

MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Ms Jane Challis

75 Shelfanger Road

Diss, IP22 4EH

Tel: 07796 410694

Email: mellisparishcouncil@gmail.com

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 27th MARCH 2025 @ 6:30PM IN MELLIS MEMORIAL HALL

Present: Cllr L Read, Cllr A Cross, Cllr L Farley, Cllr N Lockett
Clerk – J Challis, CC Cllr Fleming, DC Cllr Warboys, Bron Curtis MSDC Principal Planning Officer, Strategic Projects and Delivery - Development Management (via remote connection), Ed King – River Waveney Trust, 3 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr G Paterson.

1 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence

Cllr Read welcomed everyone to the meeting, and apologies received from Cllr Paterson were approved unanimously. He noted that Bron Curtis has arranged to join the meeting remotely at 7:00pm.

2 To receive Declarations of Interest on agenda items

None.

3 To consider requests for Dispensations on agenda items

None.

4 To resolve the draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 27th February 2025 are a true and correct record

Cllr Read requested clarification against agenda item 8; the Parish Council noticeboard is for council and parish related business only. The draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 27th February 2025 were approved unanimously, taking the above amendment into account.

5 Report from County Councillor

CC Cllr Fleming read through her report, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

Cllr Fleming highlighted the Devolution proposals and plans to bring the library service back under the control of the county council.

Councillors voiced their concerns regarding the Devolution proposals, and there was a subsequent discussion on the potential transition process, lack of democracy, areas where financial savings are expected to be made, and complicated format of the consultation questionnaire. There was also concern that the transition period may be seen as a favourable opportunity for energy project proposals to be submitted.

Cllr Fleming said that Cllr Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs has offered to meet with Parish and Town councils. The Clerk will contact him to arrange a meeting.

7:05pm one member of the public left the meeting.

Cllr Read thanked Cllr Fleming for her report, and proposed moving to agenda item 10 to accommodate Bron Curtis. Approved unanimously.

(Item 10 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) EcoPower Suffolk – proposal for energy farm with solar PV and battery energy storage system (BESS) consultation)

Cllr Read welcomed Bron Curtis to the meeting. Councillors raised their concerns regarding this proposal, including the lack of co-ordination with other energy projects coming through, and the cumulative effects, such as the significantly increased number of HGV movements on the county's very small access roads.

Bron Curtis said that the district council is very surprised at the speed with which this proposal has moved forward, and that as with National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury proposals, it is very important that she is made aware of the detailed impact on affected communities. The county council takes the lead on some of the concerns, such as the impact on the roads, but MSDC is liaising with them. Bron Curtis also said that the eastern region is expected to see more energy proposals coming forward, particularly around Yaxley Power Station due to its large capacity. Cllr Farley asked why it is not a mandatory requirement for solar panels to be installed on roof tops. Bron Curtis explained that it is not currently part of the National Planning Policy, and the route to effect change on this is via local MPs.

Cllr Fleming raised the issue of the decommissioning process, and what happens should the term need to be ended prematurely, citing the current problems being seen in the United States. Bron Curtis said the responsibility is with the landowner to ensure they have legal liability to cover this eventuality.

After a lengthy discussion, and with there being no further questions, Cllr Read thanked Bron Curtis and she left the meeting at 7:56pm.

7:57 Cllr Fleming left the meeting.

Cllr Read proposed moving to agenda item 7, public participation. Approved unanimously.

(Item 7 Public Participation Session)

One member of the public asked if the council would be happy for them to carry out work experience in the village, in relation to their film studies course, including conducting resident interviews and recording a living history of the parish. Councillors indicated their support, and said the request needs to be an agenda item for the next meeting, in order for it to be given full consideration.

The second member of the public was present to observe agenda item 10.

Cllr Read proposed moving to agenda item 19. Approved unanimously.

(Item 19 River Waveney Trust Natural Flood Management (NFM) Scheme update)

Ed King introduced himself and explained his role as Catchment Resilience Role for the River Waveney Trust. Further to his site visit with Cllr Farley, Cllr Lockett and Cllr Cross, as reported at the previous meeting, he reported that he will be arranging a village meeting to discuss natural flood defences and future proofing with residents and landowners. Unfortunately, he is unable to attend the annual meetings in May, but hopes to arrange the village meeting in 2-3 months' time.

8:12pm one member of the public left the meeting.

Cllr Farley asked if a representative from a successfully completed NFM could be invited to the parish meeting. Ed King confirmed that he will include testimonials at the meeting.

Cllr Read thanked Ed King.

