

## Offton and Willisham Parish Council

Minutes of the Open forum and Parish Council Meeting held at Offton & Willisham Village Hall on Monday 9th January 2023 from 6:00pm.

Present: Cllr S Warnes (Chair) Cllr A Rumsey  
 Cllr I Gilson Cllr C Taylor  
 Cllr A Cox Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh  
 Cllr A Chaplin Cllr D Cattermole  
 Dst Cllr D Pratt Cty Cllr K Oakes  
 16 members of the public Clerk - T Davis

### ACTION

1	<p><b>Chair to open Public Forum to discuss 3 priorities for the parish Council over the next 5yrs</b></p> <p>The Chair opened the forum by establishing the need to identify 3 priorities for the Parish Council to focus on over the next 5yrs. Residents then took it in turns to highlight their concerns.</p> <p>The first resident wanted to highlight road closures with little warning and unsuitable or zero diversions in place with little or no signs. Other residents then pointed out the poor use of diversions have caused increases in speeding on Offton &amp; Willisham roads. Pot holes were also discussed, motorbikes in particular are finding the roads more difficult because of this. Speeding was then discussed again with horseriders finding speeding cars a danger. It was at this point that the new quiet lane was highlighted, which has been established to provide priority to pedestrians, wheelchair users, horseriders and prams over that of a vehicle, and that vehicle users are responsible to ensure they make the road safe for these users. Those working at Wattisham Airfield were provided as a source of vehicles that speed through Offton &amp; Willisham. The Chair highlighted that before the co-vid regular liaison meetings with the Airbase would take place and that this is something that could possibly be reestablished. Traffic calming measures were also being discussed, the danger of the lack of pavements, poor condition of the road and overgrown trees that also increased danger. It was suggested that a working party might be formed to push these things forward with Suffolk County Council who are responsible for these types of issues and that the County Councillor, Police and Highways would work with the working party to ensure these issues are resolved.</p> <p>A resident then asked if the survey could have split the housing question (question 8) into Offton &amp; Willisham and it was confirmed that was not possible. Residents highlighted concern for large developers looking at the results of the Parish Plan as a source of information to support lots of housing in the area. It was confirmed by the Chair that question 8 actually stated that only 53 people in the village responded to this question and that It would not be one question in a Parish Plan that was significant to developers but a Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan would be the only thing that could carry weight with a Local Planning Application, The results were also not sufficient to warrant a housing survey, which had taken place following the last Parish Plan ten years ago. A Housing Survey would be the information sought by developers not a Parish Plan. These results highlighted a potential need for one or two homes for the elderly or younger generation but not enough interest from residents to seek a Housing Survey. Residents continued to be unhappy with the way in which the results were put into a pie chart for the housing question and then began a critic of the results in general. A Q &amp; A session with the Clerk on understanding some of the other questions results then followed. After the Q &amp; A for questions 8, 9 and 21 it was</p>	
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	<p>established that just question 9 needed to be corrected when referring to people that work. it should be reworded to make things more clear eg, "...highlighting that approx 10% of those completing the survey were of working age and not working".</p> <p>It was agreed that Councillors would discuss clarity for all questions when publishing the results on the parish website.</p> <p>The Chair then asked if this could be moved on from and the priorities for the parish could be discussed. A short discussion then took place in respect of the National Gird's GREEN project and concern for Pylons. The Chair acknowledged in behalf of the Council that this took place after the Parish Plan had been issued, but confirmed this was already a matter of importance and was an item on the agenda of the Parish Council meeting tonight. Two residents also wished to highlight the problems regarding Needham Market GP Practice.</p> <p>No other concerns/priorities were raised by the residents.</p> <p>The Chair then closed the forum by confirming that the issues raised would be discussed when Councillors form the priorities and moved the Parish Council meeting to the smaller room of the Village Hall. 3 residents remained for the Council meeting to listen to the issue of Pylons and Dr Poulter MP's visit.</p>	
2	<p><b>Meeting administration</b></p> <p>a) <b>Chair to welcome &amp; open the meeting</b> Cllr Warnes opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.</p> <p>b) <b>To consider &amp; Approve Apologies for absence</b> The Chair confirmed no apologies were received.</p> <p>c) <b>To receive Declarations of interest on agenda items</b> The Chair asked if anyone had any declarations of interest, none were given.</p>	
3.	<p><b>To Approve the draft minutes of the EGM of 28th Nov 2022 and for the Chairman to sign as a true record</b></p> <p>a) Matters arising from the 28th November minutes - none. <b><i>It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously agreed to accept the draft minutes.</i></b></p>	
4.	<p><b>Public Participation Session (To hear reports from the County Councillor, District Councillor &amp; Comments from the Public)</b></p> <p>The Chair invited Cty Cllr Oakes to speak first due to time constraints and parish meeting clashes. Cty Cllr Oakes report can be found in the addendum. Cllr Oakes advised that the budget for SCC is being discussed in February. Cllr Oakes advised that there was currently nothing Highways can do in respect of Middlewood Cottages, although Cllr Oakes will be trying one final time in the near future. In respect of the Grit Bin in Item 14, Cllr Oakes advised that funding from the Locality Budget could be available should the Parish Council need it.</p> <p>Dst Cllr D Pratt advised that BMDSC were having damp problems in some of the properties and therefore no funding was available for parking for Middlewood Cottages. Cllr Pratt also advised that the Dst Cllr Locality Budget is still available and Cllt Pratt's report can be found in the addendum. Cllr Pratt then advised the residents who had stayed for the Parish Council meeting what the budgets were for. The residents had no questions and were intending to listen to item 9.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Chair Report</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that MP D Poulter had been contacted whilst the clerk was away and this had been taken over by the clerk to complete the meeting dates.</p> <p>The Litter Picking Equipment now needs a new home, thank you to Cllr</p>	

