

Offton and Willisham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held at Offton & Willisham Village Hall on Monday 16th
May 2022 at 7pm.

Present: Cllr D Cattermole (Chaired) Cllr A Rumsey
 Cllr C Taylor Cllr A Cox
 Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh

Dst Cllr D Pratt Cty Cllr K Oakes
5 members of the public Clerk - T Davis

ACTION

1	<p><u>Meeting Administration</u></p> <p>a) To Elect the Chair and Vice Chair of Offton & Willisham Parish Council Cllr D Cattermole opened the meeting as last year's Vice-Chair to ask for nominations to elect this year's Chairman. It was considered that Cllr S Warnes had been an excellent Chairman and many councillors wished to propose Cllr Warnes as Chair for this year. Unfortunately Cllr Warnes had been called to an emergency and was unable to attend, but had previously consented to be Chair should the council wish this. It was therefore Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr A Cox that Cllr S Warnes be nominated for Chairman for this year. This was unanimously agreed and Cllr S Warnes was elected as Chairman.</p> <p>The Chair of the meeting, Cllr D Cattermole then asked for nominations for Vice-Chair. It was then Proposed by Cllr A Cox and Seconded by Cllr A Rumsey that Cllr D Cattermole be nominated for Vice Chair for this year. This was unanimously agreed and Cllr D Cattermole was elected as Vice-Chair.</p> <p>b) To Sign Acceptance of Declaration of Office & Data Consent Forms This task was deferred until such time as the Councillors could sign the declaration in the presence of the clerk, the Data Forms could be completed ready for the next meeting or posted to the Clerk.</p> <p>c) Apologies for absence; Formal apologies were sent by Cllr I Gilson, Cllr A Bye and Cllr S Warnes and these were accepted.</p> <p>d) Declarations of Interest; None</p>	
2	<p>To Approve the draft minutes of the 7th Feb 2022 meeting and for the Chairman to sign as a true record</p> <p>a) The Chair asked if there were any matters arising from the minutes. All were happy to accept the minutes. <i>It was Unanimously agreed for the Chair to sign the minutes as a true record.</i></p>	Clerk

<p>3</p> <p>Resident One</p> <p>Resident Two</p> <p>Item 27</p>	<p>Public Participation Session (To hear reports from the County Councillor, District Councillor, and comments from the Public)</p> <p>The Chair asked the residents if they had anything to say.</p> <p>The first resident wished to speak about National Grid Upgrade - GREEN consultation. The resident was concerned with the potential use of 50m high 'T' pylons and disagreed with the way in which the electricity was being transported from the NOOrth Sea across land and that Sub-Sea Cabling was not being used for the whole of the project along with using the existing corridor. The resident would like to recommend the proposal given by the National Grid is not acceptable.</p> <p>The second resident wanted to raise concerns regarding the current parking issues opposite Middlewood Cottages, Offton. The part of the road which is left available for parking is no longer large enough. Families have moved into the properties over time and there is more than one car per household so there are not enough spaces anymore. The County Council have conducted a site visit with Cty Cllr K Oakes and unfortunately they have not been helpful in finding a solution. The maximum capacity of the bay is 14 vehicles, yet every weekend there are 17 vehicles that need to park. The Police have visited notifying that it is dangerous. Legally there is no restrictions on parking unless cars are parked in an unsafe manner. There are more properties, which in time will have families move in. Driveway planning applications have been declined by BMSDC planning each time in the past as Highways have objected to them.</p> <p>The Chair then moved item 27 on the agenda to be discussed at this point. Councillors, along with Dst Cllr D Pratt and Cty Cllr K Oakes discussed this situation. It was established that there was no street lighting, no path and young families lived here. Councillors felt like an impending accident waiting to happen. Cllr Pratt confirmed that there was no funding available from BMSDC for help with parking. Cllr Oakes will go back and speak to the Safety and Speed Management team as well as raising these concerns when full council meet next week and speak directly to the cabinet member overseeing the department if necessary.</p> <p>Remaining residents were then asked if they wanted to speak. Cty Cllr K Oakes provided her report, which can be found in the addendum.</p> <p>Dst Cllr D Pratt provided his report, which can also be found in the addendum.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Chair Report</p> <p>This year's report was forwarded for the minutes, due to an emergency on the day.</p> <p>This year has seen the Parishes transition out of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Village Hall supported by the Parish Council held an event for residents to celebrate the opening up of the Village Hall after</p>	

