

Mellis Parish Council

Approved Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Tuesday 14 January 2020 at 8.00pm at the Memorial Hall, Mellis

Present: Cllr Lawrie Read (Chair), Cllr Tina Wilby (Vice-Chair) (departed 9.30pm), Cllr Sue Barr, Cllr Phil Cunningham, Cllr Belinda Hubbard and Cllr Ghed Paterson

Attendance: Cllr Rowland Warboys (District Councillor) and Simon Ashton (Parish Clerk)

1. Apologies and Approval of Absences

There were no apologies and absences for approval as all Members were present.

2. Declarations of Interests by Members & Requests for Dispensation

There were no interests declared by any of the Members.

3. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 10 December 2019

Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council on 10 December 2019 were received and approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. Reports by the District Councillor and County Councillor

Cllr Warboys (District Councillor) delivered his report at the meeting. A copy of the report has been made available at the end of these minutes for information. Cllr Jessica Fleming (County Councillor) did not attend the meeting.

5. Contributions by Members of the Public

There were no issues raised by members of the public.

6. Consideration of Planning Applications and Decision Notices

- (a) MSDC DC/19/05891: Application Received (Comments Due 28 January 2020)
Mellis Level Crossing, The Common, Mellis, IP23 8DU

Members requested further time to finalise a response to this planning application. The Parish Clerk agreed to contact MSDC Planning to seek approval for the matter to be considered further at the Council's next planned meeting.

- (b) MSDC DC/19/05404: Application Granted (6 January 2020)
Cowpasture Farm, The Common, Mellis, IP23 8EF

Members noted the outcome of this planning application.

7. Finance

- (a) Members noted the Barclays Bank account balance of £20,996.61 as at 22 November 2019.
- (b) The receipts and budget report and payments and budget report to 22 November 2019 were reviewed and noted by Members.

- (c) The bank reconciliation of activity to 22 November 2019 was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (d) The form provided by Barclays Bank to effect the change of the Council's correspondence address was signed by the Chair and Cllr Hubbard. The Parish Clerk agreed to submit the completed form to Barclays Bank as soon as possible.
- (e) Members approved the Parish Clerk's attendance at SALC's Preparing for Audit Course on 21 January 2020. The Parish Clerk confirmed that the cost to the Council would be £4.00 (plus VAT).
- (f) A draft budget was presented to Members by the Parish Clerk which was reviewed and discussed and subject to some amendments. Members approved the final budget, reserves and setting of a precept of £7,900 for 2020/21. The official form to request the approved precept from Mid Suffolk District Council by 31 January 2020 was signed by the Chair, Cllr Barr, Cllr Wilby and the Parish Clerk.
- (g) Following approval of the items on the checklist and the appointment of a lead by Members, the Parish Clerk agreed to book a time with Cllr Wilby for the completion of the internal controls checklist for 2019/20. It was agreed to report the findings of the review to Members at the Council's meeting in March 2020.
- (h) Following discussion, Members agreed not to approve the donation request received from Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk.
- (i) Members gave their approval for a Section 137 payment of £25.00 for a Remembrance Sunday wreath committed for the event in November 2019.
- (j) Payments were authorised in favour of the Parish Clerk's wages and office and personal expenses (£303.10), L Read for reimbursement for a Remembrance Sunday wreath (£25.00), Business Services at CAS Ltd for additional manual work by volunteers insurance cover (£23.80) and P Browne for a new noticeboard (£340.00). These payments were approved by Members.

8. Governance

- (a) Members were advised that the new noticeboard had been installed with some painting on the rear of the unit still required.
- (b) Members agreed to postpone the consideration of defibrillator tea party training and speaker arrangements until the next meeting.
- (c) Members were advised that the volunteer had collected the necessary litter pick equipment and that the insurance cover had been amended to include this risk.
- (d) Cllr Hubbard confirmed that her attendance on SALC's councillor training course had been booked to take place in March 2020.
- (e) The Chair confirmed that the new grit bin had been moved and that an update would be provided at the next meeting.
- (f) The Chair presented a proposal for the use of the Newsteads land which was approved by Members. A copy of the proposal has been made available at the end of these minutes for information. The Chair confirmed that he had also submitted a pre-planning application to MSDC Planning at a cost of £135.00 which had been approved by Members.
- (g) Members agreed to postpone the consideration of the tree planting exercise and an update from Suffolk Wildlife Trust until the next meeting.

