

Minutes of the Meeting of Groton Parish Council held on Wednesday 10th January 2024 at 7.00pm in Groton Village Hall

Present: S McGrath (Chair), N Chapman, C Hearn, M Mackay-Morris, A Dixon-Smith, R Jones (Clerk)

Guests: J Finch (Suffolk CC) B Hurren (Babergh DC)

- 1. Apologies for Absence** – P Roberts, R Cheeseman
- 2. Councillors' Declarations of Interests** - None
- 3. Minutes of the Meeting of 8th November 2023** – Approved. It was pointed out that Councillor Hearn's suggested amendment to the minutes had not been made. The Clerk to rectify this.
- 4. Receive Reports from Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council**
 - 4.1 Councillor James Finch provided a report on behalf of Suffolk CC a copy of which is attached: Concern was expressed about the number of potholes in the Parish and the quality of repairs. It was hoped that the new Highways contract would go some way to alleviating the current problems. It was pointed out that anybody could report a Highways issue online using SCC's website and the following link:
<https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>
 - 4.2 Councillor Bryn Hurren provided a report on behalf of Babergh DC a copy of which is attached: Concerns were expressed about the effect that the introduction of car parking charges could have on local small businesses. Councillor Hurren reminded Councillors about his locality budget which provided small amounts of money to local Councils for community use.
- 5. Groton Traffic Assessment** – It was agreed with Councillor Finch to book a date and venue to meet with a representative of SCC Highways to progress this item.
- 6. Questions from Members of the Public** - None
- 7. Financial Matters:**
 - 7.1. Statement of Finances and Orders for Payment and Q3 accounts were approved as follows:

Unity Trust Current Account as at 31 December 2023	£5,659.93
Unity Trust Deposit Account as at 31 December 2023	£2,779.37
Nat West Current Account as at 31 December 2023	£554.40
Nat West Deposit Account as at 31 December 2023	£0.01
Total	£8,993.71

**Payments received:
Bank Interest - £19.13**

Cheque No	Amount	Payee	Purpose
300063	£22.80	SALC	6 months Payroll Apr – Sept 23
300064	£460.76	R J Jones	Clerk's Salary Oct – Dec 23
300065	£115.40	HMRC	Tax on Clerk's Salary
300066	£675.00	A Adams	Footpath Cutting 2023
300067	£10.00	R J Jones	Clerk's Expenses Dec 23 - Jan

7.2 Budget 2023/24 - The adequacy of the Budget for 2023/24 was agreed.

7.3 Precept 2024/25 -The Precept for 2024/25 was agreed and set at £5,005.00.

7.4 Budget 2024/25 The Budget for 2024/25 was considered and approved.

7.5 Other Financial Matters – The Clerk had identified a Lenovo laptop with a discounted cost of £279.99. It was agreed that the Clerk purchase this item.

- 8. Neighbourhood Plan Update** – Councillor Chapman reported that the recent Groton Housing Needs Assessment results has been successfully completed. We had 33 Households responding and the results are informative. An interesting couple of data points are that 66% of Households have 4 or more Bedrooms, whilst 50% of Households are occupied by 2 or less people. This is consistent with the 2021 Census data. The results are being reviewed by the Steering Group and will input into the development of draft 'Housing' policies that will be shared with the community once completed. It was agreed that this section will be referred to as 'Groton People & Places Plan' going forward.

9. Planning Matters

9.1 Planning Applications - DC/23/05866 Land and Agricultural Building, Parliament Heath, Groton, CO10 5EP - Planning Application. Demolition of existing modern barn and erection of 1no single storey dwelling (Class Q fall back DC/22/05279) – After discussion it was agreed that the Council oppose this application for the following reasons:

The Council opposed the original application on the basis that the present building did not lend itself to conversion to a dwelling and concerns over the effect any building work would have on local wildlife, particularly protected species. The Council felt that environmental reports submitted in connection with this application were vague and unable to demonstrate that the habitat of protected species would remain unhindered.

In addition to reiterating its previous reasons for opposing the application, the Council agreed that the building of a completely new home on agricultural land outside of the settlement boundary would be of no benefit to the Groton community and would not be in line with Babergh DC's Planning Policy.

