

MARKET WESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Market Weston Annual Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 16th May 2024
7.00pm in Market Weston Village Hall

Present: Cllrs: D Fulcher, P Barham, M Martin, A Hall & C. Cllr J Spicer.

1. Election of Chairman

Cllr Martin proposed Cllr Fulcher for the position of Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Barham. Cllr Fulcher accepted the position. All in agreement.

2. Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr Fulcher signed the Declaration of Acceptance of office form.

3. Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr Barham nominated Cllr Martin for the position of Vice Chairman, this was seconded by Cllr Hall. Cllr Martin accepted the position.

4. Co-option of new Parish Councillor

No applications received.

5. Apologies for absence

The Parish council accepted and agreed the reason for apologies for absence from: Cllr P Freeman & DC C Bull

7. Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations:

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

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

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

8. Minutes - The minutes of the Thursday 21st March 2024 & Thursday 11th April 2024 meetings were agreed and approved as a correct record.

9. Meeting open to the public

None present.

10. Report from County Councillor: J Spicer

I would like to thank the chairman, members and clerk of the Parish Council for inviting me to attend their meetings over the last year. I am fortunate to be able to work closely with Carol Bull as we try to navigate the different responsibilities of our two councils.

The county council has had a challenging year as we meet our statutory responsibilities caring for vulnerable older people, those with disabilities, children, special education and young people. About 79% of our total annual expenditure is on these services which are provided 365 days a year.

This year we have had to make difficult decisions over the level of council tax and we are making some significant savings involving service cuts and reducing staff numbers. Meanwhile we continue to ensure we have adequate budgets for the fire and rescue service, highways, trading standards, the environment and climate change, school support and libraries. The total budget for 2024-25 is an increase of 8.6% to £752.8million.

Since October 2023 the council has had a new contract for highway services with Milestone and we are cautiously pleased with how repairs and resurfacing is progressing.

We are currently consulting on the proposal from Government for a "Devolution Deal" for Suffolk which will bring investment in Suffolk of £480million over the next 30 years. In return for this new money and devolved decision making we will be required to have a directly elected leader of the county council from May 2025.

The biggest issues I have discussed with your Parish council over the last year are:

- Flooding problems and management of ditches and footpaths especially at the junction of Pond's End Lane and The Street
- "Unsuitable for HGVs" sign erected at the junction of Ponds End Lane and the B1111
- With my locality budget I have allocated £750 for resurfacing the village hall car park

11. **Report from B. Councillor: C Bull**

Cllr Bull was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report: *The Licensing Committee* generally meets quarterly and recently reviewed the West Suffolk Council's Hackney Carriage Fares Consultation for 2024 and is also consulting on our Street Trading Policy. In addition to this there are frequent meetings of licensing sub-committees to consider licensing applications which cannot be decided by officers because for example there are objections or where there have been breaches.

The *Grant Working Party* is responsible for the allocation of grants from the Community Chest Funding which the Council establish each year to support community groups, charities and voluntary organisations across West Suffolk. This year the committee considered 96 applications and just over £465,000 has been allocated to a wide variety of organisations to set up projects. These cover such things as: helping to reduce social isolation; supporting victims of sexual abuse and violence; teaching life skills; advice on managing money and tackling debt and support for food banks. We cannot fund all the applications we receive but where organisations are not successful we offer information and support in seeking funding elsewhere.

The purpose of the *Environmental and Sustainability Working Group* is to review the progress that West Suffolk Council has made in delivering its action plan and move to Net Zero and to make recommendations to Cabinet in relation to protecting and enhancing the environment in the future. The reverse vending machines mentioned later are an example of an initiative suggested by this group.

The Council's strategic priorities going forward are now:

- The provision of affordable available decent homes;
- Environment resilience;
- Sustainable growth;
- The development of thriving communities.

To highlight a few of the things that have been achieved in relation to these strategies over the last year I would mention:

Flood Recovery Grant - Like other authorities in Suffolk, and with the assistance of ARP and Suffolk County Council, we have paid 32 of the Government's flood recovery grants to households badly affected by Storm Babet. The grant provided a cash payment of £500 each and an exemption from Council Tax for three months.

Local Plan – We are now at the third consultation stage of the plan prior to it being submitted to the Secretary of State. A planning inspector will then be appointed to hold an examination in public. It has been a long rigorous process but hopefully once adopted will enable us to provide appropriate housing in the appropriate places in the future.

Street Trading Policy - Street Trading covers a wide range of outdoor retail and catering activities undertaken in public streets. It includes flower sellers, ice-cream vendors, fancy goods, souvenir stalls and a variety of hot and cold catering activities such as burger vans. The Council is due to review its street trading licensing policy but before it does, it wants to hear from street traders, businesses, events organisers, town and parish councils, residents and other stakeholders on some of the issues which could potentially be covered and addressed in the new policy. The new policy will be formed with the new strategic priority of sustainable growth in mind.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund – This is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. West Suffolk Council has been allocated £1,943,467 over three years through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Capital Sports Fund – £14,700 from its UK Shared Prosperity Fund has been allocated by the Council to increase participation and further enhance activity. Grants of between £200 and £1,000

are available to organisations across West Suffolk. Applications are now being processed and successful bidders will be notified shortly.

