

STOKE ASH & THWAITE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Thursday 20 March 2025, 7.30pm at the Village Hall, Stoke Ash.

Present: Cllrs T Pulham (Chairman), R Kember, Mrs V Lane, G Leggett, Mrs C Maisey, R Maisey, J Rosling and G Tancred.
District Cllr T Weller and two members of the public.

1. **Apologies and Approval of Absence** had been received from County Cllr A Stringer.
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’s written report had been circulated (copy attached to the Minutes). No queries were raised.
 - District Councillor – Cllr Weller presented his report (copy attached to the Minutes). Cllr Weller highlighted the MSDC officer presence at Eye Library, this would be Friday mornings between 9.15am – 12noon.
 - Parishioners and Public (meeting open for 10 minutes). Items raised included the collection of garden waste and greater use of wind turbines rather than solar farms involving the loss of agricultural land.
4. **Parish Council Vacancies Stoke Ash** - to consider co-options to join the Council
Mrs Jean Wright and Mr Graham Wright were in attendance at the meeting having expressed an interest in joining the Parish Council on behalf of Stoke Ash. Both introduced themselves to the meeting, they had attended a number of parish council meetings and were now keen to become more involved in the community and contribute to village life. Cllr Tancred highly recommended and proposed both candidates for co-option to the council, seconded Cllr Leggett and unanimously agreed. The Chairman thanked both for putting themselves forward and welcomed them to the Council. Declarations of Acceptance of Office forms were completed and Cllrs Mrs J Wright and G Wright joined the meeting.
5. **To consider Health and Safety items for report**
 1. A difficult to control young German Shepherd dog in Thwaite
 2. Footpath between the Old Rectory and Brockford Hall, Thwaite – a dog owner did not appear to be picking up after their dog making it unpleasant for other footpath users. Cllr Kember offered to draft a letter to the resident for consideration by councillors.
 3. Roman Way/Huggins Lane junction. The incorrect Right of Way white lines following the junction re-surfacing had still not been corrected. These should be across Huggins Lane and had nearly caused an accident. Cllr Weller would pass on to Cllr Stringer to follow up with Suffolk Highways.
6. **To consider for approval Minutes of the meeting held 16 January 2025** – the Minutes of the meeting were accepted.
7. **Matters arising from the Minutes for report only**

1. 7.5.19	Stoke Ash PC vacancies	Complete.
17.5.18	Storage of PC documents at Ipswich Record Office	TP liaising with Record Office.
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
18.6.20	Review Emergency Plan	RK to complete and send to MSDC for comment. The Baptist Church was available as a rest centre.
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	Suffolk Highways confirmed 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	TP/AS Reported to Suffolk CC via website. TP offered to undertake ditch clearance Wickham Road subject to a meeting with Highway officer. If dredging work a success Willow tree to 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	Suffolk Highways to monitor. Complete. RK/AS
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. Work up to £1000 approved if required.
16/1/25	St George's Hall	GL – agenda item
16/1/25	Land south Walnut Tree PH	Agenda item.

8 To consider Planning Application/s for recommendation to MSDC

- DC/25/00652: Hill Farm, Grasshopper Lane, Stoke Ash – Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses (C3) and for building operations reasonably necessary for conversion. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 as amended Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q - Change of Use of barn to form 2No residential dwellings.
Following consideration of the application a recommendation of no objections to the proposed change of use of the agricultural buildings to two residential dwellings but no support the use of those dwellings as holiday lets was proposed, seconded and agreed by 9 councillors, abstention – proposal carried.

9. Planning Decisions received from MSDC

- DC/24/05390: Land at Norwich Road, Wethringsett (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. **Planning Permission Granted with Conditions**
- Land South Walnut Tree PH, Thwaite** – to consider landowner's suggestions for proposed development of site with small number of starter/mixed use homes
It was understood part of the land was in a flood plain. Cllr R Maisey proposed the owner was referred back to MSDC for advice, seconded Cllr Tancred and unanimously agreed.
- Planning correspondence**
MSDC – consultation on proposed change to the Planning Statement of Community Involvement to stop sending neighbour letters for certain types of planning applications consultation end date 12 May 2025. Councillors considered the content of the consultation, it was believed the action would undermine the fabric of local council accountability and democratic consultation and that notification letters of all planning applications to neighbouring residents should continue.
- Neighbourhood Watch report**
Cllr Kember had no issues to report. Nationally fraud and cyber fraud was an issue. The car park chain at the Village Hall was missing.
- Stoke Ash and Thwaite Litter Picks report**

The litter pick had been a good effort but had not been well supported this year. Thanks were recorded to those providing the refreshments.