	<p>Pinson-Roxburgh for taking them. The Chair has copies of agenda's and minutes that Cllr Earl had collected over time whilst on the Parish Council. It was for Cllr Earl's personal use and nothing is historically important. Everything is available either on the Parish Council website or the clerk will have all the original documents, they will be stored until the election in May 2023.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Clerk Report, with details of emails and correspondence up to the period 4th January 2023</b></p> <p>Since November we have had an EGM, contact with residents regarding National Grid's East Anglia GREEN and arranged a visit from Dr D Poulter who will be making a visit to the Offton and Willisham Village Hall on 3rd February at 12:30pm. Any questions from those who cannot attend can be forwarded to the Clerk. I have contacted BMSDC regarding The Green proposal decided at the meeting and this has been accepted. I have confirmed details with our new volunteer for the New Years OAP Luncheon. An article has been placed in The Link as requested. I have contacted our Rights of Way Officer &amp; Cllr Oakes regarding the By Way from Wallow Lane. The rural mobility survey was completed. A number of things are in progress:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 'gov.uk' domain, emails and new website.</li> <li>2. The new Dog Bin on the footpath post behind the Limeburners PH and near the small BT building</li> <li>3. Bank account online viewing</li> </ol> <p>The 3rd Quarter accounts have been sent to all and also reviewed in detail by Cllr Cox and this is on the agenda for this evening.</p> <p>The draft 1yr budget review and setting of the Precept is also on the agenda for agreement and signature by the Chair.</p> <p>Middlewood Cottages Parking is due for discussion and is on the agenda along with Planning for consultation, and payments due.</p> <p><b>Other items waiting for feedback from outside sources still ongoing:-</b></p> <p>Fly Tipping in The Channel, Holly Road - bank degrading, Footpath between school house and middlewood cottages, Flooding in Fiske Pightle, Speeding in the Parish</p>	
7.	<p><b>Planning &amp; Governance Consultations</b></p> <p>i) <b>BMSDC consultation request on the Planning Local Validation List (LVL)</b></p> <p>This was noted and No Comment was provided.</p>	Clerk
8.	<p><b>To discuss and approve the slat replacement of the Offton Green Silver Jubilee Bench</b></p> <p>Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh advised that the wooden slats can be easily replaced once an appropriate hardwood was purchased and a kind volunteer who had offered to help was available to carry out the work. Councillors thanked Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh for this and it was confirmed that £100 would be available for the purchase of the raw materials.</p>	
9.	<p><b>To discuss and approve action plan for the National Grid East Anglia GREEN &amp; Dr D Poulter visit</b></p> <p>The Chair suggested this item was discussed in two parts.</p> <p>The first to decide the format and details of the meeting in February, the second to decide on what happened next.</p> <p>With this in mind Councillors discussed the event in detail. Those residents who were attending were also invited into the discussions. It was confirmed that all Councillors will be expected to attend. It was concluded that as Dr D Poulter MP would be attending for only 3/4hr that the public should be invited from 12 noon</p>	