	<p>what has been a difficult time for many people.</p> <p>Council has filled one of the vacancies for a Councillor, but still have one place remaining . This being said the number of Councillors serving the Parishes is high for a rural community.</p> <p>The Council has collaborated with Great Bricett and Ringshall Parish Councils to make Holly Road a Quiet Lane under SCC QLS, this project has been led by County Cllr Kay Oaks and we thank her for the many hours of hard work she has undertaken on our behalf.</p> <p>Looking forward Council has prepared a Parish Plan Survey questionnaire. This will be distributed by Cllrs shortly and the results will guide the Parish Council to understand the villages needs in future. I am particularly pleased that with the input of our Clerk this has been bought about in a cost effective and timely manner.</p> <p>I would like to thank Cllr Andrew Cox for checking the accounts for us this year, this is an important part of the Council's business and I appreciate the time given to undertake this.</p> <p>We have again had a number of volunteers in the Parishes collecting litter and of behalf of the Council I would like to thank all those individuals for their continued effort, it really makes a difference in the appearance of the Parishes.</p> <p>I would like to thank Cllr Andrew Cox for checking the accounts for us this year, this is an important part of the Council's business and I appreciate the time given to undertake this.</p> <p>Cllr's have again taken on maintenance for the villages, I would like to thanks those Cllr's for undertaking this work.</p> <p>I would like to thank both our County and District Cllr's for dealing with any problems we may have had, and representing out villages in the relevant authorities.</p> <p>Council should express its thanks to Teresa our Clerk for her continued hard work and again delivering a successful audit.</p> <p>Finally I would like to sincerely thank all the Councillors for the time and commitment to Council matters this year. Once again the Cllr's conducted themselves in a manner that shows integrity and respect for other members and has been greatly appreciated by myself this year in my position as Chairman.</p>	
5	<p>Clerk report, with mention of emails & correspondence received</p> <p>Over the last few months we have had some resident and other communications. The National Grid Upgrade is of interest and is also on</p>	

the agenda this evening along with some other items of interest, such as Parking, Clothing Bank and the telephone box, which due to the long agenda might be moved to review at a later meeting in June.

Policies & Committees

I have reviewed the policies and internal control and note that we should adopt the LGA model code of conduct 2020 which includes greater details on gifts, behaviour and councillor interests. I consider all other policies to be up-to-date if we take on board the NALC 2022 update to the Standing Orders. I can also confirm that I have concluded a review of documents and communication under the document retention scheme and new data consent forms are here for you all to complete.

Finance

The 4th quarter accounts have been completed and checked by Cllr A Cox and our Auditor, Heelis & Lodge. I am pleased to say that no recommendations were highlighted for the second year running.

As usual the accounts are available to view at the meeting.

The first part of this financial year's Precept has been received. The Asset register has been updated to reflect the loss of the printer and the new assets purchased.

You will all have received copies of the AGAR for this year and this has been placed on the agenda.

The Insurance lock-in has ended with Zurich and a renewal quote along with a new package has been offered. They are offering to keep the same price for us for the next three yrs and have also introduced a new package that offers an increase in limits of insurance. I have also sought quotes from other providers, which were also forwarded. Today I have been sent the final quote from the CAS insurance provider, ANSVAR, for £318.26. This cover does meet minimum requirements however I would still put forward the new package by Zurich as the recommended cover for this year.

Parish Plan Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been printed ready for collection by our distributors and is now ready to go on Survey Monkey.

Bank Change Over

As you know I have been in contact with Lloyds bank on a number of occasions and they still have suspended all switching and new applications for the Treasurers account. With this in mind I would now recommend switching to Unity Bank, who not only supply online banking, they tailor authority to individual Parish Council needs. Therefore we can arrange online payments by the RFO putting forward payments for authorisation by two or one appointed person(s) depending on the financial regulations set out. This account does carry charges of £72 a year.

Speeding in the Villages

Our local Police contact has confirmed that our roads were monitored and have been found to have no out of the ordinary speeding and therefore no further action will be taken.

