

LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING IN THE VILLAGE HALL HELD ON

Monday, 27th November 2023 at 7.15 pm

Present:

Cllr John Ross (Chairman)
Cllr Sarah Gregory
Cllr Chris Yeo
Cllr Derek Dickerson
Cllr Ann Wignall
Parish Clerk Angie Buggs
Cllr Mike Ninnmey East Suffolk Council
1 member of the public

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Patti Mulcahy Suffolk County Council – no report.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

Cllr Mike Ninnmey East Suffolk Council – written report.
Cllr Lee Reeves East Suffolk Council – written report.

Councillors discussed the Red House Farm development and the number of properties proposed to be built. Cllr J Ross stated that the public are outraged that the Planning Officer has said it is up for approval despite the recent comments submitted by Suffolk County Council Highways.

VILLAGE FORUM

An opportunity for residents to give comments on any issues on the agenda. (as per standing orders max 15 minutes unless otherwise directed by the Chairman, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.

No members of the public wishes to speak.

The formal meeting of the Parish Council started at 7.30 pm.

91.23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Parrish (sickness), Cllr Cate Last and Cllr Lee Reeves East Suffolk Council.

92.23 CODE OF CONDUCT & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

93.23 TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 4TH SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 4th September 2023, which had previously been circulated, were approved and signed as a true record by Cllr J Ross (Chairman).

94.23 MATTERS TO REPORT FROM THE LATEST MINUTES (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

a. 86.23 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE THE VILLAGE GREEN FLOWER TUBS

Nothing further to report.

b. 90.23 Open Forum Question What is the timescale for determination on Planning Applications

Standard applications are 8 weeks, ie householders, new dwellings etc.; major applications are 13 weeks.

95.23 TO CO-OPT PARISH COUNCILLOR AND SIGNING OF DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Chairman reported that Ann Wignall had put herself forward to become a Parish Council and the Clerk had checked her eligibility. Cllr C Yeo proposed that Ann Wignall be co-opted on to the Parish Council, seconded Cllr S Gregory – all in favour. Ann Wignall signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Clerk said she would arrange for the completion of Interests with East Suffolk Council. **Action: Clerk / Cllr Ann Wignall**

96.23 FINANCE

a. Income since last meeting

Warm Room Grant	£1,885.50
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b. Expenditure to be agreed at this meeting

East Suffolk Council Levington Election	£869.28
Mrs A J Buggs Salary & Expenses September-October	£825.61
Mrs A J Buggs Printer Cartridge	£183.90
Derek Dickerson Footpath Signs	£183.50
East Suffolk Council Stratton Hall Election	£11.22
Village Hall Heating Warm Room	£400.00
SALC Payroll	£27.00
Tuddenham Press Newsletters	£129.00
OneSuffolk Website	£60.00
Tuddenham Press Newsletters	£100.00
Mrs Helen Kingston-Ross Warm Room Refreshments	£38.09
Levington Village Hall Warm Room	£540.00

Cllr C Yeo proposed, seconded Cllr J Ross that the above expenditure is approved – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

c. Bank balances as at 31st October 2023

Current Account	£25,473.14
Deposit Account	£8,537.41

The Parish Council noted the balances as at the 31st October 2023 for both the Community Account and the Premium Account.

d. To approve the Half Year Accounts 2022/2023

The Clerk reported that the half year accounts 1st April 2023 – 30th September 2023 had previously been circulated to all councillors. Cllr S Gregory proposed that that the Parish Council formally adopt the half year accounts, seconded Cllr D Dickerson – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

e. To discuss and approve Draft Budget 2024/2025

The Clerk reported that the Budget 2024/2025 had previously been circulated and asked for any comments. No councillor had any comments to make. Cllr J Ross proposed that the Parish Council agree to adopt the Budget for 2024/2025, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

f. To discuss and approve the Precept for 2024/2025

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council set the precept at £9,200 for the financial year 2023/2024, however due to inflation the actual expenditure by the Parish Council is anticipated to be in the region of £10,800. It was noted that the Parish Council is required to hold 9 – 12 months precept in its reserves. Councillors discussed the affects of inflation on residents. Following discussion, Cllr J Ross stated that the Parish Council had approved the Budget for 2024/2025. Cllr C Yeo proposed that the Parish Council precept for £12,500 in line with the 2024/2025 budget, seconded Cllr D Dickerson – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

