**BATTISFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

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**DRAFTMINUTES**

**of BATTISFORD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

**held at Battisford Village Hall on 19th March 2024**

Present

Cllr J Cook (Chair) Cllr A Card Cty Cllr K Oakes

Cllr E Kerry Cllr J Pope Dst Cllr D Pratt

Cllr P Lambotte Parish Clerk T Davis 10 Residents

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| 2024/22 | **MEETING ADMINISTRATION** |  |
| a.  b.  c.  d. | The Chair welcomed everyone and established no intentions to record the meeting  Apologies for Absence were accepted from Cllr J Wilson  As per our written procedure as only one person attended the meeting to be Co-Opted, Cllr P Lambotte was automatically welcomed onto the Council  Declarations of Interest on agenda items were given by Cllr Pope and Cllr Card for items 28e & 28f. |  |
| 2024/23  a. | **To Approve the Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 20th February 2024 and for the Chair to sign as a true record**  Matters arising from the minutes of 20th February 2024 not on the agenda or in the Clerk report  Following some minor clarification amendments made to the minutes by the Clerk the minutes were Unanimously AGREED |  |
| 2024/24  a.  item brought forward  2024/27a.&b.  Item brought forward 2024/28e.  Item brought forward 2024/28f.  b.  c. | **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - For members of the public, County Councillors & District Councillors to speak**  Public invited to speak  It was at this point the Chair invited people to speak in respect of the Planning applications DC/24/00793 & 00794.  The first resident spoke about the problems of access, the environmental concern especially for Hazel Dormice, Creasted Newts and Bats. And the existing quiet road along with concerns for the blind bends and junction.  Cllr Pratt then spoke about the need for the developer to bring more reports to planning and will take what has been said to the planning officer to gain some feedback for the group. A second resident then spoke about the quiet lanes road structure, that when the previous application (DC/18/03787) was heard by committee residents did not receive any communication that it was taking place and that it was important that information received now for this application was placed on the planning portal to ensure transparency. The resident went on to speak about the construction management plan, the splays needed on land that was not owned by the developer and that the dotted red line was supposed to show all the land for development but did not. The resident provided a written summation of their concerns and reasoning.  Cllr Pratt confirmed this would be looked into further, especially the development area.  A third resident spoke to agree with the concerns raised and to also support a refusal to this application due to the amount of wildlife in this area and the flooding on Church lane. The resident provided photographs of the flooding.  Cllr Lambotte was concerned about the capacity of water and drainage, especially in light of the regular flooding. The application looks to be using an existing pond for rainwater and this is not an adequate solution. There would also be water run off into the sewage and sewage going into the lake.  Whilst the council discussed the points raised by the residents further information was brought to their attention and concerns raised about the splays needed being on land the developer did not own. Residents needed to know that due diligence would be carried out by the planning officer. The residents noted that the letter from Highways regarding the splays was no longer on the planning portal and the objection given by Highways in the previous application. A resident then read out an email that was not on the portal.The residents again raised the problems of building due to the blind bends and narrow roads for transportation of things such as roof trusses.  The Chair thanked everyone for their input and most of the public left.  It was **AGREED** by all Councillors to Unanimously **Object** to the development in the following grounds:-  Battisford Parish Council were disappointed to see the reapplication of DC/18/03787 & DC/18/03788 in the form of DC/24/00793 and DC/24/00794.  Battisford Parish Council wish to place and **Objection** and provide the planning officer with the following information of why this was formed.  Battisford is a rural **Hinterland village** with no infrastructure and little amenities. There is no frequent bus service and the main mode of transport is a car. This application is also **outside of the Settlement Boundary**.  Battisford Parish Council are concerned about the narrow road the application is on and that the increase in traffic would cause increased **danger on the roads** blind bends with little or no visibility.  