

Minutes of Elmsett Parish Council meeting held on 23 January 2024 at Elmsett and Aldham Village Hall.

- 01.24.00 **PRESENT:** Alan Newman in the chair John Sones, Paul Firman, Fiona Watt, , the clerk, PC Niall Johnson and 1 member of the public was present.
- 01.24.01 **APOLOGIES:** Andrew Morton, unwell. , Nick Bird away, Andrew Woodgate work commitments, County Councillor Robert Lindsay and District Councillor Leigh Jamieson.
- 01.24.02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS:** There were no declarations of interest.
- 01.24.03 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December, 2023 were signed as an accurate record.
- 01.24.04 The Chairman introduced PC Niall Johnson to the meeting. He has been appointed as the new Police Constable of the Southern Community Police Team and his role will be patrolling the area and engaging more with the community. He has made arrangements to have a 'surgery' at the morning markets in April and November. He said that he would be happy to hear of any anti social behaviours, hate crimes etc. He also reassured the meeting that he can always call on back up for additional resources and support if necessary. He has a list of dates of our meetings for the rest of the year and will be welcome to come along at any time.
- 01.24.05 **5.1 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Leigh was unable to attend the meeting, but his report had been previously circulated to members of the parish council - **Budget gap** The Councils biggest challenge over the next two months will be delivering a balanced budget for 24/25 and beyond. Finances are tough, the council have been hit by inflation, pay rises and lack of major development across the district. At the moment this leaves a budget deficit for 23/24 of £1.8M, and this is with increases in Council Tax of 2.99% and in existing fees and charges taken into account. It is therefore falling on councillors to make some difficult decisions will therefore have to be made to ensure that we can continue to provide services.
Building in Babergh The council has, finally, become the only rural district in the country to partner with the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS). The scheme sets out how construction teams should respect neighbours, minimise impact on the environment, and have an inclusive and healthy workplace. Developers will be encouraged to sign up to the scheme when they are granted planning permission, but it will be mandatory in communities where construction could have a severe disruptive impact. The council is also looking at how this approach could be further strengthened in the future.
Second Home/ Empty Property Tax Babergh Councillors are also considering higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties, following the introduction of new government rules. There are almost 600 empty properties in Babergh, and many residents are frustrated at the building of new properties while so many lay empty. Bringing these homes back into use will help meet growing housing need. Proposals being considered by cabinet members would see the owners of properties left empty would have incremental tax rises depending on number of years empty.

Call For Sites Following on from approval of Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan the Council is already progressing with the production of part 2. At this initial point of the plan-making process the Council is inviting site submissions to be put forward for residential land use for consideration for future development. This is known as the 'Call for Sites' process.

Car Parking Charges Implementation of car parking charges in Hadleigh, Lavenham and Sudbury is being looked at again, as a way of closing the budget gap.

Anglian Water Road Closures Anglian Water have announced the route of the Bury St Edmunds to Colchester pipeline and have produced an interactive map detailing the road closures. In the Elmsett area there will be closures of The Street in Aldham, between 19th Feb and 18th Mar. This road is already closed indefinitely due to the road collapse.

Elmsett Road between Elmsett and Whatfield is due to be closed between 8th April and 26th April. Further closures to Naughton Road, Semer Road, Ipswich Road and Nedging Road are to be confirmed.

5.2 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Robert was unable to attend the meeting but had previously submitted his report to the council - **Hadleigh**

Road finger post I am told that work to remove the existing and install new 4-way finger posts in Ipswich Road, Aldham have been ordered and are due to be completed by 23rd April 2024. There is caveat that "Works ordered of this nature, whilst have a completion date are always subject to the needs of the reactive service and Highway Maintenance Operational Plan which utilise the same resource."

Aldham Road closure Highways has agreed my request to grit the detoured school bus route between Whatfield and Elmsett. Because the school bus is going five days a week on this route, it meets the criteria highways set for gritting. Highways have agreed to put this on their gritting route at least for the duration of the Aldham road closure.

The closure is likely to last many months, and possibly well over a year. I have asked repeatedly for timetable for the work but Highways are unable to give me one. There are in total about six roads across Suffolk that have collapsed similarly to Aldham owing to the storms. Since the road is being undermined by a very deep waterway alongside it, it will need to be shored up and the waterway either piped or channelled in some way. Milestone, SCC's Highways maintenance contractor, have been commissioned to investigate what exactly is the best way to fix it and then a platform will need to be designed to ensure work can be safely carried out on a road that is collapsing several metres into a field below it.

The last thing I heard on this was from Paul West last Monday saying: "County Council's (SCC) Design team is still working on the designs for this scheme and a meeting is taking place shortly between SCC and Milestone to discuss a way forward and timescales for the repair works. In the interim, the team have increased the diversion signage around this location whilst the road closure is in place to reduce the usage of unsuitable diversion routes."

County Budget proposes £64m budget cuts over 2 years The complete axing of £535k funding for **arts and museums** has attracted the headlines and will impact places like Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds. It will also impact vulnerable elderly and children from across the county who are supported by

groups like Suffolk Artslink and Dance East, Food Museum. Other cuts: - £11m staffing costs, initially by not replacing vacancies.

The county is taking £16m from reserves and £2.2m from risk reserve. There is a warning in the papers that the remaining £20m in risk reserve is now below the level need to provide full confidence that the council's financial risk. The biggest cuts are in Adult and Community Services where they are proposing cutting £28m next year, £15m more than planned. There are warnings from officers in the papers that the cuts for adult care "may result in an increase in customer complaints". The county is also cutting all funding for skills development and **apprenticeship** programmes. It warns that this means it is likely that the number of young people in Suffolk not in education, employment or training will rise as a result.