g. To discuss and approve the Local Governance Pay Claim 2023/2024

Cllr J Ross stated that the Local Governance Pay Claim 2023/2024 had been circulated to all councillors. Cllr J Ross proposed that the Parish Council agree to increase the clerk's salary by 3.88% back dated to the 1st April 2023, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

h. To discuss and approve SALC training for new Councillor

The Clerk reported that Parish Councils are required to offer training to new councillors. It was agreed that Cllr A Wignall be authorised to book SALC training. **Action: Cllr A Wignall / Clerk**

i. To discuss moving bank accounts from Barclays to another bank

The Clerk highlighted the issues some Parish Councils and small businesses are experiencing with Barclays Bank closing accounts with no notice period. Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council had experienced problems adding signatories to the bank accounts. The Clerk reported that she had investigated alternative banks and a suitable bank appeared to be Unity Trust Bank which although the cost would be £6 per month it would enable the Parish Council to access an online bank account with single, double or triple authorisations on the current account. The deposit account with Unity Trust Bank offers an interest rate of 2.77% gross as opposed to 1.4% gross with Barclays. Unity Trust Bank comes highly recommended by other Parish Councils. Councillors recognised the risk to the Parish Council if Barclays were to close the PC accounts it was agreed that Cllr C Yeo should investigate options to the Parish Council and report back to the January 2024 meeting.

97.23 TO AGREE PARISH COUNCIL / ANNUAL PARISH MEETING DATES FOR 2024

The Parish Council discuss the meeting dates for 2024 and the following dates were agreed.

All meetings will take place at 7.15 pm in the Village Hall.

Monday, 15th January 2024

Monday, 4th March 2024

Monday, 29th April 2024 (Annual Parish Meeting)
Monday, 20th May 2024 (Annual Parish Council Meeting)
Monday, 1st July 2024
Monday, 2nd September 2024
Monday, 4th November 2024

Action: Clerk

98.23 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE POSSIBLE REMOVAL OF A BEECH TREE IN PILOTS WAY (RESIDENT'S REQUEST)

Cllr D Dickerson reported that a request for the cutting down/removal of the second Beech Tree from the top of Pilots Way opposite the Ship had been received from a resident.

The trees were planted circa 2000 as replacements for previous Elm trees which had succumbed to Dutch Elm disease. The purchase of this replacement Beech tree was via a sponsorship by a benevolent parishioner from the village and was not paid for by the Parish Council as you would expect. This trees along with the other 11 replacement trees form a uniform fence line to mark the boundary marker for the Parish Council owned Church Field. The tree in question is healthy and is now starting to mature nicely after 23 years of growth. If the tree is removed it will have a detrimental effect on the appearance of the boundary of the field. It will also decrease the security as it will leave a large gap in the fence which might encourage access to the Church Field by motor vehicles and other undesirables.

In these times, where the environment is to the forefront of the news, should the Parish Council be destroying a healthy tree when there are alternatives that could be applied?

Cllr D Dickerson said he had also contacted three local neighbours for their opinion and two have no opinions they wanted considered and the remaining neighbour was strongly against allowing the removal of the tree.

The Parish Council discussed Cllr D Dickerson's report and Cllr D Dickerson proposed that the Parish Council do not allow the removal of the Beech tree in Pilots Way, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour.

Action: Clerk

99.23 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON THE WASTE BIN AND FIDO POLICY

Cllr J Ross said that the Parish Council had received a document from East Suffolk's Strategic Waste and Contact Management Team which is a new department within ESC who have undertaken a review of the current provision of litter and fido waste bins within the district that ESC has a responsibility to empty. The purpose of this review is to map the current bin provision and create a policy, that is open and transparent, for managing the stock in the future. As part of the process, ESC has created a draft policy, which they are sharing with Town and Parish Councils, to gather comments and consideration. As a part of this review ESC have temporarily closed the request for new bin service. The closing date for comments will be the 31st January 2024. ESC highlight that Section 5 may be of articular interest to Town and Parish Councils. **Action: All Councillors / Clerk**

100.23 TO DISCUSS A PROTOCOL FOR RESIDENT'S USE OF THE PC'S INFRARED CAMERA

Cllr J Ross reported that as part of Parish Council's support to residents under the Ease the Squeeze initiative, the Parish Council purchased an infrared camera. The intention is to support residents identify where their home is leaking heat in order that they can make focused insulation decisions.

