**BATTISFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

Clerk: Teresa Davis 07719208444

clerk@battisford-pc.gov.uk

<http://www.battisford-pc.gov.uk>

**MINUTES**

**of BATTISFORD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

 **held at Battisford Village Hall on 16th January 2024**

Present

Cllr J Cook (Chair) Cllr J Wilson (Vice-Chair) Cty Cllr K Oakes

Cllr N Cleaver Cllr J Pope Parish Clerk T Davis

Cllr E Kerry 0 Residents

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| 2024/01 | **MEETING ADMINISTRATION** |  |
| a.b.c. | The Chairman welcomed everyone & established no intentions to record the meetingApologies for Absence were received from Cllr Greenwood, Cllr Card & Dst Cllr PrattDeclarations of Interest on agenda items – None declared |  |
| 2024/02a. | **To Approve the Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 21st November 2023 and for the Chair to sign as a true record**Matters arising from the minutes of 21st Nov 2023 not on the agenda or in the Clerk reportCouncillors unanimously **AGREED** for the Chair to sign the minutes as a true record of the meeting |  |
| 2024/03a.b.c. | **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - For members of the public, County Councillors & District Councillors to speak**No members of the public were presentCty Cllr K Oakes spoke about the contents of her report, the county council budget, the rising cost of adult and child social care and more reserves will be used. More detail can be found in the report in the addendum. Cllr Oakes asked if anyone had experienced flooding in Battisford and urged anyone who has been flooded to get in touch. Thanks were given from the council to Cllr Oakes for her involvement in getting the B1078 road cleared following the flooding.The District Council report from Dst Cllr D Pratt was perused and no questions arose, the report can be found in the addendum |  |
| 2024/04a.b.c. | **Chair and Councillor Reports / Updates** (on the night) Chairman reportThe Chair reported that the past couple of months has been quiet. Communication with the Fete Committee has been done. Hopefully closer links were being built now between the council, the local public house and the village hall. The visit of the Mid Suffolk Biodiversity Officer had to be rescheduled to look at the woodland area. The Chair had also spoken to the Play Area Volunteer regarding setting a date for the spring clean.The Chair also noted that Battisford had no Grit Bins and that this should be placed on the agenda for February.Councillor report(s) not requiring a decision:-Cllr Wilson wanted to highlight a new obstruction to getting to one of the Noticeboards by the Public House. Cllr Pope offered to investigate.Cllr Pope noted that the pond was full of water and hoped this would continue.Clerk reportSince my last report:-.**Financial**The 1yr Budget has been prepared and presented to you this evening for discussion along with the Precept to be requested. The Third Quarter Accounts have been prepared for review by Cllr Kerry and are set for your approval this evening. The bank mandate needs to be updated to reflect the new councillors that have been co-opted and hopefully I will be able to collect outstanding information for this. **Administration / Policies / Procedure**All councillors are now using their council email, with some teething problems. Our playground volunteer has forwarded their first set of inspection records and more will follow periodically. Most communication and administration has been around the cemetery, precept, and planning over the last two months. Employment appraisal has been carried out and recommendations will be put forward this evening.**Cemetery & Playground Maintenance**£250 for the Pride in Your Place fund is ready to be spent to improve the playground and any other maintenance needed in the parish and this is on the agenda for discussion this evening.**Resident & Community communication(s)**The Village Hall has forwarded an invoice for the hire of the hall. Cllr Wilson has advised them on the grant application form for Broadband contributions and The Barcliff magazine.**Other items also in progress with the Clerk:-**, VAT reclaim, Insurance Quotes, Equipment for Topple Testing, ROI review, Employment policies, Website review, landowner permission to follow-up. |  |
| 2024/05a. | **GOVERNANCE and PROTOCOLS**To discuss updates received from Cllr Cook and Cllr Cleaver on PPP (People Place Plan)Cllr Cleaver spoke about the Neighbourhood Priorities Statement (NPS or PPP). Cllr Cleaver advised that there were tool kits available on the Mid Suffolk District Council website that helped parishes identify ‘red flags’ or potential issues to improve within the parish. Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) can also provide 4 workshops to support the parish. Discussion took place in terms of starting. An agreed suggestion was to have this as a topic on the Parish Council’s stand at the Fete. Cllr Cleaver is happy to lead on this project and will liaise with MSDC to gain some examples. It was confirmed this will be a standing item on the agenda.  |  |
| 2024/06a.b.c.d.e.f.g.h. | **FINANCIAL MATTERS****Balance of Accounts as of 31st December 2023:-****Current Account - £6,844.52****Savings Account - £13,068.11****To Advise of payments made since 21st Nov 2023 meeting**1. **Clerk Wages December - £356.98**
2. **Clerk Backdated Pay Rise - £208.00**
3. **Quarterly Bank Fee - £18.00**
4. **Village Hall Grant Award - £1500**