8:15pm Ed King and the last member of the public left the meeting.

6 Report from District Councillor

DC Cllr Warboys read through his report, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. Cllr Warboys highlighted MSDC's interim proposal to the local government reorganisation, which is that they feel more than one unitary council is needed. Cllr Read thanked DC Cllr Warboys.

7 Public Participation Session (10 minutes set aside)

As above.

8 Chair's Report

Nothing to report.

9 Clerk/RFO's Report

- The council's full response to National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury targeted consultation, Suffolk 1A, was approved by quorate email and submitted on 10th March 2025.
- The new gov.uk email addresses have been set up, and will be active once all councillors have confirmed they can access them.
- Suffolk County Council AROW Team have confirmed that no charge will be made to replace the missing finger post, following the Clerk's report that the original was rotten and in need of replacement.
- The new VAS device, and dog bins are due to be delivered shortly.
- MSDC have advised their consultation on the proposed changes to the Planning Statement of Community Involvement is now live. This concerns a proposal to stop sending neighbour letters for certain types of planning applications, as most of their neighbour comments are received electronically. The consultation is due to run until 23:59 on Monday 12 May 2025: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/planning-consultations>.

10 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) EcoPower Suffolk – proposal for energy farm with solar PV and battery energy storage system (BESS) consultation

Further to the discussion above, Cllr Lockett proposed that the council OBJECTS to this proposal, with a detailed response, (the main concerns being the size of the proposal, the fire risk, cumulative impact ie construction traffic, lack of transparency, and unconfirmed location of the BESS), agreed by the consultation deadline on the 22nd April 2025. Seconded by Cllr Farley and approved unanimously.

11 Regener8 Power proposal for 'Stone Cottages' solar farm

No information has been provided about this proposal, other than that it is for a solar farm split over two locations between Burgate and Botesdale. A public information event has been planned for the 8th April in Wortham Village Hall. To be discussed further at the next meeting once more information is available.

12 Regener8 Power proposal for 'Stone Cottages' solar farm

This proposal is for a 520MW BESS (battery energy storage system) on land at Red House Farm, east of Mellis. There is due to be a public information event in Mellis Memorial Hall 2-6pm, on 31st of March.

<https://regener8consultations.co.uk/redhousefarm/>.

Councillors were aggrieved that details of this proposal have only just been received, due to Regener8 Power forgetting to include Mellis as a consultee. This also allowed very little time to advertise the public information event.

The proposal will be discussed further at the next meeting, following the event on the 31st March.

13 Planning

To Consider – none.

To Receive an Update on:

- DC/24/05535 - Full Planning Application - Erection of a Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure including access, drainage, landscaping and other incidental works. Land South of Eye Airfield Industrial Estate, Castleton Way, Yaxley, Suffolk, IP23 8AW - **AWAITING DECISION.**
- DC/25/00598 - Full application- Change of use of domestic stables to provide part-time equine assisted psychotherapy services (employment). Tree Tops, The Common, Mellis, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 8EE – **AWAITING DECISION.**
- DC/25/00780 - Householder Application - Proposed window replacement. Saddlers Cottage, The Common, Mellis, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 8EB – **AWAITING DECISION.**
- DC/22/00416 – Application for Outline Planning Permission (All matters reserved) – Erection of petrol and electric charging facility with associated shop; roadside restaurant with drive through facility; E(g) (formerly B1) and B8 starter units; HGV lorry parking facility for rest area and drivers' facilities as a phased development. Land Adjacent North Roundabout A140, Ipswich Road, Brome Part in the Parish of Thrandeston, IP23 8AW – **AWAITING DECISION.**

14 Norfolk & Suffolk Devolution Consultation – proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk & Suffolk

The consultation runs until the 13th April 2025, full details are available on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution>. The consultation is in the form of an online questionnaire, and is requesting feedback on the proposal to form a Mayoral Combine County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk only, not the proposed local government restructuring.

Cllr Luckett proposed that the council **STRONGLY OPPOSES** the proposal, and agrees a detailed response to the online questionnaire by quorate email. Seconded by Cllr Cross and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to draft a response and email to councillors for approval/comments.

15 Donation Request received from Mellis Parochial Church Council

The Church Warden has asked whether the council could consider a donation towards either the churchyard maintenance or annual electricity usage.

After discussing, Cllr Cross proposed a donation of £600.00 towards the electricity usage, to ensure the council is acting within its authority. Seconded by Cllr Read, and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to advise the Church Warden as above, and arrange for donation to be made by online transfer.