- (h) Members agreed to postpone the consideration of the well reinstatement project restoration work options until the next meeting.
- (i) Members were updated on the progress of the village directory sign. The Chair updated Members on the limits of the sign's inclusion.
- (j) Following discussion, Members agreed that further data would be required on which to base a reference in order to proceed with the consideration of the frequency of chicken factory traffic through the village. An update would be shared at the next meeting.
- (k) The Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations presented by the Parish Clerk were reviewed, discussed, approved and adopted by Members.

9. Highways

- (a) Members agreed to postpone the consideration of an update of the SCC Highways horse warning road safety sign until the next meeting.

10. Consultations

- (a) Following discussion, Members agreed not to submit a response to the SALC Planning Questionnaire consultation by the due date of 31 January 2020.

11. Contributions by Members of the Public

There were no issues raised by members of the public.

12. Matters for Future Consideration

- (a) Review of Attendance at EPR Local Liaison Committee Meeting (6 February 2020)
- (b) Review of Implementation of Internal Audit Report Recommendations (2018/19)
- (c) Confirmation of the Booking of the SALC Internal Audit (2019/20) (May 2020)
- (d) Approval of the Council's External Audit Reporting Exemption Status (2019/20)
- (e) Review & Approval of the Parish Council's Annual Risk Assessment (2019/20)
- (f) Review & Approval of the Parish Council's Internal Control Statement (2019/20)
- (g) Agreement of the Dates of the Council's Meetings & Draft Agendas (2020/21)
- (h) Agreement of the Date of the Annual Parish Meeting & Draft Agenda (May 2020)

13. Dates of the Next Meetings

- (a) 11 February 2020 (Agenda Items & Documents Received by 3 February 2020)
- (b) 10 March 2020
- (c) The meeting finished at 9.50pm.

Simon Ashton, Parish Clerk
mellisparishcouncil@gmail.com
11 February 2020

District Councillor Report: Gislingham Ward

Mellis, Gislingham, Thornham, Wickham Skeith, Wortham and Burgate Parish Councils

January 2020

General Election – December 12

Last month saw the General Election on 12 December with many of our staff involved administering and counting the votes. You can [find the full results on our website](#).

Mid Suffolk councillors consider budget for 2020/21

The first draft of Mid Suffolk District Council's budget for 2020/21 is set to be considered by councillors later this month, including a 1.66% increase in its share of council tax, adding £2.76 a year to the bill of a Band D Property.

District Council Budget and Council Tax Notes

Members received a briefing on the draft budget for 2020/21. This draft budget will be considered by Cabinet on 13 January and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January; it is expected to be approved at full Council meeting on 27 February. Government have agreed that Shire Districts may increase council tax by £5 or 2% whichever is the greater. There are no new proposals for Central Government grants to District Councils. Government propose to phase out or replace New Homes Bonus. Any new grant is likely to be based upon achieving higher house building targets.

New Homes Bonus for 2020/21 will be £1.612M, an increase of £232k over 2019/20 but is likely to reduce (possibly by 50%) in 2021/22.

Baseline business rates will increase by 2%. Government propose a full business rates revaluation in 2021; a fundamental review of business rates is also likely.

Factors taken into account in preparing the draft budget include: a recent increase in the Public Works Loans Board interest rate; the Climate Emergency and continuing uncertainty over BREXIT.

There is £5.8M in Suffolk Pooled Business Rates Fund; £280k remains unallocated from the Mid Suffolk Business Rates pilot; MSDC is holding CIL of £8.5M; Mid Suffolk Growth and Efficiency Fund has £3m unallocated;

The effect of the Provisional Settlement from Government is £213k better than previously assumed.

£500,000 is being allocated this year for measures to mitigate climate change, followed by a further £500,000 next year.

The net revenue budget is proposed to be £10M and the Capital Programme £12M, the latter includes a proposed further investment of £8.7M in commercial properties.