**To Advise of Income Received since 21st Nov 2023 meeting**1. **Bank Interest - £89.05**
2. **Pride in your Place MSDC Grant - £250.00**
3. **Cemetery Fees - £175.00**

**To discuss and authorise payments of invoices payable in Jan 2024**1. **Clerk Office Allowance, Expenses & Mileage – £43.40**
2. **Clerk Wages January - £356.98**
3. **Citizens Advice Bureau - £50.00**
4. **Village Hall Hire Invoice - £180.00**
5. **SALC Training - £72.00**

It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** for the payments to be made.**To receive and accept the 3Qtr accounts report**Cllr Kerry confirmed the accounts had been checked and were correct.It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to accept the accounts.**To receive the recommended budget from the RFO, discuss & agree the Budget for 2024-2025 Financial Year**Discussion took place amongst the councillors in respect of the recommended budget and items placed in the forthcoming year. It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to accept the budget and for this to be placed on the website.**To formally confirm the Precept for the Financial year 2024-2025 and for the RFO and Chair to sign**Following discussion of the budget for 2024-25 it was also Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to set a Precept of £14,275, just below a 2.99% increase.**To discuss playground cleaning, repair and refurbishment purchases for working group**The need to purchase cleaning materials, repair and paint was AGREED by the Councillors, it was **AGREED** that the £250 Pride in Your Place funds would be used as well as a similar amount from the reserves if needed.  |  |
| 2024/07 | **To discuss Dog Bins & Litter Bins in Battisford**The Chair introduced this item due to the recent information provided by MSDC regarding their intention to increase their fees for Dog and Litter bins over time until the full cost was recovered. Currently bins are emptied at a discount and the fees will be increasing by 25% next year.Discussion took place in respect of where the bins were and if they were all still needed. It was concluded that a review would take place next year after monitoring of use. |  |
| 2024/08a. | **This item will be closed to the public and press on the grounds of sensitive personal information – the Chair will ask those in the public area to leave****To discuss & agree the Employment Panel Recommendations**The recommendations by the panel were Unanimously **AGREED** and will take effect from February.  |  |
| 2024/09 | **Items for the next agenda, next meeting on 20th February 2024****Apologies from Cllr Wilson received for next meeting****Memoria****Cemetery Gates****Grit Bins****PPP/NPS** |  |

Meeting Closed 8:25pm

Link for Planning <https://planning.baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/> Note: emails sent on 10th Nov, 4th Dec, 6th Dec & 19th Dec, No Comment given for each under the agreed planning protocol.

Applications were:-

DC/23/05144

DC/23/05076

DC/23/05083

DC/23/04969

DC/23/05432

DC/23/05811

**ADDENDUM**

1. District Councillor Report – January

**Call for land to support Nature Recovery**

MSDC working with The Woodland Trust are calling on landowners to help us increase tree coverage and improve biodiversity in the district. Of particular interest is land of low agricultural value, close to existing natural habitats, or land that can help join up existing habitats and create new ‘wildlife corridors’. Our district has a very low tree cover, around 8%, and MSDC is actively planting more trees and changing the way our public open spaces are managed.

