

Offton and Willisham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at Offton & Willisham Village Hall on Monday 4th
December 2023 at 7:30pm.

Present:	Cllr A Cox	Cllr L Seddon
	Cllr C Eves	Cllr T Wells
	Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh	
	Dst Cllr D Pratt	Cty Cllr K Oakes
	2 members of the public	Clerk - T Davis

ACTION

1	<p><u>Meeting Administration</u></p> <p>a) To open the meeting and welcome everyone and elect new Chair The Vice Chair opened the meeting, the resignation of Cllr Chaplin was formally acknowledged and Cllr T Wells was nominated to be Chair, this was Unanimously AGREED and Cllr Wells took up the Chair</p> <p>b) Apologies for absence; None</p> <p>c) Declarations of Interest; None</p>	
2	<p>To Approve the draft minutes of the Council meeting on 4th Sept 2023 and for the Chairman to sign as a true record</p> <p>a) Matters arising from the minutes:- Cllr Cox reported that Mid Suffolk District Council will replace the Tree and it was agreed that Cllr Cox would decide what tree this would be from the selection Mid Suffolk had available. It was unanimously AGREED for the Chair to sign the minutes as a true record.</p>	Chair
3	<p>Public Participation Session (To hear reports from the County Councillor, District Councillor, and comments from the Public)</p> <p>Item 10 & 11 During the public session items 10 and 11 were brought forward by the Chair to discuss with Cllr Oakes. The need to advise of the depth of the ford in Holly Lane during a flood was highlighted by a person having to be rescued from their car during the recent storms in October - otherwise they would have been in a life threatening situation. Residents had asked for 2-4 signs warning of flood ahead to store and place on the road when a flood happened. Cty Cllr Oakes confirmed that this will be looked into. A resident then asked about the Telephone Box. That previously it had been agreed to be repainted this year. The Clerk confirmed that the contractor who had agreed to paint the telephone box had not responded to numerous emails and that this needed to be looked at again. Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh gave an update from the Pylon Group (this has been posted on the Council website) and confirmed that the original date for the public meeting had been cancelled and a further date would be made available when known.</p>	

	<p>Cllr Oakes advised of her report (which can be found in the addendum) and gave an update on the flood that is ongoing opposite Ashfield Farm. Cllr Oakes confirmed this has been made a High Priority but will take time to repair as it is a complex matter and has to be investigated as the culvert might be broken or blocked. The road will be closed for this but is one of 400 roads in Suffolk that need complex repair. Discussion then took place regarding blocked drains and gullies. That the trees along The Channel and debris falling from them is causing blockages and it is not maintained. The ditch opposite Valley Farm is not maintained. Cllr Oakes asked for this to be referred directly to her so that ownership and responsibility can be established. Cllrs then went on to discuss the current collapsed verges and the temporary bollards. Cllrs also asked for more transparency regarding the ongoing reports made to Suffolk County Council's Highways Reporting Map. Further discussion then took place regarding the Water Markers, if permission or a licence is needed, if permission from a land owner is needed and who would maintain them. Cllr Oakes confirmed that she will take onboard these flood matters and find out more.</p> <p>A flood plan/emergency plan was also discussed and it was agreed that Cllr Seddon and Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh would liaise with Ben Spurling of Suffolk County Council to find out what was needed.</p> <p>Dst Cllr Pratt advised of his report (to be found in the addendum), a resident advised of some concerns they had for a vulnerable couple and what could be done to support them. As the Parish Council had a Safeguarding policy on the agenda it was considered prudent to follow this and for the Clerk to report the matter. Cllr Pratt would also make enquiries on their behalf.</p> <p>The Chair then invited the remaining resident to speak. The resident lived in a local village and spoke about the speeding that takes place along Willisham Road, from Barking. Barking Council are applying to reduce the speed limit from 60mph to 30mph and the resident noted that a further 150yds would then remain at 60mph on Willisham Road before the Willisham 30mph sign. The resident asked the Council if they would consider jointly putting in an application to include this part of the road and to financially contribute to this. Cllr Oakes advised that this would not be possible due to the nature of the remaining road being seen as open countryside with no houses along it.</p> <p>Councillors then discussed the request made in the Sept meeting about the potential to reduce the speed limit from Derrick Hill to the Lime Burners Public House - it was established that this would be dealt with under item 5iii.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their input and moved to item 4.</p>	
4	<p>Clerk Report, with details of emails and correspondence up to the period 27th November 2023</p> <p>Since the last regular meeting in Sept a number of residents have been in contact centred mainly around fundraising for parish events, flooding and speeding on the roads, those needing a decision have been placed on the agenda for the Council to discuss.</p>	