The most recent **housing need survey** carried out by Battisford Parish Council indicated a need for affordable housing and retirement bungalows.  As well as this being outside of the settlement boundary the development is in **untouched rich biodiversity** that has thrived during the decay of the existing buildings. Residents have noted much wildlife and rare **protected species**, such as Hazel Dormice, Crested Newts and Bats. The residents and Parish Council do not want this to be destroyed by a development not suited to the needs of a hinterland village. We ask the Planning Officer to seriously consider refusal on this basis due to the legislation requiring protection and the inability to provide a biodiversity gain in such a biodiverse site.  The Parish Council are concerned that the previous application is being brought without the proper investigations into the changes that have happened on the site as well as the **incorrect plans red lines** not showing all that needs to be developed, such as the splays and existing rights of way and no site connection to the public highway. It is also advised that all the land needed for development is not **owned by the developer** and we would ask for the Planning Officer to have sight of the **required notice** given to those landowners as this part of the land is necessary for the development to be accessed safely and with visibility.  It is felt the buildings cannot be saved and are **structurally unsound** and would ask that the planning officer ensures an up-to-date **structural survey** is carried out.  The design is felt to be not in keeping with the original feel of the site and inhibits the possibility of PV.  Concerns were raised to this development previously by the Highways authority and others regarding design and access and the decision notice sought to address issues by requiring **a pre-commencement Construction Management Plan** including HGV routing. The parish is confident that the road is entirely unsuitable for HGV access – the road is narrow and winding.  The private single track is on a blind bend close to an ancient brick and flint wall enclosing the medieval Battisford Church (Grade 1 listed). The other side has a traditional thatched house grade 2 listed with a GR embossed post box. The track is next to a former site of Battisford Hall yet to have an archaeological excavation and with the history of the area going back to medieval times this **historical significance** should to be advised to the planner.  We know that the Planning Officer will be aware of all the recent national and local planning changes that have happened since this application was granted and we hope that the Parish Council has also provided above the ‘on the ground’ local knowledge which will enable the Planning Officer to make an informed decision - as well as highlight the many concerns the Parish Council and residents share in the lack of preparedness, information and research the developer has shown.  If this application should go to committee, as it did previously under the previous refences given above, please can the Planning Officer ensure the residents and Parish Council are sent a letter confirming the date as per procedure.  The Chair then brought forward item 2024/28e and invited the grant applications representative to speak. The representative spoke about the Cricket Clubs plans for the Car Park improvements, the funds already donated and offered to answer any questions the councillors had.  The item was briefly discussed by those on the council who had not declared an interest. It was Proposed, Seconded and AGREED by 3 votes with 2 abstentions to award the grant of £750 to the Battisford Cricket Club  The Chair then brought forward the Gardening Club grant request. The councillors who had not declared an interest discussed the application.  It was Proposed, Seconded and AGREED by 3 votes with 2 abstentions to award the grant of £250 to the Garden Club towards the cost of the tables for the up coming Fete.  Cllr Oaks was then asked to provide her report, which can be found in the addendum. Cllr Oakes thanked Cllr Pope for providing the information of the damaged signs around Battisford and confirmed this has been passed to Officers to ensure this they are repaired and the cost will be incurred by Cllr Suffolk County Council (SCC). Cllr Oaks also spoke about getting the fingerposts sorted out as well as advising that the junction of Church Rd is being relooked at and will try to make this a priority.  The Chair invited Cllr Pratt to give his report. Cllr Pratt’s report can be found in the addendum. Councillors made enquiries into the grants from Mid Suffolk and Cllr Pratt will look into this but thinks none will be available until the new financial year. |  |
