

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 3rd October 2024, commencing at 7.30 pm. in the Village Hall.

Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, October 2024 Meeting Pack. Paper copies are also available.

Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Frank Domoney, Iain Lamont, Irene Mitchell, Mary Morrey, Jane Ranzetta, Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Six members of the public.

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 reminded to treat all present with respect.

1. Apologies and approval of Absences

The Clerk explained that all Councillors were present.

2. Co-option of Roy Mawford as Councillor

The Clerk explained that there are two Councillor vacancies and that Babergh Council has advised that both vacancies can be filled by co-option.

He reported that Roy Mawford has come forward and that since he is the only candidate there is no need for Roy to outline his suitability and for this to be compared to other candidates.

He informed Councillors that Roy Mawford has provided evidence of his eligibility, completed the required Register of Interests form, has received a copy of the Code of Conduct and has been directed to the other Parish Council policies published on the Parish Council website.

He told Councillors that Roy Mawford has requested a dispensation 'for the period up to the Council's Annual Meeting in 2025 to speak and vote on matters with respect to Water St unless the matter for decision can be viewed from my Disclosable Pecuniary Interest'.

He informed Councillors that SALC and NALC advice is that when there are the same number or fewer candidates than vacancies then the legal position is that Council shall resolve to co-opt them to Council.

Cllr Domoney asked whether there was going to be a vote and whether any Councillor could object.

The Clerk explained that consequent of the legal position there is no vote but that Council practice, as followed when Cllrs Robinson and Sherman joined, is that the motion to welcome Roy Mawford to Council is proposed and seconded.

Proposal: That the Parish Council welcomes Roy Mawford to the Council and asks Mr Mawford to sign the Acceptance of office with the Clerk instructed to a) inform Babergh District Council and b) lodge with Babergh District Council the 'Register of Members Interests' form.

Proposed: Cllr Muckian

Seconded: Cllr Bourne.

Cllr Domoney said: 'Will you excuse me? There is no point in me being here anymore, I was very strongly urged to attend, I'll be in touch, have a good day'. He left the room at 7.37pm and did not return.



3. Declarations of Interest

No Councillor declared an interest.

4. Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk reported that he had granted the dispensation requested by Roy Mawford as previously detailed and that no other dispensations had been requested not previously detailed to Council.

5. To approve as accurate minutes of the 5th September 2024 meeting of the Council

Motion: to approve as accurate the minutes of the 5th September 2024 meeting of Council.

Proposed: Cllr Bourne **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman

Decision: The minutes of the 5th September 2024 meeting of the Council were unanimously approved as accurate. Cllrs Mawford and Ranzetta abstained having not been at the meeting.

6. Public Participation Session

The Chair reminded Members of the Public of the protocol for this session. Those who wish to ask a question or make a statement have three minutes. Matters raised must concern business on the agenda or local matters. If a question cannot be answered tonight Members of the Public should contact the Clerk with their name and contact details and will receive a written response within 28 days. She explained that the Standing Orders of the Council are clear that this public participation session is for ten minutes and that it is at the discretion of the Chair whether further time is allowed, to ensure that all matters on tonight's agenda are discussed this session will last no more than thirty minutes.

A Member of the Public asked if it was permitted for a husband and wife (Cllrs Mawford and Mitchell) to both be Councillors and whether any adjustments would be required to Council procedures. The Chair replied that there were no barriers to husbands and wives serving together at all levels of central and local government.

A Member of the Public asked about the state of the trees at the bottom of the High St noting that one has fallen over very recently. The Chair said that Council is aware of these trees and others such as those in the Church St car park which have recently grown significantly and is working with the relevant authorities to have these trees inspected and, if required, cut back.

A Member of the Public said that he had read County Cllr Lindsay's newsletter headline 'After many months of pressure from Robert and Lavenham PC, Highways has finally given approval to a legal traffic order that sets up the village 20mph scheme... this is something we know from two village surveys that the majority of Lavenham people want.'. He said this headline is incorrect because there are many controversial issues with the scheme finally proposed by Highways and that secondly the majority to which the Councillor refers is the number of residents who voted in a survey in 2021 being 193 out of an Electoral Roll of 1,635 residents. He asked if Cllr Lindsay would like to correct his statement. The Parish Council, he said, similarly had not been given an opportunity to cast their votes on the Highways scheme and so 1,635 residents have been effectively disenfranchised. He concluded by saying that in April 2024 in the Public Consultation of the fifteen comments received nine were strongly against the scheme. The Chair responded that considering the wide ranging nature of the matters raised by the Member of the Public the Clerk would respond in writing.

7. Chairman's Announcements

Babergh Council has not yet announced the date of the Neighbourhood Plan referendum. A pamphlet summarising the Neighbourhood Plan has been written and it is expected that this will be delivered to every property in Lavenham in mid-October.

A two pronged approach from the Clerk and the local County Cllr Robert Lindsay regarding the collapsed pavement at the bottom of Water street has led to Suffolk Highways informing Cllr Lindsay that 'The local Highways Team are investigating how this historic brick culvert can be repaired in a way which is acceptable to Historic England. That may take some time, but the team have already visited the site and have taken photos and dimensional information, so it is progressing'.



She reported that there is still no word from Suffolk Highways concerning how much the 20mph scheme will cost but Highways has acknowledged receipt of the Parish Councils decision to proceed only with the Lorry sign at the Cockfield Junction and will now prepare a cost estimate for just that sign.

