

## **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025, commencing at 7.30 pm. in the Village Hall.

*Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, March 2025 Meeting Pack.*

### **Present:**

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Frank Domoney, Lizzie Falconer, Iain Lamont, Roy Mawford, Irene Mitchell, Mary Morrey, Jane Ranzetta and Michael Sherman. No members of the public were present.

### **Opening Statement by the Chair:**

The Chair began by welcoming everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of minute taking only and that after the minutes have been approved this recording will be destroyed. The Chair reminded all that this is not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Council held in public. Members of the Public were respectfully asked to maintain silence during the Council's deliberations and not to approach the Councillors. Councillors were requested not to engage with Members of the Public when Council is in session. All were asked to ensure that their mobile phone was on silent and were reminded to treat all present with respect.

### **1. Apologies and approval of Absences**

The Clerk reported that Cllr Robinson was not present and had sent his apologies. Councillors Bourne and Ranzetta were present from 7.36pm. Cllr Lamont left the meeting at 8pm.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **3. Requests for Dispensations**

The Clerk reported that he had received no further requests for dispensations.

### **4. Public Participation Session**

No Members of the Public were present.

### **5. Chairman's Announcements**

The Chair explained that since the Neighbourhood Plan is being revisited (and that the records detailing the cost of the previous plans had been requested and supplied to both the new LNP Group and to an individual consequent of Freedom of Information Act request) she considered it appropriate that this detail be made publicly available. She had asked the Clerk to publish this on the Parish Council website.

The Chair informed Councillors that the PC had been invited to send a representative to speak and answer any questions at the meeting of the Babergh Planning Committee on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March.

She explained that the purpose of that Babergh Committee meeting is to decide whether to uphold or reject the recommendation of the Babergh Officers to refuse Outline Planning Permission for the development of a Wellness Centre on 2<sup>nd</sup> Meadows.

She told Councillors that normally Council would ask the Lead of the Planning Group to attend but that Cllr Lamont, due to work commitments, was unable to attend. She said that, in her opinion, whoever attended needed to be someone who was able to articulate the majority opinion of Council and be sufficiently familiar with Planning Legislation to both present that opinion and answer any questions.

She explained that this is different to the recent visit by the Babergh Planning Committee to the Second Meadows site because this time the role of the Parish Councillor is to make a statement and answer questions and suggested that Cllr Mitchell be asked to represent Council being the second most experienced member of the Planning Group.



Cllr Falconer said that she agreed it should be someone from the Planning Group and asked Cllr Lamont (Lead of the Planning Group) who he would recommend. He said that he recommended. Cllr Mitchell.

Cllr Domoney asked if there was any possible personal animosity between the Applicant and Cllr Mitchell. The Chair responded that there was potentially animosity between the Applicant and a number of Councillors.

Cllrs Bourne and Ranzetta joined the Meeting. for the benefit of Cllrs Bourne and Ranzetta, the Chair summarised the situation and discussion to that point.

The Clerk explained that the Scheme of Delegation, which he described as being 'quite complex and not particularly helpful' says that should in respect of a matter, that the Council must respond to within 24 hours or if a weekend or public holiday with 48 hours, such urgent decisions required between scheduled meetings are delegated to the Proper Officer in consultation with the Council's Chair. He explained that the Scheme of Delegation then says that 'wherever possible members will be given notice of any urgent decision the Proper Office needs to take, in order for them to make their views known (notwithstanding the Proper Officer in consultation with the Chair can take any action they deem as extremely urgent immediately).

He repeated the words 'wherever possible members will be given notice of any urgent decision the Proper Office needs to take, in order for them to make their views known' saying that he considered this decision important as this is a meeting where the Parish Council has a three minute slot for whoever is asked to attend to explain the Parish Council's position (which may or may not be their personal opinion) and to answer questions. This he said was very different to the recent visit of the Babergh Planning Committee to the site where the role of the Parish Council representative was extremely limited in scope by the Babergh Charter. This charter permitted the Parish Council representative only to 'provide any relevant factual local information concerning the site or surrounding area which is not readily apparent' and this to take place only after the Babergh Case Officer has explained the matter including any views from consultees which are relevant to the inspection.

