

Minutes of Elmsett Parish Council meeting held on 5 March, 2024 at Elmsett and Aldham Village Hall.

- 03.24.00 **PRESENT:** Alan Newman in the chair Nick Bird, John Sones, Paul Firman, Fiona Watt, Andrew Woodgate, County Councillor Robert Lindsay and District Councillor Leigh Jamieson the clerk, and 3 members of the public were present.
- 03.24.01 **APOLOGIES:** All present
- 03.24.02 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR:** The Chairman nominated Paul Firman, this was seconded by Fiona Watt and carried unanimously. Paul signed The Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- 03.24.03 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS:** There were no declarations of interest.
- 03.24.04 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January, 2024 were signed as an accurate record.
- 03.24.05 **CO-OPTION:** The chairman welcomed and thanked the three candidates who had expressed an interest in being co-opted to the parish council. He pointed out that there was only one vacancy and so there would be a vote. He read out the procedure that would be followed according to the council's Standing Orders. Votes were made and there was one vote for one candidate, one vote for another candidate and four votes for the third. There was an overall winner which meant that Mrs Fran Williams was co-opted as the new parish councillor. The chairman invited her to stay for the meeting which she did. She signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took part in the rest of the meeting. The other two candidates stayed as members of the public.
- 03.24.06 **6.1 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR: Road closure Aldham -**
The council are now posting updates on the road closure on their website here <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roadworks/temporary-traffic-management-for-suffolk-highways-roadworks>

The latest is that they have decided on using steel sheet piles to shore up the verge and that they are investigating how deep these need to go and will have a conclusion on this by week beginning 18th March. They say they will then be able to provide a start date for actual repairs.

They insist that it is being treated as a priority to re-open the road. There are five other similar road closures listed on the Suffolk site.

I have been in regular contact with the cabinet member for Highways and senior and junior officers over issues related to the closure, including getting HGV warning signs put up on the road at the junction with Elmsett road for the Anglian Water work in Aldham. Also ensuring that the road between Whatfield and Elmsett is added to the gritting list. Like me, Elmsett and Aldham PC chairs have also been regularly reminding the cabinet member of the

frustration felt by residents. So the cabinet member and senior officers are very much aware of this.

Council Budget for 2024-25 The controversial council budget with many heavy cuts was approved at full Council on 15 February. The council is borrowing heavily from its reserves to meet the growing demand for social care for adults and children, and council tax is due to rise by £74 annually for Band D properties from April this year. There will also be cuts to Family Hubs (children's centres) and Housing Related Support, which supports vulnerable people like care leavers to find accommodation. Funding for arts and museums will be maintained for 2024-25 only and subject to a bidding process for grants after that. The Bury St Edmunds local archives will be moved to The Hold in Ipswich, which like the arts funding cuts has been controversial locally.

Reinstating glyphosate spraying and biodiversity The cabinet has reviewed its biodiversity policy and decided to reinstate weed killing with glyphosate. They started using acetic acid as a substitute last year but found that it requires five or six sprayings a year to kill larger weeds effectively and they could not afford to do this. Its new policy states that it will only use glyphosate as sparingly as possible where it has to for things such as maintenance of pavements. They will also do a small trial of hand weeding to work out how much it costs and how effective it can be.

The council has a target of managing 30% of land it owns for nature – in line with stated government policy, however, it is only applying this to its own estate, not to schools.

SEND failure – “Priority Action Plan” Following Suffolk's special educational needs services failing its Ofsted inspection, the county must now produce a Priority Action Plan with its NHS partners which must be submitted by 7th March. It will be spending £4.4 million extra in the next financial year to enable this action plan to be delivered. New staff will be hired to, amongst other things, enable care plans to be produced more promptly as well as extra training.

Suffolk Devolution expected 2025 The government is offering the county council a bit more freedom on decisions and funding for transport, skills and adult education, regenerating brownfield sites and retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient. If the deal is approved, the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk every four years. The first election would take place in May 2025 alongside county council elections. The council will be consulting on the deal soon and residents will be able to give their opinions on the changes proposed. For more information, see <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

6.2 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Leigh reported the following **Planning Application - DC/23/05014** The application for development behind the school was refused on Friday as it was outside the built up area boundary and wasn't in accordance with the Neighbourhood plan.

Babergh Budget The budget for 24/25 was approved at the February council meeting. Balancing the budget wasn't easy this year and was achieved with use of earmarked reserves along with increases in council tax, rents and fees. Council tax will go up by 2.99% which equates to a rise of 10p a week on a band D home. Council tenants will also see an increase of 7.7%. Social rents will increase by £7.92 a week and affordable rents will increase £11.13 a week. Along with ongoing concerns about future budget pressures, the cuts to Housing Related Support funding by the county council are also worrying the council leaders. The related impacts could put further demands on district council finances.

Parking Charge Petition A petition containing more than 8000 names was debated at the last full council meeting. While we are all concerned about the possible affect that charges may have on our high streets, we also have to consider the impact on other services. With a possible budget gap of £6.7m in the coming years all possible income routes have to be looked at, the contents of the petition would be noted.