Suffolk Climate Change Partnership is a Suffolk County Council initiative that provides a thermal imaging facility via the loan of a camera. Unfortunately, this scheme is so well subscribed it is booked for the whole duration of the cold weather by community groups. The Parish Council, however, decided to replicate initiative for our two parishes. Fortunately, Suffolk Climate Change Partnership have established a YouTube channel where all the training material for setup and use of the camera is available for public consumption. The camera we have purchased is the same as used by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership initiative, a FLIR One. It physically plugs in to the charge port of an Apple device and is operated by a free to download App.

Operation of the initiative is rather simple:

1. The camera is insured as an asset of the PC
2. The camera is held by one of the Cllrs
3. Residents make application to the Cllr to borrow the camera, I propose for 2 days
4. The resident completes a borrowing agreement form declaring to take care of the camera and not lend it to anyone else
5. The resident installs the App on their Apple device and plugs in the camera, taking pictures of the screen showing hot and cold spots as they wish
6. The resident returns the camera to the holding councillor.

There is plenty of relevant information available online to interpret the images provided by the camera – it is not the role nor responsibility of the Parish Council to do so, or to suggest resolution options to residents. We are just providing the opportunity for residents to acquire information of where their homes may be leaking heat. The nature of the camera is that we had to choose between an Apple or Android compatible version; we decided Apple. Residents without access to an Apple device (iPhone / iPad etc) will not be able to use the camera. I had hoped to acquire an old iPhone for this purpose but have not been able to do so yet.

Following discussion, it was agreed that Cllr J Parrish would be the Lead Councillor and take bookings for the loan of the camera and ensure that the camera is returned in a timely manner. Cllr A Wignall agreed to include a notice in the January Edition of the Parish Magazine advertising the availability of the camera. **Action: Cllr J Parrish / Cllr A Wignall / Clerk**

101.23 PLANNING

a. General – Updated Planning List for November 2023

The Parish Council noted the contents of the Planning List.

b. Appeal by Eastern Structures Wednesday, 16th August 2023: Planning Appeal Notification for AP/23/0021/REFUSE

It was noted that the appeal by ES had been dismissed by the Inspectorate. The Clerk reported that she had contacted Dominic Starkey ESC Enforcement Officer who had shared that he had visited the site to discuss the site being returned to its original state.

c. Sizewell C Update November 2023

No further update.

d. Planning Application DC/23/2694/FUL and DC/23/2695/LBC Ship Church Lane Alterations and extensions to provide additional dining and upgraded kitchen facilities and an outdoor seating area and extended parking

No further update.

- e. **Planning Application DC/23/3717/FUL Walk Farm Old Felixstowe Road Change of use of 3no. buildings from agricultural use to Class E use (light industrial/storage) Walk Farm Old Felixstowe Road Stratton Hall Ipswich IP10 0LR**
No further update.

102.23 TO DISCUSS THE PARISH COUNCIL DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

It was agreed that the Parish Council should form a subgroup to discuss a Disaster Recovery Plan based on Suffolk County Council recommendations. It was agreed to defer this item until the January 2024 Parish Council meeting. **Action: Clerk / All Councillors**

103.23 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE DRAFT HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS AND DRAFT RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Following East Suffolk Council's initial consultation (Healthy Environment 26th September – 7th November 2022 and Rural Development 1st February – 15th March 2023) drafts of both Supplementary Planning Documents have been prepared and are now out for consultation.

ESC are asking for comments on the content of the documents. The Healthy Environments SPD provides guidance that will support the delivery of healthy built environments. The Rural Development SPD provides guidance on a broad range of rural issues and topics.

Once adopted, the documents will support the Local Plan policies and be used to help make decisions on planning applications. Consultation starts on Wednesday, 15th November and ends at 5 pm on Wednesday, 10th January 2024.