**Flood Relief and Mitigation Payments**

Flood payments are being processed by Mid Suffolk based on information from the SCC highways reporting tool and information submitted to MSDC. Homeowners who want to make their homes more resilient to future flooding can also access a grant worth £5000 from DEFRA and Suffolk County Council. Homeowners are required to pay for a survey before the grant can be awarded. More information can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>

**Empty homes and Council Tax**

MSDC are proposing to increase the amount of Council Tax payable on long-term empty homes to incentivise bringing those homes back into occupation. If approved, the new policy will come into play in April 2024. It will attract levies of 100% for homes left empty for one to five years, 200% for five to ten years and 300% for ten years or more, with exceptions for properties under probate or undergoing major repairs. Additionally, it is proposed that second homes attract a 100% levy from April 2025.

**Fees and Charges for 2024/25**

There will be increases in some fees and charges set by Mid Suffolk for some of our non-statutory services such as litter and dog bin services and taxi licence renewal. Inflation and labour costs involved, and general cost increases were strong factors. Fees and charges are reviewed annually; however, MSDC cannot charge for some statutory services and national Government sets others.

**Home Insulation**

Eligible households will be able to apply for energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including homes that are privately rented. Applications will be open from 15th November 2023. Full details to be available soon. Households that are particularly vulnerable can continue to access help via the wider Suffolk scheme [www.warmhomessuffolk.org](http://www.warmhomessuffolk.org)

**Locality Award**

This year’s locality awards are still open for applications.  Any group or organisation can apply for amounts of £250 or more. Please contact me for an application form.

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| **Dr Daniel Pratt****Mid Suffolk District Councillor****E:** daniel.pratt@midsuffolk.gov.uk**T:** 07775389193 |  |  |  |

1. County Councillor Report – January

**County Council report January 2024**

An article by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding.

As temperatures plummet, highways teams have now switched their focus to ensuring the county’s roads are treated and kept free from snow and ice. Despite experiencing mild temperatures in the autumn, our highways teams have been carefully planning our winter gritting operation for months to ensure we are prepared for whatever the weather throws our way.

The gritting treatment of our roads in Suffolk is vital to ensure people can continue to travel and do so safely during winter. During the 2022/23 winter season, Suffolk used around 12,989 tonnes of salt to treat a total distance of 177,983 miles – which equates to travelling the circumference of Earth over seven times! Suffolk Highways currently has a stock of around 17,000 tonnes of salt across the county for the season ahead and is well prepared for any further drop in temperatures.

Our highway teams are responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads, roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations. They also have 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network, this includes other bus routes, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools. The P1 routes are completed when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C and P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather conditions.

This entire operation requires extremely careful pre-planning and running throughout, every single decision to grit or not is based upon forecasted road surface temperatures, whilst also considering the impact of other factors, such as wind and heavy rain.

But gritting the priority network isn’t all that the teams do to prepare our county for wintry weather; Suffolk Highways has also refilled 2,100 grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. Grit bins are owned by [parish and town councils](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/borough-district-parish-and-town-councils/) and to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, our communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and if more is required to report it via the reporting tool.

Suffolk’s residents can also do their part to support us with our gritting efforts by parking considerately and leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road – if we can’t fit, we can’t grit!

Anyone who would like to know when and where we are gritting over the coming months, all gritting activities will be posted to Suffolk Highways’ X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook and Instagram accounts – so I encourage you to give us a follow and keep abreast of all our team's movements this winter season.

More information on gritting can be found on the county council website, and details of which roads are gritted can be found on [one.network](https://one.network/), by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes.

Suffolk Highways’ winter gritting efforts form part of the county council’s wider ‘Winter Matters’ campaign, which launched last week, and offers advice to help Suffolk residents stay warm, safe and well this winter.

