



EARL STONHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at the Village Hall on
Monday, 3rd March 2025 at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillors: M Gillett (Chair)
D Turner (Vice-chair)
J Barnet-Lamb
S Budd
M Mann
H Stanford
K Wilkinson

In Attendance Cllr M Hicks – County Councillor
Cllr N Hardingham – District Councillor
Mrs S Edgar – Clerk designate
Mr T Turner

ES107/24/25 – TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr S Baker.

ES108/24/25 – TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

ES109/24/25 – TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

None received.

ES110/24/25 – TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH JANUARY 2025

It was AGREED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2025 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

ES111/24/25 – PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Turner noted that he was present to update the council on VE Day Arrangements.

ES112/24/25 – TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HICKS

Cllr Hicks reported the following:

- Devolution: Suffolk was one of 6 areas chosen out of 18 that had applied. An election for a mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk would take place in May 2026. Elections for (a) unitary council(s) would take place thereafter. Consultations were taking place. Suffolk County Council's preference was for a single unitary council for the whole of Suffolk, but other councils had varying views. The government has stated that it would normally expect unitary councils to represent in excess of 500,000 people. Suffolk has c. 750,000 residents.
- Budget: This has been set at £803m, with 77p of every £ spent on adult care, children and health, up from 75p in the current year. There is significant pressure on SEN services with c. 9,000 children seeking an EHCP (up from c. 5,000 in the recent past). There is therefore 23p in every £ for all other services (the fire service, highways etc.). The SCC principal element of council tax will rise by 2.99%, and the adult social care element by 2%.

- Pylons: National Grid are holding another consultation period but are not really listening, due to the government's 2030 decarbonisation target.
- Proposed solar farm near Eye: Ecopower Suffolk, an Israeli backed company, has applied to build a 1,500 acre solar farm on prime agricultural land. Suffolk County Council are against the proposal but it will be decided at national level.

On other matters:

- Some work had been carried out on Blacksmith's Lane, but not a lot.
- Sewage issues: Anglian Water has been reconditioning pumps and is going to install some new ones.
- A1120/A140 junction: not known whether the new government will do anything.
- Fen Lane erosion: Cllr Hicks said he would drive along Fen Lane and look at it the following day. He encouraged the parish council to keep reporting the issue. Cllr Gillett said he would do so.
- Cllr Wilkinson noted that part of the A1120 near him was slipping into the ditch. He has reported this.
- Cllr Turner thanked Cllr Hicks for his donation towards the SID.

ES113/24/25 – TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HARDINGHAM

Cllr Hardingham reported the following:

- MSDC budget: This has been agreed with no increase in the MSDC element of council tax. A £2.4m surplus is expected (down from the current year). A budget of £36.3m has been agreed for capital expenditure, of which £26m is committed. Items include sports facilities in Stowmarket and Stradbroke, a skills and innovation centre at Gateway 14, £1.5m for Stowmarket High Street and £300k for other towns. Expenditure is 70% rural, 30% for Stowmarket. Locality awards have been increased to £10k per councillor.
- Devolution: the district councils are working on their submissions.
- Parish and town council liaison meetings: webinar taking place on Wednesday.
- New local plan: this is being worked on to accommodate the government's increased housing targets.
- Local development scheme: various policies are being developed, including re installation of solar panels on outbuildings of listed buildings, upgrading windows of listed buildings, wellbeing and health, biodiversity etc.
- Energy projects: as well as the 1,500 acre project (across 5 sites in the Eye-Occold region) referred to by Cllr Hicks, another very large one is proposed to the north of Mendlesham.
- Proposed solar farm in Earl Stonham: The case officer, Averil Goudy, is reviewing Low Carbon's latest proposals, which should be available on the MSDC website shortly, if not already. He expected it to come to committee in May or June. A representative of Earl Stonham parish council can speak at the meeting. Cllr Hardingham was asked to let Earl Stonham parish council know as soon as he becomes aware of when it will be.
- Shepherd and Dog: all the reported breaches are on the enforcement website. Bradley Fulcher is in discussion with the planning officers and it is likely that a planning contravention notice will be issued. Cllr Gillett noted that he had been in contact with Bradley Fulcher on 18th February.
- Two static caravans at Moat Farm: MSDC has been informed they are for agricultural worker use.
- Localities grants: grants given towards the SID and to the Over 60s club.

Mr Turner enquired re installation of solar panels on Gateway 14 buildings. Cllr Hardingham noted that Assan Panels would be installing solar panels to generate electricity for their own use, but currently the installation of panels for external use was hindered by insufficient grid capacity, the proposed solar farm at Badley have been granted on appeal against MSDC's wishes.

ES114/24/25 – ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1. Sexual Harassment Policy: approved
2. Flooding at Blacksmith's Lane – Cllr Gillett noted that there had not been any flooding in the recent wet weather, following the work.
3. A1120/A140 Junction: see above.
4. Enforcement Action – Shepherd and Dog: see above.
5. Fen Lane, adjacent Mill Lane: see above.
6. Forward Green Sign damaged: replaced.
7. Sewage Plant – noise from pumps: a resident from Wicks Lane has reported the issue. Cllr Gillett has been told by Anglian Water that there is nothing they can do.