Loft insulation for Suffolk homes Funding is available to help Suffolk residents make their homes warmer and have launched a Suffolk Loft Insulation offer. Thanks to teaming up with builders' merchant Travis Perkins. There are four product options available and residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery.

Tax premiums for Empty & second homes Both councils agreed a new joint policy - 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 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%. Owners of 576 second homes in Babergh will 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 high-level analysis suggests the proposals for empty homes premiums could generate an extra £300k in Babergh, while the premiums for second home owners in 2025 could net an additional £1.1m for Babergh.

03.24.07

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: **The Neighbourhood Plan** refresh is well underway with the revisions. A grant to cover the cost of this work has been received. The draft leaflet is due to go to the printers and then distributed to all parishioners which will be the beginning of the consultation process and the public exhibition will take place on 23 March in the village hall. **BMSDC Local Plan** is now entering phase 2 with a call for sites. **A Morton** although having resigned as parish councillor continues to report Potholes. He has also organised a Litter Pick for 16 March. **OS Maps** the PC registration for OS Maps has been renewed and updated. **Babergh Area Forum** is on 12 March.

Rose Builders the route into the village to the site in Whatfield Road has been agreed and they have said that they will update on progress bi-monthly. Leigh Jamieson said that he would introduce the chairman to the developer. Correspondence has been received from a resident in Windings Road regarding **flooding outside nos 4-10**. With the help of Robert the parish council has been trying to get the problem resolved through County Council highways. **Bus route** Monks Eleigh PC is taking the lead with a Digibus and has invited Elmsett, but this has not been taken up. **Car park charges** in Hadleigh – this is still being debated. Fiona has started to post information on the dedicated parish council **Facebook page** which is linked to the village page. At the moment this seems to be working well.

The village green footway continues to make progress, albeit very slowly. The chairman is meeting with the legal team next week. **Beacon** on Rectory Meadow. The chairman said that with all that was going on at the moment he was unable to prioritise this and asked that John Sones take the matter forward. **Speeding** – Andrew Morton has the data following surveys that were carried out and had agreed to report back to the parish council. It was felt that speeding is a problem and that measures should be taken to remind drivers to reduce their speed. It is likely that the council will outsource the work of further investigation and providing appropriate warning signs. John Sones pointed out that the present 30mph road traffic speeding signs needed to be updated and corrected before anything further could be done because without them the Police would be unable to enforce any violation. It was suggested to also include Rookery Road in any new survey.

- 03.24.08 **VILLAGE HALL UPDATE:** Fiona reported that the village hall committee was still working on improving the situation with regard to flooding on the Meadow and the problem with this affecting the school play area. Work still has to be done clearing out the ditch the other side of the school.
- 03.24.09 **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFRESH:** The chairman had previously circulated a draft copy of the revision. This was approved and it was resolved that this should now go forward for printing and distribution to residents for consultation.
- 03.24.10 **RECESS FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION:** The main topic was the continued problem with the road closure at Aldham and the apparent lack of anything being done or communicated to the public. It was agreed to invite members of Suffolk Highways to the next meeting which would be the Annual Parish Meeting on 9 April to be held at the Village Hall. Chairman to organise if possible, to try to ascertain what is being planned and when works will be done to get the road reopened. It was also frustrating that a number of other road closures are taking place as well with no clear signage, causing further annoyance and frustration.
- 03.24.11 **DEBRIEF FOLLOWING RECENT POWER CUT:** It was agreed that this should be included with the refresh of the Emergency Plan. It was felt that this is a rather difficult task and that outsourcing should be considered. John Sones to look at who might be able to assist with this.

- 03.24.12 **HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY:** It was agreed that it is not necessary to do this at the moment with all the housing that is presently being built.
- 03.24.13 **FINANCE:** Accounts due –The clerk reported that following the resignation of Andy Morton there had been problems with getting other parish councillors registered to authenticate the on-line payments. There had been conflicting advice given by the bank and because of this it was agreed to write cheques. John Sones and Andrew Woodgate to register with TSB so that the council can use TSB on-line banking as they are already signatories. Once this has been done we can then add other signatories.
It was also agreed to update the signatories for Nationwide BS and apply for on-line.
Appointment of Internal Auditor – it was agreed to appoint SALC to be Internal Auditor again this year.
Bank Reconciliation had previously been circulated to members of the parish council and verified.
It was agreed to ask our website host to install the SSL certificate at a cost of £39.00.
- 03.24.14 **PLANNING:** DC/24/00466 Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses (C3) and for building operations reasonably necessary for conversion. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 as amended Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q - Conversion of barn to 1no. dwelling 9 Manor Road, Elmsett – The parish council resolved to reply to Babergh DC that as this was a legal matter it should be considered by BDC.
- 03.24.15 **DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS:.** 9 April, 4 June, 23 July, 10 September, 22 October, 10 December, 21 January, 2025 all to be in the Methodist Church Hall.

The meeting closed.

Signed:-..... Dated:-.....
Chairman