

## **Great Blakenham Parish Council**

Minutes of Gt Blakenham Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 9th March 2023 in the Parish Room, Stowmarket Road, Great Blakenham at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr Steve Plume (Chairman), Cllr Eoin McNamee (Vice Chair), Cllr Debbie Kemp, Cllr Will Durrant, Cllr Keeran Leonard, Karen Grimwood (Parish Clerk), District Cllr John Field and one member of the public.

### **Minutes**

The chairman welcomed all and opened the meeting at 7.30pm

1. To receive and approve any apologies for absence – **Suffolk County Cllr Chris Chambers**
2. Declaration of any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests –
  - a. Councillor's declaration of interest appropriate to any item on the agenda – **Cllr Leonard in regard to Sea Scouts Donation**
  - b. To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interest (if any) - **None**
  - c. To grant any requests for dispensations as appropriate - **None**
  - d. Co-option of parish councillor(s) / to sign declaration of acceptance - **None**.
3. Public Forum
  - a. To receive the report from the County Councillor

**New highways services arriving in Suffolk as multi-million-pound contract awarded.** Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract, which will begin on 1 October 2023. Following an extensive procurement exercise, Suffolk County Council has confirmed Milestone will be its new contract partner for up to 20 years. The new partnership, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will be delivering highway projects and improvements across Suffolk, including but not limited to maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting. When searching for its new highways partner, the county council worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at which specialist providers are in the marketplace, and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk. The council wanted the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment. A rigorous procurement exercise was carried out over many months, with various stages of discussions with service providers, to evolve their solutions to meet the various contractual requirements and deliver an effective and efficient highway service for Suffolk. Final submissions were evaluated and extensively moderated before the final winning contract was awarded.

**Fire service finalises plan to protect Suffolk's communities.**

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, brought the CRMP to Cabinet (Tuesday, 21 February) to seek approval for its adoption from April 2023.

***“We have listened to residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders about what matters to them and where they feel we should direct our resources; without this being to the detriment of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service staff, who already work tirelessly to prevent and respond to emergencies.***

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection  
The plan details Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service’s priorities until 2027, including:

- Updating how response times are reported to include from the time of call and focus on the areas of highest risk, such as dwelling fires.
- Addressing climate change to support Suffolk County Council’s ambition to be a carbon-neutral authority by 2030, with a view to introducing more non-fossil fuel vehicles in the fleet.
- Developing preventative safe and well visits, including continued work with the National Farmers’ Union to tailor advice to rural and farming communities.
- Assessing how the service works with partner agencies, such as supporting the ambulance service when appropriate and if capacity and resources allow for this
- Reviewing the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters and specialist support staff to ensure Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service remains a diverse employer of choice.

These priorities were identified during extensive research and pre-consultation engagement with staff and stakeholders. In addition, hundreds of Suffolk residents helped to inform the final document by providing feedback on proposals during the CRMP public consultation, which ran from October to December 2022 and included a series of public events held at six supermarkets across the county.

### **Future of popular Ipswich sports centre secured by Suffolk County Council**

Vivify, a school’s lettings company, will replace Ipswich Borough Council in the management of the public sports facilities at Northgate. The company has extensive experience of running more than 500 sports facilities across the country. It will manage the bookings system and out of hours service.

**Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich at Suffolk County Council, said:**

“When Ipswich Borough Council handed back its 25-year commitment to run the facilities, we were left in a challenging position.

“Traditionally we have no knowledge or experience of running sports facilities – this sits at borough level. However, we knew we had a duty to pick up responsibility for the popular venue and ensure its future. Hundreds of people use the site, whether running clubs or for racquet sports, so we accepted that - despite the unilateral decision of the borough council - we could not let the site close. The facilities will be formally handed over on April 1<sup>st</sup> and will reopen on April 17<sup>th</sup> following site maintenance and cleaning. The final details of the agreement are currently being worked through. The new agreement will cost Suffolk County Council in excess of £235,000 until July 2024. During this contract period, Suffolk County Council will continue to review the longer-term business case.

### **Other Announcements**

- ***Volunteering at Suffolk Archives***

Suffolk Archives are looking for volunteers in their branches in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft and Ipswich. ‘Volunteers bring the archive to life for researchers and local communities,

making more archives accessible and connecting people to the places they live. By volunteering you will develop new skills, make new friends and conserve Suffolk's history for the next generation.' – Suffolk Archives

There are a range of roles available from remote volunteering to in-person.

