

Minutes of Elmsett Parish Council meeting held on 14 January, 2025 at the Village Hall.

- 01.25.00 **PRESENT:** Alan Newman in the chair, Paul Firman, Fiona Watt, Nick Bird, Andrew Woodgate, John Sones, Fran Williams, Robert Lindsay, SCC and the clerk was present.
- 01.25.01 **APOLOGIES:** No apologies
- 01.25.02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS:** There were no declarations of interest.
- 01.25.03 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:** Minutes of the Meetings held on 3 & December and planning meeting on 17 December were signed as accurate records.
- 01.25.04 **4.1 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Robert had sent his report prior to the meeting as follows - At the county council's extraordinary general meeting 9th January, Conservative and Labour councillors voted in favour of fast tracking a massive reorganisation of local government. This involves the scrapping of district councils and the imposition of a single, elected Norfolk/Suffolk mayor with wide ranging planning powers. The county is also asking the Labour government to scrap the scheduled May 2025 county council election with county councillors serving an extra two to three years before having to seek re-election to a new unitary authority of unknown size or shape. Although this has been tagged "devolution" I see this as centralisation of powers away from local councils into the hands of a single mayor and much larger local authorities under the mayor of around between 300k to 500k people. The mayor will be easily controlled by central government which can give or withhold funds to the mayor as it likes. The Green, LD and independent group voted against the proposals but the Conservatives have a majority on the county council.

Free home survey to find out how best to stop heat leaks from your home Suffolk Public Sector Leaders are offering home owners a free or discounted "retrofit" assessment. The only criteria is that your home's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band must be below C.

You can apply online at suffolkenergyassessment.co.uk

You can check your home's EPC on gov.uk/find-energy-certificate.

The approved retrofit assessor will identify the best measures for your home, eg insulation, draft proofing, ventilation repairs, heat pumps or solar panels. They will also give you a cost:benefit analysis of any measure recommended.

It is free if your property is smaller than 98m² There is a maximum fee of £30 for larger homes.

Loft Insulation Offer for Suffolk Residents For the second year running, Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders are providing funding to help Suffolk residents make their homes warmer and save money on their energy bills by providing discounted loft insulation - an uninsulated home can lose up to a quarter of its heat through its roof. The Suffolk Loft Insulation Offer enables homeowners in Suffolk to receive a 50%

discount (up to £200) and free delivery on orders of 200mm or 370mm wide eco-friendly thermal insulation rolls from High Loft, the UK's leading eco loft insulation brand. Last year, the project enabled the insulation of over 5,000m² of roofs in Suffolk, and this year the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership wants to double that figure. The offer is open to anyone in Suffolk and will only close once the allocated funding has been spent. Visit <https://highloft.co.uk/pages/suffolk-council-200-loft-insulation-contribution> and fill in the form to receive your discount code.

£15k offer for home efficiency loan opens .The council's new £3m fund for interest-free loans to residents wishing to undertake home energy efficiency upgrades that was mentioned in last month's parish report is now active, and applications can now be made at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-home-suffolk-loan>. Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps are possible with loans from £2,000 to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of seven years at 0% interest.

4.2 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Leigh had previously sent his report as follows :- **Maltings development lighting application** - There has been some confusion over the lighting required. Planning, and Rose, were under the impression that the lights were knee height bollards (under 1m high), but 5m columns were on the approved application. The builders have now agreed to resubmit a discharge of condition application for knee high bollards, which planning have agreed to approve.

DC/24/05269 Erection of 2No detached self-build dwellings. I have raised this matter with the planning officer

Devolution plan The planned creation of a combined strategic authority and subsequent unitary councils will mean the end of the district council, which has always ensured that local government has remained genuinely local. Bigger is not always better – and a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to meet the diverse, and often complex, needs of our rural communities and market towns.

In seeking to cancel May's county elections, the county is removing the democratic right of Suffolk residents. The County is currently failing in so many areas and this will prevent residents from expressing their dissatisfaction with the current incumbents. District councils in Suffolk are writing to the Secretary of State to re-iterate this.