He explained to Councillors that he was therefore using the opportunity presented to him by this extra meeting to consult with Councillors (an opportunity not present when the Clerk asked Cllr Lamont to attend the Site Visit and the Cllr Lamont asked Cllr Mitchell to attend in his place without reference to other Councillors) in the context of the considerably greater importance and responsibilities attached to this matter.

The Clerk answered Cllr Domoney saying that he had received correspondence from the applicant and that the applicant has particularly questioned the process of selecting who to send to the Site Visit and who to attend the Babergh Council Meeting.

Cllr Bourne asked the Chair whether it would be most appropriate for the Chair to attend. The Chair replied that she did not have the required knowledge and that she thought it best that the attendee be a member of the Planning Group.

Cllr Ranzetta agreed that it should be a member of the Planning Group saying that she would be interested in speaking but that work commitments prohibited this.

Cllr Bourne asked who the members of the Planning Group are. Cllr Ranzetta replied that they are Cllrs Lamont, Mitchell, Ranzetta, Robinson and Sherman.

The Chair asked Cllr Sherman if he would like to express an opinion, he replied that he did not wish to.

Cllr Bourne asked Cllr Sherman if he would attend saying that there was no animosity there and that he could represent the view of Council. Cllr Sherman said that he 'won't go to represent the views of the Parish Council'.

In consequence of that answer Cllr Ranzetta asked Cllr Mitchell whether she was willing to attend, she confirmed that she was. She replied that she was intending to go to the meeting and speak and so would be happy to speak for the Council.





Cllr Morrey reminded Cllr Mitchell that she was there to represent the view of the Council, Cllr Mitchell said that she understood that and that her speech to the Babergh Planning Committee would be shared with and worked on with the Lead of the Planning Group.

The Chair concluded by saying that her role as Chair is to ensure that every Councillor has an equal opportunity to voice their opinion and that a full range of opinions is heard whilst as a Councillor she is entitled to her own opinion, express that opinion and vote. She emphasised that it is her preference not to vote but should her vote influence the outcome she may do so. She reminded Councillors that should the exercise of that vote lead to a tied vote as Chair she has, as per the Standing Orders, an additional casting vote.

#### **6. Motion to select Contractor for Green Maintenance and Street Cleaning**

The Clerk explained that the current contract expires at the end of March. He explained to Councillors that the current and budgeted costs are as below:

	<i>24/25 Current Contract</i>	<i>25/26 Budget</i>
Green Maintenance	£9,050	£12,080
Street Maintenance	£15,341	£19,176
<b>Total</b>	<b>£24,391</b>	<b>£31,256</b>
Babergh Street Maintenance Grant received	(£12,492)	(£13,333)
<b>Real Cost</b>	<b>£11,899</b>	<b>£17,923</b>

The real cost of Street Cleaning is therefore £2,849 and the total real cost is £11,899.

The Chair asked what happened if the Council did not spend an amount greater than the Babergh Street Cleaning Grant. The Clerk explained that any under-spend compared to the Babergh Grant would have to be repaid to Babergh. Technically the Clerk completes a Babergh form certifying the Parish Councils spend on Street Cleaning only and claims the money from Babergh. This grant cannot be used for Green Maintenance works.

He reminded Councillors that Council determined at its December meeting to seek quotes on a menu basis informing them that the tender document (which required tenders at a very detailed level) included in the working papers was therefore issued and advertised, as required by law, on the Public Contracts portal.

#### **Quotes Received:**

The sealed bids, received by post, were opened by the Clerk and the Chair on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025. 15 quotes were received.

2 suppliers quoted only for Green Maintenance work, their quotes for Green Maintenance were greater than £20,000 (6 suppliers quoted less than £16,300 for this work and the Green Maintenance budget is £12,080) and so these 2 contractors were disqualified.

5 contractors quoted for both parts of the Contract but their quotes were over £45,000 and so these contractors were disqualified. The whole Contract budget is £31,256.

2 contractors quoted less than £11,000 for the Street Maintenance Contract, significantly below the current cost of £15,341 and budget of £19,176 and significantly below any other quotes received. These contractors were disqualified as they clearly had misunderstood the street cleaning requirements.

