

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ONEHOUSE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY
13 JANUARY 2025 AT 7.30 P.M. IN TRINITY HALL

Present: Cllrs Boulter (Chair), Nutman, Roberts, Corker and Crissell.

In attendance: Mrs Fuller Acting Clerk, County Cllr Otton (in part), District Cllr Matthissen (in part) and 5 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence. These were received from Cllr Copping.

2. To confirm and approve the minutes of the meeting 9 December 2024

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. To receive members Declarations of Interest on agenda items. There were none.

4. To consider any dispensation requests from councillors. There were none.

5. Public comment.

Mr Leek advised that there has been a further accident along Footpath 28, no one was hurt but someone nearly fell into the ditch. Mr Leek contacted SCC Rights of Way to make them aware and to ask when the remedial work will be carried out. SCC stated before the end of the financial year and they are hoping to do more work than was originally proposed. It was agreed to put a notice up at the start of the path "use with care – very slippery". Mr Leek also advised that the Footpath Warden does not have to be a Cllr, Cllrs were already aware of this.

Mrs Smith reported that the first morning of Little Owls Baby and Toddler Group had been a resounding success and she has received very positive feedback. The group is aware that there had been some issues with parking along Forest Road which they hope to alleviate by asking some attendees to park in Ash Road and walk through. The hall will not be available to the group 19 February due to the pantomime.

6. Report from County Cllr Otton.

Following the new government's shelving of the previous devolution deal for Suffolk, the Government has published a white paper outlining the approach they wish to see in reforming local government, including the abolition of district councils. Elected mayors and large (500,000) unitary authorities are the goal for the largest local government reform since 1972, when the two (three including parish councils) tier local governance structure was introduced. While there are obvious benefits to having a 'one stop shop' for all things local government, if this is to be introduced without losing the 'local' from local government the minimum resident number needs to be more flexible. With the recommended figure in the paper being a minimum 500,000 residents per council, this means only one council for the whole of Suffolk (760,000 residents) would fit this requirement. A special meeting of the full council was held on 9 January specifically to discuss the Devolution proposals. Although a vote will be taken the decision was made at the Cabinet meeting following at 5.30 by the Leader and his cabinet colleagues from the administration. A new unitary authority with a population over 500,000 could be formed and a directly elected mayor to cover Suffolk and Norfolk. A decision whether to postpone the SCC elections will be made by the government minister. At Council on 12 December, the following motions were passed by councillors. The first was a motion opposing government's changes to Agricultural Property Relief, which mean that from April 2026, Suffolk farmers will only have relief from inheritance tax for up to £1m of combined agricultural and business property. A further motion also opposed industrialization of the countryside by major energy projects, including solar farms. Another motion also related to solar farms, specifically the need to prioritise rooftop solar over solar farms and lobby for changes to planning so that new housing and commercial developments

have solar panels and priority is given to retrofitting solar to buildings or brownfield sites over new solar farms which take good quality farmland out of food production. For example, in France solar panels are often mounted on canopies above car parks to maximise space. As well as contributing to the country's net zero targets, solar panels could significantly reduce energy bills for Suffolk schools and libraries. The final motion was on knife crime and proposed that a knife crime action plan for Ipswich be discussed at the next meeting of the Safer, Stronger Communities Board in March 2025. At Cabinet 3 December, a new economic strategy was tabled which followed the creation of the Suffolk Business Board earlier in 2024. The Board produced a strategy for the county for the next five years, listing the areas which are most important to the Suffolk economy, including clean energy, agriculture, tourism, and ports and logistics. It also outlined how the Board hopes that digital innovation, AI and robotics can help drive improvements and growth in these areas, along with plans to support start-ups, provide business mentoring and skills projects with young people. Concern was expressed that the strategy barely mentioned arts, heritage and culture, and that no arts or cultural organizations were represented on the Board. The plan was approved by the council's Cabinet, and the Suffolk Business Board will now finalise how it plans to deliver the strategy, and will report back to Cabinet every year on their progress. The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 5 December to review the plan for improvement following the Ofsted inspection of the council's children's social care provision earlier in the year. The Ofsted report was published in August 2024 and the council learned it had dropped two grades, from being rated Outstanding in 2019 its current grade of Requires Improvement. The council had to produce an action plan for improvement which it has submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education. councils. There will also be a new Strengthening Services for Children and Families Board, which will be chaired by the council's Chief Executive, Nicola Beach. The council particularly needs to improve services for care leavers and consistency of practice and quality assurance - this means reviewing interactions with children and families to make sure the council is doing the best it can to help them. This work is separate to the council's improvement work for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which is subject to a separate inspection process by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