If you would like to join the remote volunteer team at Suffolk Archives visit the [Suffolk Archives website](#) for more information.

- **Hosts for Ukraine**

It has been over a year since the start of the war in Ukraine. Suffolk County Council is still in need of a wide range of host homes for Ukrainian refugees.

Potential hosts can sign up directly with the County Council by [completing our online form](#) or emailing [refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk).

Learn more here: [Support for Ukraine - Suffolk County Council](#)

- b. To receive the report from the District Councillor

### **Budget**

The MSDC budget was agreed with Green and Lib Dem support. There are no major new initiatives but the £5.1 million additional spend from reserves on many small items, on the basis of which we withdrew our budget amendments last year, are included. The MSDC council tax has been frozen so the district charge for a Band D property remains at £171.59. Sheltered housing charges and garage rents also remain frozen at 2021/22 levels, but Mid Suffolk District Council tenants face a proposed increase of 4.1% to their rents, to cover inflationary pressures and allow investment in improving the quality of council homes. This means average weekly social rent will increase by £3.45 to £87.84 and affordable housing rents by £4.99 to £126.33. I found the rent proposal inappropriate when other cost increases, particularly fuel bills, are so dramatic and it is set against a council tax freeze. The Green and Liberal Democrat Group opposed it, but we were again defeated by the Chair's casting vote. I proposed an amendment to the budget to fund two new zero carbon electric buses to deliver scheduled rural community transport for Mid Suffolk residents. The cost estimate was £560,000 capital and £130,000 revenue for two years, figures I had derived after discussions with BSEVC at Red Gables and the county public transport officers. The amendment was accepted so we must now ensure rapid delivery.

### **A new 'County Deal'**

Suffolk is one of nine counties invited to negotiate a devolution deal, bringing more control by local leaders over areas such as transport, infrastructure, and skills to the region. Such deals are proposed in the Levelling Up White Paper as part of a strategy for improving living standards, opportunity, and prosperity across the country. This could deliver London style public transport and a skills programme to help local people gain the high quality, high paying jobs of the future.

### **Digital Skills Programme for businesses**

Business owners in Babergh and Mid Suffolk who want to learn new or improve their digital skills can now access free courses as part of a new business support programme. The Digital Skills Programme is part of post-covid recovery strategy and is being run by MENTA using funding from Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund. The workshops, which are held virtually, cover topics such as online security, digital and social media marketing, e-commerce, and information management. It will help businesses understand which platforms they should be using and how to make them work for them.

### **New library for Needham Market**

As part of the development of the former Middle School site, Needham Market now has a new library. The building offers a bigger and more modern space for library events and activities, and bookable meeting rooms for the local community. Located at the newly created Teachers Close, just off School Street, the library is part of a new development of 41 homes: houses, flats and bungalows. It has a new children's area, with a special sensory wall and more dedicated space for children's events and activities, such as Wordplay and story time sessions for young children.

### **Additional funding to support rough sleepers.**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' have awarded Babergh and Mid Suffolk £324k to provide specialised emergency accommodation for rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness. It will provide four new self-contained "Mbloc" emergency accommodation units, two in Stowmarket and two in Sudbury. These new energy efficient homes will provide dedicated long-term emergency accommodation for entrenched rough sleepers – allowing for their complex needs to be addressed in a more comprehensive way. People who have been historically excluded and marginalised will be able to get the help, support and life skills they need to hold down a secure tenancy and stay off the streets. Training, guidance and advice will be delivered by health, social care and voluntary organisations, supporting the councils' goal of ending all rough sleeping by 2024.

### **Building Regs Improvements**

In June revised building regulations will require a 30% improvement in insulation and importantly, for all heating systems to be designed for a 55° C feed temperature to allow easy retrofit of a low carbon heat source. At the same time a good practice guide for installation of heat pump systems will be issued. This is a useful step towards the standards we must adopt to limit climate change. It will help our endless fight to get builders to work build homes that won't require upgrading in the near future.

### **Planning**

Progress with the Local Plan has been slow and the formal copy of the report from the peer review of the planning committee's operation is not yet with us, so action to correct the reported shortcomings is delayed.