9.2 Planning decisions received - None

9.3 Any Other Planning Matters - None

- 10. A Garland of Hamlets** – Two further meetings held which were attended by six 'very enthusiastic people' with lots of good ideas discussed. Notes of the meetings to be collated with the next meeting provisionally scheduled for March. Possible working title 'Groton Through the Ages'.

11. Chairman's and Clerk's Reports and Correspondence - None

- 12. Highway and Footpath Matters** – A discussion took place about the amount of recent flooding in the Parish. It was agreed to include flooding as an agenda item for future meetings and to look into inviting Ruby Shepperton from SCC's 'Reclaim the Rain' project to attend a future meeting.

13. To Set Future Agenda items – Flooding. Locality Budget

14. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 6th March at 7.00pm

A Report for Groton Parish Council Meeting on 10th January 2024 From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley Tel: 01206 263649 Mobile 07545 423796 Email: james.finch@suffolk.gov.uk

Cabinet approves new funding to resurface residential roads and welcomes recent Government announcement of £107m ring fenced over next ten years.

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting (7th November), Cabinet approved an extra £10 million to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk. The funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual road maintenance budget but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads. Over recent years, the county council has recognised the importance of improving roads for residents, this new proposal follows the successful £21 million contribution towards the resurfacing of 1,000 miles of road between 2017 and 2021, and more recently the committed £21 million between 2021 – 2025 to increase pavement maintenance, deliver drainage improvement schemes and repair road signs. It is hoped that the extra £10 million boost to resurface some local roads, minor rural roads and urban cul-de-sacs would result in a reduction of new potholes, which in turn will reduce the overall financial burden on the council's emergency and reactive repair budgets. Between 2020 and 2023, 2 out of 3 pothole repairs were carried out on local roads, minor rural roads, and urban cul-de-sacs. During that period, more than half of all defects reported by the public were on these types of roads. The extra investment will make use of more sustainable materials such as warm mix asphalts that have a lower CO2 footprint than traditional hot mix asphalts and which include recycled materials to reduce raw material use; resulting in a more positive impact on Suffolk's environment. Suffolk County Council has welcomed the Government announcement - which is part of a Department for Transport plan to pump £609 million into highway maintenance in the East of England. £107m has been ringfenced for Suffolk over the next decade, including £3.4 million in this financial year.

Suffolk County Council response to local government finance settlement on 18th December

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has announced its funding package to support councils in England to deliver frontline services. Responding to this, Suffolk County Council has said: "This council funding announcement presents more challenges than we, and many other County Councils, expected. It means next year we will have no choice but to consider changes to some of the services we provide. The Government is facing considerable financial pressures and requests for funds from all corners of society, not least from councils across the country. We have consistently lobbied for more funding in Suffolk. "We fully understand this position as we too have increasing demands on our services and rising costs to provide them – but the money we receive is not keeping pace with this need. Despite being a financially well-run council, we have significantly less funding than we need – especially in services like Special Educational needs Development (SEND), home-to-school transport and children in care which are all statutory responsibilities. To prioritise these areas, we will have to make difficult decisions about the services we deliver, how we deliver them and our council tax."

Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care service rated Good overall by Care Quality Commission

Suffolk County Council has been awarded an indicative overall rating of "Good" for the quality of its Adult Social Care services. Following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve this standard. Earlier this year CQC announced that 5 local authorities with responsibility for adult social care, including Suffolk, had volunteered to be part of a Local Authority Assessment Pilot, to help CQC develop the new model of inspection to help assess councils against the requirements of the Care Act. This model would then be rolled out across the country with all 153 Local Authorities with responsibility for Adult Social Care being inspected by the commission. The assessment process began this summer with a request for information to each local authority taking part in the pilot. This collected the written evidence needed to allow CQC to understand how each council is delivering its adult social care services. Following on from this initial ask, the County Council was then required to arrange over 40 different meetings including 4 staff drop-in sessions, with over 150 people, including staff, partners, providers, carers, and people with lived experiences. These meetings allowed the CQC inspection team to meet people

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directly and ask questions to help further evidence the quality of social care services provided. CQC's final report rated the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good" and highlighted areas of strength including, the quality of its leadership, the culture of learning and support for staff, the range of digital care options available, the good relationships between social care and health colleagues and locality team knowledge and understanding of community needs.