Website

	<p>Following recent news in respect of our current I.T. provider I have placed this on the agenda.</p> <p>Small Employee Panel Suggestion</p> <p>I would like to suggest that an employee panel is formed to maintain the privacy of the clerk regarding employment issues and also free the Chair for other issues concerning the running of the council. The panel can then research correct pay levels, office costs, ensure contracts are keeping up with changes to the role as well as national changes and approve holiday without having to hold a full council meeting. eg: The last items on the agenda this evening.</p> <p>Other items waiting for feedback from outside sources still ongoing</p> <p>Fly Tipping in The Channel, The Offton Green Holly Road - bank degrading & Holly Road - tree trunks Footpath between school house and middlewood cottages Flooding in Fiske Pightle</p>	
6	<p>To discuss and agree proposed dates for Parish Council meetings up to May 2022 and the APM for 2022</p> <p>The following dates were agreed:- Monday 6th June 2022 Monday 4th July 2022 Monday 5th September 2022 Monday 7th November 2022 Monday 2nd January 2023 Monday 6th March 2023 Monday 8th May 2023 Annual Parish Council Meeting Monday 15th May 2023 Annual Meeting of the Parish</p> <p>These dates were unanimously agreed by Council.</p>	Clerk
7	<p>To discuss & adopt policies:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Internal Control policy review ii) Risk Assessment & Management Policy iii) Financial Protocol iv) NALC Standing Orders, the 2022 revision v) LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 vi) Equality & Diversity Policy vii) Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities viii) ICO Model Publication Scheme & Information Publication Policy & Fees ix) Data Policies, Cookie, Retention & Privacy x) Grants & Donations Policy <p>The Councillors had reviewed these documents and were happy with them.</p> <p>It was Unanimously agreed by Council to adopt and re-adopt items i - x.</p>	Clerk
8	<p>To discuss continuing the existing planning and/or forming new committees or Working Groups for 2022-2023</p> <p>This item was deferred by the Chair to the next meeting where more councillors would be available to discuss the potential of continuing the planning committee along with any other potential groups.</p>	Clerk

9	<p>To consider the voluntary service provided by residents for the saving and repair of the St Mary's Close noticeboard following the high winds in late February</p> <p>This item was deferred by the chair to the next meeting</p>	Clerk
10	<p>To discuss & finalise Jubilee Plans following information from the Resident Jubilee Committee</p> <p>Councillors highlighted this too could be deferred until the next meeting in June. The Chair deferred this item to the next meeting.</p>	Clerk
11	<p>To discuss the outcome from the Police regarding speeding in the village</p> <p>This item was regarding the results obtained by the police on Bildeston Rd and Ipswich Road. This item was deferred by the Chair to the next meeting</p>	Clerk
12	<p>To discuss email received from Ringshall Parish Clerk re: Ringshall plans for siting a dog bin and sign</p> <p>It was at this point that the Ringshall Chairman was invited to speak. it had been noted that an increase of cars parking along Holly Rd had occurred since it had been given Quiet Lane status. Ringshall Parish Council would like to place a Dog bin in their part of the road and to also erect a sign for no parking. Councillors confirmed they had no plans for siting a dog bin along Holly Road and would welcome these items on Ringshall's part of the road. The Chair thanked the Ringshall Chair for asking the council and for attending the meeting.</p>	
13	<p>To discuss email received from ASTCO for offering a clothing bank collection point</p> <p>The Chair deferred this item to the next meeting.</p>	Clerk
14	<p>To discuss and approve the asset list & report</p> <p>The Councillors had reviewed the asset list and were happy with it. It was considered that the report on maintenance would be discussed at a later date.</p> <p>The Asset List approval was Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr A Cox and unanimously agreed</p>	Clerk
15	<p>To approve RFO's application for the reclaim of VAT for £267.77 for the period 1st Apr 21 - 31st Mar 22</p> <p>The reclaim to send to HMRC had been reviewed and was agreed.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh, Seconded by Cllr A Cox and unanimously approved.</p>	Clerk
16	<p>To discuss & approve Bankers for 2022-23 (RFO recommends Unity Bank Online)</p> <p>Following the inability to apply for a Treasurer account at Lloyds Bank last year, the current banking arrangements were discussed.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr A Cox, Seconded by Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh and unanimously agreed to change bank accounts to Unity Bank, which carried a charge of £72 a year, which is suitable for online banking and</p>	