	<p>Our Chair has formally given their resignation and I have informed Mid Suffolk's Democratic Services of this. A new Chair is scheduled to be elected this evening. Email transition is still progressing and I have attended both a SALC library consultation webinar and attended in person the latest Mid Suffolk Town and Parish Liaison meeting held in Debenham where the 'Have you Say' was discussed along with current grants available. The 'Pride in your place' from Mid Suffolk was applied for and we have a payment of £250 to spend on Hi-vis jackets and long handled litter pickers.</p> <p>I am aware that we are in need of new councillors and would urge current councillors to let residents know that we have more than one vacancy on the parish council for them to be co-opted. Moving forward, Co-opting will now be a standing item for the now 5 vacancies we have. I am still waiting for one of the landowners to respond regarding the parking sign.</p> <p>Training has been placed on the agenda this evening so that the budget can be extended to reflect the current training need for new councillors. The annual asset check took place on 10th October and the Action Plan has been updated to reflect current goals. The 2nd Qtr accounts have been prepared and checked by Cllr Cox and are due to be discussed in the meeting this evening.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Standing Items agreed from the Parish Plan EGM</p> <p>i. Road Closures - Cty Cllr Oakes A dedicated resident was invited to speak to Cllr Oakes regarding the road closures and the current procedures in place for dealing with them. The resident was unhappy about the current situation, where no up-to-date information was provided on site and the placement of the road closure signs was misleading to drivers and caused unnecessary long diversions. It was agreed with Cllr Oakes that the resident would email the Clerk with comment on the current procedures, the clerk would look at the information and forward a request to Cllr Oakes to see if any changes to the procedures could be made to benefit residents make the information more timely, accessible to all and inclusive.</p> <p>ii. A dedicated Bus Route - Cllr Wells Cllr Wells gave an update on progress. Cllr Wells had attended a meeting regarding Suffolk transport, and spoke to High Suffolk Community Transport Group. Cllr Wells confirmed that Vertas are at full capacity and cannot provide a taxi bus service and that Swift Cabs could provide a taxi bus service but could not provide wheelchair access buses, but could take walking frames. It was concluded that Cllr Wells would continue to talk to Swift Cabs, will forward information to Councillors on the existing connecting communities service from Suffolk County Council and look into putting on a service to stowmarket.</p> <p>iii. Speeding in the Village - Cllr (and resident request on speeding along Willisham Rd) Cty Cllr Oakes confirmed a meeting with the residents regarding reducing the speed limit on the road between Willisham and the Limeburners</p>	<p>Resident Clerk Cllr</p> <p>Cllr</p>

	<p>Public House to 30mph to cover 400 metres and to provide concealed entrance signs. Cllr Oakes reported that the highways liaison officer had confirmed that they could not build a good enough case with the known information to request a speed limit change and that the signs could only be placed for a concealed entrance if there was development and farming. This had also been relayed to the residents.</p> <p>iv. A Tree for Every Household - Cllr Wells Cllr Wells advised that 2 landowners had been identified that could have a wood. One of these landowners is due to have a survey on 14th December in order to have trees ordered by January for planting. A Tree Hub scheme will be looked into further. There is no cost to the Parish Council and the project is ongoing.</p>	Cllr
6	<p>Planning Consultations & Governance Consultations</p> <p>i. MSDC - Polling District, Places & Stations Consultation - now Closed</p> <p>ii. MSDC - Local Listed Building Consent Order Councillors discussed this item and identified a preference to include older un-listed buildings as well.</p> <p>iii. Offton and Willisham Action Plan 2023-24 The action plan had been updated to reflect the new standing items from the parish plan. Councillors were happy to adopt the action plan.</p>	Clerk Clerk
7	To discuss having a community wood - as discussed in item 5iv.	
8	<p>To review and approve the Safeguarding Policy for volunteers & employees Councillors reviewed the Safeguarding policy. Some minor revisions were carried out for the Clerk to update and a risk assessment was also to be included. This was then Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously AGREED to be adopted as the Paris Council Safeguarding Policy.</p>	Clerk
9	<p>To discuss the purchase of Memorial Wreaths for the Churches As the meeting in November had not happened the clerk advised that no wreaths had been purchased as this would normally be done by the Chair via a credit card to the Royal British Legion and then reimbursed. Cllrs advised that Offton Church had received a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council and Cllr PInson-Roxburgh would find out who had carried out this very kind deed. Cllr Cox would find out if a wreath had been laid at the Willisham Church.</p>	Cllrs
10	<p>To discuss the recent flooding & having an emergency plan This was discussed in item 4</p>	Cllrs
11	<p>To discuss Resident Communication Request: Holly Lane - Height Markers each end to gauge height of water in flood This was discussed in item 4.</p>	Cllr Oakes