Cllr J Ross commented that this appears further guidance of what is in the Local Plan.

104.23 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE PARISH COUNCIL'S FOUR-YEAR PLAN – CONSULTATION WITH VILLAGE RESIDENTS

Cllr J Ross reported that a survey had been sent out to all residents and responses were due back at the beginning of October. Seventeen residents completed the questionnaire. The Parish Council will analyse those responses and bring back the results to the January 2024 Parish Council meeting. The responses received will enable the PC to formulate ideas as to what the Parish Council can adopt as part of its 4-year plan. Cllr J Ross stated that the Parish Council will discuss at their March 2024 meeting the ideas which have been put forward by residents. **Action: Cllr J Ross / Clerk**

105.23 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE LEVINGTON WARM ROOM

Cllr J Ross reported that the Warm Room has been open four mornings a week since the beginning of November. The attendance is good and ranges from between 4 and 10 residents at any one time. One of the difficulties which has been faced is that at the beginning of November the weather was unseasonably warm. The initial funding from East Suffolk Council of £1,885.50 has been received by the Parish Council and the final funding of 25% will be received on successful completion. The Parish Council agreed with East Suffolk Council that they would only accept the funding on the basis that the Warm Room would not be advertised outside of the villages due to the vulnerability of the volunteers who are responsible for the Village Hall. Last year the Levington Warm Room was one of the most successful venues in the region. **Action: Clerk / Cllr J Ross / Mrs Helen Kingston-Ross / Mrs Sally Long**

106.23 CORRESPONDENCE

All relevant correspondence has been forwarded to councillors.

107.23 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

a. Tree and Church Field Warden

Report from Cllr Derek Dickerson
Please see Item 98.23 of the Minutes

b. Village Hall

Report from Cllr John Parrish
Matters arising from the minutes of the 10th October 2023.
Running costs of the defibrillator. To evaluate this correctly the Village Hall would require a Smart Meter to be fitted. Unfortunately, a date had been arranged for the Smart Meter to be fitted but the engineer didn't turn up therefore another date will need to be arranged. The Chairman reported that the income for this financial year has covered the defibrillator costs. The Village Hall Committee is under the impression that the Parish Council agreed to cover the costs of the running of the defibrillator costs. It was agreed that John Parrish would confirm.

The newspaper box and other cladding items which were being stored at the Village Hall have now been removed.

Trustee Updates. Filomena Cristallino (Booking Secretary) and John Parrish (Parish Council) were unanimously agreed to be appointed as Trustees.

Maintenance and Cleaning. The cleaner's role and criteria were discussed, along with the changing of the Village Hall curtains.

Financial Position. The Chairman explained that the draft accounts had not been prepared as bank statements had only just been received. The finances for 2023 show an increase of £2,800 compared with 2022. Unfortunately, electricity costs have risen by over 50%. Unfortunately, the bookings for the Village Hall are down however the use of the Village Hall as the Warm Room have benefitted the Village Hall funds. The trustees discussed the Village Hall bookings, and it was claimed, whilst currently solvent, unless bookings increase dramatically, funding to maintain the Village Hall will have to come from the village via a precept and John Parrish was asked to raise this issue at the January Parish Council meeting.

Annual General Meeting Planning. It was agreed that the AGM this year will be combined with a social event and be held on 12th December 2023 at 7 pm. CE and SR to organise including refreshments.

Any other business. The WI offered a free bookcase which was rejected by the trustees. Key holders were discussed, and it was agreed FC would contact all non-trustee key holders to request the keys are returned. FC would compile an accurate list for the future.

The Parish Council discussed the cost of the Village for hiring as the Warm Room and it was agreed that £30 per session more than covers the cost of keeping the Village Hall warm.

Councillors agreed that the Village Hall should be placed on the Parish Council January 2024 for discussion. **Action: Clerk / Cllr J Parrish**

c. Sir Robert Hitcham's Almshouses

Report from Sarah Gregory

It has been busy time for the Board of Trustees at the Almshouses recently with Sue Parrish joining the Board in the role of Clerk from the 29th September.

At the September Annual General Meeting Ros Eaton was thanked for her contribution as the outgoing Clerk and remains one of the six trustees.

