

## STOWLANGTOFT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**MONDAY 17 MARCH 2025 AT 7.30PM  
THE COMMON ROOM, St GEORGES Rd**

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

90 **Apologies for absence.** Cllrs Catchpole and Suggett sent apologies which were accepted.

91 **Declarations of Interest.** None.

92 **Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2025.** Cllr Cuff proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2025 be approved. Cllr Bourne seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

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

Minute 79: 20 January 2025: Future Parish Council Meeting Venue. **The Chair agreed to clarify meeting room options within Stowlangtoft estate with Cllr Catchpole. The Clerk was to confirm availability and costs for hiring either Norton or Badwell Ash Village Halls during the winter months.**

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

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

96 **St Georges Church.** Cllr Cuff provided the following update:

- A new Church Warden was now in place.
- A monthly working party was now set up to keep the church neat and tidy.
- The broken stained-glass windows were due to be replaced in April.
- Planning for a new sign outside the churchyard entrance was progressing.

97 **Admin and Finance:**

Finance Report. The meeting noted the financial report (current bank balance of £8,332.75, projected outturn at the end of the FY of £6,900 current account (includes £1976.58 ringfenced CIL funding committed to defibrillator procurement and £4,000 committed to Quiet Lane installation costs) and £1,500 savings account), circulated before the meeting. Payments authorised:

HART Farm Services	£780.00
Clerks Salary & Wages	£614.17

The Chair agreed to authorise payments.

98 **Planning Matters.** The meeting noted the Notice of Appeal APP/D3505/W/24/3356409 that had been pre-circulated.

99 **Highways Matters.** The Clerk confirmed that Suffolk County Council had agreed to a funding arrangement for the provision of Quiet Lane status for Kiln Lane and that £4,000 of Parish Council funding was in place. Confirmation of likely start date for the work was being held up by Devolution and Local Government Review activity within the County Council and the Clerk agreed to hasten once the Interim Plan deadline for Devolution and Local Government Review had passed.

100 **Correspondence:**

Fruit Trees. The meeting noted the offer of fruit trees from District Cllr Bradbury, pre-circulated, and **agreed that the Chair would approach Stowlangtoft Estate to highlight the offer.**

Kiln Lane Closure. The meeting noted the Suffolk Highways closure email, pre-circulated, covering restoration actions post the re-opening of the A1088 bridge.

101 **Councillors' Forum:**

Millenium Bench. The Chair drew attention to the condition of the Millenium Bench installed by the Parish Council on the corner of Church View and **agreed to look at short term fixes with Cllr Cuff.**

Potential New Cllr. Cllr Marsh highlighted a potential candidate to fill the current Parish Council vacancy and **agreed to forward email contact details to the Clerk.** The Clerk confirmed that the vacancy can be filled by co-option at the next Parish Council meeting.

102 **Public Forum:**

Motorbikes in the 'Pit'. The member of the public highlighted noise issues with ongoing users of the 'Pit' off the A0188 and indicated that these had been reported to Mid Suffolk District Council enforcement in the past. As the location was on private land, the Parish Council advised the member of the public to refresh any concerns with Mid Suffolk District Council enforcement and agreed to monitor the situation.

Footpaths. The member of the public drew attention to a potential blockage of a footpath leading from Kiln Lane to the A1088. The Parish Council noted this and agreed to investigate; any blockage would be reported on the Highways Reporting tool. The Parish Council also noted a potential issue with a 2<sup>nd</sup> footpath through Langham Hills wood.

103 **Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be the Annual Parish Council meeting on Monday 19 May 2025 at 7.45pm in St Goerge's Church. This will follow the Annual Parish Council meeting that starts at 7.15pm.

If any planning applications or urgent actions are identified after the March meeting, these will be considered at a short meeting on Monday 14 April 2025 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.34pm.

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Chair

# Parish Report – March 2025

**Councillor**

**Andy Mellen**

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## **Devolution and Local Government Reorganization Update**

The government confirmed that Suffolk and Norfolk are included in the Devolution Priority Programme, and have agreed to the request from the Suffolk County Council administration to cancel this year's local elections in May. (I voted against this). This means that councils in Suffolk now need to work on proposals for reorganisation to submit to the government, initial proposals by 21<sup>st</sup> March, full plans by the autumn, with a view to one or more unitary councils being created, instead of the current two-tier system – a county council and several districts/borough councils performing different functions.

Suffolk County Council has announced that it will be proposing one single unitary council for Suffolk, although district and borough councils have been clear that they would prefer two or three.