Housing Revenue Account

After four years of government-enforced reductions, the council is also proposing putting up council house rents by 2.7% - 1% above Consumer Prices Index. This will result in an average increase of £2.19 per week increase for tenants. Sheltered housing tenants also face an increase of £2 a week on their bills plus a 62p a week increase to their utility bills. It is proposed to build or acquire 200+ new homes over the next two years at a cost of £45m, and it is proposed that £16.2m will be needed to fund the maintenance and improvements to council properties.

Stowupland High School CIL Bid

MSDC Cabinet on 6 January will consider an application for CIL Funding for the new Sixth Form Centre at Stowupland High School. The bid is for £2.45M (total project cost £2.98) and is subject to the completion of a Community User Agreement. The concerns of Stowupland Parish Council, in respect of traffic, safety, parking etc, are included in the report to Cabinet.

Council Tax Payments

MSDC Cabinet on 6 January are to discuss an initiative to introduce new fines for Council Tax fraud.

Cabinet will also consider adoption of a new protocol produced by Citizens Advice and Local Government Association for the collection of council tax arrears. This seeks to assist those falling behind with their payments in a less confrontational way.

[Read the full story](#)

Councils to consider move to clamp down on Council Tax fraud – while helping those in need

Penalties may be introduced in Babergh and Mid Suffolk to tackle council tax fraud, alongside a new Citizens Advice council tax protocol to help those in genuine need, following cabinet discussions this month.

[Read the full story](#)

Next phase in development of Needham Lake visitor centre and café agreed

Plans for a £600,000 visitor centre/café at Needham Lake have been approved and a local operator selected to run it – supporting local youth work and boosting tourism to the town.

[Read the full story](#)

1000 Endangered Animals

Over Christmas the Suffolk Waste Partnership's celebration of recycling took on a theme of endangered animals.

The artwork created by schools across Suffolk will be on display at Ipswich Town Hall café Gallery until 11 Jan, and The Apex , Bury St Edmunds until March 2020.

[Read the full story](#)

More than £791k funding boost for communities

Communities across Babergh and Mid Suffolk received a funding boost totalling £791,000, for local projects including a new car park and bus shelter.

[Read the full story](#)

New recycling wrap up The festive and New Year period are always a great time to encourage residents to think about [reducing waste](#) and improving their recycling knowledge and this year Suffolk Recycling launched a new [Christmas Wrap Up](#).

The guide has tips on how to reduce waste and improve recycling habits over Christmas, all in one place - including information on what to do with old fairy lights, wrapping paper, baubles, trees, food, metals and more.

[You can find the full guide on our website.](#)

Suffolk's Recycling Centres also offer free 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle - not a Waste of time!' sessions to interested parties to learn more about ways to reduce waste and recycling. Providing an alternative way to access information about recycling which is also available on the [Suffolk Recycling website](#).

To book a visit from their Information and Education Manager any interested parties can email [Sharon Lockhart](#)

Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice - Mid Suffolk CAB recently held their AGM. During the last year they addressed nearly 10,000 issues and helped 3,400 clients. So far their client numbers are up 17% on last year. In 2018/19 the CAB helped clients in Mid Suffolk achieve over £1.4 million in financial gains through benefit claims, employment negotiations, consumer refunds and charitable support. The work done by the 45 volunteers has been officially valued at more than £380,000. The Overview and Scrutiny committee had commenced a scrutiny of CABs in Suffolk but the work was halted because of the General Election. This work will start again in January.

Tree Planting/Tree Wardens – The missing section of Cowpasture Lane between Mellis Common and Thornham Parva, south of the Railway Line has been restored by planting native trees and hedging to redefine its ancient boundaries and establish a wildlife corridor linking the intact sections of the lane. 2,500 plants and trees were planted on Saturday 30th Nov. A tremendous effort by local residents, made possible by the partnership formed by the landowner, Nigel Patel, The Woodland Trust, Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Tree Warden Network coordinated by Frances Jannaway, Thornham's Tree Warden.

Useful Websites -

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/pre-application-advice/free-online-planning-guidance/interactive-mapping-service/>

This takes you into an interactive map that you can zoom into individual houses, check what planning applications are associated with these properties and indicates planning constraints.

<https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

This takes you to a reporting site, again map based, where any concerned member of the parish may paste comments.

Rowland Warboys 05/01/2020

PROPOSAL FOR THE USE OF 'NEWSTEADS' LAND

Introduction.