The programme to **decarbonise and retrofit school buildings to meet zero carbon targets is being stopped** from the end of this financial year. £3.57m will have been spent on this in the current year.

Over two years £3m will be cut from the £5m **Housing Related Support** budget which enables vulnerable people to live independently and helps stave off homelessness. The council papers say costs will be "rebalanced" which I assume means persuading the district councils take up the burden.

The Bury St Edmunds **records office** will be closed and records centralised at the Hold, Ipswich.

Former Children's Centres, now called **Family Hubs**, will be "redesigned" in an unspecified way following a public consultation next financial year to save £700k.

01.24.06

RECESS FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION: The chairman brought this item forward as the member of the public attending the meeting wanted to make some observations about the Aldham Road closure because of the collapsed carriageway. His main concern, especially having heard the update from the County Councillor above was that there is very little evidence that the County Council are doing anything. He was also concerned that there did not appear to have been a dilapidation survey prior to the consent of permission for the development of the Denbury houses. He also had photographs of very large vehicles meeting on the road. He appreciated that there had been exceptional rainfall and that the houses would be beneficial for the shop, pub and school, but there had been no joined up approach. Everyone was in agreement that there is still very little information forthcoming and that there should by now be some plan of what is going to be done with some timescales.

The chairman reported on the meeting which had taken place at the pub last week when a number of residents from both Aldham and Elmsett met with the District Councillor, Chairman of Aldham and Chairman of Elmsett Parish Council and the shop keeper and landlord to hear of the adverse effect the closure was having on the revenue of both the shop and pub. It was difficult to know what assistance could be given

The chairman said that the parish council would continue to seek information with timescales as the closure was also causing problems to the verges on a number of the diversionary routes being taken. The member of the public left the meeting.

01.24.07

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Chairman said he would continue to press for information regarding the Aldham Road closure. It was also suggested that we might ask for building to cease until something is done.

The chairman was also asked to write to the Floods Team at the County Council to ascertain just how often the road has been flooded by the Flowton Brook/Channel.

Post Office van unfortunately it failed an MOT and was out of action last week, but regular service should be resumed today and every Tuesday from 12.30 to 1.30pm.

Drainage problems school site and village hall. The chairman has met with a member of staff from the school to investigate where the problems are with regard to the flow of water through the school site and into Fisons's ditch. The village hall has been kept informed and Chair of VH is arranging for a drain cover to be replaced and further investigations on the meadow.

Traffic surveys – Andy Morton is still working on this and will report at next meeting.. John Sones commented that a number of 30mph signs were hidden by overgrown hedges.

Snow Clearing/gritting – volunteers required Andy Morton and Malcolm Woor have both volunteered in the past but health issues prevent them from doing this. Fiona to put a note on the new Facebook page.

Litter Pick in the spring – Andy Morton is organising this and will be advertising shortly.

Housing Needs Survey – Community Action Suffolk can do for £2,000 plus costs. As an example, the last survey CAS did the additional costs came to £206 for a village with 450 households.

Cornhatches – fallen tree – Andy Morton has asked Charles Course to remove which he said he will do when the weather calms down.

01.24.08

VILLAGE HALL UPDATE: Fiona said that she was managing the day to day running and keeping up with the bookings. She has a number of people who she can call on to help, but she will be making a more comprehensive list of tasks that need to be undertaken and trying to get more people involved to do these. She also confirmed that Ally Leach and Jo King will still be responsible for the defibrillator and liaising with the parish council for any maintenance issues. She also confirmed that the structural survey had highlighted some issues and Pual Cousins was prioritising what needed to be done. They were also working through the report following the inspection of the play equipment and hoping to get a working party involved. Fiona to contact the Friends of the School.

The Beacon – John Sones asked about the progress with repairing the beacon. Still awaiting the sourcing of a suitable pole.

01.24.09

DEBRIEF FOLLOWING RECENT POWER CUT: As there were a number of members absent it was agreed to take this matter forward to the next meeting.

01.24.10

FINANCE: Accounts due – the clerk advised that transactions could now be made by Internet Banking. Three payments had been made. CAS this was verified in October. £60.00. Village Hall hire for December – the cheque that was written in December was cancelled because of an error - £45.50.

The last payment for grass cutting was the third payment £65.00 to Tom Hitchcock. Payments created by the clerk and authenticated by two councillors. An up-to-date reconciliation showing all the transactions and statements was verified.

Grass cutting Tenders for the next 3 years. The clerk had received 3 quotes. These were considered and it was agreed that the one that met the full specification with an acceptable cost was that of Tom Hitchcock. The clerk to write to confirm the outcome with all three who submitted a tender.

Neighbourhood Plan Refresh The chairman referred the members to the proposal circulated from Ian Poole to apply for a grant to cover the cost of the refreshing the neighbourhood plan. It was proposed by Fiona seconded by Paul and unanimously agreed that this should go ahead. The chairman said that he was meeting with Ian and the Chairman of Aldham PC to submit the grant application tomorrow.

Housing Needs Survey – There was some discussion as to whether this should be done especially with the 44 houses being built, including 15 affordable and all the 18 on Whatfield Road designated as Affordable Housing. It was agreed that this item should also be taken over to the next meeting.

01.24.11

DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS:. 5 March, 16 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