

FINNINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

*Minutes for the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on
Tuesday 14th March 2023
in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:30pm*

Present: Cllr A. Kilbee, Cllr L. Charter, Cllr J. Miller, Cllr P. Trew, Cllr J. Black

In attendance: Miss J. Challis (Clerk), CC & DC Cllr Mellen, Freddie Gulliver - Emergency Planning Officer Suffolk County Council, 1 member of the public.

22.233 Visiting speakers

Cllr Kilbee introduced Freddie Gulliver the Emergency Planning Officer from Suffolk County Council, and proposed moving to agenda item 11 to allow it to be discussed within the public participation session.

Freddie Gulliver explained the way a Community Risk Register and Community Emergency Action Plans work. If the Parish Council were to proceed with a Community Emergency Plan, it would be held by MSDC (Mid Suffolk District Council), who would notify the Parish Council to take action if required in the event of an emergency, which would therefore negate any liability to the Parish council. Freddie Gulliver advised that if councillors wished to proceed, the next step would be to create a working party, with a nominated person acting as the main lead, to write a plan. This could be done jointly with a neighbouring parish to combine emergency assets, such as a village hall, although Finningham does have the Church which Freddie Gulliver said would suffice as a gathering place in an emergency.

There was a discussion with Freddie Gulliver saying he would forward a template for councillors' further consideration.

Cllr Kilbee thanked Freddie Gulliver for taking time to attend the meeting.

7:52pm Freddie Gulliver left the meeting.

Cllr Mellen sent his DC and CC reports in advance of the meeting which can be found as addendums at the end of the minutes.

Mr Aiken sent his Footpath Warden's report in advance of the meeting, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

22.234 Contribution by Members of the Public

No contributions made.

22.235 Apologies and approval of absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Arthur (prior engagement), and Cllr Winter, (unwell), and approved unanimously.

22.236 To receive any pecuniary or non-pecuniary declarations of interest from Members and any Gifts of Hospitality.

None received.

22.237 To consider requests for dispensations on agenda items

None received.

22.238 To approve minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th February 2023

Cllr Charter proposed approving the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th February 2023 as a true and correct record; seconded by Cllr Miller and approved unanimously with one abstention (councillor who was not present at the meeting). The Chairman then signed the minute book.

22.239 Matters arising from the Parish Council meeting held on 14th February 2023

All covered elsewhere on the agenda.

22.240 Chairman's Report

A bit of good news. The replacement of the village sign (together with Gislingham's) at Rob Hall Corner is underway and the person responsible in SCC Highways (Andy Moore) has promised me that he will push it through the system as quickly as possible.

Also, Andy Mellen has undertaken to use some of his Highways Budget to have a survey conducted along Walsham Road as a precursor to applying for a 40mph limit to be imposed along that stretch of Road. Bacton were successful in their application for a similar limit to be introduced along the Haughley Road. This is the first step in achieving something that I started at least 10 years ago.

I have not been able to speak to you all regarding whether or not you are standing as candidates for the next Council. I sincerely hope that you are, as I feel that we have a good team and I should like to see it continue. As you know, we shall not need an election if there are no other candidates. We shall just have to wait and see. Jane has sent you all a timeline for the election on 4th May (these elections are for both the District and Parish councils) so please make sure that you pay attention to the cut-off dates. She has very kindly offered to deposit our forms to the Nomination Stations.

Finally, I should like to thank Councillor Trew for undertaking an impromptu survey of the salt bins in the village. Some of them require topping up so, I'll ask Jane to contact the relevant SCC department to have that done. There is another bin which was left off his survey and that is at Rob Hall Corner. I ask Councillor Miller to check that one and report back before Jane contacts the SCC.

7:59pm Cllr Mellen arrived.

Cllr Kilbee proposed returning to agenda item 1. Approved unanimously.

(22.233 Visiting speakers)

Further to Cllr Kilbee's report, Cllr Mellen said he has initiated the process to get the speed limit on Walsham Road reduced to 40mph. He said it is a lengthy process and certain criteria needs to be met.

Cllr Mellen also advised that he has spoken to Suffolk Highways regarding the footpath CIL bid to hopefully expediate the process.