16 To discuss plans for VE Day 80 anniversary 8th May 2025, including approval of expenditure.

Deferred.

17 Tree Warden's Report

Deferred.

18 Footpath Wardens' Report

Deferred.

19 River Waveney Trust Natural Flood Management (NFM) Scheme update

As above.

20 Memorial Hall car park and pond maintenance update, including quotations for work to the pond

Deferred.

21 To discuss ongoing speeding and traffic concerns in the village

Cllr Luckett reported that the speed gun is due to be received on the 1st April, and that deterrents such as the Quiet Lane designations should be the next stage to address these concerns.

22 Phone box repairs and consideration of updated quotation

Deferred.

23 Mellis Garden (Newsteads Land) update, including ongoing maintenance contract

Deferred.

24 To discuss Wellhead project

Deferred.

25 Finance

A list of payments and receipts, expenditure against the budget, and bank reconciliation to 24th January was sent to councillors. Barclays bank account balance as of 24th February 2025 - **£30,300.17**

ii) Review and authorisation of payments presented:

1	J. Challis	Clerk Admin March (including holiday pay 2024/25)	£1,132.13
2	HMRC	PAYE/NIC	£7.31
3	J. Challis	Expenses (mileage)	£5.94
5	Memorial Hall	March hire	£30.00
6	Memorial Hall	March Rural Coffee Caravan hire	£20.00
7	L. Curtis	Bus shelter	£20.00
8	Suffolk Cloud	Website hosting	£120.00
9	Mellis PCC	Donation towards utilities	£600.00

Cllr Read proposed approval of all payments above, seconded by Cllr Cross and approved unanimously.

ACTION - Cllr Read and Cllr Cross to pay agreed payments above via online banking (dual authorisation).

iii) Approval of internal auditor 2024/25 – it was approved unanimously for SALC to conduct the internal audit.

iv) Budget tracking – sent to councillors

v) PC quarterly checks – deferred.

ACTION – Clerk to book internal audit with SALC.

26 Policies & Documents

- Asset Register
- Standing Orders
- Internal Control Statement
- Financial Regulations (based on the 2019 NALC model)
- Risk Assessment & Management Policy
- Safeguarding Policy – New
- Confirmation of review date for all policies

The above policies were prepared by the Clerk and sent to councillors prior to the meeting. In addition to the new Safeguarding Policy, the Clerk drafted a Volunteer Policy to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, which was also sent to councillors.

All the policies and documents listed above, including the new Safeguarding Policy and Volunteer Policy were approved unanimously. It was also agreed unanimously to review the core documents annually. These are the Asset Register, Standing Orders, Internal Control Statement, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessment & Management Policy, and Code of Conduct. The Clerk will draft a time table for the remaining policies, to be approved at a future meeting. It was noted that the new NALC model Financial Regulations 2024 will be considered at a later meeting, to allow councillors time to review the updates.

Cllr Lockett will look into the requirements for DBS checks, in relation to the Safeguarding and Volunteer policies.

ACTION – Clerk to update and publish above documents and policies. Cllr Lockett to review DBS check requirements.

27 Matters for future consideration

- Digitisation of the History of Mellis
- Printing of more Common leaflets for new residents
- Electric vehicle charging points outside the Memorial Hall

28 The date of the meeting is Thursday 17th April 2025 at 6:30pm in Mellis Memorial Hall.

Meeting close at 9:40pm.

Gislingham Ward
Mellis, Gislingham, Thornham, `Wortham & Burgate, Wickham Skeith Parish Councils
March 2025 (revised)
District Councillor's Report:

Council meeting and annual budget	The monthly council meeting for February took place on 27th February. The meeting primarily revolved around the council's annual budget, including approval of both the General Fund Budget and Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as delivered by both Cllr Winch and Cllr Pearson. This follows discussions on the budget through this month's cabinet meeting as well. Mid Suffolk is investing a record amount of over £36 million pounds in our area, 70% in rural communities. Due to the strength of reserves Mid Suffolk is not increasing its share of the Council Tax although the County council and Police are requesting the maximum of 4.99%. The full budget details can be read in the agenda here: (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Mid Suffolk Council, 27/02/2025 17:30
Suffolk Devolution updates	A public consultation has opened into the Norfolk and Suffolk mayoral combined authority by the government, until the 13th April. This is following the government's approval for the authority, of which more details can be found on the government's website Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation - GOV.UK
Mid Suffolk Devolution Workshops	These were organised to explain and consider the implications of a Mayor, a Mayoral Combined County Authority – MCCA, and the creation of Unitary Council(s). These have been recorded – and I am able to forward the slides to anyone interested.
At the Full Council 19-03-2025	Considered MSDC's Interrim proposal for Local Government Reorganisation ('LGR') affecting Babergh District Council / Mid Suffolk District Council as part of the English Devolution White Paper published by the Government on 16 December 2024. The Government wrote to council Leaders in 'two tier' areas on 5 February 2025 inviting them to submit 'interim plans' for LGR by 21 March 2025. In Suffolk the deadline for submission of full proposals is 26 September 2025. To comply with the fast-track process, the Suffolk district and borough councils jointly appointed KPMG to help develop the options for Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk. Separately to Suffolk County council which is also employing KPMG to develop its own proposal. The Joint District and Borough Councils' Proposal was submitted on 21st March alongside the separate SCC's Proposal. Link to MSDC Report. https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/suffolk-councils-deliver-report-to-government-best-for-democracy-delivery-of-services-and-meeting-diverse-demands-of-county "Our joint proposal demonstrates that a one size fits all mega authority will not solve the existing issue of large countywide services that will continue to

	drain money, requirement improvement and potentially lead to further cost cutting. Crucially, more than one unitary authority is the best way to meet these issues and would ensure strong democratic representation as one would be too remote for residents to be heard."
New Independent Group	4 Conservative Councillors (Cllr James Caston, Cllr Lavinia Hadingham, Cllr John Whitehead & Cllr Anders Linder) have formed a new independent group on Mid Suffolk Council, in opposition to the county council's approval of the proposed devolution
New Solar Farm EcoPower Suffolk PreApplication Stage	Indicatively, current site area extends to approximately 600 ha within the Mid Suffolk District Council area. Electrical connection to new 400kV Yaxley substation via underground cable. The indicative site comprises several parcels of land (5 landowners) situated around Yaxley substation. It is anticipated the site area closest to the Yaxley substation would accommodate the BESS and associated infrastructure. We are also looking to engage with the Local Planning Authority and local communities to collaborate on any suggested community benefit initiatives we can deliver as part of the Project. Gov Website: https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110019
NG Norwich to Tilbury	Mid Suffolk has responded to the recent targeted consultation and although there have been some minor local changes. Pylons further East of Gislingham avoiding Spring Farm meadows, Extended undergrounding of the existing 400KVA grid at the bottom of Dam lane, no underground option where it crosses the R Waveney, as a result of the geological results. Our position remains the same in that alternative solutions have not been properly considered.
Local Plan review	With the new NPPF published alongside new increased housing targets, MSDC and Babergh have no real option other than to review the Joint Local plan part 1 which was adopted in November 2023. The existing local plan may become superseded by new national policies if they are not updated. The councils will now build on the work already done on part 2 of the plan alongside reviewing part 1. The new timetable for the new plan will be brought to both councils in February. As a result of changes to the way the Govt calculates Housing requirements the overall demand by the government has risen by 37%. This means that MSDC has only just over 7 years housing supply. If this drops to 5 years the Council will lose a great deal of control over the planning process leading potentially to predatory development as there will be a presumption in favour of development. So, as a first step the council has published Indicative Requirements for parishes over the next 20 years

	Thornham Magna26, Thornham Parva 48, Mellis 48, Wickham Skeith 45, Gislingham 128, Wortham 90, Burgate 20. (Yaxley 60, Eye 175, Thrandeston 18, Stowmarket 1,881). Neighbourhood Plans are seen as a means of managing positively development, and are either to be reviewed or new ones started. Govt. funding for Neighbourhood Plans to be announced July. Parishes may wish to work together and would receive extra funding. MSDC will be making a first call for sites in May.
Eurogarage service area A1088/A14 junction	Following safety Concerns previously raised at Elmswell Service Station, the service station has now agreed to carry out the essential works and is due to reopen in early March following this.
Locality Budgets 2024/25	The last of my locality funds have been used to support alongside Cllr. Lucy Elki the “Love the Dove Group” that will be testing the River dove throughout its catchment area for pollution. New applications will have to wait until the next round of funding begins – hopefully in May.

Rowland Warboys MSDC Cllr. Gislingham Ward
rowland.warboys@midsuffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07484186121

cils, March 2025

Councillor Jessica Fleming, Hartismere Division. Tel. 07714-597980 Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk

Devolution – As requested by the Minister for Local Government, Mr. McMahon, SCC has prepared an Interim Plan for how it recommends going about organising services in Suffolk under a single unitary governance structure. Alternatives proposed by the Borough of Ipswich and District Councils include two or three unitaries, it will be up to the government to determine which form is preferred. SCC's proposal was submitted by the deadline of 21st March, refer to: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/2025-03-21-suffolkcc-lgr-interim-plan-final.pdf>

One implication of this transition to unitary government is the postponement of County Council elections in 2025, it is possible that the 2026 elections may also need to be postponed to give time for new boundaries to be drawn up and new councillors selected.