12	<p>To discuss the donation request by the Citizens Advice Bureau A short discussion took place regarding this matter and the recent information received by the Citizens Advice Bureau on the residents use of service. It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously AGREED to make a donation of £50.</p>	Clerk
13	<p>Finance</p> <p>a) Current Bank Balances as at 31st Oct 2023:- Community Account = £4,961.29 Premium Account = £13,775.46 This was noted</p> <p>b) To review and approve 2nd Quarter Accounts - Cllr Cox Cllr Cox advised the accounts had been reviewed and were satisfactory. Council unanimously AGREED to accept them.</p> <p>c) To review the Asset Annual Check as presented by the Clerk Councillors discussed the items arising from the asset check and all tasks were assigned to the respective Councillors to be looked at in the Spring. It was noted that the new Dog Bin was not being emptied and the Clerk will report it.</p> <p>d) To review the Training Budget and increase if needed The training budget was not adequate for the training set for this year and it was unanimously AGREED that funds are taken from general reserves to double the existing budget</p> <p>e) To review and approve the 3yr budget Councillors reviewed the forecast and advised of no changes except for the NALC pay rise for the clerk wages. Council unanimously AGREED to accept the budget To note the National Association of Local Council's (NALC) pay rise for</p> <p>f) councils employees This was noted To confirm receipts received since Sept 4th Meeting</p> <p>g) i) MSDC Precept - £5,500.00 ii) Bank Interest - £92.93 This was noted</p> <p>h) To note payments made under the financial protocol i) SALC Payroll - £54.00 ii) Clerk Wages for Oct - £391.63 iii) Clerk Wages for Nov - £391.63 iv) SALC training - £150.00 (Councillor Training) This was noted To approve and Authorise payments</p> <p>i) i) Clerk Office Allowance, Mileage and Expenses - £134.40 ii) Clerk Wages for Dec - £391.63 iii) Donations as specified in the Budget for 2023-24 (The Link, Village Recorder & Wreaths reimbursement) It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously AGREED to make the payments i - iii.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>

14	<p>EXCLUDED ITEM 14 - of a sensitive nature and to be heard after the Public are excluded (Public Bodies Admission to meetings Act 1960)</p> <p>To discuss Employee Panel members and Terms of Reference</p> <p>The employment panel members were confirmed, the panel were to review issues concerning employment matters and provide recommendations to full council for a decision. An appraisal month was set. It was agreed that draft employment policies would be emailed to the panel.</p>	<p>Clrs & Clerk</p>
15	<p>Next meeting scheduled for Monday 15th January 2023 7:30pm (NEW TIME)</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

Meeting end 10:00pm

ADDENDUM

1. District Council Report - Nov

Storm Babet and Ciarán

Mid Suffolk District Council has been working to help residents in affected homes and businesses. Household are being urged to report flood damage via Suffolk County Council's reporting tool. The Government has announced some financial support and we are awaiting further information on how this will be distributed. Affected businesses should also contact Mid Suffolk to register for support. Please visit www.midsuffolk.gov.uk for full details.

Solar and Low Carbon Energy Position Statement

MSDC's position statement on Low Carbon Energy was agreed at Mid Suffolks Council meeting on October 26th. In the absence of Government policy, the Council cannot make planning policy regarding renewable energy such as solar farms or solar PV on roof-tops. We can only provide a statement of intent in terms of how we wish to see developments proceed. This statement is an interim stage prior to the adoption of supplementary planning guidance in the New Year.

Your Community, Your Say!

The consultation to get residents' feedback on the planned priorities for the District is open until 15th November. We are hoping to engage with as wide a section of the district as possible, including some groups which seldom get involved, on topics ranging from housing to promoting active citizenship. The survey can be accessed online: <https://babberghandmidsuffolk.citizenlab.co/en-GB/projects/setting-the-future-direction-of-your-councils>

Sustainable Transport

At the same meeting it was agreed to form a working group to review sustainable integrated transport in the district – particularly for walking and cycling. It is hoped to review this in relation to commencing schemes in villages in the district.

Cosy Homes Initiative

Eligible households will be able to apply for energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including homes that are privately rented. Applications will be open from 15th November 2023. Full details to be available soon. Households that are particularly vulnerable can continue to access help via the wider Suffolk scheme www.warmhomesuffolk.org

Council Housing Repairs

The new Administration at Mid Suffolk is focussing on the backlog of housing repairs that are needed. This backlog will be dealt with via a separate contractor allowing the in-house team to concentrate on day-to-day repairs.

2. County Council Report - Dec

Cabinet approved £10 million new funding to resurface residential roads

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting (7 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.

County Councils remain united against Norwich to Tilbury onshore option

Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk County Council leaders are urging National Grid to reconsider their preferred onshore option following findings of a recent review.

