

STOWLANGTOFT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 7.30PM
THE COMMON ROOM, St GEORGES Rd**

Present: Cllrs D'Lima (Chair), Bourne, Catchpole, Cuff and Marsh. A Osman (Clerk) was also in attendance along with District Cllr Richardson and a member of the public.

63 **Apologies for absence.** Cllr Suggett sent apologies which were accepted.

64 **Declarations of Interest.** None.

65 **Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024.** Cllr Cuff proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024 be approved. Cllr Catchpole seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

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

Minute 56: 21 October 2024: Quiet Lane Scheme Funding – Stowlangtoft Estate. Cllr Catchpole confirmed that Stowlangtoft Estate would be willing to contribute £500 towards the cost of the scheme

Minute 56: 21 October 2024: SpeedWatch Kiln Lane. Cllr Cuff reported that approval has been given to operate SpeedWatch on Kiln Lane and this would start shortly.

Minute 56: 21 October 2024: Churchyard Grass Cutting. Cllr Cuff reported that the path to the church had been cleared by community volunteers and that the Community Caretaker had quoted £225 to clear behind the church. It was agreed to **accept the £225 quote for clearing behind the church** and **Cllr Cuff agreed to let the Community Caretaker know.**

67 **County Councillor Report.** The meeting noted the contents of the County Councillor's report that had been previously circulated.

68 **District Councillors Report.** The meeting noted the contents of the District Councillor's reports that had been previously circulated.

The Common Room. The future use of The Common Room was discussed and it was agreed not to continue with the arrangement after 31 March 2025 due to affordability. The **Clerk was to inform Mid Suffolk District Council** of this decision. **Cllr Catchpole agreed to investigate potential meeting room options within Stowlangtoft Estate during the winter months;** St Georges Church would continue to be used during the summer.

County Cllr Andy Mellen arrived at 7.55pm

A1088 Bridge. County Cllr Mellen reported that the new bridge beams were due to be installed before Xmas and that the earliest finish date was the end of February 2025. Suffolk Highways were looking to install permanent no right turn signs at the Kiln Lane/Walsham Rd junction to prevent them from being removed.

County Cllr Andy Mellen and District Cllr Richardson left at 8.10pm

69 **Admin and Finance:**

LGA Pay Award Briefing Note. The meeting noted the LGA Pay Award briefing that had been previously circulated.

CIL Update. The meeting noted a CIL update briefing that had been previously circulated.

Finance Report. The meeting noted the financial report (current bank balance of £5,321.52, projected outturn at the end of the FY of £1,800 current account and £1,500 savings account), circulated before the meeting. Payments authorised:

Website Hosting	£60.00
Clerks Salary & Wages	£642.98

The Chair agreed to authorise payments.

Budget for FY25/26. The meeting considered the budget for FY25/26 based upon a draft circulated before the meeting. It was agreed that:

- Income relating to glass recycling would be removed from the budget due to the introduction of kerbside collections by West Suffolk Council.
- £250 for churchyard grass cutting would be added into the budget.
- The precept would be £3,850, an increase of £550.

Meeting Dates 25/26. The meeting agreed the dates for Parish Council meetings in 2025/26.

70 **Planning Matters.** None.

71 **Highways Matters.** The planned meeting on 20 November 24 with Suffolk Highways was noted; Cllr's Bourne, Cuff and Marsh along with the Clerk would attend.

72 **Correspondence.** It was agreed that **Cllr Cuff would attend a meeting with the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner** at Badwell Ash Village Hall on 6 January 2025.

73 **Councillors' Forum:**

Remembrance Statues. Cllr Cuff **agreed to take down the Remembrance Statues and seek permission to store in St Georges Church.**

Parish Council Equipment. Considering the need to move Parish Council owned tables and chairs out of The Common Room by the end of March, it was **agreed that the Clerk would seek permission from the Parochial Church Council to store these in St Georges Church.**

Event Sign. Cllr Cuff suggested that an event sign could be erected on the bank outside the church to publicise activities. It was agreed that **Cllr Cuff would approach the Church to enquire about land ownership and potential location.**

74 **Public Forum.** None

75 **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be held on Monday 20 January 2025 at 7.30pm The Common Room, St George's Rd.