7. Report from District Cllr Matthissen

The Government are now proposing new mandatory housing targets for each local authority area. There will need to be a process to revisit the current housing numbers for each town / village in the district and a JLP review. Last December, Government announced major reform of local government. This is likely to mean one elected Mayor to represent Norfolk and Suffolk combined, who will have powers and funding to move forward the Government's agenda. Our two-tier system of district and county councils will be replaced with large new unitary councils, with SCC proposing one for the whole of Suffolk, which Mid Suffolk is very likely to oppose as being too large. Discussions are ongoing at both district and county level as to the various benefits and disadvantages of these proposals, and how best to prepare for the major changes ahead. The county council are also trying to get the elections due in May cancelled. Your District councillors are strongly opposed to this, as existing councillors would have their mandate extended to 6 years. Proposals for the General Fund budget were approved in last month's second cabinet meeting and discussed later in the Overview & Scrutiny committee. This shows the council's finances to be in surplus, in part due to expanded housing developments and income generated from Gateway 14, with these surplus funds being used to proceed with the Mid Suffolk Plan. Key figures include an increase of £1.689m in net revenue service expenditure, a £2.660m increase in gross expenditure, no increase in council tax from 2024/25, and a capital budget of £29.986m in 2025/26. The Pride in your Place grant, which was first launched last year, is open for town councils, parish councils and local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprises

(VCFSE) organisations to apply. Grants of between £250 and £5,000 may be applied for, allowing for more significant projects to take place across the district. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, the following: Planting, the development of local history, heritage culture, purchasing of village signs, purchasing of seating and benches for community spaces, maintenance or enhancement of open public spaces, the purchase of equipment to enable the maintenance of open public spaces, including community litter picks. The grant window opens on 1 December and will remain open for applications until the annual £50,000 budget is fully allocated across the district. There are quite a few new jobs being created in the Stowmarket area with various companies being based at Gateway 14. The new bridge and lifts at Stowmarket Station is a Greater Anglia project but is something the District Council has been lobbying for.

Cllr Matthissen was questioned on the new housing numbers. MSDC had a 10 year land supply which is now 7 years and will still need to look to allocate land beyond that time. Infrastructure is not keeping pace with development and residents are concerned regarding availability of doctor surgeries, dentists and schools.

8. Planning Matters

a) To discuss and make recommendation to MSDC on any applications received prior to this meeting.

24/05450 Construction of new drop kerb, 34 Forest Road – no comment.

b) To receive MSDC decisions on previously considered applications.

24/05051 Erection of single storey extension, The Cedar House, Lower Road – granted.

9. Finances

To approve payment of the following invoices:

a) £395.00 Gipping Press January OHSMag £364.00 leaflets £31.00

b) £239.09 Mrs Copping reimbursement for Gopak tables for Little Owls

c) £520.00 Christine Hargan temporary clerking services November

d) £360.00 Mrs Fuller clerking services December

Items a) –d) were approved and payments authorised

e) To receive monthly financial report from the Clerk

At the end of December there was £2,388.70 in the current account and £33,340.73 in the savings account of which £237.52 is interest for October-December. This gives total of £35,729.43 of which £28,953.14 is held in earmarked reserves and £6,776.31 in general funds.

f) To finalise and approve the precept to be raised for 2025/26.

It was unanimously agreed to set the precept at £27,000.00. The precept form was duly signed.

g) To consider setting up A Direct Debit for the monthly phone package and take any necessary action.

Currently Cllr Copping is paying this monthly and then reclaiming back on a quarterly basis. It was unanimously agreed to set up a Direct Debit.

h) To consider a request from Mrs Fuller for back pay to the end of July following the Local Government Pay Claim 2024/25 agreement and take any necessary action.

NALC & SLCC strongly recommend that employers should pay any monies due from 1 April 2024 to the date to the last day of the employee's employment if requested to do so. This will also mean that OPC will need to amend the CARE and final pay figures with the local LGPS for pre-April 2014 membership. Cllrs voted unanimously to pay Mrs Fuller £125.06 back pay for April to July 2024.

10. To consider full council review of all candidates for the post of Clerk and Financial Officer to Onehouse PC and take any necessary action.

Cllrs wish to be involved and therefore a meeting will be held 3 February to agree candidates for interview.

11. To discuss light pollution around the village and take any necessary action.

There has been very bright light emanating from the Fieldens site over the last few months. Concerns have been expressed regarding being blinded and thinking a vehicle is approaching whilst walking the footpaths and female residents have mentioned it makes them feel unsafe as they cannot see when someone is walking towards them. The light illuminates several surrounding fields causing consequences to the wildlife. This may drive away wildlife that thrive at night, or use the dark for protection from predators. It has also been questioned whether planning permission would be required for these lights. It was agreed that Cllr Roberts would draft an email (which will be checked by Cllr Boulter and the Clerk) to Fieldens advising of our concerns and gain information before discussing further at the next meeting. The email will go from the Clerk. *Action: Cllrs Roberts & Boulter/the Clerk*

12. To consider the co-option of a councillor and take any necessary action.

MSDC has confirmed there has been no request for an election and the casual vacancy can be filled by co-option. An advert will be included in the March OHSMag.

