

Minutes of Elmsett Parish Council meeting held on 12 September 2023 at Elmsett and Aldham Village Hall.

- 09.23.00 **PRESENT:** Alan Newman in the chair, Andrew Morton, Nick Bird, John Sones, Paul Firman, Andrew Woodgate, District Councillor Leigh Jamieson, the clerk, rep from Village Hall and 1 member of the public was present.
- 09.23.01 **APOLOGIES:** Fiona Watt, annual leave, County Councillor Robert Lindsay
- 09.23.02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS:** No declarations of interest
- 09.23.03 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** The Minutes of the meetings held on 18 July and 1 August, 2023 were signed as accurate records.
- 09.23.04 **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Hadleigh Road Development Leigh has asked Denbury Homes for a commitment to repair damaged verges and gardens in the village. While they confirm that they will undertake repairs to the affected verges within the immediate proximity of the development, they will not be responsible for the entire village.
- Garrards Road John Buckingham, following some correspondence this week agreed to meet Andrew Morton on site.
- Elmsett Post Office. Leigh has raised this matter with James Cartlidge, the chair of the APPG for Post Offices and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Business and Trade. and received no reply from any of them as of yet.
- District Council Priorities for the next 4 years - Increased climate change action, close collaboration with communities, and a focus on good housing. Collaboration and partnership with communities, the voluntary sector, business, and neighbouring councils are at the heart of the coalition vision. This will include encouraging the building of energy efficient homes and commercial buildings with high insulation standards and low carbon heating systems – while ensuring council housing reaches these standards too. It will also look at ways it can support community energy projects.
- Supporting market towns and villages to flourish will also be an area of focus, alongside ensuring people can learn new skills and secure good jobs. The administration is now looking at some short-term ambitions including ways of improving the energy efficiency of listed buildings; relaunch of neighbourhood plans; identifying more land for community housing and improving planning enforcement using the considerate constructor's scheme.
- Temporary Leadership Change Unfortunately, Council Leader Dave Busby following a cancer diagnosis has had to step back temporarily from his leadership role and. councillor John Ward will take over as acting leader whilst he has treatment. There will also be some changes in portfolio ownership in the short term.
- New Funding As well as the capital funding, thanks to the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Small businesses and community organisations across the districts will have access to three grants under the fund:
- Andrew Morton confirmed that he had met with John Buckingham and was disappointed that work promised last year had not been done. There is a lot of rubbish behind the garages which may cause localised flooding because of the blocked ditch. There was a further problem in that ukpowernetworks had asked Babergh permission to cut trees that were affecting their power lines

and dispose of the chippings by 6 Downlands. Mr Morton had spoken to the owner who was unaware of this. He felt that the two Public Realm departments needed to work together to get a resolution. He also mentioned the supply of grasscrete type material which apparently Public Realm has but there is no funding to fit should be discussed with the parish council who may be able to assist. Leigh to take these matters up with Public Realm.

COUNTY COUNILLOR'S REPORT: Robert circulated his report prior to the meeting - **Council warns over £30 million deficit predicted for current financial year** The latest prediction, based on the first quarter of the year is for a 4% deficit on the £688m budget the council set itself in February. This is not unexpected but the council has chosen to press release this now and state that their current answer of seeking more cuts and dipping into reserves to finance shortfalls is not sustainable. All the cost pressures, inflation and interest rates were known about when the council set its budget in February and raised council tax by 4% rather than the full 5% allowed, as the Green and LibDem opposition had proposed. Our amendment was voted down by the Conservatives. The overspend comes largely in costs for children in care with complex needs and for taxi transport to special needs schools, also growing costs of elderly care.

Hadleigh High School one of four in Suffolk so far affected by concrete problem. Pupils were scheduled to return to school in a phased manner over past two weeks. The costs of repairs for RAAC problems will be borne by the Dept of Education but cost of transporting pupils etc dealt with case by case.

09.23.05 **WHATFIELD ROAD FOOTWAY AND LEGAL AGREEMENT:** A draft copy of the Agreement had previously been forwarded to Councillors for approval. After clarification of some points by the Council's legal adviser the draft was approved without further amendment and will be forwarded to Suffolk County Council..