If any planning applications or urgent actions are identified after the November meeting, these will be considered at a short meeting on Monday 16 December 2024 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.30pm.

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Chair

Parish Report – November 2024

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Protection from Flooding

You may have seen in the press that Suffolk County Council have announced an extra £1.5m of funding to deliver the first phase of works identified in the flood investigations following Storm Babet. The council is also writing to the government requesting £20m for flood protection to help prevent future flooding in the county, as it is likely extreme weather will become more likely due to the effects of climate change. At Cabinet on 8 October, a £2m financial contribution was agreed from the council towards flood protection at Benacre, south of Lowestoft. It was predicted that without the new measures, the A12 would be flooding at that location at nearly every high tide within a couple of years. The Environment Agency are also committing over £30m to the scheme, and Sizewell C agreed to make up the rest: the total cost of the works is £59m. My group raised concerns about other areas of flooding along the coast and whether the council had a strategy for dealing with the problems caused by coastal erosion and climate change, or a list of priorities when it comes to protecting local infrastructure.

Finally, at Scrutiny Committee on 24 October, a report was presented on highways flooding and the responsibilities held by the council, water companies and the Environment Agency. Suffolk County Council is the lead flood authority for Suffolk and although it has responsibility for surface water flooding, it does not have the capacity to manage it all and has to prioritise its response. Priority is given to works to address internal flooding to five or more properties, or flooding to major infrastructure for 10 hours or more.

If you have a stream or watercourse on your land, you have responsibilities to mitigate against flooding. You can find information about this in the council's guide to riparian ownership: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/maintenance-of-ditches-and-other-watercourses/riparian-ownership-in-suffolk>

There are also some links at the bottom of this report on how to protect your property from flooding and advice on how to deal with the aftermath of flooding.

Extension of the North Falls Windfarm

Cabinet on 8 October also included the council's response to the proposed wind farm extension at North Falls. This will be off the coast of Essex with no onshore infrastructure in Suffolk, although it still has the potential to affect transport routes, Suffolk ports and the local workforce. It will be visible from Suffolk but the impact of this has been judged as less than significant. The connection for this scheme to the National Grid is planned to be at Lawford, which will only be possible if the planned Norwich to Tilbury grid reinforcement goes ahead. My group pointed out that consent should not be granted for schemes that depended on other projects which were not yet approved, but it was noted that this was not unusual for the National Grid, which often granted grid connections for projects where there was no guarantee they would proceed.

Improving Access to GPs

At Health Scrutiny on Wednesday 9 October, we heard from the NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) about what they were doing to improve access to GPs in the county. Low numbers of GPs and a high demand for appointments has caused problems recently with many people unable to make appointments to see their doctors. The committee heard how practices were switching to cloud-based telephony to decrease the reliance on a limited number of phone lines (which contributes to the chaos of the 8am rush for appointments each morning), and digital booking so that AI can prioritise the urgency of appointments based on symptoms (it is still possible to book appointments by phone and in person if patients are unable to book online). The ICBs are also making an effort to train GPs and other practice medical staff locally as this means they are more likely to stay in the area. Some services, like blood pressure checks and contraception, can now be accessed at pharmacies. Members of the committee expressed concern that community pharmacies are also under pressure currently, and also that GP surgery buildings were in a poor state, with some plans for new surgeries abandoned due to cost, such as the Cardinal Practice in north west Ipswich. It was agreed that the physical buildings of the NHS – their ‘estate’ would be looked at in Health Scrutiny at a later date.

Cuts to Winter Fuel Payment

At Council on 17 October, a motion was passed that the council would write to the government and ask them to reverse the decision they have made to cut the eligibility for the winter fuel payment for pensioners. It is estimated that this will affect thousands of pensioners in the county. The council also announced a new £3m fund for interest-free loans to residents wishing to undertake energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps. The loans (up to £15,000) to be repaid over a maximum of seven years at 0% interest. The scheme will be open to homeowners across Suffolk from November, but you can register your interest now at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-home-suffolk-loan>. My group are obviously in favour of retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient, although as the council will be returning an unspent £5m to the government in March from their previous retrofitting scheme, we would urge people to apply if they are eligible - to make sure we are reducing as many energy bills as possible across the county.