The Contract then displayed the following anonymised table of the six preferred bidders:



	I	G	C	M	L	E	Budget
Notes:			5% Yr 1 discount applied		5% Yr 1 discount applied		
Green	£7,500	£8,950	£12,175	£12,831	£14,225	£16,257	£12,080
Street	£16,185	£15,250	£14,915	£16,258	£17,745	£21,720	£19,176
<b>Total</b>	<b>£23,685</b>	<b>£24,200</b>	<b>£27,090</b>	<b>£29,089</b>	<b>£31,970</b>	<b>£37,977</b>	<b>£31,256</b>
Grant	(£13,333)	(£13,333)	(£13,333)	(£13,333)	(£13,333)	(£13,333)	(£13,333)
<b>Real Cost</b>	<b>£10,352</b>	<b>£10,867</b>	<b>£13,757</b>	<b>£15,756</b>	<b>£18,637</b>	<b>£24,644</b>	<b>£17,923</b>
<b>Under / (over) spend</b>	<b>£7,571</b>	<b>£7,056</b>	<b>£4,166</b>	<b>£2,166</b>	<b>(£714)</b>	<b>(£6,721)</b>	N/A
Green Hours	167	358	400	430	600	556	N/A
Street Hours	360	610	550	545	645	736	N/A
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>789</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>1,245</b>	<b>1,292</b>	N/A
<b>Ave Rate</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>29</b>	N/A
Head-Count	6	3	2	4,400	8	4	N/A
Other Notes:	No increases across 3 year contract	No increases across 3 year contract	Approx' 5% increases annually	RPI increases annually	Approx' 5% increases annually	Approx' 5% increases annually	

The Clerk explained that the purpose of the table was not just to rank suppliers in terms of cost but also to ascertain the level of effort each supplier intended to 'put in' to fulfil the contract and their operational resilience.

Contractors I and G were ruled out for misunderstanding the level of Green Maintenance required. The Clerk noted that Contractor I had the highest hourly rate and that Contractor G was very small.

Cllr Mitchell asked why Contractor I had not been eliminated with the other cheaper quotes. The Clerk explained that the other two quotes were considerably cheaper than Contractor I.

Cllr Bourne asked if the current Contractor was one of the six, the Clerk confirmed that they were.

Contractor C was ruled out for being too small an organisation to be able to guarantee a reliable service. Contractor E was considered to be too small and also far too expensive.

Contractors M and L were considered and Contractor L is considered the preferred Contractor, The hourly rate is lower, the number of budgeted hours is 30% higher and we would be a very small customer for Contractor M.

Cllr Lamont left the room at 8pm.





The Clerk then displayed the following table detailing the cost of the various Street Cleaning items. He explained that no-one had ever suggested reducing any aspect of the Green Maintenance work.

Scope Considerations:

		L	M	Others Average
High St etc	Weekly incl leaves	£6,904	£4,564	£6,000
Lady St etc	Fortnightly incl leaves	£3,520	£2,327	£3,000
Meadow Close etc	Monthly excl leaves	£2,599	£716	£1,800
The Glebe etc	Twice a year excl leaves	£760	£477	£600
Bury Rd etc	Monthly incl verges	£812	£4,296	£1,600
<b>Total Litter Pick</b>		<b>£14,595</b>	<b>£12,380</b>	<b>£13,000</b>
Core and Suburban	Weed killing monthly	£1,146	£2,864	£3,000
Outer	Weed killing twice a year	£494	£358	£500
<b>Total Weed Kill</b>		<b>£1,640</b>	<b>£3,222</b>	<b>£3,500</b>
Core and Suburban	Moss twice a year	£1,007	£477	£700
Outer	Moss once a year	£503	£179	£300
<b>Total Moss Treatment</b>		<b>£1,510</b>	<b>£656</b>	<b>£1,000</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>£17,745</b>	<b>£16,258</b>	<b>£17,500</b>
<b>Net Cost</b>		<b>£4,412</b>	<b>£2,925</b>	<b>£4,167</b>
<b>Hours</b>		<b>645</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>565</b>

The Clerk highlighted:

- the cost of cleaning of the quieter 'suburban' streets, a task that some have suggested be deleted as these streets are generally very clean
- the cost of cleaning the verges on Bury Rd etc as far as the National Speed Limit signs which have never before been in scope.
- the cost of a much expanded weed killing programme explaining that the prevalence of weeds had been much criticised in correspondence received by Council noting that much of this was actually the legal responsibility of Suffolk County Council
- the cost of moss removal which had never before been in scope.