14. **Church Lane, Thwaite** – report on meeting with tree surgeon re. condition of trees and any to be action taken Following the meeting with the tree surgeon a quote of approximately £700 had been received for removal of growth from two trees and removal of overhanging branches near St George’s Hall. There were no issues with the trees along Church Lane. It was agreed the work as quoted should go ahead.

15. **Thwaite Community Projects Group**

1. Allotment Lettings – preparation of plots pending.
2. Pruning fruit tree and coppice hedging on allotment land – Cllr Pulham arranging.
3. Report on grant application to fund planting fruit trees on community/allotment land – deferred.
4. St George’s Hall – report on English Heritage and Diocesan advice on sale of the property
Cllr Leggett had been in contact with the Diocesan representative. The file for St George’s had been retrieved. The Diocesan act as Custodian Trustee and the title did include restrictive covenants. James Hall at Birketts had been asked for a quote to advise on the covenants so as to consider the sale of the building for residential use.
The grassed area at the front of St George’s would also need to be investigated, this included burial plots but there appeared to be no record of the burials available.

16. **Finance**

1. To consider s.137 donation requests

A donation request had been received from the East Anglian Air Ambulance. This was declined at the present time.

2. Accounts for Payment

Date	Payee	Purchase/Service	Amount	Vat	Total	Agreed/De cld	Ch no.
20/3/25	Clerk	Sal-expen Jan-Mar 25	£779.65	-	£779.65	Agreed	100591
20/3/25	E.On	OSR electricity 1-28 Feb 25	£24.79	-	£24.79	Agreed	100324
20/3/25	Clerk	Thwaite Projects expen 24-25	£199.80	-	£199.80	Agreed	100325

Cllr Kember proposed payment of the above, seconded Cllr Mrs Lane and agreed.

3. Finance Report

Stoke Ash & Thwaite - Receipts: £70.79 interest Dec – Mar 2025

Stoke Ash & Thwaite Bank Balances at 3/3/25: Business Premium a/c - £20,478.32

Community a/c - £1,220.04

Thwaite Comm Projects:

£5,897.73

17. **Clerk’s report/correspondence**

The new Stoke Ash incumbent Rev Debbie Reynolds would be invited to the Annual Parish Meeting.

18. **Chair’s report**

The Chair stated he would arrange a meeting between Cllr Tancred and the Chair of Wyverstone Village Hall to view the refurbishment work at Wyverstone Village Hall.

19. **Any other business for information exchange/agenda requests** – none.

20. **Date of next meetings:**

Stoke Ash & Thwaite Annual Parish Meetings – Thursday 24 April 2025, 7pm at the Village Hall.

Stoke Ash & Thwaite Annual Parish Council Meeting – Thursday 15 May 2025, 7.30pm at Stoke Ash Village Hall

Meeting Closed 9.35pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

Summary of action points:

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16/1/25	Land south Walnut Tree PH	Agenda item.
20/3/25	Draft dog fouling letter	RK
20/3/25	Roman Way/Huggins lane white lines	TW/AS

County Councillor report – March 2025

Devolution and Local Government Reorganization Update

The government has now confirmed that Suffolk and Norfolk are included in the Devolution Priority Programme, and have agreed to the request from the Suffolk County Council administration to cancel this year's local elections in May.

This means that councils in Suffolk now need to work on proposals for reorganisation to submit to the government by the autumn, with a view to one or more unitary councils serving the county instead of the current two tier system – a county council and several districts/borough councils performing different functions.

Suffolk County Council has announced that it will be proposing one single unitary council for Suffolk, although district and borough councils have been clear that they would prefer two or three. All the councils need to submit their proposals to the government by 21 March 2025.

