

STOKE ASH & THWAITE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Thursday 16 January 2025, 7.30pm at the Village Hall, Stoke Ash

Present: Cllrs T Pulham, G Leggett, R Kember, Mrs V Lane, Mrs C Maisey, R Maisey, J Rosling and G Tancred.
County Cllr A Stringer and three members of the public

1. **Apologies and Approval of Absence** – District Cllr T Weller.
2. **To receive declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda** – none.
3. **PUBLIC FORUM:** to receive the following reports:
 - Police – report available online at <http://suffolk.police.uk> – no queries were raised.
 - County Councillor – Cllr Stringer presented his written report (copy attached to the Minutes). Cllr Stringer went on to explain the building process for the prefabricated homes at Bacton, these were being built within a matter of days and the Suffolk CC decision to take part in the Government’s fast track devolution programme combining the County and District Councils in Suffolk. If accepted this may involve the postponement of the County Council elections due May this year.
Queries raised: would devolution impact upon parish councils and would it take away the current personal contacted with elected councillors. Cllr Stringer stated it could involve additional responsibilities upon parish councils and the areas covered by councillors could increase.
 - District Councillor – a written report had been received from Cllr Weller (copy attached to the Minutes). Cllr Stringer gave an update on the Joint Local Plan, current advice was to prepare a new plan, this would involve putting out another a call for new sites for development.
 - Parishioners and Public (meeting open for 10 minutes) – no comments.
4. **Parish Council Vacancies Stoke Ash** - to consider co-option to join the Council
Mr John Rosling was in attendance at the meeting having expressed an interest in joining the Council. Mr Rosling had attended and observed the November 2024 meeting. Cllr Tancred stated Mr Rosling was a long-standing resident of the village and proposed he was co-opted to join the Council, seconded Cllr Leggett and unanimously agreed. The declaration of acceptance of office form was signed. The Chair welcomed Mr Rosling to the Parish Council.
5. **To consider Health and Safety items for report** – none received
6. **To consider for approval Minutes of the meeting held 21 November 2024**
Cllr Kember proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded Cllr Tancred and unanimously agreed.
7. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report only**

8. 7.5.19	Stoke Ash PC vacancies	The two remaining Stoke Ash vacancies would continue to be advertised in the parish magazine.
17.5.18	Storage of PC documents at Ipswich Record Office	TP liaising with Record Office.
18.5.23	Thwaite Comm Projects Allotment plots	See Agenda item below TP preparing plots
18.5.23	Prune Fruit Tree on allotment land/coppice hedge	TP/GL
21.9.23	St George’s Hall consultation	Agenda item
18.1.24	14.10.24	Pending St George’s future.
16/5/24	OSR – improvement Project	
21/11/24	Grant funding for fruit trees on allotment land	TP
18.6.20	Review Emergency Plan	RK reported the plan was progressing
16/11/23	Stoke Ash: 1. Provide a double-sided High-Water Sign at the ford to give warning from both directions. 2. Clear pipes under road at the Ford and Bridge 3. Ditches Wetheringsett side of Deadman’s Lane ford	Confirmation received from Suffolk Highways that a double-sided sign had been ordered. Pending Pending

16/11/23	Thwaite: 1.River Dove clearance from Deadman’s Lane bridge to Thwaite 2.Resolve flooding at A140/Wickham Road junction during rainfall	Reported via Suffolk CC reporting tool. The roadside gulleys from Wickham Road junction to the pond on the south would need to be cleared. Roadside ditches had been partially cleared. Reported to Suffolk CC via website. TP had to undertake ditch clearance Wickham Road subject to a meeting with Highway officer. If the dredging work was a success the Willow tree would be left in situ.
18/7/24	3. New manhole drain in Wickham Road at dip between Church Lane and OSR Replace 6-8 reflective bollards Church Lane/Wickham Road junction	Item 15 below
21/3/24	Thwaite Allotments – investigate whether covered by Allotment Act	Cllr Weller
18/7/24	Trees – Church Lane, Thwaite – concern raised by parishioner re. height and stability of trees near residential properties	Pending report from GL following meeting with Rishangles tree surgeon
18/7/24	St George’s Hall	GL – meeting with David Wymark to discuss sale and identify specialist estate agent.

