

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL,  
7.30pm 13th JANUARY 2025.**

**PRESENT** - Mr P. Mortimer, Mr P. Schwier, Mrs C Pryce, Mr C Osborne, Mr P Smith, Mrs D Fowler, Mr B Lee-Harwood, Mr D Hall, Mr J Gadsdon, Cllr Lloyd (SCC), Cllr Hadingham (MSDC).

Clerk- Mrs L Duckett

No members of the public were present.

**1.APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - None**

**2. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETINGS HELD 11<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024.**

The minutes were agreed and approved.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES –**

Activity continues at Withersdale Hall Farm, but the Environment Agency now has a date for prosecution in February and is looking to shut down the site.

The B1123 remains closed, Mr Smith is in dialogue with the Water Company regarding possible compensation for loss of takings in the Community Stores.

The worst pothole on Fressingfield Road has been mended but others are appearing. The overall state of the road has been highlighted to Cllr Lloyd.

An additional grass cut was carried out just before Christmas to ensure the cemetery and playground were tidy for the festive break.

**4. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR HADINGHAM (as provided)**

The MSDC monthly report was circulated prior to the meeting and can be found at the end of these minutes. No questions were raised. Cllr Hadingham is not in favour of Devolution – MSDC had not been included in the debate.

The Parish Council thanked Cllr Hadingham for the locality grant issued to assist with the purchase of rubber chippings to improve the swing area in the playground on St Johns Meadow.

**5. REPORT FROM SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL (as provided)**

The SCC monthly report was circulated prior to the meeting and can be found at the end of these minutes. Cllr Lloyd highlighted 3 items within the newsletter:

The government has announced that the funding known as the Rural Services Grant (RSG) for rural communities and sparsely populated areas where it costs significant amounts of money to deliver public services will now longer be available. These funds will be directed elsewhere. This will have a major impact on Suffolk County Council's budget.

There is major debate regarding the positioning of pylons across the region. Suffolk County Council is joining with other local authorities in the region to challenge National Grid and the government on energy projects, demanding fairness for their communities and environment.

A new Armed Forces Commissioner is being recruited in Suffolk. Anyone wishing to apply must be able to volunteer 16 days (split into 32 half days) of their time in total each year, but it is not a prerequisite for a candidate to have directly served in the UK Armed Forces.

Cllr Lloyd is in favour of Devolution.

The Parish Council thanked Cllr Lloyd for the locality grant issued to assist with the purchase of the SIDs and third mounting post, and his intervention over the dangerous pothole in Fressingfield Road.

## **6. MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The owner of Bell House has notified the Parish Council that work regarding reduction of the hawthorn tree overhanging their shed roof would be carried out via St Johns Meadow towards the end of January.

A resident had enquired if the Parish Council had ever considered installing a vehicle charging point in the village. This had been looked at several years ago, but the Parish Council doesn't own any suitable land for parking with access to power. Should an available site be identified, there was also doubt that the voltage currently available would be sufficient to make installation worth it.

## **7. FINANCE**

### **i) Payments approved between meetings.**

Suffolk Garden Services - grass cutting £150.00

N Riseborough – grass cutting St Johns Meadow £394

### **ii) Payments approved at the meeting**

L Duckett – Clerk quarterly salary plus back pay of national wage increase £655.80

HMRC Tax £110.40

Evolution Rubber products – chippings for swing area £1,349.96

ElanCity – Speed Indicator Devices x 2 £5,014.78

This payment will not be made until the SIDs have been checked. Mr Gadsdon volunteered to take responsibility for checking and downloading the information required. He will liaise with Mr Mortimer who is storing the devices until the mounting posts are installed.

### **iii) Review of budget/spend pre precept submission**

The current projected spend for the financial year indicates that the precept will be fully spent and possibly slightly exceeded due to rising costs across the board. The impact on council tax of any increase to the precept next year were illustrated by the clerk using the tax base calculator from MSDC. Although very reluctant to increase the amount the Parish Council recognised that it would be necessary to ensure all costs are covered. It was unanimously agreed that the precept would be increased to £7,750 for the financial year 25/26. The impact of this is a 42p per week increase on a Band D Council tax rate.

## **8. PLANNING – TO REVIEW ANY CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**DC/24/03486 Householder Application - Erection of two storey side extension (following demolition of existing side extension). - Hattens Farm Fressingfield Road Metfield Harleston Suffolk IP20 0LL**

There is still no decision on this application

**DC/24/04542 Householder Application - Erection of single storey side extension Location: 2 Office Farm Cottage, The Common, Metfield, Harleston Suffolk IP20 0LR**

The application has been approved.

