

GREAT BLAKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes

Minutes of Gt Blakenham Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 11th January 2024 in the Parish Room,
Stowmarket Road, Great Blakenham at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr Steve Plume (Chairman), Cllr Nick Leonard, Cllr Debbie Kemp, Cllr Will Durrant, Karen Grimwood
(Parish Clerk), SCC Cllr Chambers, MSDC Cllr Marriott, 1 members of the public

1. To receive and approve any apologies for absence. **None**
2. Declaration of any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests
 - a. Councillor's declaration of interest appropriate to any item on the agenda. **Cllr Leonard declared interest for Q8b**
 - 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 – See attached report. **Cllr chambers is aware of flooded properties in Stowmarket Road caused by drainage issues. He advises that residents of any flooding to properties must be registered with SCC. He has met with the drainage dept and was advised that someone would be out to look at the damage and help to rectify the damage and problems. He was also aware that members of the public and PC had reported the storm drain/culvert on Chalk Hill Lane over previous months and that it was not classed as a priority. He will be investigating this and who is responsible for the drain.**
 - b. To receive the report from the District Councillor – See attached report .**Cllrs aware of the police commissioning survey and wanted it noted that it is felt that local villages appear to be paying a premium for the towns policing, but it is notable that we do not have much of a police presence and when we do it only through a PCSO. Request for Cllr Marriott to look into MSDC stance on allotments and any potential threats of building developments on land or adjacent land going forward.**
 - c. To receive questions from members of the public (15 mins) **Concerned about amount and speed of traffic on Stowmarket Rd especially from HGV lorries. Cllrs confirmed that two speed indication devices have been purchased and just waiting for them to be installed in appropriate locations and on poles. The devices capture data which can be analysed when needed. Hope to be installed by the end of February 2024.**
4. To approve the Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 9th November 2023- **Approved**
5. To note the Clerk's update from previous Meetings.
 - a. Daffodil /tulip bulbs purchased and planted for Hackneys Corner verge in December 2023.
 - b. Noticeboard at village Hall erected. Big thank you to Charlie and his team at Port One for completing this service for the Parish.
 - c. Port One Planning Application & community gain offer of solar panel has been postponed until January 17th 2024.
 - d. Trees to be planted Hackneys Corner January 18th 2024.
 - e. Cllr Plume and clerk visited Chalk Hill Lane to record images of potholes and took measurements.
6. **Planning**
 - a. To consider the following planning applications
 - b. To note any planning determinations



DC/22/05259	Land Adjacent To The Port One Business And Logistics Park, Blackacre Hill, Bramford Road, Great Blakenham IP6 ORL	Condition 22 (Highway Mitigation) in order to allow Phase 5 (Units 7, 8, 9 & 10) of the Logistics Park granted under reserved matters DC/22/00661 NOTED
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- c. Any other planning matters to note

7. Growth, Highways, and Infrastructure

- a. SID Devices Update – See 3c
- b. To consider painting of bridge on Gipping Road.- **County and district Cllrs to enquire who is responsible for bridge and maintenance and report back to clerk.**
- c. To discuss how to stop cars parking/driving on Hackneys corner verge. **Discussed installing wood bollards or low fencing. Clerk to investigate ideas**

8. Governance

- a. Budgets and Precept approval for 24/25 – **Cllrs agreed to increase precept for the first time in 5 years by 6%. The decision caused mainly by costs of living increase, including a 25% rise in bin and litter collection fees, as well as insurance premiums, was not taken lightly. These increased running costs were necessary to facilitate the progress of infrastructure projects that have been approved for the village.**
- b. Donation process to be reviewed – **Clerk to provide spreadsheet with dates and amounts of donations**
 - a. Donation request from Citizens Advise Support - **£500 approved**
 - b. Donation request from Headway Suffolk - **£500 approved**
- c. Dog Bins/Litter removal cost increase – **Cost has been increased by 25% under approval by government**

9. Allotments

- a. Tree on allotment plot 23 will be crowned in first week of February 2024- **Letters to be sent to adjoining households and email to plot holder.**
- b. To discuss allotment clearance plan.- **Quotes to be obtained to clear plots and cover freshly cleared area with membrane to stop weed growth until plots allocated. Deposit fee discussed to ensure area is kept to standard.**
- c. To discuss allotment license- **Landowner still not provided licence contract. Clerk in discussions with landowners' solicitors to chase. Cllr Marriott to inquire MSDC stance on allotment land in regard to planning for housing to be approved. Decided to join association of Allotments so that legal advice can be accessed.**