From stopping the spread of winter illnesses, to heating your home for less, residents can find advice at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters) to help you and your loved ones look after your money, health, wellbeing and safety during the colder months. Information will be regularly shared on the council’s social media channels throughout winter, follow Suffolk County Council on Facebook or @SuffolkCC on X, using the hashtag #WinterMatters.**More public money for adult and children’s care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books**

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county’s most vulnerable residents.

* £74 million extra needed to protect most vulnerable over two years
* £64.7 million savings to be made over two years
* Council set to reduce workforce, services and use savings

As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children’s services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children’s care, special educational needs and disabilities and home-to-school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The two-year savings proposals, which have been published on the council’s website, 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, which has focused on reducing demand for more expensive social care options by boosting people’s independenceand ability to stay well for longer through innovative methods including cutting edge care technology. This transformation programme has already saved £30.7 million over the last six years
* £0.5 million of savings by stopping core funding to Art and Museum sector organisations. To assist with the transition, £528,000 of COVID recovery money will be made available to Arts and Museum sector organisations for 2024/25 which will fully cover the funding reduction for one year.
* £140,000 of savings by centralising Suffolk Archives to The Hold and closing the branches in West and East Suffolk. In February 2023, the council committed £3.4m to relocate the West Suffolk Archives branch to the proposed Western Way development. Remaining at its current location would have required over £5 million to protect the historic records and meet modern archive standards. West Suffolk Council has since decided not to progress with the Western Way development, ending that opportunity. Centralising the three branches into one brings Suffolk in line with most archive services across the country and is better value for taxpayers' money.
* £15.9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024/25 budget.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:**

“This is the most challenging budget-setting process the council has faced for many years. But once again, we are putting adult and children’s care at the heart of our plans.

“However, to ensure appropriate levels of funding for these key services, and those most in need in Suffolk, we must make difficult decisions about all the other services we deliver, and how we deliver them.

“This is necessary because the demand on council services for those most in need in Suffolk is at an all-time high. The cost of providing many of those services is significant, but the funding that we need is not keeping up. Across the country, councils are having to make similar tough choices.

“Our proposed budget next year will be around £752 million, of which £105m alone is down to these cost pressures from inflation and increased demand.

“We are a well-run council and over the last five years, we have saved £66 million by working smarter and leaner. But we now need to go even further.

“We have spent months scrutinising all the council’s spending. There is competition for every pound across all our services, and I understand that each service means something to someone.”

Following the recent funding announcement from the Government, Suffolk County Council will not receive enough funding to keep pace with inflation or the level of demand for services. The council has joined national calls for additional funding and lobbied the Chancellor of the Exchequer direct.

Full details of Suffolk County Council’s financial plans for 2024/25 will be presented to its Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 January.

The proposals would give the council a budget of around £752 million for 2024/25, made up of funding coming from Government, business rates, charges for services and council tax. The proposed budget would require a 4.99% increase in council tax in next year. This would be made up of a 2.99% increase in general council tax and a 2% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means the costs for a household would be:

* Band B property: £23.50 per week (£1.12 per week increase from 2023/24)
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
* Band D property: £30.21 per week (£1.43 per week increase from 2023/24)

**Cllr Rout continues:**

"We understand the financial pressure facing the Government with public services everywhere asking for more money. This is money that simply isn’t available now, especially after the vital financial support made available during and following the pandemic. This means it is up to local authorities like us to find savings to balance the books.

“I would like to thank the record number of people who completed our online budget consultation, and those who took part in our focus groups.

“Although most people said that they would rather not see council tax being increased next year, I hope they can understand why - for the first time in years - we must ask for the maximum amount possible to help support those most in need.

“Our commitment to make the best possible use of every pound of public money made available to us is absolute.”

The budget proposals will be discussed at the council’s Scrutiny Committee and then presented at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January. At the Full Council meeting on 15 February, the proposals will be debated, with a vote taking place on the budget for 2024/25 – the first year of the two-year budget proposals.

The Scrutiny Committee meeting will be available to stream on Suffolk County Council’s YouTube channel, and public questions can be submitted in advance, details are available at [www.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/).