SCC Trading Standards advise beware of five scams of Christmas and the New Year

While shoppers look to snap up a bargain, Suffolk Trading Standards is urging them to take a few simple steps to avoid being ripped off. Fake websites, scam texts and bogus competitions are just some of the tactics fraudsters use. Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said: "Be wary of offers that look too good to be true and try to stick with reputable websites that you recognise and trust" or "Be suspicious of requests to make a bank transfer and ensure you research any individual or businesses requesting financial or personal details." The five scams to look out for:

1. Scam delivery texts and emails – You may get an email or text message saying your package has been delayed and it asks you to click on a link to track its status. This link could lead you to a phishing site that steals your personal information. Malicious texts are where someone clicks on a link and provides information, they may then get a phone call from someone claiming to be from their bank who offers to help safeguard funds by trying to convince someone to transfer money into a bogus 'safe account'. Forward suspicious text messages to 7726 and send scam emails to report@phishing.gov.uk
2. Fake and copy-cat websites - The holiday season brings endless emails offering deals, sales, and bargains. Some lead to look-alike websites that trick people into downloading malware, making non-existent purchases, and sharing private information. Authenticate a website by checking the address is spelt correctly. Ideally, type it in rather than clicking on a link, or go to getsafeonline.org/checkawebsite
3. Bogus charities - Only donate to trusted, well-known charities. Before giving, check the charity's name and registration number. You can verify this at the Charity Commission's website at charitycommission.gov.uk
4. Gift Card scams - Fraudsters impersonate one of your email contacts to ask you to buy a gift card for them as a favour. They will typically say they need help buying it as a present as they are too ill, too busy or have an issue with their payment card. The scammer then asks you to share the serial numbers of gift cards to steal the value purchased. If you receive an email asking for personal information or any form of financial help, call that friend or family member on a trusted number and let them know their account may have been hacked
5. Fake social media contests, giveaways, and bogus sellers - Social media platforms are full of bargains but are also where scammers lie in wait with too-good-to-be-true offers. Fraudsters set up fake pages with offers to catch your eye and encourage you to share. These are designed to "farm" any personal information that you have publicly available on your profile. Search for the official page to see if an offer or giveaway is legitimate. Anyone losing money to fraud should contact their bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 20 40 or at www.actionfraud.police.uk Suffolk Trading Standards can be contacted via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133. For a weekly email from Suffolk Trading Standards go to www.suffolk.gov.uk/JoinTheFight.

1,400-year-old temple discovered at Suffolk royal settlement at Rendlesham

A rare, possible pre-Christian temple from the time of the East Anglian Kings, has been found at Rendlesham, near Sutton Hoo in Suffolk. The discovery was made this summer by Suffolk County Council's Rendlesham Revealed community archaeology project, which is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, made possible by National Lottery players. Last year the project uncovered the remains of a large timber Royal Hall, confirming the location as a royal settlement of the East Anglian Kings. This year's excavations also uncovered evidence of fine metalworking associated with royal occupation, including a mould used for casting decorative horse harness similar to that known from the nearby princely burial ground at Sutton Hoo. The royal compound was found to have been more than twice the size than was previously thought, bounded by a 1.5 kilometre-long perimeter ditch that enclosed an area of 15 hectares (the equivalent to about 20 football pitches). The royal residence was part of a wider settlement complex covering 50 hectares which is unique in the archaeology of 5th to 8th century England in its scale and complexity. This year's breakthrough caps a three-year campaign of excavation that transforms expectations and understanding of the period. The site at Rendlesham is identified as an East Anglian royal centre by The Venerable Bede in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Bede records that King Redwald, who died c AD 625 and whose grave is thought to be the Sutton Hoo ship burial, maintained a temple

in which there were altars to pre-Christian Gods alongside an altar to Christ – although he does not specifically say this this was at Rendlesham. Excavations are now complete and the trenches at the site backfilled, with work already underway to analyse the finds with provisional results in 2024. To find out more about the Rendlesham Revealed project visit: heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham

County Councils remain united against Norwich to Tilbury onshore option

Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk County Council leaders are urging National Grid to reconsider their preferred onshore option following findings of a recent review. The councils jointly commissioned and have now published an independent report into the Norwich to Tilbury project, which proposes the construction of a new high voltage electricity transmission line between Norwich in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex. Leaders of the three county councils are now asking National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) and the electricity system planner, National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) to consider the findings. The report, by Hiorns Smart Energy Networks, reviews the options considered by National Grid, including the preferred option of a pylon line between Norwich and Tilbury. The total length of the line would be 183 kilometres. This would consist of around 158 kilometres of new overhead line supported by 520 pylons. There would be also four sections of underground cabling. These underground sections would run through, and in the vicinity of, the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. National Grid's proposals also include a new substation on the Tendring Peninsula, to allow the connection of offshore wind farms. Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk County Councils, accept that the transmission network in East Anglia needs reinforcing to support the transition to net zero, and provide energy security. However, they remain concerned that the need for, and timing of, the current proposals is uncertain and not robust. This uncertainty brings into question the need case for National Grid's preferred option, of a land-based pylon line. All three county councils have expressed their concerns that this option will harm the local economy, environment and the health and wellbeing of their communities. The review focused on a re-appraisal of the need case for the project; that need case was developed by National Grid Electricity System Operator.

Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions for the Stour Valley

A Foster Carer Recruitment Event is held the 1st Wednesday of every month, and an Adoption Event is on the 1st Thursday all 7:00pm in your home. To book a place please email Claire.Gwatkin@suffolk.gov.uk.

District Report for Groton Parish Council January 2024. Given by Cllr Bryn Hurren.

Firstly the annual debate on our budget setting for 24/25. With a predicted deficit of 1.4 m, this has become controversial again because along with everything else, we have to review the level of cost and income from running our car parking service, this is at the moment subsidized by the council tax payers to an amount that is not entirely clear, until councilors have all the facts before them.

We are told that the cost to Babergh DC, to run, police and repair all our car parks, is just short of £480,000 but we are not quite sure of the income we get through long term parking charges and fines etc. My group at full council has asked for more details to enable us to make a balanced decision on behalf of our residents and council tax payers.

There is no such thing as free parking, it is either funded by the users or the rate payer as a whole, who may not be a user or even have a car at all. Is that justified??

The main share of our costs to run the car parks is the government levied Business rates which currently stand at just short of £300,000. While I personally support free car parking for the user for 90 minutes to help churn and trade in the market towns, this is becoming ever harder to balance without the DC having the finances to facilitate it and keeping other services and general benefits, such as grants and subsidies as well.

More controversially nationally is the great post office scandal, that I am sure that now the real truth is coming out will be sorted out quite quickly after over 20 odd years of hurt for the innocent Sub postmasters and mistresses. We can but hope that the chain of brilliant branches in our villages, town and cities will survive the Fujitsu/government incompetence and cover up.

Please everyone go into your local and see how much the foot soldiers can offer and do for you.

Good news across BMS is that we have managed to build 128 new affordable homes in 2023, this is as a result of exception sites put forward by communities, windfall sites from private development sites and new homes we have built on our own council owned land.

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One piece of bad news is that we have had to sell 9 as a result of the dreadful, still in place right to buy legislation from a long bygone era. Still a really good effort with a net gain of 119 homes.

As part of our extending the future housing needs requirements well into the future of our long term Joint Local Plan, BMS has invited landowners/developers to submit land that might be suitable for housing development, to approach the council and engage with us to fulfil our housing needs into the future. This process is called, A call for sites and will run until spring.

It is hoped that this process will guarantee us housing land into the future.

It is very important that with our JLP stage one in place, that we decide our own future development and not let it be decided by government inspectors at appeal.

On local Groton matters, we have the new application for dwelling on land at Parliament Heath.

My locality budget for your village of approx. £350.00.

Drainage and sewage issues at Castling's Heath.

As a result of a question, our bio-diversity officer is Richard.parmee@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Bryn Hurren. Ward member for Box Vale.