

GREAT BLAKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes

Minutes of Gt Blakenham Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 8th February 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 , 2 members of the public

1. To receive and approve any apologies for absence. **Cllr Debbie Kemp**
2. Declaration of any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests
 - a. Councillor’s declaration of interest appropriate to any item on the agenda.
 - b. To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interest (if any)
 - c. To grant any requests for dispensations as appropriate.
 - d. Co-option of parish councillor(s) / to sign declaration of acceptance.

3. Public Forum

- a. To receive the report from the County Councillor – **See attached report**
- b. To receive the report from the District Councillor – **See attached report**
- c. To receive questions from members of the public –

The community consultation leaflet from Harris Strategic Land regarding 132 dwellings on Stowmarket Road has raised questions. Concerns include traffic, noise, drainage, inadequate infrastructure, and the fact that the land has been used for farming for many years. It is important to note that this is only a consultation and no application has been submitted yet. The PC hopes that the Mid Suffolk District Council planning will recognise that Gt Blakenham has already fulfilled its 10-year Framework for rural housing if an application is submitted in the future.

PC requested that Cllr Marriott liaise with MSDC planning dept to see what Gt Blakenham building quota is, have we reached it and are they accepting applications for new building development in the village.

4. To approve the Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 11th January 2024 **Approved**
5. To note the Clerk’s update from previous Meetings.
 - a. Thank you received for generous donation from Citizens Advice society. **Noted**
 - b. Thank you received from Headway for donation. **Noted**
6. Planning
 - a. To consider the following planning applications.

Re		Additional Information
Consultation DC/23/00589	The Chequers Inn Stowmarket Road Gt Blakenham	Pc has no objections. Believe it has a positive impact by attracting people to the village, creating job opportunities for locals, and preventing a building from being vacant.
SCC/0107/23 MS	Waste Lodge Lane, Gt Blakenham	The permanent installation of three contractor cabin units. PC has no objections but hope it

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		does not coincide with breeding season of peregrine falcons.
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b. To note any planning determinations.

DC-23-05234	Kingfisher Drive, Gt Blakenham, IP6 0NG	Blocked paving drive and change of boundary Noted
Appeal Decision APP/W3520/W/23/3322064-DC00718	Land North Of, Chalk Hill Lane, Great Blakenham, Suffolk	Erection of 1 detached dwelling Appeal Dismissed - Noted

7. Growth, Highways, and Infrastructure

- a. To note upcoming meeting with Dan Poulter MP to update on provision of doctors surgeries. **Noted**
- b. Update on joint parish meeting on Piips and other community planning tools. **Noted**

8. Governance

- a. MSDC notified that 24/25 cleansing grant payments will change from quarterly to half yearly. **Noted**
- b. Confirmation that Precept form 24/25 has been accepted and will be paid in April 24 and September 24. **Noted**
- c. Note fee to cover costs of changing Rialtas package to alternative laptop for clerk. **Noted**
- d. Village Hall Update – **The Village Hall is seeking assistance in replacing worn-out furniture and curtains, as they believe this will attract more bookings, particularly for weddings, and increase their revenue. The estimated cost for this project is £9578.24, and while they have received funding from MSDC, SCC, and repurposed funds from another project themselves, they still need £4078.24 to cover the remaining expenses. PC agreed to pay the shortfall so that this project can go ahead from Cil funds.**

9. Allotments.

- a. Awaiting quotes for clearance of plots for reallocation. **Noted**
- b. To note a review of allotment waiting list has been completed. **Noted**
- c. Update from Assoc of allotment Holders. **Informed by Association that they could not offer legal advice regarding privately owned allotment land. Instead, they suggested registering it as a Community Value Asset. The PC agreed to explore this option further.**
- d. Discuss letter from landowner concerning license. **Agreed that legal advise would be needed and to explore options.**

10. Village Maintenance

- a. Note discussions ongoing for repair/replacement of notice board at Village Hall **Noted**