The councils jointly commissioned and have now published an independent report into the Norwich to Tilbury project, which proposes the construction of a new high voltage electricity transmission line between Norwich in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex.

Leaders of the three county councils are now asking National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) and the electricity system planner, National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) to consider the findings.

The report, by Hiorns Smart Energy Networks, reviews the options considered by National Grid, including the preferred option of a pylon line between Norwich and Tilbury.

The total length of the line would be 183 kilometres. This would consist of around 158 kilometres of new overhead line supported by 520 pylons. There would be also four sections

of underground cabling. These underground sections would run through, and in the vicinity of, the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. National Grid's proposals also include a new substation on the Tendring Peninsula, to allow the connection of offshore wind farms.

Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk County Councils, accept that the transmission network in East Anglia needs reinforcing to support the transition to net zero, and provide energy security. However, they remain concerned that the need for, and timing of, the current proposals is uncertain and not robust.

This uncertainty brings into question the need case for National Grid's preferred option, of a land-based pylon line. All three county councils have expressed their concerns that this option will harm the local economy, environment and the health and wellbeing of their communities.

The review focused on a re-appraisal of the need case for the project; that need case was developed by National Grid Electricity System Operator.

The review investigated the need and timing of the proposals. It also investigated National Grid's decision that a terrestrial route, comprised mostly of overhead lines and pylons, would be preferable to an integrated offshore option.

The review supported National Grid's position that there is a need for additional electricity transmission capacity to connect renewable and low carbon energy generation in the East Anglia region.

However, it challenged the delivery date of 2030, and suggested that the need for additional transmission capacity would be closer to 2035, or beyond. This supports the concerns raised by the three councils.

While this potential delay to the need for Norwich to Tilbury is likely to reduce the cost of National Grid developing an integrated offshore alternative, the report concludes that the

most economical option for meeting the need for future transmission capacity remains onshore overhead lines, and pylons.

The Hiorns Smart Energy Networks final report is available to read in full [here](#).

Given the uncertainties around the need for, and timing of, the Norwich to Tilbury Project, all three councils strongly recommend that National Grid carefully consider the Hiorns report, and its potential implications for the project.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

"The effects of pylons and all the associated infrastructure cutting across all three counties cannot be underestimated. The impact on local communities and businesses will be significant, along with consequences for wildlife, our visitor economy, and protected landscapes.

"This will come in the short-term through building works, disruption, and disturbance of habitats - but most notably in the long-term for future generations who will suffer from construction that they cannot reverse, all for a project that could have less impact if it went by sea.

"To ensure the UK's energy security, our clear preference is for a coordinated, offshore centred approach, delivered at pace to minimise onshore works in Suffolk."

Extra £108 million for Suffolk's roads welcomed

Suffolk County Council has welcomed the Government announcement - which is part of a Department for Transport plan to pump £609 million into highway maintenance in the East of

England. £107,590,000 has been ringfenced for Suffolk over the next decade, including £3.4 million in this financial year.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

"Today's news is extremely welcome and will certainly help us to make Suffolk's roads better for everyone. We still need to understand the detail in full. But so far, what we know is very positive and will make a significant difference to our road network."

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 is also pumping an extra £10 million into drain and gully clearing projects.

135 drainage sites were addressed during 2022/23 and 89 new projects are currently in the design phase with the county council's new highways partner Milestone. This is in addition to Suffolk's annual drain clearing programme which saw 111,000 drains cleared last year.

The county council has also gathered over 800 reports of flooding to homes and businesses, to enable owners to access funding from the Government. Suffolk councils are working together, with Suffolk County Council collecting information and assessing the reports, and the district and borough councils distributing the funding to eligible property owners.

Eligible residents who experienced exceptional property flooding during Storm Babet and have reported this to the county council, will start receiving financial support during November.

Almost £1 million extra committed to investigating significant flooding following Babet

Suffolk County Council has committed almost £1 million of funds to bring in additional flood investigation specialists as the response to Storm Babet continues.

Since the storm, targeted recovery work has been carried out across the county to ensure damaged highway infrastructure is repaired, those whose properties were flooded get help and that investigations can start which will identify how to reduce flood risk.

As lead local flood authority, the county council has a duty to investigate significant flooding under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act. These investigations help to establish the source of flooding, factors which may have caused or exacerbated the flooding, the impacts on people, services and infrastructure and any actions which could be taken to increase resilience to future storm events.

In any usual year, Suffolk County Council carries out around three or four of these investigations. Following Babet, up to 100 look to be needed.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Suffolk County Council's leader, said:

[“The impact of this truly unprecedented event is still being felt across the county and will continue to do so for months to come, so it is important that we recognise that and increase our resources appropriately.](#)

[“These investigations help us to work with communities to establish the cause of flooding in the worst hit areas and identify ways to manage the risk better in future.”](#)

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.