

Semer Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Thursday 16th November 2023 commencing at 7pm

In attendance: Councillors Richard Keens (Chair), Jackie Barraclough, James Pitcher, John Lawrence, Steve Nuttall; County Councillor Robert Lindsay (in part) and Victoria Waples (Clerk).

1. Chair's welcome including the statement for the reporting at meetings of the council – the Chair opened the meeting and thanked all for attending. The statement on reporting at meetings of the parish council was read out in accordance with prevailing legislation.
2. Apologies for absence – there were no applicable apologies for absence as all Councillors were present. The meeting noted belated apologies from District Cllr. Jamieson due to a last-minute personal commitment.
3. Declaration of member's interests:
 - i. To receive declarations of registrable interests, other and non-registerable interests as detailed in Appendix B of the Local Code of Conduct – there were no such interests declared.
 - ii. To receive notification of gifts or hospitality exceeding £50 – there were none declared.
4. Minutes of previous meetings: Council approved the previously circulated minutes which were signed by the Chair in accordance with prevailing legislation.
5. Public Forum:
 - i. To receive a report from the County Councillor – Cllr. Lindsay was invited to submit his report a copy of which can be seen at Appendix A. He drew the meetings attention to the following matters:
Speed limit on A1141 – still awaiting costs for the design including associated works. Funds would need to be contributed from a variety of sources as there was limited funds available from his Local Highways Budget (LHB) and at County level in general. The LHB team would now draw up costs including the TRO which would need to be designed, consult and advertised. All agreed that the costs were the first step prior to determining the funding sources.
Buses - £1.5m for funding for new bus routes or improvements to existing bus routes.
 - ii. To receive a report from the District Councillor – Cllr. Jamieson's previously submitted report was noted, a copy of which can be seen at Appendix B.
 - iii. To receive comments from the public on the agenda as published or concerning Semer – none had been received.
6. Parish Matters: to receive an update on items raised at previous meetings:
 - i. [A1141 speed limit change – to receive the approved formal decision for the requested 40mph Speed Limit on the A1141 between Hadleigh and Semer](#) – Council formally received the report and, as previously discussed, agreed that the costs were required to enable the project to be considered further.
 - ii. Semer Meadow – to receive an update on works carried out to the meadow – the Chair provided the meeting with an update on works that had been undertaken.
7. Statutory Business:
 - i. [To consider and provide a response to Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places](#) – all agreed that the current polling place was adequate for the needs of Semer residents.
 - ii. [To review and adopt the Council's Complaints Procedure](#) – following notified spelling amendments, all agreed that the policy as written and reviewed should be so adopted.

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- iii. [To review and adopt the Council's Health and Safety Policy](#) – following discussions relating to risk assessment and accident reporting procedures, all agreed that the policy as written and reviewed should be adopted. The meeting noted that the Clerk would produce a general risk assessment policy and form for adoption and that the accident reporting procedures would be written up and appended to the risk assessment policy.
- iv. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations – in the absence of a current model, all noted that the Clerk would bring the NALC model templates, duly modified for the parish council, for consideration and adoption at the next meeting.

8. Planning Matters:

- i. To consider the following planning applications: none received at time of serving agenda.
- ii. To note the Council's response to the following planning applications:
 - DC/23/03522 - Householder Application - Bungalow roof raised for accommodation within roof space, alterations, external insulation and cladding to existing, erection of rear extension linking to garage (Alternative scheme to DC/22/04503) @ Hollies, Ash Street, Semer – following email discussions, it was confirmed that the Clerk had formally responded to the Planning Officer requesting that its views on the materials to be used and layout be considered. A further email was sent with requests that full consideration be given to the report as submitted by English Heritage and the Planning Inspector's report and refusal decision for the previous application on this site.
- iii. To note the following planning applications as determined by Babergh District Council:
 - DC/23/02858 – Planning permission for the erection of single storey front extension (following demolition of conservatory) @ Cosford Rise, Overgang Road, Semer.
 - DC/23/03502 – Planning permission for the re-location of turf at land at Ash Street, Semer.
 - DC/23/03837 – Discharge of Conditions for DC/22/04913 – Condition 3 (Fenestration Details), Condition 4 (External Cladding), Condition 5 (Roof Cladding), Condition 6 (Eaves and Verges), Condition 7 (Rainwater Goods), Condition 8 (Solar Panels), Condition 9 (Hard Surfacing) and Condition 10 (Boundary Walls) @ Ash Street Farm, Ash Street, Semer.
- iv. To note the following planning matters:
 - [Publication of the Inspectors' Report on the Examination of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan](#) – Council noted the adoption of the report by Babergh District Council
 - [Hadleigh Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Consultation Notification](#) – Council noted the period for comments – 6th November to 17th December 2023. Noting that this would not have a direct impact upon Semer given its location in relation to Hadleigh, agreement was forthcoming that the Council would wish issues relating to infrastructure and in particular road infrastructure associated with further development, be addressed.