11. Churchyard and Cemetery.


- a. Quotes for clearance of soil stack **Agreed to go ahead with quote from Ed Seely Gardening**

12. Training and Development for Councillors and Clerk

- a. Cllr Leonard booked planning E Learning training **Noted**

13. Finance

- a. To consider approving and making the following payments: **Approved**

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Parish Rooms	B	12 Month Room Hire	£200.00	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Hackneys Corner as per tender Invoice 2425	£135.00	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Grounds Maintenance as per tender invoice 2424	£507.500	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Street Cleaning as per tender invoice 2423	£1316.67	LGA 1972 s111
Citizens Advice	B	Donation	£500.00	LGA 1972 s111
Headway Suff	B	Donation	£500.00	LGA 1972 s111
Salc	B	E learning intro to planning Invoice 28136	£20.40	LGA 1972 s111

a. Payments outside of meeting

Pandora Technologies	B	2 x Speed indicator devices + solar kits	£8784.00	LGA 1972 s111
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14. Reports -To receive reports from Councillors assigned to the following:

a. Village Hall – Cllr Kemp

The former Management Committee of the Great Blakenham Village Hall neglected regular repairs and maintenance, resulting in various issues with the building's structure and internal systems. To address these concerns, a local company was approached to provide an estimate for all necessary works. However, the cost was found to be prohibitively high, leading to the decision to phase the repairs based on available funds.

The first priority is to obtain three quotes for the removal and replacement of roof tiles, as well as the replacement of fascia boards, guttering, and downpipes. This will ensure the integrity of the building's exterior.

The second priority involves seeking three quotes for a comprehensive check of the hall's electrical system, including rewiring, installation of new sockets, and implementation of energy-saving measures such as lighting and heating upgrades. This will enhance safety and efficiency.

The third priority is to obtain three quotes for necessary remedial works to both the internal and external walls of the hall, followed by a complete redecoration. This will improve the overall appearance and condition of the facility.

Lastly, a 'wish list' of additional building works, such as bespoke toilets and minor changes to the wall layout to improve accessibility, will be addressed as a fourth priority. This may also include the addition of a small room for various purposes.

Priority one will be initiated immediately, and once the costs are received, funding options, including potential grants, will be explored to support the necessary repairs and improvements.


15. Correspondence

- a. Email enquiring about planting on Hackneys Corner. **Advised that PC will manage trees and have planted daffodils and tulips and are in discussions with biodiversity officer to create a small wildflower area.**

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 14th March 2024 and any items for the agenda.

Karen Grimwood
Clerk to Great Blakenham Parish Council
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Phone: 07508830777

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DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT FEBRUARY 24

Households to receive cost-of-living support from today (6th February) The Department for Work and Pensions has announced that eligible low-income households in the UK will start to receive a £299 cost-of-living payment from 6th February until 22nd February. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/eight-million-householdsto-receive-25-billion-cost-of-living-support>).

The payment will be sent out automatically and recipients do not need to apply to receive it. This includes tax credits-only customers who will receive the payment from HM Revenue and Customs between 16 and 22 February. People in need of additional support over winter are encouraged to check their eligibility through the government's Help for Households website (<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>) for the various cost-of-living schemes that are available.

Reforms to social housing allocations consultation On 30th January the Department for Levelling Up and Communities launched a consultation on how social housing is allocated (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-social-housing-reforms-to-crack-down-on-rule-breakers>). The aim of the consultation according to the government is to make the system fairer and not available to those who abuse it. Measures which could ban those who blight communities and repeatedly make their neighbours' lives hell through anti-social behaviour or evict them through a 'three strikes and you're out' policy, are part of the consultation. At the same time, new measures will prioritise households who have a close connection to the UK and their local area. The consultation seeks views from the public, councils, social housing tenants and providers on a range of reforms to how social housing is allocated in England, including to eligibility and qualification criteria, as well as proposals for the social housing waiting list and grounds for eviction. The consultation will run for eight weeks and closes on 26 March.