**DC/24/04574 - Conversion of existing integral garage into a bedroom and bathroom. Location: Lavendar Cottage, The Street, Metfield, Harleston Suffolk IP20 0LB**

The application has been approved.

**DC/24/00579 - Retention of change of use of 2no existing farm buildings to a commercial use under Class B8 of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended) Location: Vale Farm, The Common, Metfield, IP20 0LP**

An enforcement notice was raised in December to close this operation but as the application has gone to appeal, the enforcement will be put on hold until the outcome of the appeal is known.

**DC/24/05335 - Removal of Condition 2 (Garage Restriction) of planning permission 0102/77 dated 28/04/1977 - Erection of bungalow and garage and amendment to existing vehicular access. To allow garage to be converted into a habitable room.**

**Location: Harmony, Fressingfield Road, Metfield, Harleston Suffolk IP20 0LE**

This application was reviewed between meetings due to deadline; no objections were raised.

**9.CEMETERY RULES and REGULATIONS**

The cemetery rules and regulations were reviewed as there were now some graves causing concern over the access for maintenance. It was agreed that a working party would be formed to visit the cemetery early February to clear any remaining Christmas wreaths and items causing obstruction before grass cutting re-commenced. It was confirmed that the regulations were displayed on the cemetery gate stating that the Parish Council reserves the right to remove any items that contravene the regulations without notice, although it was preferred to have a dialogue with relatives first, if possible.

**10. MATTER RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

Complaints have been received regarding the overgrown top-heavy hedge on the boundary of Captains Farm with Fressingfield Road. Although this has been raised with the owner in the past, the top has still to be cut and is starting to cause damage to vehicles. Mr Mortimer and Mr Schwier will visit the property.

Recent correspondence from MSDC had encouraged Parishes to create a neighbourhood plan, but previous advice from Cllr Hadingham had been that this was a very costly exercise that may not be of benefit to Metfield. This advice has not changed but she suggested further advice was sought from the MSDC planning office. The Clerk would speak to the planning office to obtain more information before any decision was made.

Bridget Morely is reaching the end of her 3-year period as Parish Council representative on the Metfield United Charities Board of Trustees. She has indicated she is happy to remain on the Board for a further 3 years. It was unanimously agreed to approve her continuation on the Board.

Mrs Fowler reported that the decking surface of the play train was very slippery. She kindly volunteered to clean it to see if this would fix the issue.

The Clerk highlighted that the laptop would no longer be supported for Microsoft products post October 2025 due to its incompatibility with Windows 11. It was agreed that this would be re-visited in the next financial year.

**11.CORRESPONDENCE**

No further correspondence has been received.

**12 CONFIRMATION OF NEXT YEAR'S MEETING DATES**

The list of next year's meeting dates was reviewed and confirmed.

**The meeting closed at 8.40pm.**

**DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING - Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**MSDC Report – as provided.**



**[Leader's response to Devolution White Paper](#)**

Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council, Cllr Andy Mellen said: "I remain open-minded about reorganisation as long as it is done in the right way and has the interests of our residents at its heart..."

**[Statement in response to Government's National Planning Policy Framework announcement](#)**

Statement from Cllr Andrew Stringer, Mid Suffolk's portfolio holder for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure, following today's announcement about the National Planning Policy Framework.

**[Council tax freeze proposed in Mid Suffolk](#)**

Mid Suffolk District Council proposes to freeze its element of council tax for the upcoming financial year – helping residents to navigate the cost-of-living crisis while continuing investment in priority areas to improve quality of life in the district.

**[Full speed ahead for £18m Skills and Innovation Centre](#)**

Mid Suffolk District Council's plans for an £18m Skills and Innovation Centre in Stowmarket have taken a major step forward.

**[Mid Suffolk communities set to receive almost £700k in cash boost from developers](#)**

Three projects in Mid Suffolk are set to receive a share of £691k from Mid Suffolk District Council, with money collected from developers set to fund new sports facilities, the expansion of a college and keep long-awaited rail improvements on track.

**[Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group endorse the Suffolk Economy Strategy](#)**

New strategy aims to propel Suffolk's economic growth and position the county at the forefront of the UK's green evolution

**[Ready, steady, grow! - £0.5m boost for sports and wellbeing proposed for Stowmarket](#)**

Stowmarket could be about to receive almost £500,000 from developer contributions towards new sports and healthy activity facilities in the town.