13. To appoint the following and take any necessary action:

a) Tree and Footpath Warden - Mr Leek had been this when he was a Cllr and was asked if he wished to continue. He will consider this but will not make a commitment.

b) Safeguarding Officer – Cllr Crissell will look into what is involved

c) Safety Officer – Cllr Roberts would like to get further information before deciding to take on the position.

These will be on the agenda for the February meeting.

14. Events

a) to consider a Village Show and the formation of a working group.

This is a popular idea and should have a working party which was resolved in November to be Cllrs Copping and Leek and bring in others as required. Mr Leek advised he is happy to continue even though he is no longer a Cllr. He stated that at this point a pack needs to be put together with the organisations attending, advertisement etc. He calculated the cost to put the field back after the event would be £800 - £900 and has tried to glean information regarding insurance for the field but has not had a response. Mr Leek is concerned that the Parish Council has not included a figure in the precept for this event. Cllrs advised that they have not seen any information and would need to see the full overall plans for the event. Mr Leek claims that Cllrs have received handouts with this information but all Cllrs advised they had not received this. There needs to be a working group meeting and notes to bring councillors up to date. An item will be put in OHSMag to see if people come forward to help.

15. To consider a response to Suffolk Police and Crime Plan consultation and take any necessary action. (ends 20 January)

Councillors do not wish to respond as a corporate body but can do so as individuals.

16. To receive an update on the Paupers Graves and take any necessary action.

There has been no grass cutting since September, in preparation for the tree pollarding which will take place this month. The working group are concentrating on the righthand side of the site over the next few months. OPC has been asked by MSDC if trees for babies can

be planted there but not further trees will be planted in the Paupers Graves area. Two people from the Bloor and Hopkins Homes development have joined the working group.

17. To consider a request for an Elfin Tree project for the Pauper's Graves and take any necessary action

This has been discussed with the Pauper's Graves Group who are passionate that this is a graveyard and they want to keep its sanctity. Therefore, the request is declined and it will be suggested that they contact the Woodland Trust to see if there is a suitable tree in Northfield Wood.

18. To discuss development of land around the parish and take any necessary action.

There has been no update from Kate Parum, MSDC regarding Onehouse Meadow. District Cllr Turner has also contacted the officer and not received any reply. Cllr Boulter will contact Kate Parum again and any other contacts with this project. Taylor Wimpey as still keen to be involved.
Action: Cllr Boulter

19. To discuss OHSMag, Onehouse website and Facebook page and take any necessary action.

OHSMag – the print run will be increased to 670 to cover further residents on the Mill Grove and Bloor developments. The editor is looking to step down. There has been no response to the vacancy so far and it will be advertised again in OHSMag and further afield. A local auctioneer is prepared to hold an antiques appraisal event. He will talk about antiques and people can bring items for him to value. This could be a fundraiser for OHSMag. Only 7 adult and 2 children have booked for the Scotch Missed event. All members of the OHSMag committee are to get 10 attendees each.

Website – nothing to report

Facebook – several enquiries and issues have been sorted by this medium including information on the roadworks in Northfield Road which is for cable replacement.

20. To receive correspondence/communications and to deal with any matters.

SCC Julia Proctor update of Footpath Forest Road – she is chasing for a date for more survey work as the work is close to the Med Pressure gas main. She wants the project construction ready in Spring. Cllrs feel this is another delaying tactic, we were told it would be completed in Spring 2024, also surely SCC should have known from the beginning of the project that the gas main was there. **The following items have been circulated to Cllrs:** **SALC** training bulletin 10, 17 December, news bulletin 16 December, 7, 13 January, Carer's leave entitlement, holiday pay, devolution update. **MSDC** Suffolk Recycles winter newsletter, Devolution White Paper and other government announcements, Town & Parish update January, Joint Local Plan update, Mid Suffolk Town & Parish Liaison meeting 22 January, Joint Local Plan and devolution, Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus January promotion. **SCC** Suffolk EP Passenger group meeting 8 January, Loft Insulation for your residents. **National Grid** Norwich to Tilbury project update January. **County Cllr Otton** important roadworks information junctions 47 to 46 resurfacing overnight 13-15 January, news from Suffolk Trading Standards 19 December.

21. To receive reports

a) Report from the Clerk

Advertisement for a Clerk/Financial Officer – this has been placed with Suffolk Jobs as well as SALC.

New noticeboard for Mill Grove – is ready for delivery and Realise Futures will advise delivery date once their van is repaired. Ray Taylor will kindly store until it is installed.

Bench for Pauper's Graves area – A Enviro1500 has been ordered with Realise Futures to match the previous bench.

Councillor email – all councillors are reminded that they should have set up their onehouseparishcouncil.gov.uk email addresses.

22. Questions to the Chairman

There were none.

23. Items for next agenda

Benches for playing field and outside village hall, light pollution, appointment of Footpath Warden, Safeguarding Officer and Safety Officer, Village Show, Paupers Graves, development of land in the parish, OHSMag, Facebook and website,

18. To confirm date and time of the next meeting as Monday 10 February 2025 at 7.30 p.m. Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.02 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....