| 2024/25  a.  b.  c.  Item brought forward  2024/30 | **Chair and Councillor Reports / Updates** (on the night)  Chair report  The Chair met with the Mid Suffolk Biodiversity Officer to review the play area with a view to improving biodiversity. The Chair will bring an action plan to the council to discuss.  Councillor report(s) not requiring a decision  Cllr Card confirmed the bank had updated their details  Cllr Pope advised that the noticeboard can be moved to another part of the pub if wanted  Cllr Kerry advised that the miniature railway could be reopened to the public after some jobs have been done and that some track could be set up at the fete if some helpers could be found.  Cllr Kerry is still waiting for some information on the People Place Plan.  Clerk report  Since my last report:-.  **Financial**  The bank mandate has been sent to the bank with an acknowledgement received and the help sheet for proof of identity has been forwarded to the new councillors to complete the process.  **Administration / Policies / Procedure**  As well as normal office duties, the website audit has begun following the transition from the old website. I am also reviewing the cemetery records and completing the Valuation Office Agency form from HMRC in respect of the Cemetery.  **Resident & Community communication(s)**  A lot of communication has been received and forwarded to all councillors regarding the planning item on the agenda this evening. Three grant applications have been received, two of which are on the agenda this evening. The third will be on the agenda for the next financial year.  **Other items also in progress with the Clerk:-** 4th Quarter Accounts, Preparation for Internal Audit, Preparation for AGAR, Insurance Quotes, Equipment for Topple Testing, ROI review, Employment policies, Website review.  The Chair then brought forward item 2024/30 so that Cllr Pratt could be involved before having to leave the meeting.  The Correspondence received regarding the Hedgehog Highway was discussed by Councillors. Cllr Pope will place a piece in the local magazine, clerk advised councillor to ensure initiative was legitimate prior to this. |  |
| 2024/26  a.  b. | **GOVERNANCE and PROTOCOLS**  To discuss and approve the Action Plan for 2024-25  The Action Plan had been reviewed and was Unanimously **AGREED**  To discuss and note the Playground Annual Inspection  The Playground Inspection Report was discussed as well as the Playground Volunteer’s recommendations following the report. The strimming damage was also discussed and it was asked if the Clerk could ask the contractor to be mindful of this. It was **AGREED** that the recommendations were carried out within the previously agreed budget for 2024-2025. |  |
| 2024/27  a.  b.  c. | **Consultations including Planning**  **MSDC Planning Consultation DC/24/00793** – Full Planning Application, Battisford Hall – 5 dwellings from conversion, extension and demolition  **MSDC Planning Consultation DC/24/00794** – Listed Building Consent, Battisford Hall – works to facilitate conversion to 5 dwellings  Both items were brought forward to Public Participation  **To Note the MSDC Combs Ford and Battisford Boundary Review results and recommendations going to MSDC Council in March** – This was NOTED |  |
| 2024/28  a.  b.  c.  d.  e.  f. | **FINANCIAL MATTERS**  **Balance of Accounts as of 29th February 2024:-**  **Current Account - £9,558.32**  **Savings Account - £13,218.11**  **To authorise payments of invoices payable in March 2024**   1. **Clerk Office Allowance, Expenses & Mileage – £27.70** 2. **Clerk Wages March - £476.02**   This was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to be paid.  **To confirm payments received since 20th February 2024**   1. **VAT reclaim - £4,576.51**   **To discuss and agree a regular core grant for the Battisford Village Hall of £150 each year for the next 3yrs**  The Clerk advised that under S.19 of the Local Government Act 1976 much flexibility is given for a parish council to help support their local Village Hall/Community Centre. Councillors briefly discussed the grant and confirmed that core funding of £150 each year for the next three years would be awarded to the Battisford Village Hall.  **To discuss and agree the Battisford Cricket Club Grant Request for £750**  **As per Public Participation**  **To discuss and agree the Battisford Garden Club Grant Request for £250**  **As per Public Participation** |  |
| 2024/29 | **To discuss the Cemetery Gates –** Cllr Greenwood  Moved to the next meeting and taken on by Cllr Card |  |
| 2024/30 | **To discuss the Hedgehog Highway correspondence received** – Cllr Cook  As above in reports |  |
| 2024/31 | **Items for the next agenda, next meeting on 16th April 2024 at 7pm**  People Place Plan  Village Green Woodland Plan  Fete Stand for PC  Cemetery Gates |  |

