

MINUTES OF THE ONEHOUSE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 13 MAY 2024 AT 7.00 P.M. IN TRINITY HALL

Present – Mrs cOPPING – Chair Onehouse Parish Council
County Councillor Otton
12 members of the public

1. To receive apologies for absence.

These were received from Mr Leek, Mr Nutman, Mr Taylor, Rev Jenkins and Mrs Pedge.

2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held 17 April 2023

It was proposed, seconded and carried to approve the minutes.

3. To receive the audited parish accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

During the year a precept of £15,180.00 was raised. Donations were given to Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau, East Anglian Air Ambulance, Ipswich & East Suffolk Headway and Onehouse PCC Trinity Hall Project.

The balance of the Income and Expenditure Account as at 31 March 2023 is £11,043.37. Funds held in earmarked reserves total £13,411.92.

4. Parish Council Report – Mrs J Copping

The last year has seen the council presented with several challenges, but also given rise to many opportunities and successes.

Despite the, as yet unsettled, boundary review, we have welcomed many new residents into our community. Although frustrating to be in the position of needing to defend our boundary once again, the review gave all of our residents, new and old, a fair opportunity to comment on the process. I personally found it heart-warming to read the submitted comments on just what Onehouse means to our community. We are awaiting a final decision on retaining the boundary as it is, with the decision expected to be made 22nd May.

Another major challenge to Onehouse has been the increased flooding issues and subsequent damage to roadways. This is very much an ongoing issue that we hope to work with other parishes and key stakeholders on, to help reduce flooding cutting off access routes and posing a risk to residents, properties and vehicles. Thanks here to Councillor Matthissen for informing us of the formation of a multi parish group. Also, a key person in sourcing information and working with the multi parish team is Councillor Leek, who I thank for both his curiosity and persistence relating to drainage and flooding on behalf of residents in varying problematic areas.

Thankfully the A14 resurfacing works are coming closer to completion, however it has brought into sharp focus the issue of road safety, particularly on Lower Road for pedestrians and cyclists. Councillors Nutman and Boulter have worked hard to push for a reduction in the speed limit to 40mph on this route and have had been supported in this endeavour by Councillor Otton. We currently await the latest review into the feasibility for this speed reduction.

Throughout the last year the council has responded to 17 planning applications and planning amendments. I would at this juncture like to point out that the Council is bound by planning regulations for approval or opposition, and as such, assess each application against these regulations with the added benefit of local knowledge.

We have two ongoing projects which began during the last year. The first is the footpath extension on Forest Road. Unfortunately, this was delayed over the last twelve months due to the change and onboarding of a new contractor for this work. We've been informed the design should be available for review mid-June. We appreciate that the initial request for a footpath began over 50 years ago, however we are closer to getting this completed than ever before, with the funding already available from Taylor Wimpey. Again, thank you to Penny Otton and Julia Proctor, the SCC Senior Project Manager for continuing to push for updates regarding this work and keeping the Council informed of progress.

The second project under review during the last year, was the development of land to the south of Northfield View for the community of Onehouse. Councillor Boulter has been instrumental in meeting with stakeholders from both Taylor Wimpey and MSDC to convey what our community would like to see happen to this land now that the building of a multi-use games area has been withdrawn. These discussions included Vincent Pearce, Principle Planning Officer for BMSDC who was a strong advocate for meeting the needs of the parish with this parcel of land. Unfortunately, there have been delays to this project whilst the planning has been ongoing for the MSDC SHELF (Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities) project. We are hopeful that now the sports facilities have been agreed, the planning can be formalised on the 'wellbeing' part of the project which will take us a step closer to the development of this piece of land.

During the last year progress has been made towards a new parish website. The site has been constructed and is now being updated with information before it can be 'go live' later in the year. It's hoped that the new site will provide a broader range of information and updates that will be beneficial to both residents and visitors to our village.