The plan is for a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk to be elected in May 2026, along with councillors for new authorities, so the timeline for these changes is very tight. The government has launched a public consultation on proposals to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk, and you can give your views on the proposals by using this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution>

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Inspection Report

On Monday 10 February, The Home Office published a report of its recent inspection of Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service. Although the inspection found that the service was good at preventing fires, protecting the public and that it met requirements for responding to major incidents, the report was also concerning as it several areas where the service needed to improve, including improving culture and morale, senior leaders to act as role models and show they are committed to the values of the service through their behaviour, improving communication between staff and senior leaders and making sure employees are confident raising concerns. You may have read in the press recently that the Fire Brigades Union is alleging that Suffolk County Council has made mistakes processing firefighter pay and pensions for years and has not addressed them or listened to employee concerns about the errors.

Suffolk County Council has subsequently announced additional investment of an extra £1.6 million over two years to improve the service, and this proposal will be decided at Cabinet in March. You can read the inspection report in full here: <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/uploads/frs-assessment-2023-25-suffolk.pdf>

Active Travel Fund Award

Suffolk County Council has been awarded £3.7 million from the government to encourage cycling, walking and active travel across the county, and to make journeys more accessible. This comprises £0.9 million from the Round 5 of the Active Travel Fund, and £2.8 million from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund. The money can be spent on the following schemes: footpaths and crossing points, maintaining existing walking and cycling infrastructure, improving cycle routes and Public Rights of Way, traffic calming, and rail station access improvements. The council is currently considering suitable local projects, which will be announced in the coming months.

Changes to Suffolk's Library Service are Moving Back In-House Suffolk County Council has announced that from 1 June 2025, its libraries service will be moved back in-house. Currently the libraries are run by a local charity, Suffolk Libraries, but negotiations on the new contract have now broken down. The council made the decision to divest its libraries in 2012 and they have been run by Suffolk Libraries ever since then. The council is reassuring residents and library employees and volunteers that no front-line jobs will be cut, that libraries will remain open and there will be no reduction to opening hours. Running the library service had been financially challenging in recent years, with the council agreeing to provide an extra £720k in May 2023 for that financial year. The council is also keen to reassure Friends groups that money raised for local libraries will still be used for those libraries.

Open letter to Suffolk residents about changes to the library service: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/an-open-letter-to-suffolk-residents.pdf>

Open letter to libraries staff and volunteers on changes to the library service: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/an-open-letter-to-libraries-staff.pdf>

Local Transport Plan and Area Transport Plans

At Cabinet on Tuesday 25 February, a Local Transport Plan for the county from 2025-2040. The plan is needed by law to access funding from the government for active travel and major transport schemes, and details how the council plans to prioritise walking, cycling and wheeling in town centres to reduce congestion and air pollution. It also describes the projects that will be needed to improve transport links for Suffolk, such as works at Ely and Haughley railway junctions, better public transport, and how to manage the transition from fossil fuels. Also agreed were 15 Area Transport Plans detailing the council's transport ambitions for towns around Suffolk.

You can read the Local Transport Plan 2025-2040 and the fifteen Area Transport Plans here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/suffolks-local-transport-plan>

