

## MARKET WESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Market Weston Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 7.00pm in Market Weston Village Hall

**Present:** Cllrs: D Fulcher, P Barham, P Freeman, M Martin C. Cllr J Spicer.

### 1. **Co-option of new Parish Councillor**

### 2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Cllr W.S Cllr Bull. Cllr A Hall arrived at the end of the meeting.

### 3. **Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations:**

3.1 To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda. None.

3.2 To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests. None.

3.3 To grant dispensations as appropriate under Section 33 of the Localism Act. None.

4. **Minutes** - The minutes of the Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 meeting agreed and approved as a correct record.

### 5. **Meeting open to the public**

None present.

### 6. **Report from County Councillor:** J Spicer

To include any update on flooding issue in the village.

The issue with flooding at Ponds End Lane is in hand with SCC, in particular with Mike Mclean, a Highways Engineer. We will continue to be kept updated of any works. SCC enforcement will be writing to the residents, in The Street, about their plants obstructing the pavement. Cllr Barham stated that the, previously reported, damaged footpath fingerpost has not been repaired but has disappeared off the reporting tool. Cllr Spicer will follow up on this. A new 'Not Suitable for HGVs' sign has been put up in Ponds End Lane. Cllr Spicer informed the Council that the A1088 at Stowlangtoft will be closed in July for bridge works.

**Action Cllr Spicer**

### 7. **Report from B. Councillor:** C Bull

Cllr Bull was unable to attend the meeting but, as always is available for any West Suffolk Council matters if needed. The Clerk will ask for an update on Cinque Farm, as discussed at the last meeting.

**Action Clerk**

### 8. **Chairman**

8.1 To ratify appointment of Cllr Martin as re-elected trustee to the Market Weston United Charities.

The appointment of Cllr Martin as trustee to the Market Weston United Charities was ratified.

### 9. **Clerk:**

9.1 To review and update as required: Standing orders, Financial Standing orders, Risk Assessment, Asset Register, Code of conduct and Clerks contract.

The Clerk circulated the above, updated documents for review. The Councillors were happy with all the documents.

9.2 To give feedback on the WSC conference.

The Clerk attended the recent West Suffolk Council forum. Unfortunately, she did not feel that it was up to the normal standards of past conferences with the venue not really meeting the needs of the event and too many items being on the agenda, meaning there was very limited time for questions or networking. There was a discussion about Emergency planning with Ben Wilding A presentation on Housing and homeless and a presentation from SCC highways. This was mainly focused how much funding they receive and how the funds are spent. They have an annual

budget of approx. £50 million, this is for all highway works, including infrastructure works. It was calculated that if every pothole in the County was repaired, this would cost approx. £49 million alone. We raised concerns over the reporting tool. We were told SCC Councillors have access to more detailed information and that they would be looking at improving the tool moving forward. Questions, requested to be submitted ahead of the conference, were not answered but we were assured that we would be provided with a written document covering the answers soon.

9.3 To discuss opportunity to get a free portrait of King Charles.

There is an opportunity to receive a free portrait of the King. The Village Hall would be happy to receive the portrait. The Clerk will arrange for a copy to be supplied. **Action Clerk**

9.4 Confirmation of Councillor contact details on website.

CHAIRMAN

Darryl Fulcher, responsible for Defibrillator and Phone box. Email: [fulchernet@gmail.com](mailto:fulchernet@gmail.com)

VICE CHAIRMAN

Mrs Miranda Martin, responsible for Village Hall & PCC. [mirandafmartin@mwpantiles.co.uk](mailto:mirandafmartin@mwpantiles.co.uk)

COUNCILLORS

Mr Andy Hall, responsible for Defibrillator. Windrush, Church Road, IP22 2NX.

Mr Paul Freeman Holly Cottage, The Street, Market Weston 07930 416775

Phil Barham Alkira House, New Common Road, Market Weston IP22 2PG

The details, for those present were confirmed a correct. The Clerk will arrange for the new email address to be updated on the website once they have been set up and confirmed. (see under item 9.6) **Action Clerk**

9.5 To provide feedback on Devolution webinar.

The Clerk attended a webinar on the Devolution deal being considered by Suffolk County Council. She has concerns that some of the money in the deal is not indexed linked, which could potentially result in less money in the future. Also, an elected mayor could be in contrary to the Councils political alliance, the mayor could then make a cabinet of chosen members not reflecting electorates votes. Below is some further information about the proposal.

The Government currently controls where and how certain funding is spent in Suffolk.

In December 2022, Suffolk County Council signed an in-principle agreement with the Government to transfer some of that control and funding to Suffolk:

- Level 3 deal
- Additional funding
- More local decision-making
- Greater profile and influence with Government

This is part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda.