**SCC Report - as provided.**

**Suffolk's rural communities hit by loss of £3 million in Government funding**

£3 million of vital public funding - designed to support rural communities in Suffolk - will be cut by the government next year, it has been revealed.

The funding, known as the Rural Services Grant (RSG), was introduced in 2016/17 to support councils who serve rural communities and sparsely populated areas where it costs significant amounts of money to deliver public services. Suffolk County Council will, from April 2024, no longer receive the grant. [The government announced last week that the funding will be redirected elsewhere](#) – adversely impacting rural areas like Suffolk.

**Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:**

*"It is deeply disappointing that the government has once again made a decision that disproportionately harms rural areas.*

*"Delivering essential services, like bus services, social care and road maintenance, is inherently more expensive in county areas like Suffolk due to our sparse population. The decision to scrap this grant compounds the challenges we are facing already with the rising costs of services like adult and children's care and home-to-school transport.*

*"Yet the government continues to overlook these realities, prioritising urban areas instead.*

*"It is becoming clear that any additional funding promised to support local authorities is to be undermined by cuts and additional costs elsewhere. This is a troubling pattern where supposed solutions offer no real relief and councils are faced with great financial uncertainty.*

*"I am concerned that the government's response to rising local government costs is to shift the burden onto residents, forcing councils to impose steep Council Tax increases to balance the books. This approach is both unsustainable and unfair to those in rural communities."*

Nationally, the Rural Services Grant is worth £110 million a year to rural communities. Other counties, including Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire and Northumberland have also spoken out about the removal of the rural grant.

---

### **Council calls on government to prevent scrapping of influential department**

The CAA is intending to close down its Airfield Advisory Team.

Through its work on major infrastructure projects, officers at Suffolk County Council have learned that the team will not be available to provide advice to planning officers or planning inspectors after March 2025.

Suffolk County Council has written to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, to review the proposal.

The Airfield Advisory Team has been instrumental in helping to shape improvements to infrastructure projects and informing planning across Suffolk. This includes the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, as part of National Grid's 'Great Grid Upgrade' and other proposed energy projects such as solar farms and wind turbines.

Without this team, it is anticipated that there will be no robust and effective advice to support the design and delivery of new infrastructure projects, and that this will compromise scrutiny of their design and delivery.

The impact of obstructions such as where pylons are placed or the glare from solar farms may also limit the commercial, strategic, and recreational operation of airfields across Suffolk and the rest of the country.

### **Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:**

*"The effective and technical advice that we have received from the Airfield Advisory Team has been essential to a number of projects that we respond to, on behalf of Suffolk's communities.*

*"As an example, they have directly helped with making improvements to the Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, to lessen the impact on Suffolk residents and businesses.*

*"Without such expertise, considerable projects such as pylon runs or solar farms could end up being put in ill-informed locations, risking the viability of existing airfields, and the safety of those that use them and who live and work nearby.*

*"As such, we have written to the Minister for Aviation, asking that he work with the CAA to reconsider the scrapping the Airfield Advisory Team."*

In July 2024, Suffolk County Council raised its concerns about the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project when it formally objected to plans, published at the time.

Amongst a number of fears, it cited that there would be "serious implications on nine airfields" with pylons close to runways which, in some cases, could possibly stop flying all together.

Suffolk County Council's letter to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, can be read on [suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

---

### **Suffolk discoveries rewrite the history of the East Anglian Kingdom 1,400 years ago**

A new book details how 5,000 items of metalwork discovered by four local metal detector users during 10 years of archaeological fieldwork in Rendlesham, Suffolk, have helped change the way academics think about the earliest English kings and their kingdoms.

The fieldwork and significance of the finds, co-ordinated by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS), are shared in the new book, *Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800*, released this week.

The journey started in 2008, when a landowner contacted SCCAS for assistance following finds made on their property. Over the following decade, SCCAS co-ordinated archaeological investigations of the local area that identified the site of an East Anglian royal settlement - with the invaluable expertise of four experienced detectorists recovering and meticulously recording thousands of metal finds of archaeological interest, including precious metal jewellery and coinage.

A team of experts, funded by a project grant from The Leverhulme Trust, reconstructed the layout and history of the settlement, its place in wider landscape, the social connections and trade networks of those who lived there, and details such as the metalworking techniques of the master crafters who worked there.