	administration by the clerk and has a two or three step authorisation online approval for payments.	Clerk
17	<p>To discuss & approve Internal Auditor for 2022-23 (RFO recommends keeping Heelis & Lodge)</p> <p>The Councillors were very happy with the current Internal Auditor of Heelis & Lodge.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr A Cox, Seconded by Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh and unanimously agreed to approve Heelis & Lodge as Auditors for 2022-23.</p>	Clerk
18	<p>To discuss & approve Workplace Pension Scheme for 2022-2023</p> <p>The Clerk advised that the Clerk pay amount did not qualify for a pension contribution to be made by the Parish Council and that a letter would need to be sent to confirm this. The Council approved of this.</p>	Clerk
19	<p>To discuss and approve 4th Quarter (end of year Accounts)</p> <p>The final accounts had been forwarded to all councillors and Cllr A Cox had also reviewed the accounts in detail and confirmed that they are all in order.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh and unanimously agreed to approve the end of year accounts for 2021-22</p>	
20	<p>To review and approve Internal Auditor Report for 2021-2022 accounts (no recommendations)</p> <p>The Councillors had all read the Internal Auditors report along with the completed section of the AGAR. The report had again given praise and no recommendations.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr A Cox, Seconded by Cllr D Cattermole and unanimously agreed to approve the report.</p>	Clerk
21	<p>To review & approve the Annual Governance & Accountability Return Section 1 (Resolution required)</p> <p>All Councillors had read Section 1 of the AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return).</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr A Cox, Seconded by Cllr D Cattermole and unanimously agreed to approve Section 1 of the AGAR and for the Chair and Clerk to sign</p>	Clerk / Chair
22	<p>To review & approve the Annual Governance & Accountability Return Section 2 (Resolution required)</p> <p>All Councillors had read Section 2 of the AGAR</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr A Cox and unanimously agreed to approve Section 2 of the AGAR and for the Chair to sign.</p>	Clerk / Chair
23	<p>To review & approve the Certificate of Exemption</p> <p>All Councillors had read the Certificate of Exemption from the AGAR.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr A Cox and unanimously agreed to approve of the Exemption and for the Chair and RFO to sign.</p>	Clerk/Chair

24	<p>To review, discuss and approve Insurer for 1st June following quotes received as at 8th May 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Renewal - £257.60 (optional 3y lock in with this price) b. Zurich new package increasing value of Covers - £264 c. Aviva (via BHIB broker) - £352.24 d. Aviva (via BHIB with 3yr lock in) - £332.96 e. CAS insurance, no quote given in time <p>Councillors discussed the options that had been provided. It was Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr A Cox and unanimously agreed to accept the renewal quote from Zurich with a 3yr lock in up to 1st June 2025 for £257.60 each year.</p>	Clerk
25	<p>Planning & Governance Consultations</p> <p>i) BMSDC planning consultation request DC/22/02302 - Prior Approval Agricultural to Dwelling - Does Farm, Offton This item was discussed. The Council had no comments to make.</p> <p>ii) Community Governance Review Consultation (deadline 27th May 2022) The Council briefly discussed the review and concluded they were happy with the existing boundaries of the parish This was Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr A Cox and unanimously agreed.</p> <p>iii) National Grid Upgrade - GREEN consultation (deadline 16th June 2022) It was at this point that the floor was opened up again to the Public. Cty Cllr K Oakes identified the importance of the SSSI designation and that consideration should be made to underground cabling. After discussion, it was decided by council that this item needed looking into, further discussion and would like more residents to provide their input on the proposed swathe and that maybe a petition might be needed. It was therefore concluded that the beginning of the next meeting, 6th June, time would be set aside for an open forum at the outset of the meeting, whereby a plan of action could be formulated. Cllr Oakes would like to be given as much information as possible and any questions that arise during this meeting.</p>	Clerk Clerk Clerk
26	<p>Report from the Telephone Library Volunteer of the need for the Telephone Box to be repainted professionally.</p> <p>This item was deferred by the Chair to the next meeting</p>	Clerk
27	<p>To discuss Middlewood Cottages Parking Problem</p> <p>Details of this were heard earlier in the meeting and can be seen in Public Participation</p>	
28	<p>To discuss an Annual Award to be given at the Annual Parish Meeting</p> <p>This item was deferred by the Chair to the next meeting</p>	
29	<p>To discuss the ongoing maintenance of the Parish Council Website and Email provision</p> <p>This was deferred by the chair to the next meeting</p>	