Joint Local Plan review As part of their drive to build 1.5 million homes nationally the Government has increased the annual housing requirement from 416 to 775 homes in Babergh (up 86%). Each year, planning authorities must demonstrate they have a five-year land supply for the required number of homes, something that we have done in recent years. However, the higher figures, set in December's National Planning Policy Framework review, mean this may become more challenging in future years. If this happens, there is a risk that national planning policies would start to take priority over the Joint Local Plan - and the council may find itself in a position where they have to approve planning applications on sites contrary to the development plan.

We feel that it is wrong to blame the council for failures in houses being built. Repeatedly developers fail to build out approved applications.

Because of the Governments unrealistic ask, although the plan was only approved in 2023 the council has no option but to review it.

Budget warning Babergh are looking to increase their element of the Council Tax by the maximum amount allowed, 2.99%, as well as increasing all fees and charges to help the councils difficult financial situation. There is still a predicted deficit of £361,000. The budget will be finalised over the next couple of months.

Kingfisher leisure centre ongoing delays In my last report I mentioned that the leisure centre in Sudbury would be re-opening on the 11 December. Unfortunately, surveys completed on the pool in November identified further structural issues. The work required to resolve these will delay reopening of the pool until mid-February. Other parts of the leisure centre are still open as normal.

Community projects cash boost Once again, the council have been able to assist community projects across the district with funding from the community infrastructure levy (CIL). Projects in East Bergholt and Glemsford received c£61k and £28k respectively from the October submission window.

Babergh endorses the Suffolk Economy Strategy The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group (SPSL), which includes Babergh Council, has endorsed the Suffolk Economy Strategy. A comprehensive plan will propel Suffolk's economic growth and position the county at the forefront of the UK's green evolution, by playing on Suffolk's strengths in clean energy, agri-food, and logistics, and integrating these core sectors with emerging opportunities in technology and innovation.

Both Robert and Leigh were concerned about the prospect of devolution and the form it might take and impact on the smaller authorities.

- 01.25.05 **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Chairman said that Ian Poole had stated that the update of the Neighbourhood Plan is still in progress. In answer to a question regarding the progress on the footpath on Whatfield Road he said he would chase this up yet again.
- 01.25.06 **RECESS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no members of the public present.
- 01.25.07 **CORRESPONDENCE:** BDC - Devolution and Local Government Reform Planning Matters (including the revised National Planning Policy Framework) – Notification that there will be a Teams meeting regarding this next week.
- 01.25.08 **VILLAGE HALL/COMMUNITY SHOP:** The Community Shop has launched their Shares which is going well, a number of households have already registered their interest and bought shares, other fund raising events continue. The opening is now scheduled for early February with limited stock to begin with to enable volunteers to become familiar with the till etc.

Fiona reported that they are also looking at providing direction signs pointing to the shop.

01.25.09 **PLANNING** DC/24/04857 - Extensions and alterations to house (following the demolition of side garage/outbuildings). Erection of 2no. outbuildings - Hawkdene, Hadleigh Road, Elmsett. – comments to Babergh - Whilst the parish council had no objections in principle to the development the parish council would like to see a condition that would restrict the two large outbuildings from being converted to residential use in future.

01.25.10 **FINANCE:** The following invoices were verified for electronic payment. Clerk to set up Fiona Watt and Paul Firman to authorise.

Bowlsworld	Balance of invoice for bowls mat	£879.00	£137
Elmsett Meth church	Hire 1&29/10 & 17/12	£65.00	

Bank Reconciliation – the clerk presented an up to date bank reconciliation and confirmed receipt of VAT returns up to the end of the calendar year of £10,768.35.

Parish Council domain name – The clerk had received a quote from Community Action Suffolk but councillors agreed to carry on as we are at the moment as it was considered rather costly.

Provision of new grit bins – the clerk had confirmed with the County Council that any replacement bins should be yellow. It was agreed to review the location of the present bins and to research suitable bins to purchase ready for next winter.

Village Maintenance – It was proposed by Nick Bird and seconded by Fiona Watt that the chairman have delegated authority to spend up to £500 for any minor maintenance works within the parish. This was agreed

01.25.11 **DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS:** 25 February, 1 April, 13 May, 17 June, 22 July 16 September, 28 October, 9 December all at The Methodist Church Hall

The meeting closed.

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