My thanks go to Councillor Boulton who led the Council's efforts, with support from Councillor Crissell, to nominate the Pauper's Graves working group for the Suffolk Society's Heritage Champions award, more on that within their report, along with other exciting news. The commitment of this working group to preserve this area for future generations, whilst maintaining the integrity of this last resting place for so many of our own and surrounding parish residents deserves all of our gratitude. The Council has gone through a period where numbers of councillors have been depleted. Helping to rectify this Councillor Leek was co-opted in November 2023 leaving us with just one further vacancy, which we expect to fill shortly. At this point I would like to commend Councillor Corker for his dedication to the role of councillor and ongoing support of the parish. John has undergone some personal challenges over the last twelve months and the fact that he remains a valued member of our Council demonstrates both his fortitude and commitment to Onehouse.

I would like to remind residents that all councillors are volunteers. We act on behalf of the parish and endeavour to make decisions that meet the needs of residents

whilst abiding by the laws which govern us. To enable the council to better understand the needs of our growing community, we are planning to undertake a village wide survey with the intention of creating a People and Places Plan. Once the groundwork has been completed and the Plan fully adopted, it will serve as evidence of what the needs of our community are, and be a useful tool for future planning for either housing or amenities.

The OHSMag continues to go from strength to strength with its new editor Laura Cross at the helm, following the resignation of Ron Raisey. Laura is bringing in new ideas to the magazine with the support of the three parish OHSMag committee. Fund raising events to support the ongoing costs of the magazine are currently in the planning stage.

Moving forward into this new year the Council is seeking to work more closely with the OHS Community Centre to encourage more residents to use this resource. And finally, with sadness I would like to portray my personal thanks and those of the entire Council, to Peggy Fuller, who after over 28 years serving as the Clerk for Onehouse, has decided to retire. Peggy's commitment to Onehouse and consummate understanding of the rules by which Councils are bound has supported both me as Chairperson and so many of those that have gone before. The role of clerk can, I'm sure, be a thankless task at times, being the constant sounding board for councillors, residents and stakeholders alike.

5. Matters arising from the previous items on the agenda.

There were none.

6. County Councillor's Report – Mrs P Otton.

Flooding in Suffolk From end of October 2023, Suffolk suffered a winter of repeated flooding, most notably Storm Babet, when the area around the Burford bridge, Rattlesden and parts of Lower Road were particularly badly affected. Along with your chair we arranged for SCC to help with warning signs and she went above and beyond in putting these out.

I attended a meeting of local parishes in Gt Finborough to see what we could do jointly to make improvements to prevent this happening again. It was agreed that all the agencies need to work together. I managed to get the problem on Lower Road partly dealt with but SCC still needs to get the landowner to clear ditches. With Tom Jewers help the problem at bottom of Cutlers lane seems to be resolved. Suffolk's total rainfall during October 2023 was 117.9mm (4.5in). The drainage systems in the county were unable to cope with the volume of water. Suffolk County Council have committed an extra £1m for flood investigations to try and prevent future incidents;

The government offered funding to household affected by flooding, with many also able to access further money for preventative works and I am pleased many were successful in getting this money.

FOREST ROAD FOOTPATH; I'm sorry that with the new highways contract this has again been delayed but is definitely still on the list to be done.

SPEED LIMIT LOWER ROAD. I have now sent the final report to reduce the speed limit from 60mph to 40mph to Cllr Richard Smith the cabinet member for highways who has the delegated authority to make the change (or not!). I am

pleased that the traffic survey, which I agreed could be paid for from my local highways budget, and feedback from the police was reasonably positive.

I have also on numerous occasions reported the state of Lower Road and it is on the list for further work but also for SCC to get work done by the landowner.

PAUPERS GRAVES; I was more than pleased to be able to contribute to this most worthy project from my locality fund.

ROAD SIGNS; I was given £3,000 to cover replace and repair road signs across my division and several in Onehouse will be done, but thank you to the parish council for doing the survey and “chipping” in as £3K would not be able to cover all my parishes!