Pavement safety and preventing trips and falls

At Council on 17 October my group brought forward a motion that the county review its priorities for repairing pavement defects. Currently, if there is a difference in the surface level of the footway of 20mm or more, this will be repaired, but we argued that in areas of high footfall or where a trip or fall had been recorded, this threshold was too high. Most members of the public who trip or fall are over 65, and in areas outside GP surgeries or opticians it would make sense for the repair policy to be more flexible. The administration at the council did not vote to pass our motion, but reported that a review of their highways processes was being undertaken. Councillors from my group will taking part in the review to try and ensure that poor quality footways are made safer for pedestrians to use.

Suffolk Local Transport Plan

A newly-developed plan which details the long-term vision for transport in Suffolk has been launched for public consultation. Local communities helped shape a new draft of the Suffolk Local Transport Plan by sharing their views back in February of this year and the council is now asking for feedback on the final proposed document. The plan details activity between 2025-2040 and sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk, including decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices.

The council has also produced fifteen 'Area Transport Plans' and a 'Suffolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan' which are the funded implementation plans for the wider Suffolk Local Transport Plan. These plans outline how the Local Transport Plan's vision and objectives will be delivered in key locations across the county. The consultation is available via www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP and will close on Monday 25 November 2024. The Local Transport Plan and its associated plans will then be presented to Suffolk County Council Cabinet in 2025.

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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>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/preparing-for-flooding>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

District Councillor Report:

November 2024

Affordable Housing on former Stowmarket Middle School site	38 new affordable homes have been constructed on the site that was previously occupied by the former Stowmarket Middle School, which closed in 2015. These houses include a wide range of sizes and rents, in order to increase affordability.
Council meeting	The monthly council was due to take place on the 31 st October, however it was cancelled due to agenda items being deferred to later meetings. The next meeting is due to take place on the 21 st November.
New Progress Power Community Benefit Fund	Mid Suffolk District Council has opened applications to a new fund which will make £270,000 available to community organisations and projects over the next three years. The Progress Power Community Benefit Fund has been provided by power generation business Drax as part of the development of the Progress Power Station on the former Eye Airfield site. £90,000 has been made available by the company each year to support local projects in the vicinity of the power station, with the fund and grant applications administered by Mid Suffolk District Council.
Stowmarket Town Centre revitalisation	At this month's cabinet meeting, funding was agreed for a list of new measures to help revitalise Stowmarket Town Centre. Measures discussed included a £400k grant scheme to assist with existing retailers, £100k to increase sustainability from the Wayfinding project, and £16k at developing overnight accommodation within the town.
Solar Together Scheme: Deadline extension	The extension for the Solar Together scheme has been extended to the 15 th November. The scheme is available for all residents for free.
Living Well in Winter Grant	The annual Living Well in Winter Grant was launched this year in order to support communities through the winter months. This includes assistance with financial management, improved accessibility for recreational activities, and the creation of new connections to allow community ties to flourish during the winter months.
Suffolk Taxibus (MSDC Rural Transport Grant funded projects)	<p>Mid Suffolk district council have launched their taxibus service . A number of routes are due to start operating shortly , the most relevant one for our parishes is on this link https://www.suffolktaxibus.com/stowmarket-circularvia-thurston The routes are not the same as the existing taxibus service from Woopit to Bury St. Edmunds.</p> <p>Further details will be provided by MSDC comms team and I have a list of FAQ's which I will distribute once they are out of draft</p>