Meeting finished at: 8:29pm

**ADDENDUM**

1. **Dst Cllr D Pratt – March**
2. **Cty Cllr K Oakes – March**

# Public consultation on Suffolk County Council’s proposed devolution deal starts on 18 March

A 10-week public consultation on our proposed devolution deal with the Government will start on 18 March and run through until 26 May. The consultation will be in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any residents can complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori. The consultation will be available through our website [www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution) and social media. There will also be media coverage highlighting the consultation.

# Dragon Patcher lands in Suffolk to bolster response to rural potholes

Suffolk Highways has welcomed the new pothole-repairing machine to help fix the growing number of potholes experienced nationally during the winter season, with a trial set to initially target defects in rural Suffolk.

The Dragon Patcher is a machine that releases compressed air which cleans the surface of the road, before heating the surface to a temperature that enables repair material to bond effectively with the road surface, allowing the pothole to be repaired with an aggregate and hot bitumen material.

Compared with the traditional approach of repairing potholes, the Dragon Patcher can work five times faster. This trial is in addition to the potholes being repaired around the clock as part of our routine repair programme, during the past two months Suffolk Highways has repaired 2,851 potholes across Suffolk.

Fuelled by the biodiesel, HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), the patcher reduces raw material use and creates zero waste and has shown to provide significant carbon savings when compared to traditional patching techniques.

Once the trial ends in Suffolk, a decision will be taken on whether to roll out the technology across the county.

# Councils’ loft insulation offer for Suffolk homes

Suffolk’s Public Sector Leaders have launched a Suffolk Loft Insulation offer, teaming up with builders' merchant Travis Perkins to offer Suffolk residents a significant reduction on loft insulation.

There are four product options available, and residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery.

According to The Energy Saving Trust, it is estimated that an uninsulated home loses a quarter of its heat through its roof. An effective way to reduce this heat loss, and heating bills, is to insulate your loft, attic or flat roof. Correctly installed insulation should pay for itself many times over in its 40-year lifetime.

The offer is open to anyone and will close once the allocated funding has been spent. To find out more visit [www.greensuffolk.org/at-home/grants/](https://www.greensuffolk.org/at-home/grants/). Simply fill out the [online order form](https://forms.office.com/e/aAX5csv5LE) and Travis Perkins will be in touch to arrange payment and delivery.

The Loft Insulation Grant is being funded by Suffolk’s Public Sector Leaders and Travis Perkins and will help contribute to Suffolk’s Climate Emergency Plan and our vision for Suffolk to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

# Have your say on Suffolk’s local transport plan

Residents are invited to share their views on how they travel to help inform Suffolk’s Local Transport Plan.

The plan sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk and covers key themes such as decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices.

Suffolk County Council is asking for feedback on the key themes proposed for the fourth version of the plan, which will cover the period until 2040 and respond to long-term transport opportunities and challenges facing Suffolk and the UK.

A link to the survey can be found at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ltp4>. The consultation will run for eight weeks until 8 April 2024.

Feedback from the consultation will be collated and inform the production of the draft local transport plan. The full draft document will then be subject to further consultation later in the year.

# Council budget approved with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable

Suffolk County Council has confirmed its financial budget for 2024-25.

The £752.8m package was approved at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 15 February 2024, with the priority to protect vulnerable adults and children across the county.

Despite the recently announced uplift in government funding and asking residents for the maximum Council Tax contribution, it is still not sufficient to cover the rising costs imposed by inflation, or the increasing levels of demand for services - in particular children’s care, special educational needs, and disabilities (SEND) and home to school transport.

However, as a direct result of the government’s recent intervention to provide further funding, the following proposals were approved:

* £500,000 of project funding will be made available to all arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk from April 2025 – it is intended that this funding will be available every year going forward.
* £528,000 of core funding to nine arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk will end in March 2025.
* £45,000 will be reinstated to support the County Music Service from April 2024
* £9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024-25 budget.

To provide care and services for vulnerable children and adults, the next two years will see an additional £42.7 million allocated to children’s services, and an additional £29.9 million for adult services. However, this means £64.7 million of savings needs to be found at the same time.

These significant savings over the next two years include:

* £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
* £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council’s hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme.

The council’s budget will increase by 8.6% (from £693.0 million to £752.8 million), some of which is generated by a 4.99% increase in the council’s share of Council Tax, and additional Government funding.

The increase of 4.99% to Council Tax is made up of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care. This will see the council’s share of a Band B property’s bill rise by £1.12 per week, compared to last year.

# More of Suffolk’s tree cover and orchards to be restored

Suffolk County Council has secured funding of £201,213 from the government’s Local Authority Treescapes Fund on behalf of Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council.

The funding will go towards the planting of the trees, many of which are ‘standards’ around six feet in height when planted. The funding also covers three years of maintenance to help the trees become established.

The Fund aims to restore tree cover in non-woodland areas which may have been impacted by issues such as disease, habitat degradation or ageing tree stock. Many of the proposed projects will involve their local community and pupils from local schools.