Environmental Resilience – The council has developed a broad action plan to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2030 and work has already been completed to decarbonise a number of buildings using the £1.4 million secured from the Governments' Decarbonisation Fund. It also continues the commitment to the £9 million investment for our Net Zero Emissions by 2030 journey and proposes an additional £2.75 million into the fund which will be utilised to improve the energy efficiency and incorporate renewable energy (electricity and/or heat) into council buildings; electric vehicle fleet (EV) investment to replace small vehicles on fleet with EVs when replacement falls due and expansion of our West Suffolk Solar for Business scheme.

I am pleased to say West Suffolk has become the first council in the country to get behind an initiative to increase recycling and support local businesses. The council has teamed up with Love Newmarket Business Improvement District (BID), The Guineas Shopping Centre, Abbeycroft Leisure, Eastern Education Group, Our Bury St Edmunds BID and Trovr to deliver four reverse vending machines. Trovr reverse vending machines use a smartphone app to incentivise recycling through points-based rewards which can then be spent in local businesses. The goal is to increase recycling rates and reduce litter. The new reverse recycling machines can be found outside The Guineas Shopping Centre, Newmarket Leisure Centre, and West Suffolk College. A fourth machine will be installed in Bury St Edmunds town centre once a site has been secured. This is part of our Strategic Priority for environmental resilience and if successful then more sites will be looked at across West Suffolk

Grass Cutting Review - The Council owns or is responsible for a significant amount of public open space in the district amounting to over 500 hectares and the service has been facing some significant, coinciding challenges over recent years hence the need for review. Town and Parish councils were consulted as part of this. As a result of this review a number of changes have been implemented including updating some machinery and employing additional staff.

Finance

All that has been achieved and is planned for the future is the result of prudent and efficient financial management which has enabled us once again to deliver a balanced budget, something many other councils are struggling to achieve. This allows us to maintain our standards of service.

- 4.3 million black and blue household waste bins emptied;

- 2495 determined planning applications;

- 839 food safety inspection carried out;

- 236 West Suffolk households assisted with adaptations to their homes through disabled facilities grants at a cost of £1,879,394.

The budget for 2004/2005 includes:

- Local Council Tax Support Scheme continuing with a maximum reduction of 100%;

- The introduction in 2025 of a second home premium in relation to council tax;

- Changes to the long term empty property premium on council tax.

On a less positive note very soon into the new administration a decision was taken to not progress the Western Way Hub development which would have provided among other things a new swimming pool to replace the existing one which is in urgent need of significant renovation being over 40 years old. At the present time we do not have a time schedule for when this will be carried out or how long it will take. Additionally the Bury St Edmunds Archives which SCC had agreed to move to the hub as its present building is no longer viable is now in need of a new home and may be relocated to Ipswich.

I cannot finish this report without mentioning West Stow Anglo- Saxon village which is run by the council. The council recently organised a tour of the village for representatives from the American Air bases and members of the council. I had not been there for many, many years and did not realise how it has been developed by the Council and what it now has to offer and moreover what an important archaeological site it is. So much so that it receives significant outside funding for various projects it undertakes. As well as the reconstructed houses in the village there is an excellent museum, a lovely coffee shop and wonderful walking opportunities with or without a dog. They hold regular events there and host tours for schools. I would urge you all to pay it a visit one day and get involved - they are always looking for volunteers.

Finally, may I thank all members of the Parish council for all the work they do on behalf of the village and its residents and remind you that my Locality Budget is now open for this year!

12. Progress reports. For information, from:

12. Chairman

The Chairman had no additional report to make.

12. Clerk:

12.1 To confirm receipt of free portrait of King Charles.

The Clerk confirmed that the free portrait of the King had been left in the hall for the Village Hall.

12.2 Confirmation of Councillor contact details on website and to confirm status of dedicated email addresses for PC business.

The Councillors have set up separate, Parish council dedicated email addresses. These have been updated to the website. Cllr Fulcher would like his home address added to the website and Cllrs Barham and Hall would like their addresses to be removed. Cllr Hall is still to set up a dedicated mwpc@gmail email account.

Action Cllr Hall/Clerk

12.3 To discuss Councillor training, to include chapter 8 training.

It was agreed that we need someone on the Council to undertake the Chapter 8, Community Self Help training. This would enable the Parish Council to undertake works on the highway, such as verge cutting and sign cleaning. Cllr Barham is willing to undertake the training. The Clerk will continue to provide training dates to try facilitate this.