10. Village Maintenance

- a. To discuss maintenance contract and additional project quotes. **Current maintenance contractors wish to concentrate on tender work only so request to be excluded from any extra work outside of what they are contracted to do. Agreed to obtain quotes for any additional work that needs completing.**
- b. To consider removing turf from small areas of Hackneys Corner and to reseed with wildflowers with cooperation from Biodiversity Officer MSDC- **Cllr Plume in discussions with biodiversity officer to go ahead with this idea. Problems with grass cutting at wrong time of the year. Clerk to email Cllr Chambers with problems so can investigate.**
- c. To consider a bramble removal program from the bank on Bramford Road during early spring and reseed areas with wildflower seeds.

11. Churchyard and Cemetery.

- a. Soil dump emptying – **Agreed to obtain quotes to have work completed**

12. Training and Development for Councillors and Clerk



a. Cllr Leonard requested to enrol on planning training

13. Finance

a. To consider approving and making the following payments:

Shades	B	Hackneys Corner maintenance as per tender – Invoice - 2411 (paid out of meeting)	£135.00	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Grounds maintenance as per tender -Invoice 2410 (Paid out of meeting)	£507.50	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Street cleaning as per tender -Invoice 2409 (Paid out of meeting)	£1316.67	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Hackneys Corner maintenance as per tender – Invoice 2417	£153.00	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Grounds maintenance as per tender -Invoice 2418	£507.50	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Street cleaning as per tender -Invoice 2419	£1316.67	LGA 1972 s111
Clerk	B	Reimbursement of EE Wifi Hub and Mobile costs November 2023 (paid out of meeting)	£26.00	LGA 1972 s111
Clerk	B	Reimbursement of EE Wifi Hub and Mobile costs December 2023	£26.00	LGA 1972 s111
Monthly Payroll	B	Month ending 31/11/2023 (Paid out of meeting)	£976.30	LGA 1972 s111
Monthly Payroll	B	Month ending 31/12/2023	£976.30	LGA 1972 s111
Salc	B	Training Invoice 27364	£72.00	LGA 1972 s111
Suffolk.cloud	B	Support /host of website Invoice 2024/005	£110.00	LGA 1972 s111
Three	D	Clerk Mobile – 104790676 02/11/2023	£12.78	LGA 1972 s111
British Legion	B	Donation for Wreath – EJD31	£50.00	LGA 1972 s111
GBVH	B	Christmas party S137 (paid out of meeting)	£350.00	LGA 1972 s111
Lloyds Bank	D	Multipay card	£1915.42	LGA 1972 s111
Unity Trust Bank	D	Service charges	£18.00	LGA 1972 s111
Lloyds Bank	D	Multipay Card	£125.91	LGA 1972 s111
Three	D	Clerk Mobile - 110479067600100002	£11.00	LGA 1972 s111

b. Payments Received

Unity Trust Bank	D	Credit Interest	35.27	LGA 1972 s111
E of E Co-Op	B	Burial Memorial Fee	£100.00	LGA 1972 s111

Additional payment of £90.36 to HMRC was added after agenda was published. **Noted and agreed**

14. Reports

To receive reports from Councillors assigned to the following:

- a. Gt Blakenham Village Hall – Cllr Debbie Kemp **Report attached**

15. Correspondence

- a. Compliment received on work completed at cemetery hedging.

16. Future meetings

- a. To note invitation for items to be considered in the next meeting.
 b. To note the date of the next scheduled Meeting on Thursday 8th February 2024 and any items for the agenda.

Karen Grimwood
 Clerk to Great Blakenham Parish Council
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Parish Council website: www.greatblakenham.suffolk.cloud

Date: 5th January 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a final horizontal stroke.

080224

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT JANUARY 2023

Storm Henk

Reporting problems

A multi-agency meeting took place on the morning of 2nd December regarding the amber weather warning in place for wind across Suffolk. The wind speeds were expected to be in the region of 50-60mph with possible gusts reaching 70mph.