Creating more orchards is one of the themes across the planting projects. Nationally, there has been a decline in the number of orchards because of commercial pressures and increased imports.

This loss of orchards has impacts on the species they support, with less blossom and fruit for food, and less shelter and shading. It also means we are losing some of our heritage varieties and reducing genetic diversity.

One example of this is the creation of a community orchard in Woods Meadow Country Park, near Lowestoft. Local varieties of apple, plum, gage and cherry trees will be sourced from the Suffolk & Apples & Orchards Project. The trees will be cared for by wardens, the Woods Meadow volunteer group, the local primary school, and local residents. The fruit will be available for the local visitors to the park to pick and eat, but also a good source of food for birds and wildlife.

# Council to review weed control for roads and pavements

In February 2022, the council agreed to stop using glyphosate in its routine weed treatment programmes, to find more natural alternatives to help protect the local environment.

However, the alternative products proved unable to meet requirements, which was further exacerbated by exceptional growing conditions. Multiple applications were sometimes needed which could introduce other negative environmental impacts.

It has proved a challenge to reduce high performing treatments, whilst significantly mitigating the environmental impact. Other local authorities locally have experienced a similar situation.

Regular weed treatment on our highway network will continue using a variety of methods, with plans for glyphosate being considered only when appropriate – the ambition remains to reduce the use of glyphosate as far as possible.

Teams will continue to monitor and research the different approaches being used to remove weeds on our roads and pavements. Where needed, glyphosate would be used responsibly as it is one of the most cost-effective and long-lasting solutions.

# £4.4 million to be spent on additional staff to strengthen SEND reform

Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet confirmed today that 60 new members of staff will be recruited to drive forward important reform to the way special educational needs and disability (SEND) services are delivered in Suffolk.

New Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, Andrew Reid, today reaffirmed Suffolk County Council’s commitment to ensuring improvements to the SEND service go further and faster. This includes an increase in permanent SEND staff of nearly 15%.  
  
These new posts will support the improvement of the quality and timeliness of assessments, plans, reviews, and communications with families.

In January, a report by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) found significant concerns with the way SEND services are delivered by the NHS and Suffolk County Council. In response to this, the Local Area Partnership, made up of Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and Northeast Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, must submit a Priority Action Plan by March 7 outlining the improvement programme.  
  
In order to support this improvement programme, an additional £4.4million was signed off during the budget discussions at Full Council on February 15. Of this, £3.4million will provide 46 new full-time posts – a increase of 14.76% in current staffing levels. An additional £1million will be spent in 2024/25 to fund 14 temporary posts.  
  
Cabinet today agreed to delegate authority to approve the priority action plan to be submitted to Ofsted and CQC on 7 March to the statutory director of children’s services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and SEND. The priority action plan is also being approved at the Suffolk and North-East Essex ICB Executive and the Norfolk and Waveney ICB Executive on 4 March 2024.

# Suffolk’s wettest ever winter breaks highway response records

Storm Babet saw nearly two months’ worth of rain fall in 24 hours, the subsequent storms and severe weather events saw more sustained rainfall, leading up to what Met Office described as the fifth wettest February on record since 1836 with several days still to go.

As a result of the extreme weather, Suffolk Highways has seen an 82% increase in requests for action on the highway - 18,000 additional customers reports so far during the 2023/24 financial year.

The number of drainage and flooding issues have increased by a staggering 364% in the last five months when compared to the same period in 2022/23. Suffolk Highways has also responded to 2,117 emergency incidents in the same period, which represents a 64% increase on last year.

The increased wet weather coupled with occasional freezing temperatures this time of year results in a sharp rise in pothole breakouts. Despite these challenges, highways has completed 34% more repairs to potholes in 2023/24 when compared with the previous year.

To help keep up with this unparalleled increase in demand, Suffolk County Council is investing more resource and trialling new ways of working, including:

* Increased highway funding allocated to fix potholes, resurface roads and repair drainage.
* 70% increase in highway crews to maintain and repair the roads.
* Launching a trial of new ‘Dragon Patcher’ equipment – a pothole-repairing machine which can repair potholes up to five times faster than traditional methods.
* Trailing a ‘Road Mender’ – a patching machine used in urban areas which will help boost productivity and present more environmental benefits.