Action Cllr Barham/Clerk

13. The Green/Play area report

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

Cllr Fulcher recently cut The Green and he was very grateful to Tony and a local lady who came and helped to clear up the grass cuttings. It was agreed that Cllrs Martin and Barham will be added to The Green WhatsApp group so they can be alerted if extra help is ever required.

Action Cllr Fulcher

The situation with the status of the mower remains unchanged. This means that only Cllr Fulcher can cut The Green. This is a big burden on one person and we really need to address this as it is not really fair or practical to carry on in this manner. The Clerk will write to Mr Hatten to address the matter.

Action Clerk

13.2 To note any additional works to the play area.

It was understood that a local resident is still willing to instal a goalpost and do some works to the bike jumps/burns in The Green. Details of the goal are still to be received and the Clerk is yet to hear from the district Councils regarding any safety regulations. The Clerk will follow this up. With regards to the burns concerns were raised about the proposal to lay a surface between the burns. More details about this need to be received before a decision is made. It was felt that to have grass between the burns would be the best option. Cllr Barham will continue to discuss this scheme with the resident.

Action Cllr Barham/Clerk

13.3 To note play area report and discuss any actions required.

No additional works required at this time.

14. Highway matters

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

This matter is now with Suffolk County Council.

14.2 To receive any update on potential VAS project.

In the absence of Cllr Freeman this item was deferred until the next meeting.

14.3 To receive any update on footpath signage.

It was understood that the footpath sign, in New Common Road, has still not been replaced. Cllr Barham will confirm the repair has not been undertaken and we will follow this up with C. Cllr Spicer.

Action Cllr Barham/Clerk

15. Finance.

15.1 To consider payments and note any receipts.

Payment	Mijan	Software	-£60.00
Payment	SALC	subscription	-£158.97
Payment	Various	Admin	£597.44
Payment	Darryl Fulcher	The Green	-£67.50
Payment	Various	Admin	-£149.89
Receipt	West Suffolk	Precept	£9,100.00
Payment	west Suffolk	Dog bin emptying	-£191.36

15.2 Bank reconciliation, budget report and accounts update.

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

15.3 End of Year Accounts.

15.3.1 The accounts were found to be in good order, and we received positive feedback overall and the Councillors were happy to accept the internal audit report. There were a few suggestions made to reflect governance good practice. These included: to review of the Standing Orders to update procurement thresholds. To review terms of reference and effectiveness of internal audit and demonstrate the Councillor understanding of this. To look at the earmarked reserve values and sign off on the Asset register. To include the approval and acceptance of apologies at meetings. To reinstate Fol information on the website. It was agreed to look at having a .gov website address, there is going to be a grant of £100 available towards these costs. Cllr Barham will look at the providers available to host this, the Clerk will forward some further information regarding this.

Action Cllr Barham/Clerk

15.3.2 To approve and sign section one, Annual Governance statement, of the AGAR 2023-24. Section one of the AGAR, the Annual Governance Statement was approved and signed.

15.3.3 To approve and sign section two, Accounting Statement, of the AGAR 2023-24. Section two of the AGAR, the Accounting Statement was approved and signed.

15.3.4 To accept and sign the Certificate of exemption 2023/24 for submission to the external auditor and confirm details required for meeting the Parish Councils obligations under the Transparency code.

The Certificate of exemption for the 2023/24 AGAR was approved and signed. The Clerk will make sure all the correct documentation is submitted and that documents required for compliance with the Transparency Code are uploaded to the website.

Action Clerk

15.4 Banking arrangements, to discuss option to move our current banking arrangements to Unity Bank.

The Clerk provided some information on Unity Trust Bank. Following discussion, looking at the service that is currently being received from Barclays, the Clerks positive experience with banking with Unity Trust Bank and the potential increase in interest received from Unity Trust, it was agreed that we would move our account from Barclays to Unity Trust Bank. The Clerk has been informed that switching to Unity Trust Bank is simple and can be completed in just seven working days guaranteed using the Current Account Switch Service (CASS). The Clerk will begin the switching process.

Action Clerk

15.5 to confirm completion of internal audit review for YE 2024

The Clerk and Cllr Freeman conducted the internal audit review on 25th March 2024.

15.6 To confirm arrangements for additional accounting checks at the meeting.

To comply with our Standing Orders a Councillor, not approving the payments, will check the invoices against the bank requests for payments. This will be rotated amongst the Councillors. At this meeting this was conducted by Cllr Hall.

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

16.1 C/24/0584/HH | Householder planning application - a. single storey extension b. replacement roof c. insertion of doors and windows d. weather-boarding | Fen Farm Barn Bury Road Market Weston. **No objections** to this application were raised.

17. Councillors reports and items for future agenda

No additional reports or requests made.

18. Correspondence for information

No additional correspondence received.

19. Aide memoire

19.1 Tree planting project, Cllr Hall. Noted.

19.2 Flooding issues, Cllr Hall. Noted.

20. Date of next meeting: July 18th, 2024, 7pm 2024

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

21.1 Personnel Issues. None.

21.2 Legal Issues. None.