Additional Investment Fund worth **£16m** per year for 30 years, not index linked.

Local control of **£9.4m** Adult Education Budget each year, not index linked.

**£5.8m** one off funding to develop brownfield housing sites

**£3m** one off funding to expand Suffolk's Greener Homes 0% Loan Scheme to improve energy efficiency and renewable generation.

An integrated multi-year transport settlement

Control of £9.4m annual Adult Education Budget from 2025 (currently centrally allocated)

Responsibility for commissioning adult education in Suffolk:

- Better targeted
- Closer, more focused collaboration with business and other partners
- Focus on the skills we need in Suffolk.

Suffolk County Council's leader would be directly elected by residents.

First election in **May 2025** in line with next county council elections

No new levels of bureaucracy:

- The directly elected leader would be part of Suffolk County Council
- Existing decision-making arrangements would apply.
- Devolution is a journey, not a one-off event.

- Experience shows devolution opens the door to greater powers and funding over time.
- 4th level of devolution already announced offering multi-year funding and more influence.

A public consultation on the proposed deal will launch in March 2024, giving residents and businesses an opportunity to have their say.

9.6 To discuss recommendation that councillors have dedicated email addresses for PC business.

There is an ambition to make Parish Councils work in a more secure and effective way by using .gov email and website addresses. Unfortunately, there is a considerable cost, particularly for smaller parishes, involved in this. A .gov website domain is £138 for 2 years and it is £24 per email address for a Gov email address. At this time, it was considered that this would represent too big of an outlay for this service. It was agreed that all the councillors would set up a mwpc.gmail address for Parish Council use. The Clerk will pass this information on to Cllr Hall who was not present for this discussion at the meeting.

**Action All**

9.7 To discuss Councillors training needs and the need for up-to-date training record.

It was agreed that we would set up a training register to record training and development. All the Councillors present would be interested in undertaking some Councillor Basics training. The Clerk will look in to organising this.

**Action Clerk**

## **10. The Green/Play area report**

10.1 to receive an update on the continuing maintenance of The Green, including any update on the current status of the mower.

Our mower is still currently not working, although progress has been made and ideally it will be ready soon. Cllr Fulcher will use a borrowed mower until ours is repaired. The Green will be ready for it's first cut soon.

10.2 To discuss working party programmed to meet on 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 10am.

There is a lot of debris that needs to be removed before any grass cutting is undertaken. As discussed previously, off the back of the West Suffolk Council play park report and advice from the WS Parks Manager, there is some works to be done to some of the wooden play structures and the bench, near New Common Road, needs to be removed. A trailer will be needed to remove the debris. Cllr Freeman will speak to Pat Murray about this. If he is not available Cllr Fulcher will make arrangements to have the debris removed. Any debris waiting to be removed can be stored on the concrete pad near the shed. Unfortunately, Cllr Fulcher is not available to help on the day but asked to be kept updated.

**Action All**

## **11. Highway matters**

11.1 To discuss any highways issues. Including Pothole repairs and overgrown plants on footpath.

We need to make sure that all potholes are logged on the SCC reporting portal. Cllr Fulcher will make sure the ones in Ponds End Lane are on and the Clerk will report the ones in New Common Road. It was questioned if just filling the reported potholes, rather than all the potholes in that area, was the best use of resources. As discussed under item 9.2 there is simply not enough money to fill all the potholes.

**Action Cllr Fulcher/Clerk**

11.2 To receive any update on potential VAS project.

Cllr Freeman has produced a letter to send to residents who might be affected by the erection of a post, or use of a VAS near their homes. It was agreed to combine this with a letter produced by SCC for completeness. Cllr Freeman and the Clerk will meet on Monday to discuss the project further. There may be some opportunities to add extenders to existing posts if the locations, identified by Cllr Freeman, are suitable. At this stage it is still a fact gathering exercise with no financial commitment being made.

**Action Cllr Freeman/Clerk**

11.3 To receive any update on footpath signage.

This matter was discussed with Cllr Spicer under item 6. These posts will be re-reported again and then the report number will be passed to Cllr Spicer for investigation. **Action Cllr Barham/Clerk**

11.4 To include any update on chapter 8 training.

Cllrs Barham/Freeman/Fulcher are potentially interested in receiving training that would allow them to operate on the highway. There are currently no dates available for the training. The Clerk will continue to pursue this, potentially having some training just for her Parish Councils.

11.5 30mph stickers, audit of need.