RAAC/Condition of School Buildings In September the council held a scrutiny session on the condition of school buildings, which was very timely as the news has just begun reporting on the number of schools with RAAC,. RAAC, which stands for Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete, is a lightweight building material, cheaper than concrete, which was used extensively in buildings between 1950 and 1990 Stowupland Highschool was one that had to close and will now be re-built.

New Suffolk Fire and Rescue Control Centre

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have recommended that the council leave the current control centre partnership with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire councils and open a new control centre in Suffolk by the end of 2024. A new temporary site for the control centre was needed from December 2023, and work will now begin to find a more permanent site in the centre of the county close to major roads.

New Highways Contract

From 1 October 2023, Suffolk County Council entered into a new Highways contract with Milestone, following the end of the previous contract with Kier. The new contract promises better communication with councillors and Suffolk residents, and contains incentives for the new contractor to work efficiently – for example, undertaking other works needed in the same geographical area when they are called out. The performance of the contract will be scrutinised after 12 months to assess Milestone’s performance and is for an initial period of 10 years, with the option to increase it a further 10 years.

At the same time, a new contract for street lighting was entered into with McCann. This contract is due to last for seven years.

Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined In February 2024, the Council’s budget for 2024/25 was voted in. The Conservative budget proposed an increase in council tax of the maximum 4.99%, which breaks down into a 2% rise for the Social Care Precept and a 2.99% increase in general tax.

Council services have faced another year of spiralling demand and additional cost pressures, The proposed budget included a 100% cut to arts and museums funding, with a temporary fund set up for 2024-25 using the remaining Covid funding from the government to allow some time for these organizations to adapt and find other sources of income.

It also proposed that all local archives and records be centralised to The Hold in Ipswich, a decision which has been vigorously opposed in both Lowestoft and Bury

St Edmunds, where communities want to keep their record office buildings in the area.

My group acknowledged the difficulty of the council's financial position and proposed a minor amendment – that instead of using all of the leftover Covid funding for arts and museums, half should be allocated to supporting young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), a service the Conservatives were planning to cut.

We proposed that £250k of the 2024-25 funding for arts and museums be allocated from the council's core funding, as this is an important distinction for arts organizations when they are applying for other sources of income. This amendment was declined.

The Conservatives backed down on the 100% reduction in funding from April 2025 onwards, and shortly before the budget meeting announced a £500k funding pot which arts and heritage organisations can bid for in the 2025-26 financial year. This could mean the funding for arts and museums is spread more thinly, but means more organizations are likely to benefit. As budget decisions for 2025-26 will not be made until the February 2025 council meeting, this decision is not yet ratified.

Ofsted/CQC Inspection of Suffolk SEND (special education needs) Provision
Suffolk County Council and its NHS partners who provide SEND services (the 'Local Area Partnership') were inspected by Ofsted and CQC in November 2023, with the inspection report being published on 30 January 2024. The inspection found 'widespread and/or systematic failings' in the county's SEND provision and is the second poor inspection result since SEND inspections were introduced in 2016. As a result of the inspection, the two Cabinet Members for children's services and education at the council stood down, and new Cabinet Members have been appointed to these roles. A new full time and permanent Director for Children's Services (DCS) has also recently been appointed, who will start at the council in July.

Suffolk Devolution Deal After much talk of devolution in the last few years, it looks like this may now happen in Suffolk. Devolution is a process by which regions or cities in the UK can have greater control over decisions in their areas. The government agrees a deal with the area which gives them more freedom to make local decisions about how to spend government funding. This is due to happen in Suffolk from 2025 in areas such as transport and adult education. There will also be a £16m annual investment fund for economic growth, a £5.8m lump sum to regenerate brownfield sites across the county, and a £3m one off investment in retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient.

The devolution deal also means the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk, so every four years residents will have two votes, one to elect their local county councillor and the leader of the county council. That leader CANNOT BE A COUNTY COUNCILLOR. The first election for the directly elected leader will be in May 2025, which is the next county council election. There could be problems with having an elected leader if they are from a different political group to most of the other councillors; the leader can choose a Cabinet and control the council's agenda, but without the votes in the council chamber they might find it difficult to get things done.

