

STOWLANGTOFT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**MONDAY 18 MARCH 2024 AT 7.30 PM
THE COMMON ROOM, STOWLANGTOFT**

Present: Cllrs Suggett (Vice Chair), Bourne, Catchpole and Marsh. A Osman (clerk) was also in attendance along with two members of the public.

84 **Apologies for absence.** Cllr D'Lima sent apologies which were accepted.

85 **Declarations of Interest.** None.

86 **Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024.** Cllr Bourne proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024 be approved. Cllr Marsh seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

The February meeting was cancelled due to no planning applications being received and no urgent actions needed.

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

Minute 72: 15 January 2024: Newsletter Funding. Cllr Cuff was not present to update. Payment details would be confirmed when the spring newsletter invoice was passed to the Clerk.

Minute 74: 15 January 2024: 20s Plenty. The meeting discussed various documents that had been previously circulated relating to the 20s Plenty Scheme and its implementation. It was **agreed that the Clerk would look at whether The Street or Kiln Lane would meet the Suffolk County Council criteria** for the scheme.

Minute 75: 15 January 2024: Z Cards. The Clerk reported that while some Z Cards had been provided by the Suffolk Resilience Forum, further copies to allow one to be provided for each household with the village newsletter were still awaited.

Minute 79: 15 January 2024: VAS Battery. Cllrs Cuff and D'Lima were not present to provide an update on the state of the battery in the eastern VAS on The Street; however, the device was working.

Minute 80. 15 January 2024: Locality Funding. The Clerk had successfully applied for locality funding for the cost of relocating the eastern VAS on The Street, replacement VAS batteries and charger and for the spring village newsletter; funding was provided from District Cllr Davies' locality fund.

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

89 **District Councillors Report.** The meeting noted the contents of the District Councillors combined report that had been previously circulated.

90 **Clerk's report:**

Mid Suffolk District Council Manager Visit. The Clerk reported that he had met with Head of Tenancy Services at the Common Room to discuss maintenance of the room, including legal checks on electrical items and fire safety.

91 **St Georges Church.** Cllr Suggett **agreed to check with the PCC on the visit of the architects.**

92 **Finance:**

Finance Report. The meeting noted the financial report (current bank balance of £2696.13 and the projected outturn at the end of the FY of £1,500 current account and £1,500 savings account), circulated before the meeting. Payments authorised:

HART Farm Services	£288.00
Clerks Salary & Exps	£542.91
VAS Batteries & charger	£330.58

Cllr Suggett agreed to authorise payments.

93 **Planning matters.** None

94 **Highways matters:**

Kiln Lane Traffic Survey. The meeting noted Kiln Lane traffic survey results that had been pre circulated.

A1088 Bridge Works. The meeting noted a previously circulated written brief from the Clerk on a meeting of the A1088 Bridge Liaison Group held on 26 February 2024. The Vice Chair welcomed Mr White-Thomson, Chair of Hunston Parish Meeting. Bridge reconstruction work was still due to commence in June for 4 months and all local villages had highlighted concerns about increased traffic on roads that were in a poor state of repair at the A1088 Bridge Liaison Group Meeting. At this liaison meeting, Suffolk County Council agreed to look at preventative highways' maintenance and post works restoration.

County Cllr Mellen arrived at 8.00pm

County Cllr Mellen indicated that the ongoing A14 works might still affect the start date of the A1088 bridge works as the official diversion when the bridge was closed was along the A14. **County Cllr Mellen agreed to:**

- **Temp Speed limits.** Find out from Suffolk Highways what the County Council's position was regarding temporary speed limits between Badwell Ash and the A1088 during the bridge closure period.
- **A1088 Repairs.** Ask whether a more permanent repair to the pothole prone A1088 bend leading to the bridge could be made while the bridge was closed.

County Cllr Mellen left the meeting at 8.15pm

95 **Correspondence:**

Stocking Lane Flooding. The meeting discussed the flooding along Stocking Lane following the recent exceptional rainfall and agreed to monitor the situation in the future.

96 **Councillors' Forum:**

Village Sign. Cllr Suggett **agreed to contact the community caretaker to replace the weed barrier by the village sign and relate shrubs.**

97 **Public Forum.** Nothing reported.

98 **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting on Monday 20 May 24 at 7.45 pm in the St George's Church, The Street, Stowlangtoft.

This meeting will follow the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.15pm.

If any new planning applications or urgent actions are identified after the March 2024 meeting, a short meeting will be held on 15 April 2024 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.47pm.

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Chair

Parish Report – March 2024

Councillor Andy Mellen

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Council Budget for 2024-25

At Council on 15 February, Suffolk councillors met to discuss and vote on the administration's budget proposals. The council is borrowing heavily from its reserves to meet the growing demand for social care for adults and children, and council tax is due to rise by £74 annually for Band D properties from April this year. There will also be cuts to Family Hubs (children's centres) and Housing Related Support, which supports vulnerable people like care leavers to find accommodation. Funding for arts and museums will be maintained for 2024-25 but not from SCC core funding, and subject to a bidding process for grants from April 2025. The Bury St Edmunds local archives will be moved to The Hold in Ipswich, which like the arts funding cuts has been controversial locally.