9. Financial Report:

- i. To consider and approve the following items for payment: all agreed for the following payments to be so approved
 - SALC – Councillor Training - £72.00
 - Community Action Suffolk – Website Hosting - £60.00
 - Babergh District Council – Parish Election Recharges - £125.22
 - V Waples – Clerk's Hours to date - £418.65
- ii. To retrospectively approve the following items paid since the last meeting: all approved the following payments that had passed through the account to date:
 - Landscape Services – Tree Work - £540.00
 - R Keens – reimbursement for 2022/23 expenses paid out - £438.81
 - Community Action Suffolk – Insurance 2023-2024 - £96.06

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- Suffolk Association of Local Councils – Annual Subscription - £105.19

- iii. To note the receipt of the following items: Council noted receipt of the following items:
Babergh District Council – Precept No. 2 - £1,750.00. The Chair handed the Clerk the cheque from UK Power Networks in the sum of £4.60 (Wayleave) which would be banked at the earliest opportunity.
- iv. To note the bank balances to date and consider the financial position as at 9th November 23 – the bank balances, following a review of the statement versus the cashbook were confirmed at £9,266.44.
- v. To consider the 1st Draft for the Budget for the year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 - confirmation of the budget that was set for 2023-2024 in the sum of £3,500 was given along with a breakdown of budget to actual to the period ending 16th November 2023 and aggregate income and expenditure to date. Council reviewed the indicative budget as drawn up by the Clerk which, if set at £3,500, given the indicative tax base would result in a council tax bill for a Band D property of £52.54. It was noted that this would be an increase of 1.95% as the tax base had decreased by that amount over the past year. The budget and precept would be formally approved at the meeting scheduled for January 2024 once the tax base had been confirmed by the District Council.
- vi. Council to confirm the Appointment of Barclays Bank as its Bankers and to agree to the opening of a Community Bank Account – following an update on the correspondence received from the bank confirming that a Community Bank Account was the applicable account for a local government organisation, Councillors agreed to the appointment of Barclays Bank as its Bankers and to the opening of a new business bank account with Barclays. It was noted that all funds should be so transferred. It was agreed that all Councillors including the Clerk be added to the list of authorised persons of the business account (currently Cllrs. Keens and Barraclough) with any two authorised persons being the signing arrangements on the account.

10. Councillor Reports:

- i. To receive matters of interest for noting – clearance of ditches along Church Land (from Overmore) to entrance to the parish field was needed although it was acknowledged that clearance from the other side of the river would be a problem. Cllr. Keens agreed to liaise with the landowners to ascertain whether work could be undertaken to alleviate the problem associated with the uncleared ditches and fallen trees.
- ii. To receive urgent matters of concern – there were no further matters raised.

11. Correspondence: to receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response -

12. Date of next meeting: Council noted the following:

- i. Meetings for the year 2023-24: 18th January and 28th March 2024.
- ii. Meetings for the year 2024-25: 16th May 2024 (ACM and APM); 18th July 2024; 21st November 2024; 16th January 2025 and 20th March 2025.

13. There being no further business to transact, the Chair closed the meeting at 20.31pm.

Signed.....

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Appendix A – Report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay

Speed limit change Union Hill approved

I am delighted that this has been approved. It only came about as a result of a great deal of my time spent lobbying and gathering information for a lengthy report to Highways. I also had to fund two lots of speed surveys separated by something like five years before they would consider it. The next issue is the costs. I am still awaiting quote for this work – I have asked whether Trident can do installation rather than their new highway maintenance contractor Milestone. But the fact is I do not have enough in my discretionary budget to do anything more than contribute a minority proportion of what are likely to be the costs. After all this effort, I hope the community can raise this.

Stone Street

A separate application to reduce the speed limit on A1141, Stone Street from 40mph to 30mph has also been approved.

Bid now to get new bus services

The county council have some new money from central Government they have to use for new or extra bus services within a short time frame. Unusually they are asking communities (parish councils) to bid in conjunction with operators.

There are several potential bids I have been encouraging operators and parishes to look at in my Cosford division.

- The 379 Hadleigh to Bury bus (via Semer) (once a week on Weds). I have asked operators GoAhead (Hedenhams) if it can be expanded to a daily service with changed timings to meet 9 to 5 working day and West Suffolk college start and finish times. GoAhead interested but awaiting meeting date.
- The 461 Hadleigh to Stowmarket (via Semer). We could bid with operator HCT to expand this from twice a week to five days a week with timings to meet the West Suffolk college Kura bus service from Stowmarket. West Suffolk College are v interested and are gathering data for potential pupil demand for me for this or the 379 route.
- The 111 Hitcham to Ipswich (via Nedging). Currently three services a day to Ipswich and four back. Frequency would be doubled with an extra bus and it may be possible to persuade Mulleys to start this from Stowmarket rather than Hitcham.
- 112 Bildeston to Sudbury – Bildeston and Brent Eleigh PCs are liaising with GoStart to see if a fortnightly route could be run from Sudbury to Bury and back, via Bildeston.