Libraries Consultation On Tuesday 25 March, Cabinet reviewed the results of the recent consultation about the Suffolk library service, which is due to go out to procurement in the summer. Broadly, the members of the public who responded to the survey agreed with what libraries currently provided, including community and digital services, and the mobile library and home library services for people who were housebound. It is also likely that mobile libraries will run from smaller vehicles in future. The successful bidder for the new libraries contract is likely to be announced in November, with the new contract starting from June 2025. The contract will be for six years with an option to renew for a further six years.

Motions to Council My group passed one motion successfully during the year in May 2024, which was for the council to work with its partners to better signpost members of the public to benefits they may be entitled to. This motion was raised as a result of reports that over £15bn of means tested benefits are going unclaimed because people were not always aware of the support they could access to help them.

Other motions the group had been unable to bring forward or were voted down by the Conservative administration included solar power 'Roofs before Rural', to ask the council to commit to prioritise solar panels on buildings and brownfield sites over solar farms on good quality agricultural land, and to lobby the government to reduce barriers to community energy projects. Community energy projects enable local people to produce electricity (for example, by solar panels on schools) to reduce bills, with any extra electricity sold to the grid, making a profit which can be reinvested locally.

In July my group proposed a motion to make it easier for communities to lower speed limits on rural roads where the safe speed for driving is clearly lower than the current National Speed Limit, thereby reducing accidents and making roads safer for all users. This motion was voted down by the Conservative administration. We also tabled a motion on flooding in December, which among other things, proposed to increase the frequency of clearing drains and gullies around the county; however, the Conservatives proposed an amendment removing this recommendation and passed a weaker motion which did not include any changes to the usual schedule of drainage works.

County Cllr Otton was asked where the new fire and rescue control will be sited. This is still being looked into but a new site is needed by the end of 2024.

7. District Councillor's Report – Mr J Matthissen.

Becoming the MSDC Administration

The year 2023-2024 has been quite unlike any since I was first elected in 2007. After 16 years being a member of the opposition at Mid Suffolk, with limited influence beyond advocating for the villages I represent, I am now a member of the group running the District Council, known as the administration. This has brought new responsibilities as well as playing a part in shaping the priorities for the years up to 2027. Your councillor now chairs the Audit and Standards committee, and is a director of two of the companies owned by the District Council. I also continue as a member of the Planning Committee although I hope to step back from that now our many new councillors have gained knowledge and confidence in their roles.

The new administration has moved ahead with a range of big projects, of which the sports health and leisure complex at Chilton Fields is closest to our villages, while Gateway 14 and The Range building have the highest visibility for the town. Two of the smaller projects worthy of particular note, are the Cosy Homes initiative to insulate leaky houses across the owner occupier and private rental sectors, and the Rural Community Transport grants which I hope will soon bring some improvement to the skeletal public transport services in our rural areas.

Of significance to every village will be the adoption last year of the Joint Local Plan after a painfully long period of preparation and examination. We have greater control over development, and in fact very few additional houses have been granted since last May. Those already permitted or allocated will however be under construction for the rest of the term to 2027 and beyond.

Inevitably it is not all good news however and after spending £670,000 to tackle a council housing repair backlog we have found that the longer term finances of the 3500+ homes we own are not as strong as we had been led to believe over recent years. Known as the Housing Revenue Account the rents must pay for all the associated costs of repairs, management and new buildings. Government rules dictate that it cannot be supported from our stronger General Fund. Hence rents were increased by 7% as an unwelcome part of our first budget.

8. To receive reports from Local Organisations

Jubilee Players

Last September, for the first time ever, we put on an adult play entitled “Five One”. We all felt this was very successful on both the evenings we put on a performance. At the suggestion of our director, Bryan Jones, we placed the stage at the opposite end of the hall which, for this particular play, worked very well.