Several flood alerts were in place which the Council were monitoring with the Environment Agency.

Flood alerts

At the beginning of the month there was a flood alert for the River Gipping from downstream of Needham Market to upstream of London Road Bridge, Ipswich. However, risks from flooding are now reducing with a few days of dry weather.

A reminder that if people need to report roads flooding, blocked drains or culverts, fallen trees, debris etc, they should use the Suffolk Highways reporting tool: [Suffolk County Council - ReportIT](#).

Council tenants should report emergency repairs as a result of storm damage by calling [0300 123 4000](#) option 3. Outside normal working hours (after 5pm during the week, or at weekends), should be reported by calling [0808 168 7794](#).

Flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports updated

The UK Health Security Agency's report of 15th December 2023, showed that whilst cases of influenza had increased, related hospitalisations had fallen. Overall COVID-19 activity had increased in most regions, ethnicities and age groups. Cases of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) had fallen.

Keeping Kids Healthy

Last week (3 January) the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published a blog post which provides a guide for parents and carers to help keep their family healthy this school term. It explores available vaccinations; how to recognise symptoms of common illnesses and how to make informed decisions on whether a sick student is well enough to attend school or college (<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2024/01/03/a-parents-guide-to-keeping-kids-healthy-this-school-year>).

Community Ownership Fund

The government is providing £150 million over 4 years to support community groups in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost, e.g. community centres, parks, pubs and post offices.

(See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus>).

Voluntary and community groups can bid for funding to acquire important assets and run them for the benefit of the community. The Fund will run until March 2025. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will run regular bidding windows throughout the year for applicants to submit a full application to the Fund.

Suffolk Recycling

Glass will be part of kerbside collections from April 26th 2024. In the meantime MSDC are promoting their “Glass is better in the bank” campaign. Glass can be reprocessed in the UK ready to be made into new bottles or jars in a few weeks. It can be endlessly recycled.

Foxhall Recycling Centre development is now complete and fully operational ahead of schedule. Changes to the highway and site layouts should allow improved access. Steps up to containers have been removed and the Re-use Shop has been moved which should improve customers’ experience.

MSDC Skills and Innovation Centre at Gateway 14

Fiona Duhamel gave Lib Dem and Conservative councillors a presentation on this project. It will be a three-storey development with public access to the ground floor where there will be a glass atrium and a public café. Also on this floor there will be a dedicated training space which might be used to teach modular, long-term degrees. There will be a Boardroom with space for up to 150 delegates. Forty-four office units will be available to let and there will also be hot-desking facilities. It is planned to provide 150 parking bays and possibly two electric bus parking spaces.

The design of the building is such as to allow a 33% reduction in emissions compared with other buildings of a similar size.

MSDC Housing Revenue Account

Deborah Fenton presented some data to Conservative and Lib Dem councillors. The original HRA was set in February 2022. Now there is a new HRA Business Plan for 23/24. There have been problems with contractors and £375K is needed to catch up with repairs. Surveyors and building services consultants have occasioned increased costs.

Provisional Settlement Still Unfair for Rural Communities

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was released on 18th December setting out the funding for Councils for the financial year 2024 to 2025. The consultation on the settlement runs until 15th January 2025, leaving councils little time to respond due to the Christmas and New Year break.

Despite representations from the Rural Services Network and rural MPs highlighting the unfairness of the current funding formula for rural councils, the settlement for 2024 to 2025 means that:

- Urban Councils will receive 37% MORE in Government Funded Spending Power (£142.09 per head)
- Rural Residents will have to pay 20% MORE in council tax per head

In times of reducing public expenditure, it is more, rather than less, important to distribute the available resources between different areas fairly. It costs significantly more to deliver services across large rural areas.

Levies on Second Home Owners and Owners of Empty Properties

Councillors at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are considering higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties, following the introduction of new government rules.

There are and more than 680 empty properties in Mid Suffolk, which the councils are keen to bring back into use to help 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.

Proposals being considered by cabinet members next month would 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%.

Also under the proposals, the owners of 542 second homes in Mid Suffolk would 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.