30	<p>To discuss and agree on the Community Self Help form for BMSDC It was agreed that the two volunteers (who were in attendance) would look at the form and agree with the Clerk what could be taken on as a parish</p>	Clerk
31	<p>Finance</p> <p>a) Current Bank Balances as at 31st March 2022:- Community Account = £5513.57 Premium Account = £9004.62 Premium Savings Account = £0.34</p> <p>b) Known Income received as at 30th April 2022 – i. BMSDC Precept - £2961.54 ii. BMSDC Precept - £2038.46</p> <p>c) To confirm payments made since 6th February 2022 meeting iii. Clerk Wages for March - £352.95 iv. Survey Monkey (parish questionnaire) reimbursement to Chair - £384.00 v. Clerk Wages for April - £352.95 vi. Gipping Press (paper parish questionnaires) - £184.00</p> <p>d) To approve payments and authorise cheques for signature (Resolution required) i. SALC & NALC Annual Subscription - £340.95 ii. SALC Payroll - £54.00 iii. Clerk Wages for May – £352.95 iv. Clerk’s Mileage Expenses & Office Allowance - £125.10 v. Viking (Ink Cartridges) - £147.02 vi. Heelis & Lodge (Internal Audit) - £90.00</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr D Cattermole, Seconded by Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh and unanimously agreed to authorise cheque for signature for the above payments</p>	Clerk
32	<p>To discuss and approve the NALC 1.75% pay award and current pay scale of the Clerk It was at this point that the Chair closed the remaining meeting to the Public This was Unanimously agreed by the Council</p>	Clerk
33	<p>To discuss and approve Clerk Holiday This was unanimously approved by the council</p>	Clerk

34	<p>To discuss the office allowance and printer costs</p> <p>It was briefly discussed and agreed that an increase to the office allowance would compensate for wear and tear of a printer now that the Offton & Willisham Printer was not going to be replaced.</p>	Clerk
35	<p>Date of the next meeting was agreed for Monday 6th June 2022.</p>	

Meeting end 8:03pm

ADDENDUM

1. County Council Report

[County Council report for May 2022](#)

[Violence Against Women and Girls funding announced](#)

On April 4th, Suffolk County Council announced £350,000 of funding to support the ambitions set out in the Suffolk Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2022.

This fund has been provided by Suffolk County Council to support the work of the strategy in preventing violence, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators and strengthening the system.

Organisations will be able to apply for this funding to support initiatives that are synonymous with the objectives of the strategy and aim to stop violence against women and girls.

[‘Just say hello, just listen, just reach out’](#)

A new film featuring various partners from across Suffolk has been released which aims to prevent suicide.

The ‘Just Say Hello’ campaign aims to raise awareness of how a simple ‘hello’ can make the difference to a person’s mental wellbeing, whether it be a loved one or a stranger.

With evidence suggesting that 75% of people who die by suicide have no contact with mental health services, or even their GP within the 12 months preceding their death, it is important that everyone knows they can play their part. Simply reaching out and starting a conversation can be enough to help someone or by interrupting their thought process and encouraging them to get further help.

Featured in the film is Terry Waite who used to work as a hostage negotiator in some of the most dangerous parts of the world and unfortunately was captured and spent almost five years in strict solitary confinement. He says, “Each year in Suffolk alone, 65 people die this way. And those figures are frankly tragic and unacceptable.”

This video highlights suicide being the biggest killer for men under the age of 45, with 3 in 4 deaths by suicide being men.

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary on National Offer Day

This year 99.22% of children were offered a place at one of their parents’ three preferred schools and 95.6% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 7144 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2022.

Families who applied online can log on to the Admissions Portal from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email with details of the school place offered.

Fire service delivers much-needed equipment to Ukraine

It was announced on April 19th that Staff from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service embarked on a 1,000-mile journey to transport vital firefighting kit to help their counterparts in Ukraine

The deployment team, consisting of six volunteers, will drive across Europe to deliver Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service’s donation of two fully operational fire engines and accompanying equipment, which forms part of the wider National Fire Chiefs Council and Fire Aid initiative.

Their journey will see them travel to Kent to join the national convoy of vehicles departing for Ukraine. From there, they will head to Poland, where they will hand over the vehicles and kit to the Polish Fire Service, who will distribute the items to the Ukrainian fire stations most in need.

Suffolk County Council to freeze post-16 travel costs to schools and colleges

It was announced on April 28th that Suffolk County Council is to freeze charges for travel for over 16s to schools and colleges from September.

The council's Cabinet agreed fares should remain at 2021/22 levels for another 12 months to help families faced with soaring living costs. The decision means costs for the 2022/23 academic year will remain at £930 per year for mainstream transport and £750 for SEND pupils.

Councillor Rachel Hood, Cabinet member for Education, SEND and Skills, said:

“With the fuel, energy or other price rises at this time, Suffolk County Council does not feel it would be appropriate to ask families to pay any additional charge. We are particularly concerned that any uplift would affect less well-off families. We are also concerned that any increase might be considered unaffordable and may limit post-16 options for students, which absolutely is not an outcome desired by Suffolk County Council.”