The Future Homes and Buildings Standards: 2023 consultation – reminder

On 13 December 2023, DLUHC launched a consultation on changes to the Building Regulations for dwellings and non-domestic buildings. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-homes-and-buildings-standards-2023-consultation>). The government is committed to improving the energy efficiency and reducing the carbon emissions of new homes and non-domestic buildings. Energy efficiency requirements for new homes and non-domestic buildings are set by Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Power) and Part 6 of the Building Regulations 2010 ("the Building Regulations"). The consultation sets out DLUHC's plans for achieving the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard. It sets out technical proposals for changes to the Building Regulations, the associated Approved Document guidance and calculation methods. The consultation closes on 6 March.

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Public health update

Latest measles statistics published and guidance for education settings


The latest number of measles cases in England have been published by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in an updated epidemiological overview. UKHSA is seeing an increase in cases of measles with a particular cluster in the West Midlands amongst unvaccinated children. On 19 January, the UKHSA warned that further outbreaks of measles will spread to other towns and cities unless urgent action is taken to increase measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination uptake in areas of greatest risk. Measles spreads very easily among those who are unvaccinated, especially in nurseries and schools. The best protection against measles for children and adults is to get both doses of the MMR vaccine. It is never too late to have these vaccinations. The Department for Education has published an education health blog (https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/01/22/what-to-do-if-you-think-your-child-has-measles-and-when-to-keep-them-off-school/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) with guidance on measles and the MMR vaccine for parents, nurseries and schools.

UKHSA has also produced [a measles communications toolkit to support councils with messages on measles and the MMR vaccine.](#)

New Disability Action Plan launched

On 5th February the government launched its Disability Action Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-action-plan>) setting out 32 steps it is taking to make the UK accessible for disabled people to live, work and thrive. The Disability Action Plan actions include:

- building an online information hub for councils on creating accessible playgrounds
- a new working group to educate businesses on the legal rights of assistance dog owners and make it simpler to report when they are refused access to a business
- leading new research into emerging issues affecting disabled people in the UK over the next 20 years.

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Small grants made available to village halls in England

The Defra funded grant scheme reopens for those managing rural community buildings, this time with a lower award threshold of £2, 000 to support smaller projects and make it accessible to more groups.

In 2023, a £3 million village halls fund was launched to provide support for the modernisation and improvement of village halls in England.

Managed by Action with Rural Communities in England (ACRE), the fund has already awarded over £1 million to rural communities, helping them undertake ambitious improvements to their building. Works undertaken or scheduled to take place include new roofs, insulation, extensions, and more energy efficient heating systems.

On 1st February, the grant fund re-opened to new applicants who wish to undertake smaller projects such as disability access, toilet upgrades and new kitchens. Grant awards of between £2,000 to £5,000, and up to 20 per cent of eligible project costs, are on offer. Project expenditure must take place before 31 March 2025.

A streamlined on-line application process and simplified eligibility criteria will make it easier for smaller projects to come forward for support. The scheme will remain open during 2024 until available funding is fully allocated.

Final local government finance settlement 2024 to 2025

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, presented the final local government finance settlement 2024/ to Parliament on 5th February .The settlement includes support for all of local government through the sector-wide Funding Guarantee, ensuring all councils will see a minimum 4% increase in Core Spending Power before local council tax decisions – an increase from the 3% Funding Guarantee in 2023-2024.