Cllr Ranzetta asked if this is the removal of moss growing on the pavement, the Clerk explained that it was. She asked if references had been seen. The Clerk said that they had been this had revealed little as Contractors tend only to offer good references.

Cllr Domoney praised the quality of the Clerk's work.

Cllr Falconer asked how 'green' the suppliers were. The Chair reminded all of Suffolks failed attempt to use more 'eco-friendly' products. The Clerk displayed the following table.

L	Moss is Algoclear and mechanical brushing of stubborn spots, Weeds is Glyphosate.
C	Moss is Iron Sulphate and mechanical brushing of stubborn spots, Weeds is Glyphosate.
I	Moss is Iron Sulphate and mechanical brushing of stubborn spots, Weeds is Glyphosate.
E	Moss is Finalsan and mechanical brushing of stubborn spots, Weeds is Glyphosate.
M	Moss is MMC Disinfectant, Weeds is Gallup 420 (Glyphosate).
G	Moss is Moss Off biodegradable , Roundup (Glyphosate)

The Chair questioned whether the saving of money consequent of the removal of the cleaning of quieter suburban streets was sufficiently large to justify the removal of these tasks. Cllr Mitchell concurred.

Cllr Mitchell asked whether the current Contractors provide reports detailing what they have done. The Clerk replied that they do but that this could be improved saying that all the Contractors have offered detailed reporting.

Cllr Falconer asked if in the eventuality that a task took fewer hours than the Contractor anticipated whether Council could assign the Contractor an additional job. The Clerk replied that the Contractor was remunerated on a task basis and that it was accepted that the time to complete tasks depended on the season and so this would be possible only by agreement.

Cllr Ranzetta asked how Council would respond if the Contractors performance was not satisfactory. The Chair explained that it was recognised that more regular meetings with the Contractor would assist in contract management.

Cllr Sherman asked why the Paddocks had been excluded when Old Station Close had been included when both collect contributions from residents for street cleaning etc. Cllr Mitchell replied that Old Station Close was much closer to the main road and so more likely to be affected by 'general dumping'.

Cllr Domoney said that the Contract needs to include clauses concerning poor performance by the Contractor due to industrial relations or other issues. Cllr Mawford responded that all the proposed suppliers except one were small and that the use of small suppliers introduced an element of service reliability risk concerning which the mitigation is the withholding of the monthly payment due.

Cllr Sherman asked, to improve monitoring, if a report could be supplied by the Contractor saying what they are going to do each week and then what they have done. All Councillors agreed that this was an excellent idea.

The Chair asked if Councillors were in favour of a new three year contract to replace the existing three year contract. Cllrs agreed that such a contract offered the Council certainty. The Clerk explained that each time the Contract is renewed that the full tender process has to be followed.

Cllr Mitchell said that an organisation with 8 employees would be big enough to do the work, Cllr Sherman commented that to such an organisation the Council would be an important but not sole customer.

**Motion:**

**Amendment so that it reads:** that Contractor L is selected with the twice yearly litter picking reinstated, Contractor L to be awarded only subject to a satisfactory reporting mechanism to be put in place to explain what work is going to be done each week and what work has been done. Cost £31,970 in yr 1, £33,655 in yr 2 and £35,001 in Yr 3.

**Relevant Powers and duties:** Burial grounds, cemeteries and crematoria: Open Spaces Act 1906, subsections 9 and 10. Closed churchyards: LGA 1972, section 215. Parks and pleasure grounds: LGA 1972, section 133. Power to maintain footpaths and bridleways: Highways Act 1980, subsections 43 and 50.

**Proposed:** Cllr Muckian **Seconded:** Cllr Mitchell

**Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Vote on amended motion:

**Proposed:** Cllr Muckian **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta

**Decision:** Approved unanimously.

It was agreed that the identity of Supplier L remain confidential until the Contract is agreed.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025 7.30 pm in the Village Hall. Meeting closed at 10pm.

J. Muckian  
3/4/25