Cllr Kilbee asked where the possible new joint depot for waste and building services, mentioned in Cllr Mellen's DC report, would be. Cllr Mellen said it had not been confirmed, but was likely to be close to Gt Blakenham.

Cllr Charter if Cllr Mellen is aware of plans to build a supermarket on the Jeffries of Bacton car sales site. Cllr Mellen said he was aware a planning application, (DC/23/00929), for change of use had been submitted for this site. It is currently awaiting a decision.

Cllr Trew said he had received a report of some very tall trees blocking light from a resident's garden, and could Cllr Mellen advise how to find out which department this report should be directed to. After discussing it was agreed for Cllr Trew to forward the location to the Clerk to investigate further.

8:12pm Cllr Black arrived.

22.241 Clerk's Report

- EN020027 East Anglia GREEN Update – Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylon Group have advised they recently held a meeting with James Cartlidge MP and Sir Bernard Jenkins MP; OffSET (East Of England MPs task force headed by Sir Bernard Jenkins MP) are pleased to hear that the ESO (Electricity System Operator) are holding a review to consider offshore routes for electricity transmission in East Anglia. Following this review a comprehensive cost benefit analysis of offshore vs on shore will be available, which will look at the benefit and cost of both options, whereas to date National Grid have only looked at the cost.
- Footbridge Eastlands Lane – Following the report made to Suffolk Highways, they have advised that the footbridge has now been closed off, although they cannot confirm timescales for repairs or replacement.

22.242 Finningham GREEN Footpath CIL bid application

Roy Emmerson, from the Infrastructure Team at MSDC, had a meeting on 20th February 2023 as previously advised, with officers from Suffolk County Council's Public Rights of Way and Highway departments. During the meeting he shared the current list of footpaths, cycleways, etc, CIL funding applications, and the Active Travel schemes listed within the BMSDC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) document, which SCC are now going through. There is a further meeting due to be held on 20th March 2023 following which Roy Emmerson hopes to have an update, which he would like to hold a meeting to discuss.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange meeting as above

22.243 To discuss the emergency plan.

Discussed as above within public participation. Cllr Trew made further comment that it seems as if the Emergency Plan is for MSDC rather than specifically for the parish, and as Finningham does not have assets such as a village hall it may not be worth pursuing. It was agreed to look at the template from Freddie Gulliver once received, and include as an April agenda item for a decision to be made.

22.244 To discuss Annual Newsletter to everyone in the village, including approval of printing costs

Cllr Charter has been working on the newsletter, but after consideration suggested it might be beneficial to create a joint newsletter with the FoF (Friends of Finningham). Cllr Kilbee said representatives from FoF had indicated their intent to attend the next meeting to discuss the King's Coronation, which would provide an opportunity to discuss the newsletter with them too.

22.245 To consider formal request from Finningham PCC for the Parish Council to take on maintenance of the churchyard

A formal request has been received from the PCC for the Parish Council to take over maintenance of the churchyard, as per s.215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Within the request the PCC state that is their position that the responsibility has vested in the Parish Council for a great many years, as evidenced by custom and practice, together with previous correspondence on the matter. However, as minuted at the meeting held on 14th February 2023, there is no record in either the Parish Council or PCC historic minutes, of a formal Order passing on maintenance of the churchyard to the Parish Council.

Councillors discussed the request, but raised concerns regarding the liability implications, and decided they need more information before making a decision.

Cllr Kilbee advised that the Land Registry document obtained regarding the churchyard fencing, does not unfortunately confirm ownership of the fence. Councillors noted that this cannot be progressed anyway until a decision has been made regarding the churchyard maintenance.

ACTION – Clerk/Cllr Kilbee to look at liability implications for next meeting, as above

22.246 Playground Improvements, including approval of purchase of play bark

The Playground Inspection Report dated 1st February 2023 identifies that the loose fill surfacing (play bark) is too low under the slide and climbing frame/activity equipment.

Cllr Arthur has calculated that five bags of play bark are needed to top it up to the required level, and has obtained pricing details from three suppliers. After discussing councillors agreed their preferred supplier at a cost of £75.00 per bag including delivery.