As a result of all this work, experts have determined that:

- The royal centre at Rendlesham – covering an area of 50 hectares (approximately 70 football pitches) – is the largest and wealthiest settlement of its time known from England
- For 150 years, from AD 580 to 730, Rendlesham was the centre of royal power in this part of the kingdom – the place where the kings stayed, dispensed justice, feasted followers, received envoys, and had coinage minted

- Analysis of metal-detected finds from other places in Suffolk and Norfolk has enabled the identification of similar settlements to Rendlesham – centres from which royal power was exercised over other parts of the kingdom

**Professor Christopher Scull, Cardiff University and UCL Institute of Archaeology, who led the research project, said:**

*“Since its discovery on the eve of the Second World War, the royal burial ground at Sutton Hoo has stood alone as an enigmatic memorial to the East Anglian kings of the seventh century.*

*“But our ground-breaking research involving Rendlesham has not only identified the places where these kings lived, and from which they ruled, but also how their ancestors fought to establish a kingdom after the collapse of the Roman world.*

*“These societies were more sophisticated, and more widely connected, than we previously thought. We are able to show how local leaders from what is now south-east Suffolk established a wider rule over what is now Norfolk and Suffolk, and how they ruled their kingdom through royal centres such as Rendlesham. We also believe that the legacy of Roman rule helped shape the geography of the early East Anglian kingdom.”*

Following these significant discoveries, the journey continued with SCCAS conducting a separate phase of archaeological fieldwork as part of the *Rendlesham Revealed* project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, involving local communities to undertake further excavations that have uncovered additional evidence of the royal settlement, including a great hall and possible temple.

**Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:**

*“Suffolk continues to reveal its extraordinary history and international significance. We owe the discovery and understandings of the royal settlement at Rendlesham to the landowner for allowing access, to the four local metal detectorists who were instrumental in discovering the site, to all the professionals and academics involved in realising the importance of what has been found, and to the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service for coordinating.*

*“With the cooperation of responsible metal detector users, who choose to work with our archaeological service, it shows how all parties can come together and make a powerful contribution to archaeological research and protect our shared heritage.”*

*Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800* is published by the Society of Antiquaries of London, with grants from the Marc Fitch Fund, The Sutton Hoo Society, University College London, Historic England, and the Scarfe Charitable Trust.

The book was made possible following project funding by The Leverhulme Trust through the Institute of Archaeology, University College London working in partnership with the University of East Anglia, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

*Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800* is available to order from the [Pen & Sword Books website](#).

The metal-detected finds from Rendlesham are held by Colchester and Ipswich Museums and will be on permanent display at Ipswich Museum when it reopens.

---

### **Suffolk and East of England councils seek fairness in the face of energy projects**

Suffolk County Council is joining with other local authorities in the region to challenge National Grid and the government on energy projects, demanding fairness for their communities and environment.

The county councils from Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Lincolnshire all face similar challenges with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being planned for their counties.

These are typically related to energy projects, including solar farms, wind turbines, pylons and the infrastructure associated offshore wind farms, such as substations and cabling.

#### **Two of Suffolk County Council’s main concerns, shared with the other counties, are:**

- The uncoordinated approach to NSIPs - this is creating significant challenges for Suffolk’s rural communities under the current planning policy as applied by the planning inspectorate and Secretary of State.
- The government’s 2030 target for decarbonising the electricity grid – this is too hasty, making it impossible to deliver alternative solutions to pylon projects like Norwich to Tilbury

#### **Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:**

*“Along with colleagues from neighbouring county councils, we are asking government and National Grid for fairness to our communities.*

*“Unbelievably, many energy projects are simply not being coordinated, even those proposed by the same umbrella organisation. This means upheaval for local communities, unnecessary infrastructure, construction and disruption – all of which is preventable, if only there was some organisation.*

*“Successful motions at our full council meeting last week (12 December 2024), saw references to the impacts that significant energy projects will likely bring to Suffolk – which are also felt across Essex, Norfolk and*

*Lincolnshire. For example, many energy projects significantly threaten Suffolk's best and most versatile farmland, our rural communities and landscape."*

Suffolk County Council has had a longstanding position to support the need for low carbon energy to provide energy security for the country, and the progress to net zero – but not at any cost.

**Cllr Rout continues:**

*"The government's urgency to decarbonise the grid by 2030 is causing damaging decision-making and threatening the food security, habitats, and natural beauty of our countryside and its communities.*

*"It means the only solution for grid upgrades to projects like Norwich to Tilbury, are pylons. There are other viable alternatives, such as offshore or underground cabling. These options have still not been properly costed, despite what the government or National Grid may say, and are likely to prove more beneficial and efficient if given suitable consideration and time."*

---

**'Your county needs you' – search gets underway for new Armed Forces Commissioner for Suffolk**

Suffolk is seeking a new Armed Forces Commissioner.