Initial analysis suggests the proposals for empty homes premiums could generate an extra £500k in Mid Suffolk next year, while the premiums for second home owners in 2025 could net an additional

£90k for Mid Suffolk. The districts, however, only keep a fraction of the council tax they collect, with the bulk going towards the cost of services provided by Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner.

The proposals, which will be discussed by both cabinets on Tuesday, January 9, are just one way that the councils are encouraging empty properties back into use. There is also information on the councils' websites about Houses 4 Homes – the councils' empty homes initiative and the range of help it can offer owners to bring properties back to use, including providing loans, landlord lettings and income assistance and construction support.

*Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
Updated 09/01/2024*



Foxhall Recycling Centre redevelopment completed ahead of schedule

The new and improved Foxhall Recycling Centre in Ipswich is now fully open to all customers as construction works have been completed ahead of schedule.

Work on the project began in October 2022 and was originally anticipated for completion in early 2024. The site remained open throughout the build, but service was reduced for business and trade customers and there were temporary restrictions on some waste types while space was limited.

The new site, designed by Concertus Design and Property Consultants and built by R G Carter, increases capacity for vehicles on site, improves access from Foxhall Road and reduces queuing on the highway.

It also has a new raised-level construction, giving better access to containers for users without the need for stairs.

Improvements have also been made to the site's Re-use shop, which sells furniture, sports equipment, kitchen supplies, books, toys and bric-a-brac collected at Suffolk's recycling centres and which would otherwise have been disposed of as waste.

The project was originally expected to cost £7.8 million, but the increased cost of materials and high inflation since the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine resulted in the final cost of the refurbishment being £8.3 million. The construction work was all completed within the agreed contract price and the scheme benefitted from a £958,914 contribution from East Suffolk Council through the Community Infrastructure Levy on development schemes.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/waste-and-recycling/book-a-recycling-centre-time-slot>

Appointments are not needed to visit the Re-use Shop, which is open 7 days a week.

Suffolk Residents invited to help shape the future of library services

A public consultation has been launched (Monday 30 October), encouraging Suffolk Residents to tell Suffolk County Council what they want from their library services in the future.

Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Limited, the independent charity that runs the library service, comes to an end on 31 May 2025, with a new contract set to begin in June 2025. The Council is therefore seeking views from the public about what is important to them, ahead of awarding the new contract.

The 13-week consultation will be followed by a competitive Tender Process, before the new contract is awarded in November 2024.

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More public money for adult and children's care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county's most vulnerable residents.

- £74 million extra needed to protect most vulnerable over two years
- £64.7 million savings to be made over two years
- Council set to reduce workforce, services and use savings

As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children's services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children's care, special educational needs and disabilities and home-to-school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The two-year savings proposals, which have been published on the council's website, include:

- £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
- £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme, which has focused on reducing demand for more expensive social care options by boosting people's independence and ability to stay well for longer through innovative methods including cutting edge care technology. This transformation programme has already saved £30.7 million over the last six years
- £0.5 million of savings by stopping core funding to Art and Museum sector organisations. To assist with the transition, £528,000 of COVID recovery money will be made available to Arts and Museum sector organisations for 2024/25 which will fully cover the funding reduction for one year.
- £140,000 of savings by centralising Suffolk Archives to The Hold and closing the branches in West and East Suffolk. In February 2023, the council committed £3.4m to relocate the West Suffolk Archives branch to the proposed Western Way development. Remaining at its current location would have required over £5 million to protect the historic records and meet modern archive standards. West Suffolk Council has since decided not to progress with the Western Way development, ending that opportunity. Centralising the three branches into one brings Suffolk in line with the majority of archive services across the country and is better value for taxpayers' money.
- £15.9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024/25 budget.

Following the recent funding announcement from the Government, Suffolk County Council will not receive enough funding to keep pace with inflation or the level of demand for services. The council has joined national calls for additional funding and lobbied the Chancellor of the Exchequer direct.

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Cabinet approved £10 million new funding to resurface residential roads

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting (7th November), Cabinet approved an extra £10 million to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk.

The funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual road maintenance budget but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads.

Over recent years, the county council has recognised the importance of improving roads for residents, this new proposal follows the successful £21 million contribution towards the resurfacing of 1,000 miles of road between 2017 and 2021, and more recently the committed £21 million between 2021 – 2025 to increase pavement maintenance, deliver drainage improvement schemes and repair road signs.