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

District Councillor Report – Stoke Ash & Thwaite – March 2025

<p>Full Council - Annual Budget</p>	<p>Full Council of Mid Suffolk District Council on 27th February approved the Council's Annual Budget for 2025/26. Details can be found here: (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Mid Suffolk Council, 27/02/2025 17:30. Highlights as follows: No increase in Council Tax: The Council Tax bill for a Band D property remains at £175.03. That works out under £3.37 a week to cover all district council services, including waste collection, licensing, planning, public realm and supporting the local economy, culture and communities. (Council Tax overall is expected to rise, however, as MSDC only sets and receives a small portion, with the bulk going to the County Council.) MSDC expects a budget surplus of £2.4m in 2025/26: This is down from last year, due to factors including rising employee costs, costs for services, and discontinuation of the government's Rural Services Delivery Grant.</p> <p>Capital programme agreed: The Council committed to a capital programme of £36.3m (£26m committed, with another £10m proposed 'capital ambition' projects), partly funded from reserves. This will deliver an ambitious pipeline of projects across the district.</p> <p>Among other things, expenditure includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in sports and health facilities in Stowmarket and in Stradbroke (with a £540k investment in Stradbroke's leisure centre.) • Major investment in the new Skills and Innovation Centre to upskill the District • £1.5m fund to support High Street regeneration in our largest town, Stowmarket • £300k per year funding pot for projects in other market towns and rural communities • Investment in cycling and walking infrastructure • Increase in the Locality Award to £10,000 per Ward, giving an annual total of £340,000 in Locality grants to fund smaller projects around the District • Ongoing support for range of other grant schemes to fund community projects.
<p>Local Government Reorganisation</p>	<p>As noted in the last report, the government has announced major changes to the way local government is organised. This includes the creation of new mayoral strategic authorities, and dissolution of District and County Councils into unitary authorities.</p>
	<p>In January, Suffolk County Council voted to enter the 'fast track' version of these changes. The government accepted this, resulting in the cancellation of the May 2025 County Council elections. Mayoral authorities – the government has opened a consultation until April 13th. To share your views, see: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation Creation of unitary authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial plans are to be sent to the government by 21st March 2025.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSDC is concerned about the lack of public consultation on this aspect of the reforms. An Extraordinary meeting of Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils to discuss the issues was rescheduled from Feb 10th to April 10th to allow more time to review emerging details from government.
Planning Policy updates	As noted in the last report, the Joint Local Plan (JLP) for Babergh and Mid Suffolk is being reviewed, to make sure it stays compliant with the government's increased new targets for housebuilding. The timeline for this work was approved at the February Full Council meeting. Further information can be found here: babergh-and-mid-suffolk-joint-local-plan-review The Cabinet member for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure, Cllr Andrew Stringer, has highlighted the importance of Neighbourhood Plans, which form part of the district's local plans.
EcoPower Suffolk: solar application	EcoPower Suffolk (a subsidiary of Eenergy International Ltd) has announced plans for a 600 ha solar project in our area: https://ecopowersuffolk.com/ The project includes parcels of land along the B1077 between Occold and Eye, and around Brome Avenue (Eye), as well as several other villages. Because of the project's size, it is classified as a National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and so the government (not the Local Authority) will decide if it goes ahead. The first consultation period will run from 10 March to 22 April 2025. For details see: Have Your Say EcoPower Suffolk Mid Suffolk Council leader Cllr Andy Mellen and Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure, Cllr Andrew Stringer, have urged the government to take a more coordinated approach to such large-scale infrastructure projects in the District: Energy infrastructure 'must be coordinated' to minimise impact on Mid Suffolk communities - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk.
New way to reach the District Council in Eye	From March, you will be able to drop in to Eye Library on Fridays to get help from Council staff. MSDC is opening its first joint customer-access point at Eye Library, alongside Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice, starting 28th March. Staff from both organisations will be on hand to help residents between 9.15am and 12pm every Friday. This aims to make life easier for residents who prefer face-to-face contact. The Council can also be contacted about many issues by phone and through the website: www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or phone 0300 123 4000
Blister Pack Recycling	Medicine blister packs are a difficult to recycle product and should not be placed in the recycling bin. Some pharmacies offer limited collection points, often requiring you make a purchase or download an app to dispose of small volumes of materials. MSDC has launched a pilot project to recycle blister packs free of charge at three locations across the district. Palgrave Community Centre is one of the host locations. Whenever the Community Centre is open to the public the container is available for your use for completely empty blister packs only Any unused medicines should be returned to a pharmacy for safe disposal..
Funding for community projects	Details of Mid Suffolk Council's community funding can be found at: www.midsuffolk.gov.uk – click on the 'Access community funding' button. For advice or further information, please email the grants team at: BMSDCgrants@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk
Cllr Rachel Eburne RIP	With great sadness I convey news of the death of Cllr Rachel Eburne, Deputy Leader Mid Suffolk District Council on 14 March 2025. Cllr Eburne served on the District Council since 2010 as ward member for Haughley and Wetherden. At Full Council on 19 March 2025 a minute's silence was observed and tributes were heard from members across the chamber.