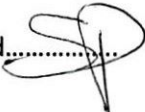
Mid Suffolk reveals draft budget to deliver new vision

MSDC have pledged to limit a rise in Council Tax to 2% which means that the proportion of the council tax bill for a Band D property, which is currently £171.59, would increase by £3.43 – around 7p a week. The district's share is less than 10% of the total bill, with the remainder going to Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and town or parish councils. A report for Mid Suffolk's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 22 January showed that the cost of providing its services to residents and communities is expected to rise by £3.3m to £15.75m in the next financial year – a 27% increase. This is mainly due to inflationary pressures, particularly interest rates and salary costs, while there has also been a reduction in planning fees as potential development continues to stall in the national climate. The report notes the council has already been working on efficiencies and savings. There will be additional income from fees and charges, with the cost of garden waste collections rising from £59 to £62 a year for renewals. Meanwhile, council tenants would also see a 7.7% increase in rents to try to keep pace with increased costs, and to ensure the necessary investment in repairs and maintenance across the council's social housing stock. This would mean an average weekly social rent increasing by £7.35 a week from £95.46 to £102.81. For affordable housing, weekly rents would increase by £10.65 from £138.33 to £148.98. The draft proposals go before Mid Suffolk Cabinet on 6th February. Following Cabinet, the proposed budget will go before Full Council on 22 February. Any changes to council tax or rents would then take affect from 1 April.

Community Rail Partners

At the last full council meeting on 25th January, Mid Suffolk councillors unanimously backed the introduction of a community rail partnership (CRP) in the district.

A CRP is an association comprised of the railway industry, local councils and the voluntary sector, working together to try to increase passenger numbers by promoting economic development, community engagement and

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sustainable travel. Residents in and around Thurston, Elmswell, Stowmarket and Needham Market may be set to benefit from much-needed attention and investment to their local stations

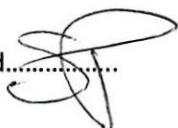
The establishment of the CRP and funding from Greater Anglia can open the door for the partnerships and projects focusing on accessibility, mental health, exclusion and isolation, and general station improvements through murals or floral displays.

£18m Skills and Innovation Centre - Update

In partnership with West Suffolk College and the universities of Suffolk and Essex, the Centre, within the Gateway 14 complex, aims to address the skills gaps locally and within the Freeport area and seize opportunities around growing sectors such as the green economy and digital/AI technology. Careers and recruitment advice would be available on site, and a new local labour market data observatory would be created to record and identify areas of skills demand and supply. Mid Suffolk's Cabinet approved the full business case at the end of last year. At the latest full council meeting, on Thursday 25 January, councillors agreed to use £10.75m of council reserves up-front for the project, but these would be replenished from business rates once the centre is operational. Outline planning permission is already held for the whole Gateway 14 site. Gateway 14 Ltd, wholly owned by Mid Suffolk District Council, would need to submit a reserved matters application for the new Skills and Innovation Centre.

Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
06/02/24

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One Network

This is a quick reminder about the website [one.network](https://www.one.network). It is a free-to-view website, with large-ranging sources of roadworks and traffic disruption information in the UK.

The one.network map enables highway authorities to communicate authoritative up-to-date information about roadworks, events and other activities on the highway.

Users can register for email alerts about upcoming roadworks affecting their area. This is particularly useful for informing residents on future works.

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

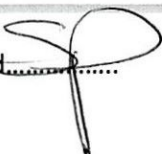
As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children's services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

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](#) today, 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.

Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division
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- £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 directly.

Full details of Suffolk County Council's financial plans for 2024/25 will be presented to its Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 January.

The proposals would give the council a budget of around £752 million for 2024/25, made up of funding coming from Government, business rates, charges for services and council tax. The proposed budget would require a 4.99% increase in council tax in next year. This would be made up of a 2.99% increase in general council tax and a 2% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means the costs for a household would be:

- Band B property: £23.50 per week (£1.12 per week increase from 2023/24)
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- Band D property: £30.21 per week (£1.43 per week increase from 2023/24)

Council to propose new funding for arts & heritage in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council is today (26th January) announcing its intention to create a new funding pot open to all arts and heritage organisations in the county.

- Core funding for nine arts and heritage organisations still to cease after 2024/25
- New £500,000 funding pot proposed from 2025/26, open to all arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk
- Proposal to be tabled at Cabinet meeting on 30 January

Following this week's announcement from government that £600 million of further funding will be available to local councils, the council intends to propose a new £500,000 project fund to which all Suffolk's arts and heritage organisations can apply.