Deadline for bids is 20th December. Details and online form here <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/news/bus-service-improvement-plan-where-should-the-money-be-spent/>

Foodbank and community support

Bildeston food bank is now supporting 39 families from several different villages including Monks Eleigh, Nedging and Hitcham. Together with the district we are exploring ways to help roll out the Bildeston model out across the district, because it is clear that existing food banks and CAB are only reaching about 30% of those in need.

Footpath between Nedging and Chelsworth

After I spoke in favour of putting this footpath from Nedging Mill to Parsonage Lane, Chelsworth on the Definitive Map as a public footpath, the committee voted unanimously to do so, despite the officer recommending refusal. The council made an order to put it on the Definitive Map in early October.

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Should there be no appeal, then it will be entitled to be signposted with public footpath signs which should increase the numbers using it.

Bildeston 20mph

I am told new highways contractors Milestone are aiming to restart work on installing 20mph signs etc next month (December).

Appendix B – Report from District Councillor Leigh Jamieson

Storm Babet

The big talking point locally has been the flooding caused by storm Babet. The storm which hit the county on the 20th cut off many villages across both Mid Suffolk and Babergh leaving homes, and businesses counting the cost. With another storm due this week, we need to do what we can to ensure everyone remains safe. The strength of the storms we are getting is further demonstration of the effects of our changing climate. We have always had extreme weather, but the frequency is now the problem.

Listed Building consultation

One of the lovely things about our district is the old buildings that give our area character. Unfortunately, a lot of these buildings have terrible energy performance that can leave residents freezing during the winter. While we must conserve this rich heritage, we also need to allow energy efficiency upgrades which are balanced and sensitively designed. The current system creates a barrier for homeowners to do this. Led by Green Party councillors Babergh & Mid Suffolk have opened a consultation until the 29th December. It is something that we want to encourage as it would help reduce energy bills, protect buildings from climate change, cut carbon emissions and help preserve aging properties.

Housing Repairs

Babergh's new Green Councillors have discovered that there are significant issues with the state of Council housing stock across the district. The group have made this matter a priority and will be pushing the council to improve on the situation as soon as is possible. To help with this the council have released £943,000 from reserves to help clear the repair backlog. The money would also support wider improvements to the council housing service in the district.

Storm Babet: Flooding

Following the storm that caused extensive flooding across the county Babergh were able to provide emergency contact numbers and worked through the weekend and subsequent days to help people in the most need. Fortunately, a small number of our tenants were affected by flooding. Where needed, Building Services have supported with some dehumidifiers to help dry out our council properties and welfare checks were made on tenants too.

The team also collected information about any businesses affected by flooding, making sure support and advice was given where possible.

Joint Local Plan

Part one of the joint local plan has now been fully approved by the examiner and will go before both councils next week for adoption. The decision, which has been long in coming will provide the council with up-to-date policies to direct planning decisions.

Young people wellbeing

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils have introduced a new scheme to improve the wellbeing of young people in schools and connect them with their communities.

The purpose of the project is to act as an early intervention for students, addressing vulnerabilities such as low self-esteem while helping them develop important skills and forge new relationships.

This is being achieved through the implementation of a 'youth link worker' in the schools and will complement existing work that already takes place. These workers have been embedded in time for the start of the new term and will work with young people and their families to identify and access community activities that suit their interests.

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They will also work to overcome any barriers that are in the way of individuals participating in the activity in which they are interested. This might involve setting up new after-school clubs, securing new equipment, improving facilities and beyond.

New Website

The council has launched a new website that it hopes will be more user friendly and easier to use for people across the district. The first step, which you can now see the results of, was to refresh all our content – ensuring our information is easy to read and up to date. Upgrading report forms is part of the next phase. Once complete, you will be able to login to your account and track any reports you make to us step by step.

Silver Sunday support

Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils are once again supporting the Silver Sunday campaign. The councils are joining forces with local groups to help tackle loneliness for older residents, by bringing generations together for free sing-alongs, games, and fun. The Silver Sunday campaign is designed to help tackle the issue of social isolation, particularly for older residents in rural communities. Local events include the Sporting Memories group at the Kingfisher Leisure Centre, and a rock and roll themed party hosted by the Ansell Memories Café at the Ansell Centre in Hadleigh.

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