Cllr Freeman will do an audit of the 30mph signs that are damaged or faded and would benefit from being refreshed with a replacement sticker. **Action Cllr Freeman/Clerk**

## **12. Finance.**

12.1 The following accounts were approved for payment.

Administration	Payment	Various	-£957.95
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12.2 Bank reconciliation, budget report and accounts update.

The Clerk provided the Councillors with bank reconciliation, budget report and schedule of payment for the Councilors information.

12.3 To confirm completion/or date of internal audit review.

Cllr Freeman and the Clerk are meeting on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March to complete the internal audit review. **Cllr Freeman/Clerk**

12.4 To confirm details for Internal Audit

Our existing Auditor is no longer willing to carry out Audits for smaller parishes, this is because they require almost as much work as larger parishes with the current obligations under the audit regime and transparency code. The Clerk has made arrangements with SALC to carry out our audit this year. It would appear that this is an online service, and the Clerk was unsure of how much work this could potentially generate. **Action Clerk**

12.5 Barclays banking arrangements.

The Clerk has been investigating better investment options for the Parish councils' funds. Our current bank, Barclays, offers an interest rate of 1.5%. Unity Bank, an organisation the Clerk is familiar with and who specialise in Community banking, offer a much better rate, starting at 2.77%. They do command a fee but, even taking this in to account, they would still offer a much better return on any funds held. The Clerk has again experienced, time consuming, issues with Barclays and it was agreed that we should start looking at the process of moving over to Unity bank. The Clerk will explore this further, and it will be an agenda item for the next meeting. **Action Clerk**

12.6 To discuss and agree arrangements for additional checks for online payments.

It was agreed to look at changing process to check payments and receipts. It was suggested that in addition to the Clerk setting up the payment with the bank and a Councillor authorising the payment, a third member will be required to check the documentation and sign off on the paperwork at the meeting. This role will be rotated amongst the Councillors. This will be confirmed at the next meeting where it will be an agenda item.

**13. Planning Matters** to include any applications/decisions received since the agenda was posted.

13.1 To note recent consultation on the West Suffolk Local Plan.

The Clerk had shared the following information with the councilors prior to the meeting. Market Weston is included as a Type B Village. Type B villages perform an important characteristic and social function in West Suffolk. These villages have only a limited range of services and facilities. Any area not listed in the settlement hierarchy is designated as countryside. These places are

characterised by having very few, or no services and facilities, and so large amounts of growth in these locations would not be sustainable. In type B villages, in order to cater for appropriate small scale local growth, developments of five homes or less within the designated housing settlement boundary would be permitted. Market Weston is one of 27 type B villages in West Suffolk. As mentioned above these settlements have a very limited range of or no services and poor accessibility to public transport. It is likely that residents will rely on the private car to travel to meet their day-to-day needs. In these villages no sites are allocated through the local plan and only limited infill development, or affordable housing exception sites would be permitted, where it accords with other policies in the development plan. The scale of growth considered appropriate for type B villages is an indicative maximum scheme size of around five homes, as infill plots within the housing settlement boundary including making use of previously developed or brownfield land dependent on infrastructure and environmental capacity. The Councillors were happy with this designation and as there are no sites outside (or indeed) inside the village boundary being put forward, they were happy to be in this category and did not wish to submit any comments.

#### **14. Councillors reports and items for future agenda**

14.1 To confirm additional works to noticeboard.

Cllr Barham has added some lights to the noticeboard. Currently they are flashing, this may be due to the angle of the solar pad or the lack of sun at the moment. We will continue to monitor this, and it becomes problematic, the lights will be removed. **Action Cllr Barham.**

Cllr Martin asked that, if the Church were to hold a fete this year, would it be ok to use The Green as a venue. The Parish councillors would be happy to support this idea. It was confirmed that, as long as the Church have their own public liability insurance, the Parish Councils insurance would cover them using The Green for this event. Cllr Martin will let the Church know the Parish Councils view on this. **Action Cllr Martin**

#### **15. Correspondence for information**

15.1 Arthritis Action - Free presentations and groups, circulated.

15.2 To note Connecting Communities information for community transport. Noted.

15.3 SALC Survey. Noted.

15.4 Homeless reduction survey, a request to complete the survey, as individuals was received at the West Suffolk Council forum. The Clerk has re-circulated the survey.

#### **16. Aide memoire**

16.1 Tree planting project, Cllr Hall.

16.2 Flooding issues, Cllr Hall.

**17. Date of next meeting:** May 16<sup>th</sup> 2024 7pm Annual Parish meeting to be followed by the Annual Parish Council meeting

#### **18. To consider the exclusion of the public and press in the public interest for consideration of the following items:**

18.1 Personnel Issues. None.

18.2 Legal Issues. None.