

Minutes of Elmsett Parish Council meeting held on 17 June, 2025 at the Methodist Church Hall.

- 06.25.00 **PRESENT:** Alan Newman in the chair, Paul Firman, Andrew Woodgate, John Sones, Fran Williams, and Leigh Jamieson BDC, and the clerk was present. One member of the public (newly appointed clerk)
- 06.25.01 **APOLOGIES:** Verified absences were received from Nick Bird (holiday), Fiona Watt (illness) and Robert Lindsay SCC apologised for non-attendance.
- 06.25.02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS:** Paul Firman declared an interest in item 6 Letter from Headteacher regarding the extension of the car park at the village hall.
- 06.25.03 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:** Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 May were signed as an accurate record.
- 06.25.04 **4.1. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Leigh's report was circulated prior to the meeting as follows:- **Neighbourhood Plan funding** - Last week's announcement that all funding and support for the development of neighbourhood plans would cease immediately came as a shock to the council. The announcement came from the government following last week's spending review. While the ending of support was considered a possibility it was assumed that if it happened, it would be a staggered withdrawal. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Leigh spoke with Paul Bryant from Babergh's neighbourhood plan team who advised that Elmsett will be fine as they are in the closing stages of their review.
- Social Housing improvements** The councils housing team have turned the tide for tenants, transforming the service they provide and promising further improvements, with the launch of their new 'repairs pledges.' The teams have worked tirelessly to address the issues which led the councils having to self-refer to the Social Housing Regulator in 2023. Now, tenant satisfaction is on the rise, with a corresponding drop in complaints, currently putting Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils above last year's average performance figures for local authority landlords nationwide. The councils have carried out a comprehensive review and transformation of its building services: restructuring its repairs and maintenance service, asset, and compliance service, and reviewing its processes, policies and how they engage with tenants, including the introduction of a new Complaint Task Force and resident liaison officers. Having been satisfied by the changes made and embedded in the service, the Regulator lifted the Regulatory Notice that had been imposed on the councils.
- Leadership Change at Council** Back in 2023 when the coalition administration was put together it was agreed that the leadership of the council would be rotated. At the recent AGM Independent Councillor John Ward took up the reign for the coming year. Over the last two years the council has made excellent progress on housing repairs and maintenance. However, ensuring the financial stability of the council remains a top priority.

Tree For Life Once again, the councils 'tree for life' scheme is open to parents who have welcomed, or are due to welcome, a child into their families this year.

There is also the chance for families, who have sadly lost a child to apply for a memory tree as part of the scheme. Since its inception, the councils have given out well over two thousand trees.

Councils' commitment to Armed Forces Babergh has restated its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant – an important pledge for thousands of families in the districts.

The councils' commitment is set out in an action plan, including:

- Special consideration is given to armed forces individuals and families when it comes housing, to ensure they are not at a disadvantage.
- As part of wider work, the councils will consider how tenants and their families who are vulnerable as a result of military service are identified along with support options.
- Raising awareness of opportunities to join the organisation among service leavers and supporting the needs of service families and reservists who work for the councils.
- Council suppliers and local markets will also be encouraged to take action to support the covenant.

Local Government Survey Suffolk's five district and borough councils are launching a county-wide survey, open until 25th July, asking people for their views on the future of vital local government services. This will allow residents, businesses and community groups to have their say on what they want to see from Local Government. The survey is available here- [Project: Have Your Say on the Future of Local Government...](#)

4.2 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Robert's report arrived for circulation after the meeting – **Footway Whatfield Road** I have asked that the officer in charge of this project to meet with me and representatives from the parish council to discuss what they are thinking with the design of the whole of the footway, including the part which needs extra width from the green, given that they look like agreeing the developer's alternative plan which required a priority one way system. The meeting will take place on Teams June 25th.

Black bins random search The county council is conducting a "composition sampling" of black bin contents to enable them to work out what is currently being

Householders do not need to change anything in the way they dispose of things, ahead of this survey. Nor should they because they want an accurate picture of the normal contents.

Libraries were taken in-house by county council Sunday June 1 The county is renaming the service, **Suffolk Community Libraries**, and is introducing a new logo. A new website was also launched this week at www.suffolkcommunitylibraries.co.uk, with anyone visiting the existing site redirected to the new site. The county insists nothing is changing for library users. All 45 libraries will remain open, with the same staff, services, opening hours, activities, and the Spydus reservation system.

Consultation launched on Developer Contributions Suffolk County Council has launched a consultation so Suffolk residents can give their

views on the contributions which can be sought from developers proposing major planning applications. In 2011, the council published the “Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions” to make developers aware of what they should consider, and the financial contributions they should take into account to mitigate for the impact of new developments such as housing estates.

Local Government Reorganisation – “Engagement” Meetings

Conservative-led Suffolk County Council’s has got the council’s comms team to arrange meetings with town and parish councils to advocate the creation of one giant Suffolk unitary, rather than the two or three that district councils, led by different parties, have asked for.

County councillors have not been invited to these meetings. It is important to point out that the “independent report” by accountants PriceWaterhouse Coopers that the Conservatives are relying on was commissioned by the County Council Network, so not really independent. The alleged cost savings are disputed and a report commissioned by Suffolk’s district and borough council comes to a different conclusion. The Government will decide ultimately in any case and may well go for just one, since it believes one will be easier to control.

On 17th June County Cabinet approved setting aside a £1.9 million for county council’s officers to do work with the reorganisation. This is on top of the salary for their new officer in charge of reorganisation. The full cost will be many times higher than this.