Cllr Trew proposed approval of expenditure up to a maximum of £450.00 to purchase the play bark. Seconded by Cllr Black and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Cllr Kilbee/Clerk to organise purchase.

22.247 To discuss a permanent VAS device on Station Road

Suffolk Highways have confirmed that they do not allow permanent VAS devices, however they do permit them to be permanently installed either battery or solar powered, on the provision that they are switched off for a minimum of one week, after a three-four-week operational period.

Cllr Trew has reported that the batteries in the current device do not seem to be charging properly. Cllr Kilbee has been in contact with Elancity who have provided some advice regarding the voltage which he asked Cllr Trew to check. In the meantime, Cllr Kilbee will find out the cost for replacement batteries. Councillors discussed leaving a VAS in position on Station Road as per the operational instructions from Suffolk Highways, and purchasing a second device to be moved between the other approved locations.

ACTION – Clerk to seek quotations for a second VAS device. Cllr Kilbee to find out cost of replacement batteries.

22.248 Elections 4th May 2023 and arrangements for the Annual Parish Council and Annual Parish Meetings

As advised at the 14th February meeting, Town and Parish Council elections are being held on 4th May 2023. Anyone wishing to stand for election must complete and hand in a Nomination Form by 4th April 2023. Due to it being an Election year, the Annual Parish Council meeting must be held within 14 days of 9th May 2023.

After discussing, it was agreed to hold the Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 9th May 2023, followed immediately by the Annual Parish Council Meeting at 7:30pm.

22.249 King's Coronation May 2023, including approval of expenditure for commemorative item

Councillors discussed options for a commemorative item, deciding that their preferred option to be a paperweight with the official King's Coronation logo, made by the company who supplied the Queen's Platinum Jubilee mugs last year. Cllr Trew proposed proceeding with the paperweights up to an overall spend of £2,750.00, to include an inscription to say 'presented by Finningham

Parish Council'. Seconded by Cllr Miller, and approved unanimously. Cllr Kilbee will confirm the total number of paperweights required upon receipt of the most recent electoral register which the Clerk has requested. They will be presented to residents at the beacon lighting on Sunday 7th May. Councillors also agreed to see if a mobile caterer could be found to attend the beacon lighting as well.

ACTION – Cllr Kilbee/Clerk to arrange order of the paperweights

9:19pm Cllr Mellen left the meeting

22.250 Correspondence received

An email has been received from a resident asking if the Parish Council can do anything about Network Rail cutting down the trees on the railway bank. Councillors took note of the resident's concerns but the trees have already been cut down, so there is little the council can do retrospectively.

An email has been received from a resident advising that the VAS device on Westhorpe Road is not working. This is due to the issue with the batteries not holding a charge properly, and will be rectified as soon as possible.

22.251 To consider and approve Risk Assessment and Management Policy

Prepared by the Clerk and circulated to councillors prior to the meeting.

Approval proposed by Cllr Charter, seconded by Cllr Kilbee, and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to publish

22.252 To consider and approve Reserves Policy

Prepared by the Clerk and circulated to councillors prior to the meeting.

Approval proposed by Cllr Trew, seconded by Cllr Miller, and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to publish

22.253 Finance

a. RFO's report (bank balance, receipts, and payments)

Balances as of 27/02/2023

Community Bank Account

Balance as of 27 February 2023: £26,145.92

(Balance as of 29 Dec 2022: £27,491.98)

Receipts (since 29 Dec 2022): £0.00

Payments (since 29 Dec 2022): £1,346.06

Deposit Account

Balance as of 27 February 2023: £3,333.32

General funds: £9,334.36

Reserves (1/2 of precept & election costs): £4,258.71

Restricted funds (CIL & grants not spent): £15,886.17

b. Requests for payment

Admin J. Challis - £261.43

HMRC J. Challis - £65.40

Clerk expenses (J. Challis mileage) - £20.61

A. Kilbee expenses (Land Registry document) - £19.95

A. Brownlie (cemetery clearance) - £200.00

D. Aiken expenses (postmix) - £12.90

TOTAL payments - £580.29

Cllr Trew proposed authorisation of the above payments, seconded by Cllr Charter and approved unanimously with one abstention against A. Kilbee's expenses (Cllr Kilbee).