The successful candidate will play a key role in supporting the UK Armed Forces community in the county for a three-year period from mid-March 2025.

This voluntary, non-political role includes chairing the Suffolk Armed Forces Covenant Board, set up by Suffolk County Council and partners to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the UK Armed Forces and their families, are treated fairly.

Suffolk is home to Wattisham Flying Station, RAF Honington, Rock Barracks near Woodbridge, plus reservists based in Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, RAF Honington and Lowestoft.

There are an estimated 30,000 veterans in Suffolk of which around 10,000 are of working age.

The Board's work includes help with wellbeing for veterans and families, encouraging GP practices to become 'Veteran Friendly' accredited, and providing additional educational and emotional support for children from service families.

**Lee Holloway, the current Armed Forces Commissioner for Suffolk and a former naval officer, said:**

*"It has been a privilege to lead the county's Covenant Board in supporting our Armed Forces.*

*"There is an increasing and diverse range of support services which have come about through partnership working whether they are delivered by professionals or indeed volunteers. I wish my successor the very best of luck."*

**Councillor Mick Fraser, Armed Forces Champion at Suffolk County Council said:**

*"This is a fantastic opportunity for someone to provide independent leadership to Suffolk's military community, whilst also working closely with our council and other partners to drive organisational change that's of real benefit for our Armed Forces.*

*"I'd like to thank Lee Holloway for all his work over his term. I have no doubt that we'll find the right replacement and would urge those interested to come forward and apply now."*

Anyone wishing to apply must be able to volunteer 16 days (split into 32 half days) of their time in total each year, but it is not a prerequisite for a candidate to have directly served in the UK Armed Forces.

They will, however, need to learn about issues affecting the local UK Armed Forces community – consisting of regular military, the reserves, service families, veterans, and cadets.

Applications for the voluntary position will be accepted until 5pm on Friday 17th January 2025, to enable the successful candidate to start their three-year appointment in mid-March 2025.

Further information on the vacancy, application process and Suffolk's Armed Forces Covenant can be found at: [www.suffolkmilitarycovenant.org.uk](http://www.suffolkmilitarycovenant.org.uk)

---

**Suffolk councillors to consider devolution and council reorganisation**

Suffolk County Council will hold an extraordinary meeting of councillors, and a meeting of its Cabinet, to debate and then decide on whether or not to put Suffolk forward for the government's new devolution and reorganisation programme.

The government has required that formal notice be given if Suffolk wishes to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme by 10 January 2025. Therefore, the meetings, both to be held on 9 January 2025, will see all 75 councillors debate and vote on a proposal to recommend Suffolk is at the front of the queue. Following the Full Council meeting, the Cabinet will make a final decision.

**Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:**

*"The government has set out its devolution and reorganisation proposals and has asked that Suffolk County Council submit an expression of interest by 10 January if we wish to be part of the Devolution Priority*

*Programme. As a result, we must hold these extraordinary meetings. On 9 January, all Suffolk County Councillors will be given an opportunity to have their say before a final decision is made by Cabinet.*

*“Changes of this scale create an opportunity to streamline local government, empower joined-up decision making, save taxpayers money and ensure councils are resistant to economic challenges.*

*“I welcome the positive engagement of Suffolk’s district and borough councils. This is a significant decision and one that will not be taken lightly.”*

On 16 December, the Government published its much-anticipated [English Devolution White Paper](#), outlining plans for broader and deeper devolution coupled with a programme of coordinated local government reorganisation.

Key to the proposals is a reorganisation of council structures, particularly in two-tier areas like Suffolk, with a shift away from district, borough and county councils towards unitary councils. The government argues that unitary councils can deliver better outcomes for residents and save money that can be reinvested in public services.

For most areas, the government says that this means creating councils serving populations of 500,000 or more, with exceptions where they make practical sense.

Alongside reorganisation, the government is also proposing to create new Mayoral Authorities – with a single directly elected Mayor covering larger geographies (for example Norfolk and Suffolk) and with powers over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, health improvement and blue light services.

At this stage, no decisions have been made about what will happen in Suffolk.

The meetings will be held consecutively from 2pm in the King Edmund Chamber at Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX. The meetings will be live-streamed on the council’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SuffolkCC>

Papers for the meetings can be viewed at: <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>