Council Annual General Meeting On Thursday 22 May, all three motions tabled by the three political groups were passed by the council, these included a motion against the government’s proposed changes to public consultation for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) like Sizewell C, Sea Link and Lion Link and solar farm applications. The council also agreed motions proposing a ban on live animals being used as prizes on council land, and to support the campaign for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to be eligible for the 20 year long service medal which is currently for warranted police officers only.

Nominations sought for Suffolk Community Awards 2025

Nominations are now open for the Suffolk Community Awards 2025, which is organised by Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Association of Local Councils. The three bodies, which previously all had their own awards, have combined together this year. The ceremony will showcase the excellent work and achievements of individuals, groups, towns and villages across Suffolk with 18 awards, including a new one for a local community’s efforts respond to climate change. Other award categories cover youth participation and young person of the year, community building, contribution to volunteering, most active community and council, councillor, young councillor and clerk of the year. Nominations are now open and must be made by Sunday 13 July at

06.25.05 **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** The chairman confirmed that Kathleen Peacock had been appointed as the new clerk and responsible financial officer with effect from 1 July. As part of her contract she will attend and minute all full council meetings.

Whatfield Road footway overall – The footway proposal for Whatfield Road is in three parts.

Part 1 footway in front of the 7 bungalows – has been constructed and is complete.

Part 2 The proposal for the Shrublands footway and the pond is now considerably reduced from the original concept agreed when the outline for the 18 dwellings was allowed. This showed a boardwalk concept over the pond so that the original highway was unaffected with a new footway to the side of it. The proposal which we have objected to but now understand is agreed between highways, the developer and district council is to have a carriageway in front of the pond reduced to a 3m width with a 1.2m wide footway immediately in front of the pond which the Parish Council has consistently objected to. Because of the dangers of having an overrunable footway and the narrowed width this would involve a priority traffic flow system. The chairman has been invited to a meeting on 25 June with the County Councillor and Highways to see exactly what has been agreed.

Part 3 This is a footway from the pond towards the village which requires the parish council to de-register a small sliver of the village green to accommodate moving the highway on the edge of The Green and the construction of a footway in the verge in front of The Maltings. A legal agreement with Highways has been proposed to cover these works but remains unsigned for 12 months as we await final details from Highways. A plan showing the stage 3 alteration was on the parish noticeboard for just over a year.

06.25.06 **CORRESPONDENCE: 1)** Letter from Elmsett Primary School (a copy was also sent to the Village Hall MC) – Paul Firman declared an interest in this matter – The Headteacher was anxious to state an opposition to the likelihood of the village hall extending their car park over part of the meadow being used by the school. The contents of the letter were noted by the parish council as no proposal has yet been put forward by the village hall to comment on.

2) Heathpatch are again holding farm tours bookings to be made through their webpage.

3) Consultation on the 'shaping of Suffolk' This is a public consultation/survey to get the views of the public on devolution.

06.25.07 **COMMUNITY SHOP UPDATE:** Fran Williams said that the shop was continuing to be very successful and that Amy was now working full time. They are monitoring the additional summertime opening hours to see whether it is worthwhile. She said that they were continuing to recruit volunteers and that they had linked up with a venture with young people

with special needs, giving them valuable work experience. She said that the shop was becoming a real hub for the village and there was a great community spirit developing. The chairman thanked Fran and all the team for their hardwork in making this .a success.

VILLAGE HALL UPDATE: Paul Firman reported on the progress of the improvements to the village hall. He said that the bar area had been improved with the addition of a new urn, sink and handwash basin. The application to BIFFA for a grant has got through the first stage.

They are hoping to do a lot of improvements including a false ceiling to improve acoustics, toilets and flooring in the school summer holidays. Also as mentioned earlier in the meeting, they have asked consultants to look at improving the car parking arrangements. The chairman thanked all involved with the work of the village hall and hoped that the consultant will take the letter from the school into their deliberations. and said that the combination of both the hall and shop have brought new life into the village.

06.25.08 **RECESS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no members of the public present. Paul Firman took the opportunity to thank the retiring clerk for her 40 years service to the parish council. He quoted various events taking place at the time she commenced and the number of changes including technology which have improved the way of working. He presented a gift and a bouquet from the councillors which was gratefully received. The clerk thanked Paul and all the councillors and said that when she started she used a typewriter and carbon paper to produce agendas and cycled around the village distributing them to the councillors.

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

Ed Seeley	50% invoice for St Peters maint.	£120.00
Hitchcock	Grasscutting Inv 276	£150.00
Methodist Ch.	Hire 17-6	£27.00
Defibstore	Defibrillator pads (already paid)	79.20
SALC	Int Aud	398.40

The chairman agreed to the purchase of a new cabinet for the defibrillator as the present one had been damaged

Although the chairman had agreed to the purchase of a new cabinet for the defibrillator it was felt that it was not necessary and that repairs could be carried out in the form of a new lock.

Bank Reconciliation – the clerk prepared and circulated prior to the meeting an up-to-date bank reconciliation.

The report from the Internal Auditor following audit had been circulated to all councillors, there were no major concerns. All necessary AGAR documents have been added to the council's website and forwarded to the external auditor.

Mobile phone for new clerk – members discussed the merits of purchasing a mobile phone for the use of the new clerk. It was agreed that a new phone was not necessary but recommended a new sim to be used in an older mobile phone.

In answer to a query regarding interest rates members were of the opinion that whilst this should be taken into consideration it was important to be able to access the funds easily. With the requirement for wet signatures etc it was time consuming and costly to withdraw especially recently without the facilities of a local Post Office.

06.25.10 **DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS:** 22 July, 16 September, 28 October, 9 December all at The Methodist Church Hall. The date of the September meeting may be changed.

The meeting closed.

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