David Bradbury
01.11.2024

District Councillor Report: Thurston Ward

4th November 2024

<p>New community transport services</p>	<p>The new services have been funded by Mid Suffolk District Council's Rural Transport Grants Scheme, after £820,000 was ringfenced for rural transport provision as part of the council's 2022/23 budget. The two new services will provide community transport options for residents wanting to travel to and from Stowmarket from surrounding villages, and also connect communities in Debenham, Eye and beyond.</p> <p>From 1 November, Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus operated by Swift Taxi Cabs will provide transport services across central and south Mid Suffolk. Initially, they will have two routes available - Stowmarket Circular via Thurston and Stowmarket Circular via Bacton. These routes have been chosen with the areas having been identified as having the greatest immediate need – such as lack of current provision.</p>
<p>Investment in Stowmarket town centre</p>	<p>MSDC have agreed to invest £1.5m generated from the Gateway 14 development into regenerating Stowmarket town centre by bringing empty units back into use. The Stowmarket Town Centre Gateway Fund is now up and running, with applications sought from agents and landlords of empty units, as well as potential tenants, to see how funding may be best used to help new business and community ventures off the ground.</p> <p>Additional new proposals include a £400K grant scheme for existing retailers to improve the appearances of their shopfronts, investing a further £225K in enhanced street cleansing and public realm services for the town, and feasibility work into demand for hotel accommodation. The shopfronts scheme could include new signage, canopies, lighting, or reinstatement of traditional or historic features that have been lost. This would be aimed at small and medium-sized firms, with national businesses excluded.</p>
<p>Community rail partnership</p>	<p>The Council has supported the formation of Greater Anglia's new Community Rail Partnership for the Ipswich to Cambridge line. The aim of the partnership is to help develop and promote rail services along this key regional rail corridor, helping to align the evolution of services in line with local needs.</p> <p>The new Ipswich to Cambridge partnership will look to focus on the communities served by trains along the line (Ipswich, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Elmswell, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Kennett, Newmarket, Dullingham and Cambridge). Mid Suffolk District Council will provide funding for the partnership alongside Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, West Suffolk Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Cambridge City Council.</p>
<p>Winter social isolation</p>	<p>The Living Well in Winter grant will help local organisations such as town and parish councils, village hall or playing field committees, sports clubs and sports centres, charities, social enterprises, community shops, and community interest companies deliver new and existing accessible spaces and activities during the colder months.</p> <p>Last year, a total of 14 projects received funding from the grant. Successful</p>

District Councillor Report: Thurston Ward

4th November 2024

	<p>projects included community cafes, additional family sessions at preschools, coffee and chat sessions, and activity clubs. Now, the grant window has opened again, enabling applicants to address issues like social isolation and decreased physical activity, which are exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, particularly during the winter.</p> <p>Other eligible projects might also include lunch clubs, after-school clubs, the continuation of warm spaces, subsidised family sports sessions, hobby workshops and beyond. Organisations can apply for a minimum of £500 and a maximum of £2,000, and have until Friday 8th November to do so.</p>
Street cleansing and ground maintenance	<p>Mid Suffolk's Cabinet have approved a proposal to enhance public realm services, increasing scheduled street cleaning and ground maintenance work in Stowmarket town centre, and creating REACT – a Respond, Enforce and Clean Team – to provide additional capacity to respond to urgent and reactive street clearing issues across the district.</p> <p>The creation of REACT will allow the public realm street cleansing team to focus on scheduled work across the district's large rural area – including dog and litter bin emptying, litter picking on the main rural road routes and villages, and mechanical sweeping – without the distraction of having to respond to reactive cleansing incidents. The new team would also play a role in education and enforcement, giving advice on street cleansing issues, patrolling problem areas, gathering evidence and issuing warnings and notices, working alongside the council's environmental protection team, where appropriate.</p>
Local issues	<p>The Fishwick junction in Thurston has been closed whilst final construction to the new staggered junction is ongoing; a diversion has been put in place via Pokeriage Corner.</p> <p>Confirmation has been received from Suffolk Highways that a one-way system has been installed in Kiln Lane, Stowlangtoft to mitigate additional traffic using the road whilst the bridge on the A1088 remains closed. The police have also undertaken to monitor the Kiln Lane regularly.</p>

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