Public Engagement on Devolution - A public engagement is open until 13th April and is focussed on creating a Mayoral Combined County Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk. The Government White Paper suggests that Mayors would be primarily responsible for fire, police, and public health through Integrated Care Partnerships across County boundaries. Mayors would also take charge of strategic transport (bus and rail), strategic planning, employment and skills, 'net zero', and economic growth through Local Growth Plans, the Council of Nations and Regions, and a Mayoral Council. Regards planning Mayors would develop a Spatial Development Strategy for their relevant areas, working closely with (local) authority members. This public engagement is part of a statutory process to establish the legal framework for a Combined County Authority. The government will consider responses to this consultation as it prepares to lay the necessary legislation.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution>

Suffolk Libraries to be taken back In-House – Rather than contracting out the library service when the present 6-year contract ends in June 2025, Suffolk's 45 libraries would be taken back under the ownership and control of SCC. All would remain open with no change to opening hours, investment would be made in new mobile libraries and computers. Plans are subject to a formal Cabinet decision on 18th March 2025. The transition would commence in June.

Large Scale Solar Proposals – Two large (NSIP) solar proposals with Battery Electric Storage Sites (BESS) are proceeding in Mid Suffolk at pre-application state and have held local public meetings. These are: Elmya north of Mendlesham (675 acres) and Eco-Power near Yaxley. For Elmya reference: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects-including-nsips/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-nsips/white-elm-solar-farm> and EcoPower around Yaxley/ Mellis/Eye around 1500 acres) <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/suffolk-prepares-for-another-significant-solar-farm-proposal>

Yaxley Field Battery Electric Storage Site, Yaxley - DC/24/05535 | Full Planning Application with Environmental Statement - Erection of a Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure including access, drainage, landscaping and other incidental works. This proposal has been subject of a holding objection from National Gas

Transmission PLT because NGT operates a high-pressure gas pipeline that runs through the land proposed for development. However it may possibly go ahead if certain health and safety criteria are met:

FEEDER PIPELINE 5 - DISS COMPRESSOR TEE to STOWMARKET.

The pipeline has a 12.2m easement in operation (6.1m either side of pipe). No development, construction or landscaping is permitted within the easement without formal written approval from National Gas Transmission.

There are specific criteria that must be adhered to for developing battery energy storage systems in close proximity to National Gas Transmission's gas pipelines, they can be built adjacent to pipelines but never within the easement.

The developer is engaging with National Gas Transmission for further guidance in the early stages of design to ensure that electrical interference, security, future access, and construction methods can be mutually agreed prior to undertaking any works on site.

Refer to Field Yaxley - planning reference [DC/24/05535](#).

National Grid Pylon Scheme Public Consultation – Public consultation has recently closed about adjustments to the route in areas close to Palgrave, Mellis and Gislingham.

National Grid has made some adjustments to the routes in Palgrave and Mellis and east of Gislingham; earlier proposals for undergrounding in the Waveney Valley have been rejected. National Grid states: *Following a review of consultation feedback and the findings of environmental and technical assessments, we have concluded that an overhead line would be most appropriate. This is because an overhead line would have the least impact on the valley and the local environment, particularly recognising the future purpose of the Waveney and Little Ouse Recovery (WaLOR) project and meets our requirements as a developer.* Refer to [Norwich to Tilbury Frequently asked questions | National Grid ET](#)

The County Council's position is as follows: *"We are bitterly disappointed that pylons are still the go-to solution for this project, and particularly those cutting across the Waveney Valley's valued landscape, rather than going underground, or ideally offshore. We still firmly contend that less damaging alternatives to the project have not been properly considered.*

Information is available on – nationalgrid.com/norwich-to-tilbury

Major Planning – Eye Petrol Station DC/22/00416 - This application received outline approval in November 2024, full approval is pending subject to agreement by the applicant to fund a public walking and cycling route from Cunningham Drive into and through the Airfield area. This requires a commitment for £75,000 through Section 106 to cover most of the related costs. I am in process of confirming that above ground storage tanks will be installed to protect the underlying aquifer, as recommended by the EA.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07714-597980
Twitter: @jesstfleming