ACTION - Cllr Kilbee and Cllr Winter to pay the remaining above approved payments by bank transfer (dual authorisation). Cllr Black to confirm when he has access to online banking.

c) Review of reserves

Councillors discussed the reserves, which do not currently show a breakdown to include earmarked reserves such as the footpath project. The Clerk will prepare a breakdown of available funds/reserves for councillors' approval at the next meeting, for transparency and as per the Reserves Policy.

d) Appointment of Internal Auditor 2022/23

Councillors agreed unanimously for Andrew Strickland to conduct the internal audit for 2022/23 as previous, and noted that PFK Littlejohn have been appointed as the external auditor for the next 5-year period.

e) Bank account signatories

Cllr Kilbee, Cllr Winter and Cllr Black are currently signatories on the bank account, but only Cllr Kilbee and Cllr Winter have access to the online banking facilities, and there is a need for additional signatories in the case of absence etc.

Cllr Trew indicated that he would be happy to act as a fourth signatory and follow the procedure to register for access to the online banking. Approved unanimously with one abstention (Cllr Trew).

ACTION – Cllr Trew to complete mandate from Barclays

22.254 Planning

a. To consider applications – None received

b. Decisions & to consider planning matters coming forth

DC/23/00337 APPLICATION FOR OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION

Application for Outline Planning Permission (all Matters Reserved) Town and Country Planning 1990 (as amended) – Erection of 4 No. detached chalet bungalows. Location: Land Adjacent, White Horse Inn, Station Road, Finningham – **AWAITING DECISION**

22.255 To discuss date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 11th April 2023 in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham.

22.256 Questions to Chairman

The member of the public advised that there is a tree down near the bridge on Church Lane. Cllr Trew said he will have a look and report it to Highways if necessary.

22.257 Items to be discussed at the next meeting and included in the April agenda.

Nothing received.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9:43pm.

FOOTPATH WARDEN'S REPORT

At present we have good access to our public rights of way and other than the two following closures, I believe our paths etc. are in reasonably good condition for the time of year.

TEMPORARY FOOTPATH BRIDGE CLOSURES

There are two temporary closures in place at the moment, placed by SCC PROW;

At footpath 1, Walsham Road IP14 4JH Grid Ref TM05571 70783 the

Wooden footbridge is damaged and unsafe.

At footpath 3, Walsham Road IP14 4JH Grid Ref TM05594 70783 the

Wooden footbridge is damaged and unsafe.

Both have SCC notices placed on them and are ribboned off.

We are in March now, and have already experienced some stronger winds, so I will look out for the odd trees/branches etc. That may cause obstruction.

DOUG AIKEN

District Councillor's Report for Parish Councils - March 2023

Councillor Andy Mellen, Bacton Ward (Bacton, Cotton, Finningham, Westhorpe and Wyverstone)

Budget agreed for 2023/3	At last month's full Council meeting the MSDC council tax freeze was confirmed. The opposition put forward an amendment to put aside £2M to help residents most in need with energy-saving measures, and this was agreed unanimously. The housing revenue account budget was also agreed, and this includes a 7% increase to council housing rents, just to try to keep pace with costs for some services soaring by almost 40% and to enable continued investment into repairs and maintenance.
Possible new Joint depot for waste and building services.	Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk have agreed to provide £6M each to improve the depot facilities. This is likely to end up with a single joint depot for the two councils. Currently the depots at Stowmarket, Sudbury and Gt Wenham are no longer fit for purpose, and are unlikely to meet the needs of the Council and residents in the future.
Gateway 14 officially opened	Gateway 14 was officially opened by representatives from Jaynic, MSDC and town and parish councils at the beginning of February. Gateway Boulevard, the main estate road is now complete so vehicles can drive through the site to Creetings. Hopefully the pedestrian and cycle links to the estate will be completed soon, and there will also be green corridors and high-quality landscaping to encourage biodiversity on the site.
People and Place plans	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are to be part of a Government pilot project which aims to get more communities shaping the places they live with a new approach to planning. <i>People and Place Plans</i> are simpler than full Neighbourhood Plans and should be a more accessible way to highlight local planning priorities.
Elections in May	<p>The local elections are taking place on 4th May. The full election time table has now been published https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/elections/current-elections/. Nominations need to be in by 4th April.</p> <p>This year for the first time voters will need to bring photographic ID when they attend a polling station to vote. Details of the types of ID which are acceptable can be found at https://www.babergh.gov.uk/elections/voter-id/. Residents who do not have any form of acceptable ID can apply for a <i>Voter Authority Certificate</i> or they can apply for a postal vote.</p>
Digital skills workshops	MSDC are running sessions in local libraries to help people get online and to develop their digital skills. More information is available on the website https://www.babergh.gov.uk/the-council/digital-journey/digital-skills-events or you can phone 0300 1234 000 (Option 7) .