The plan is for a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk to be elected in May 2026. The government has launched a public consultation on proposals to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk, and you can give your views on the proposals by using this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution>

## **Suffolk Fire and Rescue Inspection Report**

On Monday 10 February, The Home Office published a report of its recent inspection of Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service. Although the inspection found that the service was good at preventing fires, protecting the public and that it met requirements for responding to major incidents, the report was also concerning as it several areas where the service needed to improve, including improving culture and morale, senior leaders to act as role models and show they are committed to the values of the service through their behaviour, improving communication between staff and senior leaders and making sure employees are confident raising concerns. You may have read in the press recently that the Fire Brigades Union is alleging that Suffolk County Council has made mistakes processing firefighter pay and pensions for years and has not addressed them or listened to employee concerns about the errors.

Suffolk County Council has subsequently announced additional investment of an extra £1.6 million over two years to improve the service, and this proposal will be decided at Cabinet in March. You can read the inspection report in full here: <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/uploads/frs-assessment-2023-25-suffolk.pdf>

## **Active Travel Fund Award**

Suffolk County Council has been awarded £3.7 million from the government to encourage cycling, walking and active travel across the county, and to make journeys more accessible. This comprises £0.9 million from the Round 5 of the Active Travel Fund, and £2.8 million from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund. The money can be spent on the following schemes: footpaths and crossing points, maintaining existing walking and cycling infrastructure, improving cycle routes and Public Rights of Way, traffic calming, and rail station access improvements. The council is currently considering suitable local projects, which will be announced in the coming months.

## **Changes to Suffolk's Library Service are Moving Back In-House**

Suffolk County Council has announced that from 1 June 2025, its libraries service will be moved back in-house. Currently the libraries are run by a local charity, Suffolk Libraries, but negotiations on the new contract have now broken down. The council made the decision to divest its libraries in 2012 and they have been run by Suffolk Libraries ever since then. The council is reassuring residents and library employees and volunteers that no front-line jobs will be cut, that libraries will remain open and there will be no reduction to opening hours. Running the library service had been financially challenging in recent years, with the council agreeing to provide an extra £720k in May 2023 for that financial year. The council is also keen to reassure Friends groups that money raised for local libraries will still be used for those libraries.

Open letter to Suffolk residents about changes to the library service:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/an-open-letter-to-suffolk-residents.pdf>

Open letter to libraries staff and volunteers on changes to the library service:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/an-open-letter-to-libraries-staff.pdf>

## **Local Transport Plan and Area Transport Plans**

At Cabinet on Tuesday 25 February, a Local Transport Plan for the county from 2025-2040. The plan is needed by law to access funding from the government for active travel and major transport schemes, and details how the council plans to prioritise walking, cycling and wheeling in town centres to reduce congestion and air pollution. It also describes the projects that will be needed to improve transport links for Suffolk, such as works at Ely and Haughley railway junctions, better public transport, and how to manage the transition from fossil fuels. Also agreed were 15 Area Transport Plans detailing the council's transport ambitions for towns around Suffolk.

You can read the Local Transport Plan 2025-2040 and the fifteen Area Transport Plans here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/suffolks-local-transport-plan>

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/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

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

## District Councillor Report: David Bradbury

March 2025

Council meeting and annual budget	<p>The monthly council meeting for February took place on 27<sup>th</sup> February. The meeting primarily revolved around the council’s annual budget, including approval of both the General Fund Budget and Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as delivered by both Cllr Winch and Cllr Pearson. This follows discussions on the budget through this month’s cabinet meeting as well.</p> <p>An amendment was proposed by Cllr Richardson regarding a “Rural Support Fund”, although this was voted down by the administration. The full budget details can be read in the agenda here: <a href="#">(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Mid Suffolk Council, 27/02/2025 17:30</a></p>
Suffolk Devolution updates	<p>A public consultation has opened into the Norfolk and Suffolk mayoral combined authority by the government, until the 13<sup>th</sup> April. This is following the government’s approval for the authority, of which more details can be found on the government’s website <a href="#">Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation - GOV.UK</a></p>
New Independent Group	<p>4 Conservative Councillors (Cllr James Caston, Cllr Lavinia Hadingham, Cllr John Whitehead &amp; Cllr Anders Linder) have formed a new independent group on Mid Suffolk Council, in opposition to the county council’s approval of the proposed devolution plans.</p>
Elmswell Services update	<p>Following safety Concerns previously being raised at Elmswell Service Station, the service station has now agreed to carry out the essential works, and is due to reopen in early March following this.</p>