09.23.06 **GRASS AND HEDGE CUTTING:** The chairman reported that there had been a number of emails regarding the overhanging nettles and hedging along the footpath adjacent to the Meadow. The rep from the village hall said there had been several comments on the Facebook page. She confirmed that the face of the hedge had been cut and some of the weeds had been cut back. There was discussion on who is responsible for cutting the hedge and weeds. Whilst it was felt that Suffolk County Council may be responsible, the likelihood of them getting round to cutting it back in a timely manner on an annual basis was felt unlikely. Suffolk CC are going to spray in a couple of weeks' time but will be too late. There was also debate as to whether cutting the hedge would disturb birds. It was felt that this was only guidance on cutting and that safety trumps everything. A number of people had written to the Council pointing out children were having to walk on the road to avoid the nettles. Members of the council felt that this was totally unacceptable. It was agreed that the village hall would endeavour in the future to get the hedge and weeds cut with financial assistance from the parish council. It was also agreed to write a piece for the newsletter in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding on what was going to be done with the hedges.

09.23.07 **SPEED SURVEY ANALYSIS:** Andy Morton explained that he had commissioned Suffolk County Council to carry out surveys so that the council could have some data to work with, with regard to the perception that there

was a problem with speeding in various locations in the village. He said that the results of the survey had been submitted and further data was being collected later in October. The data had also been shared with the Police, none of the sites met their criteria to set up an enforcement site. There was discussion as to where there are problems - Whatfield and Hadleigh Road. Some solutions were Speedwatch, flashing signs etc. Although County Council had refused to put up signs in Hadleigh Road where there was felt to be a particular problem. Agreed to put the results in the newsletter and on the council's website and ask residents for their opinions as to what they would like to be done. To be taken to the next meeting in October.

09.23.08 **CLOSURE OF POST OFFICE/ALTERNATIVE PROVISION.** The parish council was saddened to learn from the Post Office of their decision to close as of 3 November. It was agreed that alternative provision should be looked into as this would affect a number of residents. One area was to try to obtain visits by the Mobile Post Office to provide a much needed service. This will, no doubt need the co-operation from Aldham, Whatfield and surrounding villages to get sufficient custom. Andrew Woodgate agreed to look into this. Agreed to put a note in the newsletter to this effect.

09.23.09 **CORRESPONDENCE:** Correspondence from residents concerned about speeding and the state of the hedge by the Meadow were dealt with when discussing above agenda items.

09.23.10 **CLOSURE OF FOOTPATH BY DENBURY HOMES:** Notice had been received that Denbury Homes were carrying out works on Footpath 9, Elmsett to facilitate resurfacing works and it would be closed for 3 months..

The diversion route will be Hadleigh Road, Footpath 7 and vice versa.

It is intended that the closure will operate from 27/09/2023 – 27/12/2023 but, if necessary, the order may remain in force for 6 months.

09.23.11 **REVIEW OF POLICIES:** The Council's policies had been circulated to all members of the council prior to the meeting for review. Councillors agreed the adoption of all policies, date to be next reviewed September, 2024. Code of Conduct, Access, Wildlife, Privacy, GDPR, Internal Control, Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Risk Assessment, Website Access. The asset register was reviewed in conjunction with the insurance policy renewal.

09.23.12 **FINANCE:** The following invoices were verified and cheques signed. The chairman reported that St Peters had appointed a new contractor to carry out churchyard maintenance. Both chair and Vice chair had met with him so that he continues with the regime set up by Hilary Furlong some time ago and agree that the Parish Council would continue to contribute 50% of the costs up to £600.

Zurich	1038	Ins Renewal	300.00	
T Hitchcock	1039	Grasscuts 4,17&31-8	195.00	
Babergh DC	1040	Election Costs	147.71	
Village Hall	1041	Hire 12/09/2023	19.50	LGA 1972
T Hitchcock	1042	Cuts Jul	130.00	
T Hitchcock	1043	Inst bench The Green	£738.98	CIL
St Peters Ch	1044	Chyd maintenance	160.00	

Bank reconciliations were submitted and verified.

The clerk confirmed that the second precept payment had been received £5,200.

A member of the council suggested that money from the current account be transferred to the savings account. The clerk pointed out that only a sum up to £85,000 could be guaranteed by Nationwide. Investigation to continue as to appropriate account.

09.23.13 **DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS:** 31 October and 12 December..

The meeting closed.

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