In February we put on our traditional pantomime “Beauty and the Beast” which was well cast and well received by the audience on all 4 evenings. It involved a great deal of hard work, commitment and dedication by all concerned and as usual, we appealed for more people to join the Jubilee Players in any capacity.

Four new stage backdrops were purchased eliminating the need for scenery painting. We also purchased another three sets of steps which were needed as an addition to the stage we bought two years ago.

Regrettably Carole Hearn, who was a founder member and has been our treasurer for a great many years has decided to retire. We would like to thank her very much for the wonderful service she has provided and are looking for someone to replace her.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to the Committee for all the hard work they do and all the effort they make in keeping the Jubilee Players alive. Looking forward to the next show.

OHS Management Committee Community Centre

Outbuildings – Building project almost completed, total raised in selling of bricks and tiles = £3880. Jobs to do: Downpipes and drainage for rain water, Connect electrics

Grass cutting – continues to be paid for by Parish Council

Finances End of year accounts presented for July 22- June 23 Current account - £12,406.14, Deposit account - £680.04

Hall hirings - Lynn, Pilates class - Monday and Thursday evenings 5:15 pm – 8:15 pm

Jubilee Players – September to February Wednesday evenings 7 - 8:30 pm and January – February Sundays 2- 5 pm. Hall hire fees are £15 per hour, Pilates - £10 an hour includes heating, Jubilee Players - £7 an hour + heating

2024 onwards

Hall floor and windows - Section 106 grant received from Mid-Suffolk Bid as follows:

Floor £26,518, Windows, doors and facias for decorating £4,000, Internal secondary glazing £8,996 Grant awarded £38,218. Work to commence on 27 May 2024 – 2 weeks for windows and doors etc, 2 weeks for floor (hall will be closed for 2 weeks for floor)

Preschool donated £500 to hall for decorating prior to above work

Hall and play equipment upgrade - Phase 2 of project as advised by Mid-Suffolk to commence after the above.

Youth shed - Plans are underway for a youth shed at the side of the hall for teenagers on a Friday evening.

Sports and Social Club

The social club is currently open on Friday nights only due to lack of voluntary bar staff and a change in socialising and drinking habits over the last few years. We do however have a small but regular band of customers. In the autumn we plan to open on Wednesdays to cater for the pantomime rehearsal cast and the darts team will continue next season on Thursdays. Hopefully this will increase revenue .I would also expect an increase in turnover related to hall hirings with our planned more appealing hall after the refurbishment. We currently hold £1600 in the bank account.

Onehouse Church

The Parish Church of St John the Baptist continues, as it has for the best part of 1000 years, to serve and meet the spiritual and material needs of the people in Onehouse. Whilst the current Electoral Roll of the Church is twenty-six and Sunday congregations are between fifteen and twenty, the Church is open to serve and meet the needs of all parishioners as and when required. The Church strives to be open and welcoming to all. The Church, along with Harleston and Shelland, Combs, Buxhall, Gt Finborough and Little Finborough is within the Combs and Finborough Benefice. The seven churches are served and led by the Rector, Revd Sarah Jenkins, supported by Revd Canon Pauline Higham and a small ministry team of Lay Readers and two Elders. Whilst our Rector lives in Combs Rectory, Pauline as Assistant Priest, lives in Onehouse Rectory, Woodland Close. There is a regular pattern of Services across the Benefice with two Services, a Service of Holy Communion and a Service of Morning Worship in Onehouse Church each month. During December, January and February, Services are

usually held in Trinity Hall. Details of Services are always posted on the Church noticeboard, in the OHSMag and online. There are, of course, always Services held in Onehouse, as in all the Benefice Churches, at Easter and Christmas and for other festivals or significant occasions. These Services see larger congregations. Just yesterday, 12th May, sixty-four attended the George Ward Memorial Service.

Onehouse has, for several years, hosted a 9.30 am Wednesday morning Benefice Holy Communion Service in Trinity Hall and this is regularly attended by twenty or so people from across the seven Churches. This followed by an open coffee morning, well attended by local people.