ES115/24/25 - TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) CLERK'S REPORT

Mrs S Edgar was in attendance following her interview to be appointed clerk. Cllr Gillett has been carrying out the clerk's responsibilities in the interim. Councillors confirmed Mrs Edgars appointment as Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, effective from 1 April 2025. The meeting agreed to fund the purchase of a laptop and Microsoft Office software.

b) TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT

A finance report and a budget monitoring report had been circulated. The balance in the accounts on 2nd February 2025 was £7,640.74. The Vertas grass cutting cost for 2025/6 was £134 more than budgeted and insurance was also slightly above budget.

c) TO AUTHORISE PAYMENTS AND NOTE RECEIPTS

The following payments made were ratified (although the two donations had in fact been approved at the previous meeting):-

| | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------|
| Jennie Blackburn | Clerk's Pay (Jan) | £148.16 |
| Jennie Blackburn | Clerk's Office Allowance/Exp (Jan) | £28.25 |
| Forward Africa | Donation | £100.00 |
| Earl Stonham PCC | Donation - Churchyard maintenance | £600.00 |
| Earl Stonham Village Hall | Room hire | £24.00 |
| Vertas | Grounds maintenance | £415.56 |

It was AGREED: That payments totalling £1,315.97 be approved.

The following receipts were noted:

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Masquerade | Recorder Advert Payment | £30.00 |
| Jack De-Cova | Allotment rent | £202.15 |
| Eco Sweep | Recorder Advert Payment | £30.00 |
| | Interest | £5.76 |

d) BANK RECONCILIATION

To be revised.

e) BANK MANDATE

It was agreed that this should be changed to remove Jennie Blackburn, to add Susan Edgar in her place, and to change the postal address to Susan Edgar's address.

f) INTERNAL AUDITOR

Trevor Brown is no longer available to carry out the internal audit. It was agreed that SALC should be appointed at a cost of £183 plus VAT. The internal audit is scheduled for 14th April.

g) EXTERNAL AUDIT

There is no need for an external audit but PKF are available to provide advice.

h) **WRITE OFF OF SHARED PRINTER/LAPTOP FROM THE ASSET REGISTER**
This was agreed. Cllr Gillett said that, in view of their age, they were of negligible value.

i) **NEW PARISH CLERK**
Starting date to be agreed following the meeting.

ES116/24/25 – APPROVAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following policies and procedures were approved, Cllr Gillett having confirmed there were no changes:

- a) Internal Audit Control and Risk Management Arrangements
- b) Financial Regulations and Standing Orders
- c) Data Protection Policy
- d) Document Retention Policy
- e) Publication Scheme

ES117/24/25 – PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Ref: DC/25/00344 - Application for Listed Building Consent - Ramplins Farm, Angel Hill

It was AGREED: That the Parish Council had no objections to the application.

Ref: DC/25/00493 - Planning Application: Conversion of former chapel with attached cottage to form 1no. dwelling and conversion of outbuilding to 1no. dwelling - The Old Chapel, Chapel Lane

It was AGREED: That the Parish Council had no objections to the application but it should be pointed out that bedroom windows of the former chapel would overlook the children's play area on the Recreation Ground.

ES118/24/25 – PLANNING DECISIONS

Ref: DC/24/04891 - Planning application for retrospective change of use of barn from agricultural to commercial use - Moat Farm, Debenham Road – **GRANTED**

ES119/24/25 – SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Agreed.

ES120/24/25 – SPEEDING RELATED ISSUES

a) SID – WORKING PARTY UPDATE

Application has been made to erect poles near Bishop's Cottage at the western end of Forward Green and near the new house at the eastern end. It is hoped that Highways will pay for these, otherwise the cost for the poles would be £1,000. The original SID cost quote was £5,014 but this has now gone up by £500.

Cllrs Hicks and Hardingham have each given £1,000 from their locality budgets but an approach to businesses has only resulted in one donation to date, from Roger Gladwell. So far a total of £2,955 has been raised.

Cllr Hardingham noted that locality grants needed to be spent within 6 months.

Flyers are to go out in the Recorder asking for donations. Cllr Hardingham suggested that an approach could be made to the Communities Grants Team at MSDC.

b) FUNDING FROM CIL TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF THE SID

It was noted that CIL funds had been earmarked for replacing the village sign in due course but it was agreed that, if necessary, a contribution could be made from the CIL funds. Cllr Hardingham stated that one could apply for a Pride in your Place grant for village signs.

c) COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH UPDATE

The team had not been out much recently in the winter weather but were expected to be out that week.

ES121/24/25 – FOOTPATHS

There will be a mystery route footpath walk on 3rd May.

ES122/24/25 – VILLAGE HALL

Work has taken place in the kitchen and a new commercial oven has been bought. Tony Turner and Barbara Heard have done food hygiene training. An EHO inspection that morning had awarded a 5 star rating (the highest possible).

ES123/24/25 – VE DAY 80 ARRANGEMENTS

The beacon will be lit on Thursday 8th May, accompanied by free fizz and nibbles. Cllr Wilkinson said that Perfect Perennials would sponsor the cost of the fizz. People will be encouraged to bring torches to shine a light for peace and 'I vow to thee my country' will be sung.

On Saturday 10th there will be a VE themed evening, street party style, in the village hall with Nigel Woodhouse providing 40s music and the Stonham Theatre Guild leading communal singing. (The Stonham Theatre Guild will also be doing a fundraising event on 3rd August).

ES124/24/25 – MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL

It was reported that the Magpie in Stonham Parva had been sold for £180,000.

Cllr Budd noted that unofficial 30 m.p.h. signs had appeared in Blacksmith's Lane.

Cllr Stanford stated that there will be a service on Good Friday at 2 p.m. and services on Easter Day at 6 a.m. and 11 a.m. Before then there will be a Mothering Sunday service on 30th March at 11 a.m. There had been no applicants for the post of Rector by the first deadline, so the post is being readvertised.

Cllr Gillett stated that the parish council's website provider had merged. He had been advised that the parish council ought to have an official 'gov.uk' website, while maintaining ownership of the current domain name.

ES125/24/25 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday, 12th May 2025 at 7.00 p.m. – Annual Parish Meeting followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting

The meeting finished at 9 p.m.

Chairman..... Dated.....