8 To consider Planning Applications for recommendation to MSDC

- DC/24/05276: Hill Farm, Grasshopper Lane, Stoke Ash – application to determine if Prior Approval is required for demolition of buildings. The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) Schedule 2 Part 11, Class B – demolition of buildings A, B, C & D. Parish Council offered no comment.
- DC/24/05390: Land – Norwich Road, Wetheringsett (part in the parish of Stoke Ash & Thwaite) Application under S73a for the Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of DC/20/00324 dated 06/10/2020 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) – Erection of 9no dwellings with associated private amenities and parking. To vary Condition Number 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) to allow a revision/amalgamation of the SUDS areas as per revised drawing RS/4957/23/01. A response of No Comment was agreed.
- DC/24/05278: Gt Hallows, Church Lane, Stoke Ash – Demolition of outbuilding. Erection of single and 2 store extension comprising entrance link to dovecote outbuilding and garden room replacement for demolished store area. 2 storey extension to provide secondary stair access and wc. A recommendation of support was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.

9. Planning Decisions received from MSDC

- DC/24/04378: Eastwick Farm, Clay Lane, Stoke Ash – re-construction of agricultural building (following & 04379 storm damage). Permission Granted with conditions
- DC/24/05276: Hill Farm, Grasshopper Lane, Stoke Ash - application to determine if Prior Approval is required for demolition of buildings. The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) Schedule 2 Part 11, Class B – demolition of buildings A, B, C & D. MSDC Decision:
 - That prior approval to the development is required
 - That prior approval is **GIVEN** subject to conditions

10. Planning correspondence

Contact had been received from the owners of the land south of the Walnut Tree PH informing the Parish Council that they were again looking into developing the site with a small number of properties, including starter homes. The Parish Council had been asked whether it would support the proposal and whether there was currently a need for such properties in Thwaite. Cllr Stringer stated the site could be put forward as an exception site accompanied with a housing needs survey. The Chair stated he would consult with the owner of the Walnut Tree PH and councillors would obtain views of Thwaite parishioners. Include item for report on the next agenda.

11. Neighbourhood Watch

Cllr Kember was pleased to report there were no items to raise. The reported outdoor cameras would be promoted in the parish magazine.

12. Stoke Ash and Thwaite Litter Picks 8 and 9 March 2025 – report on arrangements

An advertisement for volunteers had been included in the parish magazine. Helpers to meet at 9.45am at Stoke Ash VH or the Old School Room. All equipment with the exception of gloves (helpers using their own) would be supplied. Refreshments would be served after the litter pick.

13. Church Lane, Thwaite – report on condition of trees and to consider quotation for any works required

A meeting with the tree surgeon was to be held on 20 January 2025. Should any work be required a budget up to £1000 was unanimously agreed so as not to delay the work.

14. Thwaite Community Projects Group

1. Allotment Lettings – preparation of the plots would commence early February 2025.
2. Pruning fruit tree and coppice hedging on allotment land – Work to commence early February 2025.
3. Report on grant application to fund planting fruit trees on community/allotment land – deferred.
4. St George’s Hall and Old School Room – report on proposed meeting with Diocesan Architect.

The Diocesan Architect had recommended a meeting with English Heritage for initial advice. The burial plot issues would also need to be resolved with the Diocesan Board.

15. Wickham Road, Thwaite – report on request to Suffolk Highways for new surface water drain

A response had been received from Suffolk Highways that the section of the road would be monitored by them but they were unable to confirm any work at present. Item to be removed from the agenda.

16. Deadman’s Lane – report on providing double-sided High Water gauge sign – awaiting confirmation of installation from Suffolk Highways.

17. Finance

1. To consider s.137 donation requests

At its last Finance Meeting the Group had suggested quarterly payments of £50 to the Coffee Caravan, ie £200 per annum. To cover the 2024/25 financial year a one-off payment of £200 was proposed by Cllr Leggett, Seconded Cllr Kember – unanimously agreed. The quarterly payments would commence financial year 2025/26.

2. Accounts for Payment/receipts received

Date	Payee	Purchase/Service	Amount	Vat	Total	Agreed/Decid	Ch no.
16/1/25	Coffee Caravan	S.137 donation	£200.00	-	£200.00	Agreed	100559
16/1/25	Clerk	Sal/expen Nov – Jan 2025	£734.40	-	£734.40	Agreed	100560
16/1/25	Stoke Ash VH	Parish Council Hall Hire Jan – Dec 2025	£192.00	-	£192.00	Agreed	100589
16/1/25	Stoke Ash VH	Hall Hire for Coffee Caravan use Feb-Dec 2024	£176.00	-	£176.00	Agreed	100590
16/1/25	E.On	OSR electricity 1 – 31 Dec 2024	£21.81	-	£21.81	Agreed	100321

Cllr Leggett proposed payment of the above, seconded Cllr Mrs Maisey – unanimously agreed.