My group were concerned about the lack of core funding from Suffolk County Council to arts and museums, as this is how they secure funding from other sources, and we proposed an amendment to this effect. We also suggested that some of the council's remaining Covid funding from the government be used to support young people not in education, employment or training, as this cohort had suffered a lot of upheaval in their final years of schooling and exams. Support for young people not in education, employment and training is one of the services that is due to be cut in the administration's budget plans. Our amendment was declined by the Conservatives, as was the Labour amendment which also proposed to reverse some of the planned cuts.

Ofsted/CQC SEND Inspection Report

As you may have read in the local press, Ofsted and CQC published their joint report into SEND services in Suffolk at the beginning of the month. The report was scathing about the county's SEND provision and detailed the failures of the council to communicate and work with parents and carers, improve the EHCP and annual review processes and waiting times, improve outcomes and reduce exclusions. My group was disappointed and concerned that the services are yet to get to grips with improving a service that has now received a third poor inspection result in a row and we offered our assistance to the Local Area Partnership (Suffolk County Council and NHS teams) in preparing the Priority Action Plan they now need to submit to Ofsted and CQC by 7 March.

The poor report led to the resignation of the Cabinet members for SEND, Education and Children's Services and prompted a reshuffle of the political leadership at the council. This report will be devastating for parents of children with special needs in Suffolk, and the council will need to work hard to make improvements quickly and build back trust.

Suffolk Devolution in Sight

Devolution is something there has been a lot of talk about in Suffolk in recent years, and it looks like it may be happening from 2025. The deal the government is offering Suffolk is the same as the one for Norfolk and would give the county more freedom on decisions and funding for transport, skills and adult education, regenerating brownfield sites and retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient. If the deal is approved, the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk - every four years, residents will be given two votes, to elect their

local county councillor AND the leader of the county council. The first election would take place in May 2025. The council will be consulting on the deal soon and residents will be able to give their opinions on the changes proposed. For more information, see <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Changes to Local Archives

Following the recent controversial proposal in the county council's budget to move local records from Bury St Edmunds to The Hold in Ipswich, the council have announced that they will be inviting community representatives from both Lowestoft and Bury St Edmund's to form two new Working Parties to consider local access to historical material. This could allow relevant collections to remain in the local area, but any proposals would need to be funded locally rather than by Suffolk County Council. This is not a reversal of the council's decision, and the majority of the records are still planned to move to The Hold, with the North-East and West Suffolk branches of the archive service to close.

Flooding and Highways

I am continuing to follow up on a number of persistent flooding problems affecting parishes right across the division/ Inevitably attention and resources have been targeted where homes have suffered interior flooding. Gardens and driveways have a lower priority, however I am happy to follow up specific issues, residents can get in touch via the contact details above.

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

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 Cllr Report Thurston Ward

Beyton, Norton, Thurston, Tostock, Stowlangtoft

February 2024

MSDC Meeting.

Mid Suffolk District Council meeting in February. The budget was approved. The MSDC part of the council tax will be increased by 2% which is lower than most councils in the country. The MSDC part of the council tax bill is about 8% with the rest to Suffolk County Council and the Police.

The council also approved changes to the second home and empty home council tax charges. There are more than 680 empty properties in Mid Suffolk, which councillors are keen to see used to meet growing housing need.

The councils already impose a council tax premium on the owners of properties that are empty and unfurnished for two years or longer, but under new legislation, the councils would be able to target empty properties after just one year from April 2024 – and impose a levy on second home owners from April 2025.

At meetings this week, both councils agreed a new joint policy that will see the owners of properties left empty for a year or more paying double, with a premium of up to 100% from April 2024; properties empty for five years or more seeing their council tax bills treble with a premium of up to 200%; and owners of properties left empty for 10 years facing quadrupled bills, with a premium of up to 300%.

Owners of 542 second homes in Mid Suffolk will see their council tax bill double from April 2025. The definition of a second home for council tax purposes would be a property which there is 'no one resident' but that is 'substantially furnished'. There will be exceptions, in line with Government policy, expected to include properties being actively marketed for sale or rent for a limited period, houses going through probate, caravan pitches or houseboat moorings (I can't think of many houseboats in the area)

Mid Suffolk District Council has launched a new rural transport grants scheme to help provide passenger transport routes across the district, connecting local communities and reducing emissions, by providing viable alternatives to solo car journeys.

As well as the Cosy homes scheme, MSDC have a loft insulation offer (here: [Funding and Support for Homeowners and Renters – Green Suffolk](#)) Funding is available to help residents make their homes warmer with extra loft insulation to help save money on their energy bills.

MSDC have approved a grant to New Green Community Trust for new doors at Thurston's New Green Centre - £10,000.00

Network Rail – foot crossing at Thurston Station.

Still no sign of the final report which was due by the end of November.2023 Our preferred option is the reinstatement of the tunnel under the tracks.

Flooding.

The worst flooding in the villages (that we're aware of) was the road between Beyton & Thurston but If any properties have experienced flooding damage, grants are available from MSDC to assist. Apparently this is the wettest February on record so some locations are suffering from flooding despite not being affected previously.

Locality grants

Austin & David still have some locality budget which needs to be applied for before 22 March..

David Bradbury & Austin Davies

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