	<p>and bring or write questions they would like answered by the MP. The clerk will bring adequate paper, pens and box. It was noted at this point that anyone wanting to ask a question who would not be able to attend could email the clerk <a href="mailto:clerk@offtonandwillisham.org.uk">clerk@offtonandwillisham.org.uk</a>.</p> <p>Cllr Warnes, Cllr Cattermole and the Clerk would then sort the questions for duplicates and most popular and prioritise questions ready for 12:30pm (along with any already received by the public via email). Tea &amp; Biscuits will be provided, the forum would be chaired by Cllr Warnes and the prepared questions given to Dr D Poulter MP to answer to those attending, followed by an open question time if time allowed.</p> <p>It was also considered a good idea to invite the chair of the anti pylon group as a second speaker once the time with Dr DPoulter MP was completed. Dst Cllr D Pratt advised that he had compiled a list of sensitive sites within the district he covered and it was agreed that a copy of this list would be useful for the Clerk, so that the sites could be pinned to a large map. Cllr Pratt agreed to forward the list. Topics for questions were discussed and confirmed. The topics were:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Underground</li> <li>2) Off Shore (eg: Cumbria)</li> <li>3) How to push forward/lobby concerns</li> <li>4) Overground (to include environmental &amp; historical sites, placement and information)</li> </ol> <p>Further discussion then took place in respect of forming a working party rather than bring to full council. It was agreed to continue as a council pending what transpired at the meeting on 3rd February from Dr D Poulter MP and the members of the public. The residents then left.</p>	Clerk
10.	<p><b>To discuss information received from Cty Cllr Oakes and Dst Cllr Pratt on Middlewood Cottages Parking</b></p> <p>Both Dst Cllr D Pratt and Cty Cllr K Oakes had reported that they had no progress on this issue. Councillors tried to think of a way forward on this and it was agreed that it might be appropriate for a form of warning /hazard or slow signs to be erected and for the purchase to be made via the CIL reserves held by the Parish Council. It was <b>Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously Agreed for the Clerk to advise Cllr Oakes of this prior to her next meeting with the Highways liaison Officer.</b></p>	Clerk
11.	<p><b>To discuss Bildeston Rd Gully blockages (to be confirmed)</b></p> <p>It was highlighted by Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh that Bildeston Road, from the Limeburners Public House and up passed the Church has 6 gullies blocked causing flooding. Council also highlighted that the drains were also blocked and causing flooding along Willisham main road, Fiske Pightle, and Tye Lane. It was <b>Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously Agreed for the clerk to follow-up on previous reports with Cty Cllr Oakes and report the new &amp; ongoing problems.</b> Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh would be available to meet Highways should a site meeting be needed.</p>	Clerk
12.	<p><b>Training - To approve refresh training for up-coming Elections in May for the Clerk</b></p> <p>The Clerk explained about the training available. It was <b>Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously Agreed for the Clerk to attend.</b></p>	Clerk
13.	<p>a) <b>Finance</b></p> <p><b>Current Bank Balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022:-</b></p> <p><b>Current Account = £3598.52</b></p> <p><b>Savings Account = £13542.35</b></p>	

<p>b) <b>Income received - Bank Interest £42.06</b></p> <p>c) <b>To confirm payments made since 7th November 2022 meeting under the financial protocol</b>  i) <b>Clerk Wages December - £391.63</b>  ii) <b>Clerk backdated wage rise - £260.00</b>  iii) <b>Bank charges - £18.00</b></p> <p>d) <b>To review 2023-2024 annual Budget</b>  The proposed budget provided by the RFO was considered by council. All figures were agreed except grants for the grass cutting and ground maintenance for Offton Church and Willisham Church. These were increased to the same as last year, with a new total of £11,261 needed for the 2023-2024 financial year. The new figure was <b>Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously Agreed.</b></p> <p>e) <b>To review and confirm the Precept for 2023-2024</b>  Following agreement of the Budget it was decided that some of the increase in the budget would be met with £261 from reserves and that the Precept should be £11,000 to meet costs for the year.  <b>This was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously Agreed.</b></p> <p>f) <b>To review 3rd Quarter accounts, with report from Cllr Cox</b>  The Chair mentioned at this point that the new banking was excellent, secure and easy to use online. Cllr Cox then presented the findings from the review and confirmed that the accounts were all in order. The Chair extended Council's thanks to Cllr Cox.  <b>It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously Agreed to accept the 3rd Quarter accounts prepared by the RFO.</b></p> <p>g) <b>To approve payments for January (Resolution required)</b>  i. <b>Clerk Wages for January – £391.63</b>  ii. <b>Clerk Mileage &amp; Office Allowance - £64.55</b>  It was <b>Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously Agreed for both payments to be made.</b></p>	<p><b>Clerk</b></p> <p><b>Clerk &amp; Chair</b></p> <p><b>Clerk</b></p>	
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b>Resident communication - St Marys Close Grit Bin Lid Broken</b>  Prior to leaving the meeting to go to another Parish Council meeting Cty Cllr Oakes confirmed that if the Parish Council decide that a new Grit Bin is needed, then Cllr Oakes would be happy to pay for this from the Locality Budget available. The current state of the bin was discussed.  <b>It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously agreed to accept Kay's offer to reimburse the Parish Council from Kay's locality Budget once a new grit bin has been purchased by the Clerk.</b></p>	<p><b>Clerk</b></p>
<p><b>15.</b></p>	<p><b>To discuss &amp; confirm meeting dates up to May 2023 elections</b>  The upcoming elections and the coronation were discussed. It was concluded that the March meeting would be cancelled and a new meeting set for 17th April to allow the clerk time to complete the end of year accounts for the Parish Council to agree and prepare the AGAR. To ensure there is adequate time between the election of new councillors and including the coronation bank holiday, a date for the Annual Parish Council meeting was set for 15th May 2023.  <b>Next meeting Monday 17th April 2023</b>  <b>Annual Parish Council meeting Monday 15th May 2023</b></p>	<p><b>Clerk</b></p>