The Bank balances currently stood as follows:

SA&T Business Premium a/c: £21,407.53
 SA&T Community a/c: £1,572.44
 Thwaite Comm Projects a/c: £5,897.73

3. Finance Report

Thwaite Lottery – Cllr Mrs Maisey reported there were currently 34 members. Prizes totalling £60 had been made every month, £100 at the Grand Draw and a £5 complimentary prize to anyone who had not won.

An amount of £1100 was therefore available to donate to the Thwaite Projects Group funds. Huge thanks were recorded to Cllrs Mr and Mrs Maisey for all their work in running the lottery, this was much appreciated. A £20 donation had been made to the Group collected from the Christmas Concert held at St George's Hall.

It was reported the Stoke Ash Lottery was having a successful year. It was hoped to recruit more parishioners via publicity in the parish magazine.

18. Clerk's report/correspondence

The date of the Stoke Ash and Thwaite Annual Parish Meetings was agreed as 24 April 2025, 7pm for Stoke Ash and 7.30pm for Thwaite. Refreshments would be served after the meetings.

19. Chair's report

The Chair enquired whether there were any plans for community events during 2025.

Cllr Tancred stated there would not be a village fete in Stoke Ash but other events suggested included a Summer Solstice event, a Childrens' Christmas Party and a Christmas Wishing Tree in the Village Hall as there would be no service at Stoke Ash Church.

Cllr Mrs Maisey stated Thwaite Projects Group would be holding a Carol Service.

20. Any other business for information exchange/agenda requests

Cllr Kember would inform the Suffolk Girl Guides of the availability of MSDC grants and a list of projects as suggested by Cllr Stringer.

21. Date of next meeting: 20 March 2025, 7.30pm at Stoke Ash Village Hall

Meeting closed 9.30pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

Summary of Action Points

1. 7.5.19	Stoke Ash PC vacancies	The two remaining Stoke Ash vacancies would continue to be advertised in the parish magazine.
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18.5.23 18.5.23 21/11/24	Thwaite Comm Projects Allotment plots Prune Fruit Tree on allotment land/coppice hedge St George's Hall consultation 14.10.24 OSR – improvement Project Grant funding for fruit trees on allotment land	See Agenda item below TP preparing plots TP/GL Agenda item Pending St George's future. TP
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18/7/24	Trees – Church Lane, Thwaite – concern raised by parishioner re. height and stability of trees near residential properties	Pending report from GL following meeting with Rishangles tree surgeon. Work up to £1000 approved if required.
16/1/25	St George’s Hall	GL – meeting English Heritage and Diocesan Board to be arranged.
16/1/25	Land south Walnut Tree PH	Obtain parishioner views re. development of part of the site for starter homes

County Councillor Report Jan 2025

Motions Passed at Council

At Council on Thursday 12 December, three motions were passed more or less unanimously by councillors. The first was a Conservative motion opposing government’s changes to Agricultural Property Relief, which mean that from April 2026, Suffolk farmers will only have relief from inheritance tax for up to £1m of combined agricultural and business property. Above this £1m, they will have to pay inheritance tax at half the usual level (20% rather than the usual 40%). The change has inspired protests since it was announced by the government, including farmers driving hundreds of tractors into Westminster and in Suffolk, along the A14 from Ipswich to Felixstowe at 5mph. The Conservative motion also opposed industrialization of the countryside by major energy projects, including solar farms.

The motion brought by my group also related to solar farms, specifically the need to prioritise rooftop solar over solar farms and lobby for changes to planning so that new housing and commercial developments have solar panels, and priority is given to retrofitting solar to buildings or brownfield sites over new solar farms which take good quality farmland out of food production. For example, in France solar panels are often mounted on canopies above car parks to maximise space. As well as contributing to the country’s net zero targets, solar panels could significantly reduce energy bills for Suffolk schools and libraries. Sadly this motion was not taken into account by the recent appeal decision at Badley, where 56.22 hectares of the best and most versatile agricultural land with numerous Heritage assets negatively affected was approved by the government inspector, this grid connection was given a license, but connecting nearby gateway 14 sheds have been denied connection due to lack of capacity.