# District Councillor Report – Harry Richardson

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2025

<p>Devolution and local government reform</p>	<p>The government have announced that Suffolk is to be included in their 'Devolution Priority Programme'. This has seen the 2025 County Council elections postponed to May 2026, which will now coincide with the election of a 'Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk'.</p> <p>My current understanding is that the government are working to a timetable that will see the 2027 District / Borough Council elections in Suffolk replaced with elections to a new 'shadow unitary authority' (or 'authorities'), which will be formally established in May 2028 to replace the District and County Councils.</p> <p>The government has given the County and District / Borough Councils until 21 March 2025 to submit initial plans for local government reform in Suffolk, with final plans submitted in the autumn. Suffolk County Council have confirmed their support for a single, Suffolk-wide unitary authority, while the District / Borough Councils are working on a short-list of three options: one unitary authority, two authorities (East and West Suffolk), and three authorities (East, West, and 'Greater Ipswich').</p> <p><a href="#">The Government's eight-week public consultation</a> on devolution and the election of a regional Mayor started on Monday 17 February and will run until Sunday 13 April.</p>
<p>MSDC Budget 2025/26</p>	<p>Mid Suffolk approved its budget for 2025/26 at the recent Council meeting on 27 February 2025. This will see Council Tax and all existing fees and charges frozen for the duration of the year, while continuing with a significant capital investment programme directed toward Stowmarket in the form of a new health, education and leisure facility and new Skills &amp; Innovation Centre at Gateway 14.</p> <p>The Administration did not accept an opposition amendment to the budget which would have seen £1.5m extra investment in a fund accessible to villages and rural communities; they did however agree to repurpose an existing fund ('regeneration in towns outside of Stowmarket') into a broader 'Rural Support Fund' totalling £2.1m across 2025/26 to 2029/30 (£300k for the first two years, and £500k for the remaining three).</p>
<p>Local Plan Review</p>	<p>At our Full Council meeting on 27 February, it was announced by the Administration that Part 2 of Mid Suffolk's Local Plan (i.e. the plan containing site allocations) will be scrapped and replaced with a 'Local Plan Review'. This is as a result of the government's decision to make changes to the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and increase the house-building targets for local planning authorities.</p> <p>The 'Local Plan Review' will expand on the existing Part 1 (i.e. outlining planning policies) with new site allocations taking into consideration the new house-building targets, and will cover a 20-year period from 2024-2044. The evidence base that had been developed for Part 2, including call-for-sites submissions, will be relied upon and converted into the Local Plan Review.</p>

	<p>The indicative timeline for this plan development is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scoping and participation stage, including minimum four-month notification of Plan commencement – March 2026 to July 2026 (minimum four months).</li> <li>• Plan visioning and strategy development including first public consultation – August 2026 to March 2027.</li> <li>• Evidence gathering and draft the Plan – April 2027 to December 2027.</li> <li>• Second public consultation, proposing changes and submission of the Plan – January 2028 to June 2028.</li> <li>• Examination of Plan including additional three months for Main Modifications (no more than 24 months after commencing the Plan) – July 2028 to March 2029.</li> <li>• Adoption – April 2029.</li> </ul> <p>As you may appreciate, this represents a worrying degree of uncertainty for the coming years as a result of the government’s changes – not least because the Local Plan Review adoption date is scheduled for <i>after</i> Mid Suffolk District Council is set to be abolished.</p> <p>I will continue to keep you updated promptly as and when I receive new information about the Plan Review’s development.</p>
A14 services	<p>As you may be aware, following further legal action from Mid Suffolk District Council the ‘On the Move’ services at the Elmswell roundabout adjacent to the A14 have been closed pending the remedial highways works being completed as stated in the relevant planning applications.</p> <p>Although it has been a source of frustration that the services continued to remain open for approximately one month following the issue of an enforcement notice, the works are now being undertaken as expected and the services are estimated to reopen any time from Tuesday 4 March.</p>
Residents’ Parking Zone	<p>Mid Suffolk are pursuing plans to help address parking issues in Stowmarket by investing in the next stage of a possible residents’ parking zone (‘RPZ’). £25,646 has been allocated to proceed to the design phase of a proposed RPZ to reduce issues relating to nuisance parking in the town.</p> <p>This type of scheme involves formally restricting parking by only allowing those with permits to park within marked bays of certain roads. Restrictions can be in place at all hours of the day or for a defined period.</p> <p>The power to establish an RPZ belongs to Suffolk County Council as the highways authority, but this proposed funding from Mid Suffolk would enable the development of a detailed plan, to understand the scheme’s feasibility, costs and potential impacts.</p>

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