16.	<p><b><i>EXCLUDED ITEM 16 - of a sensitive nature and to be heard after the Public are excluded (Public Bodies Admission to meetings Act 1960)</i></b></p> <p><b>To consider the feedback from the Employment Panel formed in June on employment needs and arrange the Clerk's annual review</b></p> <p>This was briefly discussed with the Clerk and moved to the next meeting.</p>	Clerk
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**Meeting closed 9pm**

## **ADDENDUM**

### **1. Cty Councillor K Oakes Report - Jan 2023**

#### **Keeping people in Suffolk warm this winter**

“Suffolk Winter Warmth” provides items such as hats, gloves, scarves, blankets, duvets, baby sleep bags, hot water bottles, LED bulbs, draughtproofing and more, to households in need.

Following a successful pilot in November, Suffolk Winter Warmth launched this week. The project provides support for any household experiencing hardship and in need of support to prevent ill health and keep warm. Residents can be referred by professional or voluntary sector organisations supporting residents who are struggling to heat their homes. These organisations include District and Borough Councils, Health Professionals, Citizens Advice and Community Groups, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Coffee Caravan and more.

The project is backed by £50,000 of funding from Suffolk's Collaborative Communities Board and is co-ordinated on behalf of the whole county by East Suffolk Council.

Professional and voluntary organisations can refer residents to the scheme by visiting: [Winter warmth referral » East Suffolk Council](#).

#### **Solar farm proposal “not anywhere near acceptable”**

Councillor Richard Rout, the council's Deputy Leader, told the Planning Inspectorate's Examination Authority panel that it is “the poorest application I have dealt with to date.”

Councillor Rout made these comments at the first hearing of the formal Examination process (Tuesday 6 December 2022) which hears representations from all interested parties of the proposal.

This process concludes on 28 March 2023, during which time more sessions will be held when the council will address its concerns in greater detail.

The council has many issues with the current application, including:

The geographic scale of the proposal which will permanently transform the landscape

The impact on local communities of the 24-month construction period

Sunnica's serious shortcomings in terms of both evidence and methodology

Sunnica's presentation of proposal which makes it, and impacts on local communities, unclear

Mitigation proposals do not appear to be tailored to the local context

## **Historic half a billion-pound devolution deal hands Suffolk regeneration and skills powers to level up.**

Suffolk will be devolved power over their Adult Education budget, so they can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of the local community and will receive immediate support to build new affordable homes on brownfield sites, as well as more capital funding to improve energy efficiency in houses.

The deal will also see Suffolk County Council handed control over a £480 million investment fund – this will be guaranteed for the next thirty years. This will enable the county to drive growth and plan for the long-term with certainty as it looks to level up and unlock its full economic potential.

Suffolk will also get a directly elected leader of the council. This not only provides a single person who is accountable to the people of Suffolk but gives the county a local champion who can attract investment and be a stronger voice in discussions with central government.

With three new devolution deals signed in the last seven days, 50% of England will now be covered by a devolution deal and reaffirms the government's commitment in the Levelling Up White Paper to offer a devolution deal to any area that wants one by 2030.

The deal also sets out the government's plans to devolve more power to Suffolk County Council through:

**Investment:** It will bring decades of funding worth £480 million to improve the lives of Suffolk's residents and spend on their local priorities.

**Housing:** The deal will provide £5.8 million to regenerate brownfield land into beautiful, affordable homes and drive economic growth across the area; Suffolk will also receive greater compulsory purchase powers.