Cllr Andy Mellen
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Parish Report – March 2023

Councillor: Andy Mellen

Division: Thedwastre North

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For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving

Homes for Ukraine: One Year Anniversary of War

The 24th February marked the one-year anniversary since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Suffolk continues to do its part through the Homes for Ukraine programme – hosting refugees fleeing the war. In total, 1256 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Suffolk through the programme. Currently, we have around 330 host families, supporting 750 Ukrainians – with others in private accommodation.

Suffolk is in need of new hosts, to continue to offer a safe haven for Ukrainian refugees who are not yet ready to enter private accommodation. Based on numbers, Suffolk needs 50 new hosts in the coming months. Hosts are entitled to £350 per month, which increases to £500 after 12 months.

If you think you can help, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/Ukraine.

SCC Financial Budget

At the beginning of February, the Council's budget for 2023/24 was voted in, confirming an increase in council tax by 3.99% - broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in general tax. Council services have faced a gruelling year of demand and additional cost pressures. In addition, the Council is not on track to achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2030, as they have promised to do so.

The opposition group proposed an additional 0.89% increase (19p weekly increase) to ensure vital services were protected from cutting support to residents. We pressed for this money to be used in the following ways:

1. To invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to develop a stronger pathway towards Net Zero.
2. To facilitate a review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.
3. Using £1m to actively recruit, retain and reward frontline staff in adult social care.
4. Providing more for Suffolk Libraries to help maintain services
5. To invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through EV vehicle usage.

The Conservatives voted against our budget amendments, saying our proposals were ill thought-out and inappropriate. The five Labour councillors did not submit a budget response, nor did they vote in the budget meeting, as a protest against the whole system of local authority funding.

SCC Cabinet Meeting

The Cabinet met in February to discuss the forecasts for the Council's current budget. The latest forecasts show that SCC is having to use more Reserves than anticipated to cover additional costs in running its services.

In addition, the Cabinet agreed to move the West Suffolk Archives in Bury St Edmunds to a new location in the town on Western Way. Our Group were concerned about the lack of sufficient public transport access to the new location – being far from the train station with an irregular bus service.

Finally, the Cabinet discussed the Fire & Rescue Service's new risk management plan. The plan outlines all foreseeable risks in Suffolk and indicates the service's priorities and proposals to improve the service.

New Highways Services: Contract Agreed

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded SCC's new highways services contract. The contract will last over 20 years and will be worth between £800m-£1bn, will begin 1st October 2023. The service will provide maintenance of roads, pavements, Rights of Way, drainage, hedges, construction of new roads, and snow clearing – this is not an exhaustive list.

Our Group campaigned last year for Suffolk Highways maintenance to be brought back in-house. This was due to the extortionate prices the previous provider, Kier, gave for simple jobs such as tree cutting and speed bump designs (i.e., £5,000 for a pair of dropped kerbs, £7,500 to cut down a single tree, £10,000 to design four humps in a road).

We have been given reassurance from Suffolk Highways that the same mistakes will not be repeated, and that the contract is more robust to deal with the inflated quotes previously received. We will closely monitor the new contract to ensure this is the case.

Household Support Fund: Extension Granted by Government

The Government has agreed to extend the Household Support Fund, meaning local authorities will continue to receive funding to help residents through the current cost-of-living crisis. The grant is distributed through small payments to support vulnerable household meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.

To apply for help, visit Suffolk's Cost-of-Living support leaflet at: <https://suffolk.pagetiger.com/cost-of-living-support/scc1>