

Minutes of Elmsett Parish Council meeting held on 25 February, 2025 at the Methodist Church Hall.

- 02.25.00 **PRESENT:** Alan Newman in the chair, Paul Firman, Nick Bird, Andrew Woodgate, John Sones, Fran Williams, Robert Lindsay SCC, and Leigh Jamieson BDC, and the clerk was present.
- 02.25.01 **APOLOGIES:** Fiona Watt (illness)
- 02.25.02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS:** There were no declarations of interest.
- 02.25.03 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:** Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 January were signed as an accurate record.
- 02.25.04 **4.1 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Robert had sent his report prior to the meeting as follows - **Battle likely over size of new "unitary" councils in Suffolk** Although the county council administration has officially said it will take an evidence based approach to determining what size unitary council it proposes to government, the leader and front bench made clear in the public council chamber that they support a single unitary for Suffolk. The district councils are drawing up their own submission which is likely to call for more than one. Personally I find the whole idea of super-sized councils an anathema. It will further erode local accountability and democracy. But the Government is forcing it on to every council in the country so there is little we can do but try to get the best deal we can. The May 2025 county council elections have been scrapped but it is still not clear when next local elections will be. Mayor will be May 2026 and the guidance so far is that "shadow unitary" councillors will be elected May 2027. This could be delayed further.

**Suffolk Libraries to be brought in house** The Suffolk Library Service is being taken in house by Suffolk County Council after they failed to agree a renewal of the contract with the charity that has been running them since 2012. The charity insisted the terms it was offered (same budget as last year with no annual increase for inflation etc) meant staff hours would have to be cut by 30%. The council say they can run it with no hours being cut. The fear is that this will mean cuts in staff numbers and an increased reliance on volunteers. The amount the library charity was being paid has not risen significantly for more than ten years.

Robert said that he will donate a sum from his locality budget to the Shop.

**4.2 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Leigh had previously sent his report as follows: **Village Community Shop** I would just like to congratulate everyone involved in the opening of the village shop. The work that has gone in to getting the shop up and running in such a short timescale has been incredible and I want to pay tribute to all concerned. **Devolution & Local Government Reform (LGR)** Babergh has engaged KPMG on a consultancy basis to assist with the development of proposals for LGR. Babergh will work with other councils across the region to ensure that their interim plans are ready by the 21st of March target date. KPMG will work with the council to produce the business case. The

council then needs to firm up the initial proposals for submission by September this year. The districts are considering the option of a single unitary, two unitaries or three unitaries.

I would encourage everyone to have their say on the government's consultation if you have not already done so.

**Community Group 'Live Well' funding** The 'Living Well in Winter' grant, first introduced in 2023, exists to help local organisations such as town and parish councils, village hall committees, sports clubs, charities, social enterprises, and community shops deliver new and existing accessible spaces and activities during the colder months. This year, the latest funding window has provided a wide range of organisations with grants between £500 and £2,000, with successful projects offering anything from warm spaces and coffee mornings to movie showings and dance classes. In total twelve projects in Babergh shared £15,173.

**Budget** Tomorrow night we will be debating the finance recommendations for this year's budget. Although not yet agreed the recommendations include an increase in Council Tax of 2.99% from £188.10 to £193.73 per annum. However, even with this increase, budget savings of £2.559m, increases of £1.417m in fees and charges, and an increase in income the council is still having to rely on reserves to produce a balanced budget.

**National recognition for building control.** Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' building control team were crowned winners of the prestigious 'Local Authority Building Control Team of the Year' award at the 2024 LABC Building Excellence Awards grand finals. Judges cited the team's dedication to raising industry standards, its exceptional problem-solving skills, and customer services.

- 02.25.05 **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Chairman said that Ian Poole had sent an update of the Neighbourhood Plan, which arrived too late for discussion at this meeting. It was agreed to hold a further meeting in order to discuss and approve the revised Plan. It was agreed to meet on 5 March.

The Chairman also reported that the Tree Survey was carried out last week and that he would circulate the report once it was received.

A litter pick has been arranged to coincide with the Keep Britain Tidy Campaign and Great British Spring Clean for Saturday 22 March at 10 am to meet at The Rose and Crown. The chairman is in possession of the equipment.

- 02.25.06 **RECESS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no members of the public present.

- 02.25.07 **CORRESPONDENCE:** Police Forum – notification of meeting to be held on 19 March at Hadleigh Town Hall.

- 02.25.08 **VILLAGE HALL/COMMUNITY SHOP:** Paul Firman said that the VHMC are obtaining quotes to refurbish the toilets. He also confirmed that having sought legal advice, they would not be pursuing the Electric Charging Points at the village hall car park.

In the absence of Fiona, Fran Williams reported on the progress of the Community Shop. They had been operating now for two weeks. There had been a few teething problems with the tills, but volunteers were working well. Members of the public were delighted with the facility. New stock items will continue to be added. It is hoped that newspapers will soon be available. There has been a lot of publicity from East Anglian Daily Times, Radio Suffolk and local t.v. Everyone has been amazed at how swiftly it has come to fruition and have said that "the village has got its life back". She said that fund raising had reached some £31,000, shares continue to be purchased and other fund raising activities have been scheduled. The chairman thanked everyone for their efforts.

02.25.09 **PLANNING:** DC/25/00302 - Discharge of Conditions for DC/17/05204 - Condition 16 (Wildlife Sensitive Lighting) - The Malting, Whatfield Road. Members of the parish council agreed the following response - As you are aware the parish council has a policy of no lighting in the village to favour dark skies. We note that a previous application for taller columns has been approved and therefore on this occasion we would not object to the approval of the application which is seen as a better alternative to the 5m columns.

02.25.10 **FINANCE:** The following invoice was verified for electronic payment. Clerk to set up Fiona Watt and Paul Firman to authorise.

Elmsett Meth church	Hire of hall 25-2-25	£26.00
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Bank Reconciliation – the clerk presented an up-to-date bank reconciliation.

The clerk confirmed that £60,000 had been transferred from Nationwide to the TSB account. A cheque had then been signed for £60,000 transferring the money to the Cambridge Building Society, together with a form to add Fran Williams as a signatory and to delete Andrew Morton from the Cambridge BS.

Appointment of Internal Auditor – it was proposed by Nick Bird, seconded by Paul Firman and agreed to appoint SALC as Internal Auditor again this year.

02.25.11 **DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS:** 1 April Annual Parish Meeting, 13 May Annual Parish Council Meeting, 17 June, 22 July 16 September, 28 October, 9 December all at The Methodist Church Hall

The meeting closed.

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