### **Judicial Review**

A judicial review instigated by Thurston Parish Council led to a judgement that the District Council Officer mis-directed the development control committee in the position the Thurston neighbourhood plan took on a development of 210 homes. The QC involved said the planning officer's report to the committee wrongly concluded the application should be permitted. He said: "On the correct interpretation of Policy 1 and of the underlying spatial strategy and objectives of the neighbourhood plan, the release of the site for the development is not in accordance with the neighbourhood plan". He also found that the planning officer's analysis of the position in relation to paragraph 14(b) of the NPPF "was vitiated by his misunderstanding of Policy 1 and the underlying strategy and objectives of the neighbourhood plan". This really underlines Green and Liberal Democrat concerns about our planning department and suggests significant training is necessary if it is to deliver the service residents expect.

### **Greenhouses**

You will have heard reports that the tomato growing activity by Sterling Suffolk at the greenhouses on Bramford Road has ceased, a victim of the vastly increased gas prices triggered by post covid shortages and Russia's invasion of the Ukraine. As you are probably aware the original scheme was to supply heat from the Incinerator, in fact it was Suez looking for a lead user in a heating grid that triggered the creation of the business. When it came to the crunch Suez and the County in the form of Matthew Hicks wanted to charge a market

value for what most of us regarded as waste heat. It is dumped to atmosphere by the condensers you can see from the Bramford Road. They also wanted Sterling Suffolk and their Dutch backers to fund the installation of heat exchangers at the plant. We did have the turbine designed to supply heat at some cost to electricity output, but it was claimed that an additional £5 million was required to match the steam take off and its temperature to the form necessary to go some 0.5 to 1 Km to the greenhouses. We are trying to get Mid Suffolk to help but just what help could be provided is difficult to guess without sight of the books. To fund short term losses might be possible but I have no idea of the sums that would be involved, and "short term" might be measured in years with the current world situation and the need to move to less carbon intensive heat sources. Heat pumps might fit the bill but would need to be large and ground sourced I would have thought but are no doubt things the company would have considered and rejected. Since Port One have a local deal for incinerator electricity something might be possible.

c. To receive questions from members of the public – **None received**

4. To approve the Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023 - **Approved**

5. To note the Clerk's update from previous Meetings – **Unity Trust Bank account now up and running.**

6. Planning

a. To consider the following planning applications.

DC/23/00718	Land North Of, Chalk Hill Lane, Great Blakenham, Suffolk	Erection of 1 detached dwelling (amended scheme and re-submission of DC/22/02498).  <b>Noted that objections from residents are similar to previous planning application. PC have no objections</b>
DC/23/00589	The Chequers Inn, 19 Stowmarket Road, Great Blakenham, IP6	Retention of change of use of public house (Sui Generis) to Indian restaurant (Use Class A3)  <b>No Objections</b>
DC/23/00691	28 Plummers Dell, Great Blakenham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 0HW	- Conversion of detached garage to additional living accommodation for elderly relatives including infilling of existing garage door opening in brickwork to match existing, relocation of existing flank door, and insertion of new glazed screen in rear gable elevation  <b>No Objections</b>

b. To note any planning determinations.

DC/22/05924	Land At Blackacre Hill, Bramford Road, Great Blakenham, Suffolk	Discharge of Condition Application for DC/20/01175 - Condition 33 (Fire
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		Hydrants) (Part discharge for Phase 5 comprising Units 7, 8, 9 and 10)  <b>Noted</b>
DC/22/05925	Land At Blackacre Hill, Bramford Road, Great Blakenham, Suffolk	Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/22/00661 - Condition 3 (Mound Construction Details), Condition 4 (Refuse Bins and Collection Areas) and Condition 5 (Parking Management Plan)  <b>Noted</b>
DC/22/05697-DC/23/00988	20 Chequers Rise, Great Blakenham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 0LT	Erection of single storey rear extension.  <b>Noted</b>
DC/22/05551	Land At Blackacre Hill, Bramford Road, Great Blakenham, Suffolk	Condition 30 (Landscape Management Plan) (Part Discharge for Phase 5 comprising Units 7,8,9 and 10)  <b>Noted</b>

c. Any other planning matters to note.