However, this does not alter the difficult financial decisions the council is having to make so that it can prioritise spending on services like SEND, home to school transport and children in care. An extra £74 million is still needed over the next two years to protect the county's most vulnerable adults and children.

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Proposals to end the core funding of £528,000 of nine arts and heritage organisations after the 2024/25 financial year, are still in place. This funding will be replaced with the new £500,000 project funding pot, open to all arts and heritage organisations, from April 2025.

The new £500,000 fund would contribute to delivering on the council's ambitions such as looking after the health and wellbeing of Suffolk's residents, particularly those most in need of extra support to live as safely, independently, and healthily as possible.

The impact of the government announcement for further funding for councils will be discussed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Meeting on 30 January 2024, where proposals will be explored.

Suffolk local area partnership commits to urgent improvements to SEND services and apologises to families

The partnership responsible for overseeing and delivering services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk have apologised to families and commits to urgent action to strengthen and accelerate improvement plans following an inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

- Ofsted and CQC Inspection Report finds significant concerns with SEND services
- The Local Area Partnership promise urgent action to accelerate and strengthen improvement plans
- Senior leaders offer joint apology to Suffolk families

The inspection, which took place in November, highlighted that 'there are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns' about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. The report can be read [here](#).

The local area partnership which delivers SEND services is made up of Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB.

The inspection report, published January 30th, identifies two priority actions as follows:

1. The partnership should work more collaboratively and effectively to improve strategic planning. This needs to deliver systems with measurable impact that will create better experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. Leaders should cooperate to take urgent action to improve the timeliness and quality of the statutory Education Health Care plan process, Education Health Care plan needs assessments and Education Health Care plans and annual reviews. This should ensure that plans meaningfully capture the views and aspirations of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that they get the right support at the right time.

The local area partnership is now implementing a number of urgent actions. These include the proposed investment of £4.4 million into SEND services next year by Suffolk County Council (subject to Full Council agreement on February 15), and the establishment of a Suffolk SEND Improvement Board, which will be chaired by an Independent Chair, to oversee the improvement plan and actions

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needed. A new SEND Strategy is also in the process of being co-produced with parents and carers to set the strategic direction.

Alongside key priorities, the report identifies a number of areas where the partnership is working well. These include:

- In some areas, the local area partnership has worked successfully to improve services
- Strong levels of capital investment have increased the availability of special school places
- Initiatives to equip professionals in schools, such as the online tool to support schools, Valuing SEND or VSEND, are showing early signs of impact
- Several health teams support families sensitively and successfully, including the neonatal physiotherapy service
- Social care teams are effective. Social work assessments and reviews are comprehensive and helpful.
- Many providers, such as schools and colleges, praise their relationship with the local area partnership

As a result of this inspection, a monitoring inspection will be carried out within approximately 18 months. The local area partnership is now required to prepare and submit a priority action plan to address the identified areas for priority action.

The Ofsted and CQC report follows two years of significant investment into the way SEND services are delivered in Suffolk. Reform progress has been monitored by the Department for Education, who reported in March 2023, that progress was 'reassuring' and noted 'the leadership's commitment to improvement in a wide range of areas'.

Significant pieces of reform include:

- Investment of more than £55 million to create more than 1,250 additional places in specialist and mainstream schools
- Creation of specialist SEND support teams and training for all Suffolk schools to support them to meet the additional needs of children in mainstream schools
- Proposed investment of £4.4m in 2024/25 and £3.4m in 2025/26 to expand our statutory SEND teams and secure sufficient educational psychology resource to improve the quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care assessments and reviews
- The ICB has invested £700,000 in recurring funding in the voluntary and community sector to provide support for families waiting for these diagnoses, as well as co-producing a new parent resource pack as part of the Suffolk Local Offer

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