**Education:** The agreement devolves the Adult Education Budget so they can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of residents and the local Suffolk economy.

**Transport:** An integrated transport settlement starting in 2024/25, to support the area to improve key transport infrastructure priorities.

**The Environment:** The new deal will help Suffolk deliver on its ambitions to be the country's greenest county with £3 million to improve energy efficiency in homes.

### **Council to protect frontline services and increase funding in budget proposal**

Adult care services and children's services will receive £47m more funding as part of Suffolk County Council's £685m budget proposals.

Despite an incredibly challenging economic climate, the council has been able to produce a balanced budget. This will protect the services that people rely on the most and continue to care for the most vulnerable, which accounts for 75% of the whole budget.

Adult care services will have £34m more in their budget, and children's services will have a further £13m. This will help with the extra expense needed to meet the huge increase in demands for services, as well as higher costs due to inflation.

The budget-setting has been achieved with input from the council's partners, officers, departments and notably, Suffolk residents. Over 2,600 local people contributed to an online survey and focus groups, asking where they would spend more money, spend less money, and their views on Council Tax.

The top service areas where people wanted to spend more, were social care services for adults and children.

**Adult and children's care were at the heart of our budget setting last year and are again this year. This is exactly what people told us in our public survey too, so we are all in agreement about investing more in these areas, and it meets one of our four ambitions for Suffolk - to look after people's health and wellbeing.**

**This year, it's a case of being prudent across all areas of the organisation. Even though we have created £15.5m of savings, our frontline services are protected and receiving more funding.**

**Alongside an increase in our funding from Government, and a history of excellent financial management at the council, I'm proud that we've been able to navigate our way through the extremely turbulent, economic waters caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. We will be able to ensure that the services which mean the most to people, are still provided.**

#### **Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment**

Some of the service areas where people also said they wanted to see more money spent, will receive additional funding:

£700,000 for SEND services to support new recruitment, which is on top of the £1.1m invested this year

£500,000 for Highways: to use environmentally friendly weed treatments, and stop using glyphosate which can damage wildlife

£110,000 for tree management: to support the 'right tree right place' policy, having an appropriate inspection regime and supporting the resulting tree management requirements.

£45,000 for Citizens Advice: to support work during cost-of-living challenges

A budget gap for next year - the difference between what money is available and what needs to be spent - had already been identified, resulting in savings of £15.5m for next year.

Under the proposals, the council's budget would increase by 9.6% (from £625.3m to £685.3). Additional funds would come from a total 3.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in funds from the Government for adult and children's social care.

Regarding Council Tax, the proposed 3.99% increase would be made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means costs for a household would look like:

Band B property: £22.32 per week (85 pence per week increase from 2022-23)  
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)

Band D property: £28.70 per week (£1.10 pence per week increase from 2022-23)

**Just like at the council, I understand that every penny counts in homes around the county.**



## **2. Dst Cllr D Pratt Report - Jan 2023**

### **Waste Fleet**

The new fleet of 22 waste tankers are now in service. There were over 400 names submitted in the competition to name the waste tankers. Details of the winning names can be found on the website here <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/news/revealed-winning-names-for-babergh-and-mid-suffolks-new-environmentally-friendly-bin-lorries/>. The new tankers are fuelled by hydrogenated vegetable oil which is produced from waste cooking oil.

### **Solar Carport at Stowmarket Leisure Centre**

The 70 solar carport spaces are now up and running, producing almost a quarter of the Leisure Centre's annual electricity demand. The system also includes battery storage so excess energy produced during sunnier periods can be saved for later.

### **New Tenancy Policy**

Mid Suffolk Cabinet meet next week to discuss a new tenancy policy. The policy sets out a clear explanation of the range of tenancies that the councils offers and how and they are managed. The policy reinforces the councils' recognition of and the importance of all residents having a safe and sustainable place to call home, alongside the need for high-quality social and affordable housing.

### **Fees and charges**

Next week Cabinet will also discuss future fees and charges for council services. Fees and charges are a vital revenue stream for the Council, but they pledge to keep any increases fair and will continue to support families in need. Some of the increases in charges are statutory – such as building control and licencing. There is likely to be an increase in charges for garden waste collection.

### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

It is likely that there will be up to 100% Council Tax reduction for those families with the lowest income, and some form of transitional protection scheme to ensure that no-one will be worse off under any of the proposed changes.

### **Locality Funding**

I still have funds available and would welcome applications from any local club or organisation in need of funding towards the cost of a local project.

**Dr Daniel Pratt**

**Mid Suffolk District Councillor**