It is hoped that the extra £10 million boost to resurface some local roads, minor rural roads and urban cul-de-sacs would result in a reduction of new potholes, which in turn will reduce the overall financial burden on the council's emergency and reactive repair budgets. Between 2020 and 2023, 2 out of 3 pothole repairs were carried out on local roads, minor rural roads, and urban cul-de-sacs. During that period, more than half of all defects reported by the public were on these types of roads.

The extra investment will make use of more sustainable materials such as warm mix asphalts that have a lower CO2 footprint than traditional hot mix asphalts and which include recycled materials to reduce raw material use; resulting in a more positive impact on Suffolk's environment.

Suffolk Residents invited to help shape the future of library services

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The 13-week consultation will be followed by a competitive Tender Process, before the new contract is awarded in November 2024.

To inform the consultation, the council has undertaken engagement with over 30 organisations including Suffolk's Libraries IPS Limited staff, key service users, schools and partner organisations.

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4.7 million litres of water and 8,412 drains cleared since Storm Babet battered Suffolk one month ago

4.7 million litres of water has been pumped away and 8,412 highways drains cleared of post-storm debris since Storm Babet hit Suffolk one month ago.

The scale of work undertaken since the storm includes:

- Clearing and jetting of 8,412 drains
- Removing 121 trees blocking roads
- Cleared flood water from 198 locations
- Repairing 1,200 road and pavement potholes
- Contacting landowners about blocked private watercourses and roadside ditches, which are generally their responsibility to maintain.

The areas worst hit by the storm, including Debenham, Framlingham, Needham Market and Cavendish have all had their drains blitzed to clear tonnes of silt, leaves and other debris that has been washing into them as flood waters have subsided.

After drains are cleared, water from large tankers is run through them to check they are operating and if they are not, high pressure jets can be brought in to clear any blockages. In extreme cases, cameras are used to locate hidden blockages and then work is scheduled to dig up the pipes and fix the issues.

Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care service rated Good overall by Care Quality Commission

Suffolk County Council has been awarded an indicative overall rating of "Good" for the quality of its Adult Social Care services.

Following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve this standard.

Earlier this year CQC announced that 5 local authorities with responsibility for adult social care, including Suffolk, had volunteered to be part of a Local Authority Assessment Pilot, to help CQC develop the new model of inspection to help assess councils against the requirements of the Care Act. This model would then be rolled out across the country with all 153 Local Authorities with responsibility for Adult Social Care being inspected by the commission.

The assessment process began this summer with a request for information to each local authority taking part in the pilot. This collected the written evidence needed to allow CQC to

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Suffolk Highways prepared for the County's cold snap

With 39 gritting lorries, around 17,000 tonnes of salt and a winter team of over 80 people, our depots are ready to spread salt and treat over 2,000 miles of roads across the county.

Suffolk Highways has been carefully planning for the arrival of the colder weather, including training and hiring drivers, checking the routes and preparing the gritting lorries for action. The service is responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads (except trunk roads), roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations.

They also have 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network, this includes other bus routes, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools.

The P1 routes are completed when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C and P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather.

But gritting the priority network isn't all that the teams do to prepare our county for wintry weather; Suffolk Highways has also refilled 2,100 grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. Grit bins are owned by parish and town councils and to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, our communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and if more is required to report it via the reporting tool.

Suffolk Highways is encouraging residents to make sure their cars are winter ready and ensure they drive to the condition of the road, as a treated road may still have some ice forming particularly in areas where there is water runoff from adjacent land.

More information on gritting can be found, here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/check-which-roads-are-gritted>, and details of which roads are gritted can be found on one.network, by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes.

Suffolk Highways' winter gritting efforts forms part of the county council's wider 'Winter Matters' campaign, which has launched today, which offers advice to help Suffolk residents stay warm, safe and well this winter.

From stopping the spread of winter illnesses, to heating your home for less, residents can find advice at www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters to help you and your loved ones look after your money, health, wellbeing and safety during the colder months. Information will be regularly shared on the council's social media channels throughout winter, follow Suffolk County Council on Facebook or @SuffolkCC on X, using the hashtag #WinterMatters.

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