressure on the county's transport routes and tourism industry. Cabinet decided that they would not lodge a holding objection at this stage, but their response to the National Grid consultation outlined their concerns and the possibility of objecting in future once more details were known. **SCC Carbon Net Zero Ambitions** The council's Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 11 December to review the council's progress towards becoming carbon net zero by 2030. Overall there had been a 10% reduction in emissions in 2022/23, due to reduced energy use for street lighting (a recent upgrade programme) and reduced gas consumption at SCC property and schools. However, the council is not on target to be carbon neutral by 2030, at least partially due to the third scope of indirect emissions – this includes emissions by suppliers and contractors used by the council which are difficult to measure accurately and control. The supply chain represents 91% of the council's total footprint, and it has updated its contract terms and conditions to include annual reporting on reducing carbon emissions, and also requires suppliers to sign up to its Carbon Charter and Climate Change Commercial Ask. **Getting Children Ready for Education** - On Thursday 14 December, the council's Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee met to review the support the council provides to prepare children for school. This includes the county's nurseries and early years providers, health services for 0–5-year-olds and Family Hubs (formerly children's centres). In recent years the council has worked with the National Literacy Hub to try and engage children with reading, after research in 2020 concluded that educational attainment for Suffolk children was much lower than it should be. The Committee acknowledged the good work that

was going on in a challenging area and urged that recruitment of health visitors be prioritised by SCC to fill the current vacancies (21%). There were also plans to improve the council's digital platform - in partnership with parents - so they were able to find information and support more easily. **DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant** - As well as the initial £500 grant payment and council tax/business rate discounts, residents whose homes have been flooded may also be eligible for up to £5,000 from the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant, which the government requires Suffolk County Council to administer on their behalf. The application process will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures. Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>

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Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)

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 Warboys

Empty homes and Council Tax	To incentivise bringing more homes back into use, MSDC is proposing to increase the amount of Council Tax payable on long-term empty homes. Currently these attract a levy of 50% on the Council Tax payable. The new policy will be levies of 100% for empty homes being left for one (to five) year, 200% for five (to ten) years and 300% for ten years or more. Exceptions will apply – such as property under probate or properties undergoing major repairs. If approved, this will be from April 2024. Additionally, it is proposed that second homes attract a 100% levy. If approved, this will be from April 2025 as a year's notice has to be given. There had been the opportunity to increase some of these from 2019 but the previous Administration did not take these up.
Greenhouse gas emissions	MSDC has published its Greenhouse Gas Emissions report for 2022/23 which shows a reduction in emissions against 2018/19 when the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to be carbon neutral by 2030. The leisure centres are the biggest cause of emissions. As the first reductions made are the “low-hanging fruit”, there will be a lot more work to continue this downward trend.
Fees & charges for 2024/25	For the annual review process of setting fees or charges MSDC has to consider factors such as inflation and the hours involved. The Council cannot charge for some statutory services and national Government sets others. Discretionary charges, such as vehicle licensing, litter bin emptying and pavement licensing, can be set locally and for these MSDC aims to cover costs.
Stowmarket sports facilities improvements	MSDC Cabinet has approved of the full business case of the Stowmarket Sports Health and Leisure Project to allow the first stage, covering new and updated sports facilities, to go ahead. This includes a 3G pitch, special athletics track, multi-games area (MUGA), improving existing pitches and other facilities. If Council approves this, it is hoped work can start in 2024.
Home insulation	The <i>Cosy Homes</i> initiative launched with a £2 million fund and we are encouraging householders to apply. Eligible households can apply for free energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including if privately rented. Full details to be available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk

	This initiative is in addition to a programme of retrofit for the Council's own housing stock. Also, particularly vulnerable households can continue to access help via the wider Suffolk scheme, www.warmhomessuffolk.org
Flooding	Flood payments (of £500 for residents and £2,500 for businesses) are being processed by Mid Suffolk on the basis of information from the SCC highways reporting tool and information submitted to MSDC. Affected households may also be eligible for a discount on council tax. At present there is no confirmation that a second payment will be available.
Locality Award	A reminder that this year's locality awards are still open for applications. Any group or organisation can apply for amounts of £250 or more. Please contact one of us for an application form.

Cllr. Rowland Warboys Chair Mid Suffolk District Council 2023/24 (Green Party) Gislingham Ward
Email: rowland.warboys@midsuffolk.gov.uk

WICKHAM SKEITH PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCIAL REPORT 15 JANUARY 2024

Receipts since 13.11.23

13.11.23	Pride in Place grant		164.40
			<u>164.40</u>

Expenditure (movement since 13.11.23)

Schedule of verified invoices agreed for payment

22.11.23	WS village hall electric work	100699	581.26
7.12.23	Elan City SID	100700	2,807.99
7.12.23	L Rogers December wages	100701	189.00
14.12.23	Cancelled cheque	100702	0.00
14.12.23	L Rogers expenses	100703	24.90
2.1.24	CopyDiss noticeboard header	100704	18.00
2.1.24	T Thorogood grass voucher	100705	110.00
8.1.24	L Rogers January wages	100706	186.40
8.1.24	HMRC	100707	2.60
9.1.24	Bunting - One Stop promotions	100708	359.70
			<u>4,279.85</u>

Unpresented cheques

7.12.23	Elan City SID	100700	2,807.99
7.12.23	L Rogers December wages	100701	189.00
14.12.23	Cancelled cheque	100702	0.00
14.12.23	L Rogers expenses	100703	24.90
2.1.24	CopyDiss noticeboard header	100704	18.00
2.1.24	Tim Thorogood grass voucher	100705	110.00

8.1.24	L Rogers January wages	100706	186.40
8.1.24	HMRC	100707	2.60
9.1.24	Cancelled cheque	100708	0.00
			<u>3,698.59</u>

Bank Reconciliation

Account	statement date	statement balance	actual balance	unpresented cheques
Community a/c	12.12.23	£29,834.68	£29,834.68	3,698.59
Business reserve	12.12.23	£1,129.91	£1,129.91	0.00
		£30,964.59	<u>£27,266.00</u>	