For some years now (at least 25), Mellis Council has owned a piece of land adjacent to the school and it was tasked with deciding how to use it, coming with a covenant from Mr Newstead originally, stating that the ground should be used as a children's play area.

Many brave attempts have been made to make good use of this land – mainly evolving around it's use as either a nature play area (as per the original bequest), or as a relief for the rather dire situation at school pick-up and set-down times, when, because of the nature of the number of cars that need to park-up, and the curvature of the road, can cause rather a bit of chaos (albeit for short periods of the day).

I believe that in the past a working party had cleared the land originally, but as the school has neither funds, nor time, to maintain it, it has fallen back to scrub and the area which used to be a pond has been fenced off.

Current Situation.

The school has made good use of part of the Newstead's land (this needs to be formalized, as per council minutes from April 2017) – up to the pond area, but no further - and this area is now fenced around the pond and from any school access.

This has had the effect that the remaining piece of land is now inaccessible – either by road, or on foot, as it is bounded by the school, the telephone exchange and the road (with associated hedge and ditch, owned by Suffolk Wildlife).

The remaining piece of land that we are talking about from here on in is an area of land which is 147 feet (44.8 metres) on it's northern (road) edge (NOTE – measurement was taken from the pavement by the 30mph sign and so may not be entirely accurate), with 90 feet from the road to the end of the Openreach Exchange (27.4 metres) from the road to the rear (these measurements have been taken from outside of the area and so useable space will be less, as there is quite a deep ditch immediately behind the road-side hedge and also one to the rear. It's roughly rectangular, except for a bit that goes behind the Exchange (estimated as being 28 feet x 25 feet (8.5 x 7.6 metres).

All in all, around 14,000 sq. ft, 1,300 sq m, about 0.32 of an acre.

The parish council is now going to focus on a better use of this land and will come up with what we think may be a way forward – unblocking the deadlock of the last 20-odd years.

A Way Forward?

We have been considering how best to utilize the land to satisfy both main 'camps' from the discussions in the past, which were for a nature play area and/or a temporary (temporary, as in, Ecoblock, rather than tarmac, or something similar) car-park (the original bequest also stated 'with appropriate' building).

Over time this has rather morphed into those who wanted just a car park and those wanting something a little more in keeping with it's rural position (and certainly no parking).

As you can imagine, there will be many hurdles to cross, as there are a number of interested parties and there is, of course, the need to fund anything we do.

So, the idea is to have 3 broad plans created at a high-level, as we have no wish to spend time/effort/money on creating a detailed set of plans, to find that we are thwarted in our attempt use one of them (to get vehicular access, for instance).

The Story So Far – and The Planning Ideas.

As I said earlier, this is not to denigrate the attempts that have been made in the past to find a solution. But, like I said, it's more to either a) get definitive agreements for any actions, via the various planning bodies, or b) quash once and for all!

Early last year (2018), there was an attempt to clarify (with legal help), the situation as regards to the bequest itself. From the parish council's point of view, it seemed rather inconclusive, but still gave us a way forward to consider uses outside of the strict wording of the bequest.

Plan 1 - Full vehicular access.

Obviously this is going to be the costliest and, probably, most difficult to get the required permissions for. Just to get access from the road it will need agreement from Suffolk Wildlife, Highways, Babergh Planning and the school, and the costs will not be inconsiderable, for works and materials.

With the amount of land calculated (0.32 acre), along with turning space and not utilizing all the ground (i.e. leaving mature trees and other greenery), it should be possible to supply 20-25 spaces.

We would expect to ask the Highways, if they did approve access, to make the entire stretch of road, from the far end of the school, to Yaxley Manor as a no-parking area, giving clear view for access and exit.

Plan 2 - Foot access from the road.

Less onerous this, along with the obvious reduction in costs, but restricts the use of the land considerably. Only permission required would be Suffolk Wildlife, to breach the hedge and the school for safety/access reasons.

Plan 3 – Foot access from the school.

Very similar to Plan 2 and restricted to use by the school only, which the council think would be the most feasible, but probably an opportunity lost.

Far more secure for the school of course.

Plan 4 – Assign over to school the whole area

If we can't get the required permissions or money, hand the remaining land over to the school officially and have done with it!

Let them keep access to the part they have fenced off and leave the rest to mother nature.