In October the brick outhouse used for storage and shared by the residents received some repointing, replacement of mortar oose roof tiles were reattached and the roof was braced internally, preventing this useful structure from falling into disrepair.

Work is moving forward in preparation for the Almshouse Quinquennial in March 2024.

d. Public Transport

Report from Marian Rose

Generally, the local bus services continue to run quite well. However, a problem occurred recently when I took the village bus (No 78) into Ipswich. I was left at the bus station as the bus for the return journey left from a different bay whilst I sat at the designated Stand B. Luckily, I was able to catch the 75/77 service which runs along the Old Felixstowe Road so was not sufficiently inconvenienced to demand that First Bus get me a taxi. Investigation confirmed that the driver had called at Stand B just before I arrived, and he had collected a resident (a regular passenger) and even carried her shopping to the bus which was parked at the bottom of the bus station. I have since used the bus again and spoken to the driver about the incident. His advice was that, if the bus was not in its designated slot, then we should look around for it. This is all very well for the savvy and more mobile of us but it is not easy for those who are not or who are visually impaired, as is another of our residents who regularly uses the bus. The drivers have been asked again to check if there are any passengers for Levington on the occasions when the bus cannot leave from its advertised stand. I will continue to monitor this issue and follow up any repeats.

Another problem affecting our No 78 bus service is that parking on the corner by the Village Hall makes it difficult sometimes for the bus to make the turn from Nacton Road into Bridge Road. I am told that on occasions this has caused the driver to get out and get the offending vehicle moved. By agreement with John Ross, I have submitted an article to the Parish Newsletter asking residents to take more care when they or their visitors are parking in that area. (At the time of writing the November edition has not been distributed.) John and I hope that this gentle reminder will be sufficient to alleviate the problem. On the plus side, I am pleased to report that the Government-led initiative to cap fares at £2 per journey has been extended until 31 December 2024. Sadly, to date, this scheme does not seem to have led to more residents using our local services. Most days there will be only one or two villagers using the service which does not bode well for when the service is next reviewed.

e. Footpaths

Report from Cllr Derek Dickerson

1. The board walk was completed, apart from a minor screws issue which is now resolved. This new board walk is working well and meets the need.
2. The fridge dumped at Levington Creek does not impede the footpath.
3. Five footpath signs which had been destroyed have all been replaced and to date these have not been vandalised.

f. Nacton School

No report.

g. SALC

No report.

h. Port Liaison Group

Report from Cllr Derek Dickerson/Cllr John Parrish

The meeting on the 14th November 2023 was chaired by Richard Turnhill. There were 12 attendees in total and the meeting lasted for 80 minutes covering the following points.

1. Minutes from the last meeting agreed and signed off.
2. It was pointed out that the additional profits gained from the Covid period has been invested in new ships. Also, there has been an increase recently in the number of Covid cases at the Port.
3. Points from the report:
 - a. Business is very subdued with no early increase expected.
 - b. The rail business is holding up better than the road levels.
 - c. Port of Felixstowe are installing remote operated cranes. This allows operation from the office. These roles will require additional recruitment. The focus here will be to increase the number of female staff from current levels of 8%.
 - d. The number of electric vehicles now stands at 25 trucks and 128 trackers.
 - e. The Ely railway project is now going ahead due to the cancellation of the northern section of HR2.
 - f. The Numbai Mersk made history when visiting Felixstowe Port with a draught of 17 metres making it the deepest to visit. London Gateway's maximum is 16.5 metres.
 - g. Port of Felixstowe community funding. It is possible that the Parish Council could tap into this.
4. From April 2024, new physical checks will take place for all RoRo traffic entering the port.
5. Robin Hill of Bidwells explained that the amount of capacity for logistical purposes is under strain along with the peninsula's expansion, meaning that the pressure for additional land will be increased.

The Next Meeting is scheduled for 21st May 2024.

i. Police/SNT/ASB

No report.

j. ESPA

No report.

108.23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, 15TH JANUARY 2024 IN THE VILLAGE HALL

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.20 pm

VILLAGE FORUM (Opportunity to raise issues not necessarily on this agenda)

A member of the public commented that the Parish Council reserves are there for the development of the village.

Signed..... Date

Angie Buggs
Clerk to Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council