Onehouse Parochial Church Council, the PCC, currently twelve in number, meets monthly to discuss and oversee all aspects of the Church. The Church remains financially self-sufficient and through regular giving, one-off donations, 'Gift Day' donations and fund-raising events is able to meet necessary costs and pay the Annual Parish Share which for Onehouse totalled £7500 last year and will rise to over £8000 this year.

During the last Quinquennial Inspection in 2022 a number of minor and some major repair needs to the fabric of the Church building were identified by the appointed architect/surveyor. The most significant being major repair and replacement of the Church roof in the next five-ten years. This work will be at significant cost and in addition to generous donations already received, grant aid will need to be sort.

Of course, in addition to the Church building, the Trinity Hall and Trinity Hall Car Park is Church property and has its own ongoing costs and maintenance needs. The refurbishment work completed during recent years has improved and enhanced the building considerably, but more needs to be done. Thank you to Penny Otton, John Matthiessen and OPC for the support, encouragement and financial assistance. Currently, plans are being prepared for work to the external walls, with either cladding or another suitable alternative to provide a more durable outer shell than the current lime cement rendering. Internally, a sound-system, hearing loop and wi-fi provision are all being considered and costed.

The Church and Trinity Hall are maintained by a number of willing volunteers from within the Church and the village community. Cleaning, maintenance work, gardening and flower arranging continue throughout the year and additional volunteers will always be welcomed.

The Church and Trinity Hall are important village amenities and resources and the PCC are keen for them to be seen as such and used well by the community. Suggestions and ideas for activities, developments and Services will always be welcomed and considered by the PCC.

OHS Women's Guild

We have had a very good year. Our membership has risen to 35 plus 3 honorary members. The committee has been very busy planning our programme, now up to December 2024. Changing our meetings to afternoons is working extremely well.

Our programme and insurance certificates are displayed on our lovely new noticeboard in Trinity Hall. We also report each month in the OHSMAG. Our AGM will take place on 16th May.

Paupers Graves

We are a team of seven old boys who meet twice a month all through the year looking after this rather beautiful and tranquil little site. It is a favourite route for many dog walkers (some who leave their dog poo bag on under one of the seats!!!) It is also a place where people can sit in a quiet space. A lot of people sit and have their lunch on one of the benches. We have won the Suffolk Heritage Champions Award 2024 for the preservation care and restoration of the Stow Union Paupers Graves Site. This recognition is something that we did not expect and we all are very excited and pleased to be recognised for our labours over many years. Our District Councillor has donated a new recycled plastic bench which looks just like a dark wooden bench but without having to do any maintenance to. This is placed in a new area we have opened up for people to sit. Recently we have had another success story in so much as, Julie Johnson a lady who lived in Nacton as a child is doing a dissertation for her Master’s Degree on Pauper’s Burial Grounds in Victorian Times and she has discovered the names of all those buried there from 1813 – 1835 three hundred during that period. All the other records have been destroyed or gone missing!! We are hoping that we can raise enough money to have a proper memorial plaque erected with all their names on. They were people who had nothing all their lives but they all lived; therefore, they should be acknowledged and remembered. Our District Councillor has promised the money for the brickwork involved in the Memorial and we have got a Stone Mason giving us an estimate for the Granite Plaques. It is thought that the total cost of two plaques or a single large plaque (depending on the design the team go for) should be in the region of £7400.00. This includes VAT As it will be purchased by Onehouse Parish Council they will be able to claim the VAT back so that reduces the cost by 20%.

The Pauper’s Care Team at the moment are: Richard Cook, John Corker, John Emsden, Ian Fraser, David Nicholson, Phil James and Ray Taylor our total age is 558!! We are getting quite an ancient team, so; if there are any volunteers out there who would like to carry on to care for this very important and historic site please contact us.

9. Any other business

There was none

The meeting closed at 7.47 p.m.

Signed..... Dated.....