The decision will be reviewed in 12 months' time.

The Post-16 Travel Policy applies to full-time learners aged 16-18 years, and those aged 19 years and over if they are continuing the same course started before their nineteenth birthday. It also applies to continuing learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) aged 19-25 years.

To qualify for funding under the scheme young people need to continue to study or train in one of three ways:

- Study full-time in a school, college or with a training provider (at least 540 hours of planned learning per year)
- Full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more per week) combined with part-time education or training leading to relevant regulated qualifications (at least 280 hours of planned learning per year)
- Be working in an apprenticeship, supported internship or traineeship

The council is not required by law to fund Post-16 Travel and does not receive any funding from central government to fund it.

2. District Council Report

Mid Suffolk District Council – Battsford and Ringshall Ward

District Councillor's Annual Report 2021/22

In the year 2021/22, it has been gratifying to see past efforts and projects starting to take off and new ones take root.

In February 2021, I visited the small orchard at Ringshall village hall with our tree warden Lucy to spread mulch around the 16 trees planted by the community in 2020. The trees were purchased using my councillor's locality budget from Apples and Orchards East, a charity that promotes the preservation of orchards in the East of England. Whilst it is a small aspect of my work here, it has been very satisfying to see the trees establish and flourish. I have included a snapshot of other work I have been involved:

Barking Tye Common – There are ongoing efforts to establish the Tye as a County Wildlife Site that would offer non-statutory protection and recognition of its value to biodiversity. In April and June of 2021 I organised two citizen-led surveys to record flora and insect species present on the site. This was intended to support data from a Suffolk Wildlife Trust survey funded from my locality budget.

Great Bricett Community Woodland – I was very pleased that our officers at MSDC were able to provide 20 large trees and that the locality budget was used for the creation of the pond.

Offton Village Green – MSDC owned land in St Mary's Close in Offton was proposed as a site for wildflower planting. I carried out a public consultation but did not receive enough positive support for the project to go ahead. In August last year we worked with residents and the parish council to come up with a new design which will go out for re-consultation this year.

Verge management – MSDC have finally acquired a 'cut and collect' mower which will be instrumental in better managing our roadside verges for wildlife. We are one of the first districts in Suffolk to do this and was one a key idea put forward in the Biodiversity Task Force group.

Streetlighting – In September 2021 I proposed a motion to reduce the impact of artificial lighting at night which is detrimental to wildlife and known to impact human health. With huge support from Jessica Fleming, the Conservative portfolio holder for the Environment, the motion was almost unanimously accepted by the council. We are working on this with our officers from Planning and partners at SCC Highways, and it will form a major issue to be discussed at our next Task Force meeting.

Parish Decarbonisation Forum – The Local Energy Showcase in October 2021 provided an opportunity to meet representatives of the organisations supporting renewables projects for parishes, communities, and small enterprises. I am in the process of organising a cross-parish meeting. Alex Templeton from UK Community Works and Chris Musset from Eastern New Energy and Suffolk County Council will speak on a range of projects, funding opportunities and support available for community energy schemes. It will be hosted at Offton and Willisham village hall, May 24, starting at 07:00 pm.

Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan – A new LCWIP has been created much to the thanks of a dedicated officer and brilliant public engagement in our public consultation. I was

pleased to see six route improvements within our ward add to our wish list, including a proposal to introduce pavements connect Wixfield Park to the church and the village hall in Great Bricett.

Planning: Great Bricett Red Lion – In January 2021 we successfully applied for an Asset of Community Value listing on the pub and have helped defended the pub against the application to convert the pub to a dwelling. I have been working with planning officers to dispute the claim of poor business viability.

Planning: Great Bricett Business Park – The planning committee finally came to the decision to refuse the application for the siting of 69 mobile homes in the business park. This case had been re-scheduled numerous times over the year, meaning the decision was painfully dragged-out. After some conversations with the planning officer, he agreed that the concurrent application DC/21/06987 for 51 dwellings provided a better outcome of 18 affordable homes.

Other Planning Matters – I actively supported the planning application for 4 dwellings on Pound Hill after it was endorsed by the parish council for its exemplary design and sustainability aspects. The ‘barn’ on the site opposite the brambles has now received planning permission to be converted into a dwelling which I also supported.

Dan Pratt

Mid Suffolk District Councillor – Battisford and Ringshall Ward

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