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7. Growth, Highways, and Infrastructure

- a. To note that SCC have notified they are working on identifying who owns Addisons Way so that the flooding issues can start to be actioned. – **Pc disappointed that SCC are not aware of who owns the land. Cllr Field suggested that they contact MSDC planning dept or perhaps ask neighbouring businesses if they have the information required.**
- b. Update on replacement of Zebra crossing lights Stowmarket Road – **No update received as Cllr Chambers absent**
- c. Update on faulty crossing flood lights Gipping Road adj. Masons Drive- **Still investigating who has responsibility for lights. Orbit and Rendall and Riddell have been contacted.**
- d. To discuss meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup> with Richard Brown Planning Ltd. – **Meeting was informative and the actual building plans were impressive.**

8. Governance

- a. Staff probation / yearly increment – **Agreed clerk position to be made permanent and approved yearly pay increment.**
- b. To consider monthly pay roll to be placed on standing order.- **Agreed to set up a direct debit for contacted hours/hourly rate.**
- c. To note precept application has been approved - **Noted.**

To consider request for funding for Barham Country Park . **With the possibility of funding a couple of major projects and yet having no idea of what the costs will be PC has decided that they are not able to consider a request for funding at present.**

- a. To consider donation request to Sea Cadets – **Cllr Leonard noted he has an interest so would not participate in the decision. Agreed to a donation once clerk has received further information.**

- b. To consider request to fund new doors for Parish Rooms – **Clerk to request further information before considering an amount to donate.**
  - c. Update on Acronis software – **Additional units can only be purchased singularly or in blocks of five. Clerk to order.**
  - d. To consider donation to Claydon 1<sup>st</sup> Scout Group – **Agreed to donate £1000.**
9. Allotments.
- a. To note our contractors Shades have completed installing water butts. - **Noted**
  - b. To discuss completing a shed survey.- **Chair and clerk to arrange a date to survey the sheds for maintenance required.**
10. Village Maintenance
- a. To receive updates/reports from Cllr's concerning play equipment on Village Hall Playing Field - **Cllr McNamee and Cllr Kemp advised that as far as they are aware the GBVH are awaiting a 3<sup>rd</sup> quotation for play equipment and a formal inspection update to see in the interim if the repairs can be completed asap and if some of the equipment can be re-opened for the Easter holidays. Discussed whether PC or GBVH would be advising parishioners of update in "The Intouch Magazine" and whether to send out a joint survey on social media.**
11. Churchyard and Cemetery.
- a. To consider any options for the rebuild and maintenance of the shelter in the Cemetery. **Noted**
  - b. Letter complaining about burial at Lawn cemetery. Email and letter response sent. **Noted**
12. Training and Development for Councillors and Clerk
- a. To note that the six-module councillor course will not be recommencing until July 2023. Once dates are released Cllr Leonard will be booked on to attend. **Noted**
13. Finance
- a. To consider approving and making the following payments:

Shades	B	Hackneys Corner maintenance monthly charge as per Tender - 2291	£135.00	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Grounds maintenance charge as per Tender -2292	£507.50	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Labour to install water butts and guttering on 14 sheds in allotments - 2293	£577.08	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Street cleaning charge as per Tender. - 2290	£1300.00	LGA 1972 s111
Monthly Payroll	B	Staff salary	£ 893.75	LGA 1972 s111
PKF Littlejohn LLP	B	Audit fee May 2022 SB20214526 d	£408.00	LGA 1972 s111

#### 14. Reports

To receive reports from Councillors assigned to the following:

- a. Valencia Liaison Committee - Cllr. Plume - **None received**
- b. Suez Liaison Group - Cllr. Plume – **Committee decided that there is no longer a need to meeting every month but will switch to a yearly meeting. Noted that**

**Suez are contactable at any time if an issue arises.**

**15. Correspondence**

- a. Email highlighting the overgrowth of trees into property in Plummers Dell and on the boundary of GBVH recreation ground. Referred to VHMC as they own and manage grounds. **Noted**
- b. Email requesting that the gate providing access from Aspen Close through to GBVH recreation ground be reinstalled and locked to stop foot fall through the close, motor bikes and dog fouling. Referred to VHMC as they own and manage grounds. **Noted**
- c. Email complaining of height, smell, litter, and noise from the landfill sight. Emailed Valencia to advise of issues. Emailed Cllr Chambers to refer to Environment agency. **Due to Cllr Chambers absence no update was received. No response from Valencia received**
- d. Four emails received, all suggesting an enclosed dog walking area on the potential piece of land for parish. **Noted**
- e. Email enquiring when the VH playground will be open. **Discussed on 10a**
- f. Phone call concerning the fire at Sackers. **Noted**

**16. Future meetings**

- a. To note invitation for items to be considered in the next meeting. **Village engagement survey, WIFI Hub**
- b. To note the date of the next scheduled Meeting on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and any items for the agenda.

Karen Grimwood  
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Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023

Signature :

Date : 13/4/23.