Suffolk Economic Strategy

At Cabinet on Tuesday 3 December, a new economic strategy was tabled which followed the creation of the Suffolk Business Board earlier in 2024. The Board produced a strategy for the county for the next five years, listing the areas which are most important to the Suffolk economy, including clean energy, agriculture, tourism, and ports and logistics. It also outlined how the Board hopes that digital innovation, AI and robotics can help drive improvements and growth in these areas, along with plans to support start ups, provide business mentoring and skills projects with young people. My

group asked questions about the impact of Sizewell C on the tourism industry, and the competition for workers where Sizewell was offering wages that local hospitality businesses, for example, would be unable to match. We also expressed concern that the strategy puts “powering” the nation ahead of “feeding” the nation, and that then plan barely mentioned arts, heritage and culture, and that no arts or cultural organizations were represented on the Board. The plan was approved by the council’s Cabinet, and the Suffolk Business Board will now finalise how it plans to deliver the strategy, and will report back to Cabinet every year on their progress.

Devolution and Council Reorganization

Following the new government’s shelving of the previous devolution deal for Suffolk, the Government has published a white paper outlining the approach they wish to see in reforming local government, including the abolition of district councils. Elected mayors and large (500,000) unitary authorities are the goal for the largest local government reform since 1972, when the two (three including parish councils) tier local governance structure was introduced.

While there are obvious benefits to having a ‘one stop shop’ for all things local government, if this is to be introduced without losing the ‘local’ from local government the minimum resident number needs to be more flexible. With the recommended figure in the paper being a minimum 500,000 residents per council, this means only one council for the whole of Suffolk (760,000 residents) would fit this requirement.

A vote has taken place at an extraordinary Council meeting this month, where the council agreed to ask endorse for the most “ambitious” timeframe to deliver Devolution, as well as sanctioning the cancelation of this May’s County Council Elections, if agreed by the government, under the current timeframe there will be no future elections to our District or County Council.

Broad Road Bacton

The first house on the Broad road Bacton development arrived on site this week, what is noteworthy is the houses are steel framed and come with the bricks already attached and pointed etc, each house takes circa a week to erect and fit the roof.



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District Councillor Report: Stoke Ash & Thwaite Parish Council

January 2025

Budget Updates	Proposals for the General Fund budget were approved in December’s cabinet meeting, and considered at Overview & Scrutiny committee. This shows the Council’s finances to be in surplus, unusual for District Councils, in part due to expanded housing developments and income generated from Gateway 14. Surplus funds will be used to proceed with the Mid Suffolk Plan. Key figures include an increase of £1.7m in net revenue service expenditure, a £2.7m increase in gross expenditure, no increase in Council Tax from 2024/25, and a capital budget of £30m in 2025/26.
CIL Expenditure Updates	Updates regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy programme were considered by Cabinet. This included approval of £.5m investment into Stowmarket Health Education and Leisure Facilities (SHELF), and £188k funding for Thurston Community College.
Devolution White Paper	The White Paper regarding devolution published in December, has been debated at Suffolk County Council and a submission put forward to join the priority cohort of Council’s to adopt unitary status, abolishing the current two-tier local government structure. A “Strategic Authority”, is likely to include a Mayor for both Suffolk & Norfolk. If the submission is accepted, central government will determine whether County Council elections will take place as scheduled in May 2025.
National Planning Policy Framework	Changes have been made to the National Planning Policy Framework to assist with the Government’s housebuilding plans. This includes mandatory housebuilding targets for councils, with a priority on brownfield sites. Mid Suffolk’s Cabinet Member for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure Cllr Andrew Stringer has commented on the new proposals. Statement in response to Government's National Planning Policy Framework announcement - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk
Locality Award 2024/25	A small balance remains in the District Councillor’s Locality Budget and applications from local community groups are welcome. Information and application forms are available on the Council’s website: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/web/mid-suffolk/w/locality-awards
Yaxley Synchronous Condenser	I attended a presentation and overview site visit at the invitation of Conrad Energy. This vital infrastructure project to stabilise sustainable energy supplied to the grid is progressing to schedule. A Q&A gave representatives of relevant Parish Councils opportunity to ask questions relating to construction phase, noise abatement, landscaping and ongoing maintenance and impact of the site. https://conradenergy.co.uk/energy-generation/grid-stability/yaxley-synchronous-condenser/

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