She informed Councillors that Council has received a report after an inspection of the play equipment in 1st Meadow. Refurbishment of the equipment and replacement of the safety surfacing is recommended. The total cost of the suggested works is approximately £13,000. This will be discussed by Council at a future meeting. The Clerk will ask Babergh Council whether Neighbourhood Cil can be used for these works.

She noted that extra poles have been installed for additional Speed Indicator Devices on the Melford road verge. The first additional device will be installed shortly and subject to it working properly a proposal for a second additional Speed Indicator Device will be brought to Council

She gave her thanks to the volunteers who have been working around the village and reported that on Saturday 28th September she had been pleased and honoured to officially open Lavenham Pre School's Forest School a project supported by a grant from the Parish Council. It is, she said, a fantastic facility and extended congratulations to everyone who made this happen.

The Chair concluded by explaining that with the Clerk she had that afternoon met with Suffolk Highways, Cllr Lindsay and the Babergh CIL team. Babergh continue to refuse to fund the upfront £5,000 design costs for the Green Willows footpath agreeing only to go away and 'reflect'.

8. Local Authority Councillors' Reports

County Cllr Lindsay began by expressing his concerns about Babergh's handling of the Green Willows Footpath project informing Cllrs that he would work with the District Cllrs to find a solution.

He reported that the County Council had at its last Cabinet meeting allocated £4.5m from reserves to update its waste depots to handle the food waste, glass and cartons that a new law says must be recycled by 2026 and plastic film by 2027. The County, he said, must also set up a new contract for anaerobic digestion of the food waste, which can be used to generate methane for fuel or electricity and will receive no additional funding from Central Government to meet these legal requirements.

The County Council is predicting a projected overspend of £1 million compared to budget however, the Council's reserves, the 'savings' it holds for a rainy day, are taking another big hit this year and are due to reduce by £22.2 million. He said that this is a rate of spending by the Council which is unsustainable even for a few more years and that like other councils in the same position Suffolk will be hoping for an improved funding settlement from the new Government.

He informed Councillors that the devolution deal which Suffolk Conservatives negotiated with the previous Conservative government has been scrapped by the new Labour government, as has the similar deal for Norfolk. Devolution would have provided the County with extra funding and power to make more decisions locally, for example transport and adult education in return for a directly elected leader of each authority. The mood music, he said, from the Government is that they want to deal with fewer local authority leaders and that Norfolk and Suffolk should therefore agree a single, directly-elected Mayor before they will offer them devolution. He said that he considers agreement unlikely.

Cllr Mitchell asked whether the scrapping of the devolution deal would stop the County Council's attempts to increase its powers in connection with the management of HGVs. Cllr Lindsay replied that he was not aware of any such connection.

Now, he said, is the time for parents and carers of children to apply for places at primary and secondary school next year. He advised that parents and carers should not assume that free transport will be provided to their catchment school. For the last few years, the County has stopped supplying free buses to the catchment school and they are only for the "nearest" school. The nearest and the catchment school may be two different places. There is a 'Nearest School Checker' on the Suffolk County website. Cllr Sherman asked if he was aware of the recent increase in the school bus charges. Cllr Lindsay replied that he was not but would report back.



District Cllr Maybury reported Babergh is considering making changes to the arrangements concerning charges to tenants for damages. She expressed concerns with respect to this adding that resolving tenants issues with the poor maintenance of their homes by Babergh Council is a substantial part of her workload.

She reported that to meet Government legislation it looks likely that there will be a rotating three week schedule in which black bins (ordinary refuse) will be collected week one, recycling bin for glass, tetra pak cartons, aluminium, plastics etc., week two and a separate recycling bin for paper and card, week three. Food waste collection is planned for each week with households being provided with kitchen caddies and large collection bins to be stored outdoors. Producers of food packaging will be required to part fund the cost of recycling.

District Cllr Clover reported that the new First Time Fix project aims to improve speed of repair times alongside delivering a more accountable efficient service for social housing residents. He would be pleased to hear from residents concerning the effectiveness of this.

He informed Councillors that Babergh Council has lodged a formal objection against National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury pylon proposals. No final decision has to be determined following consultation. However, the new Government has resolved to agree this line of pylons.

He reported that the Call for Land Summit which landowners were invited to attend and contact organisations who can help support native wildlife was a sell-out. Should any Landowners like further information he would be happy to speak with them.

Landowners, he said, are now being requested to cut back hedges along footways and public rights of way as the bird nesting season has finished whilst the damage to the roof of the Kingfisher pool is far more extensive than first thought and closure looks like being at least for a 12 week period. Members of the public are able to use the swimming facilities in Bury or Hadleigh in the interim.

Cllr Lamont asked how the District Council was going to publish this request. Cllr Lindsay responded that the local landowners are, in general, very well aware of their responsibilities.

The Chair asked all Councillors to ask Babergh Officers to reconsider their position and also to consider whether they could make any of their locality funds available to help move the Green Willows forward.

9. Planning Applications for Consideration

The Clerk informed Cllrs that no decisions had recently been received from Babergh Council completely contrary to the PC's recommendations. The applications from the owners of Lavenham Hall had been approved without any clauses concerning solar panels. He told Councillors that a new application for the development of a Wellness Centre on Second Meadow had very recently been validated by Babergh Council and would be on the Agenda for the November 7th meeting of Council.

DC/24/00483

57 High Street, Lavenham Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9PY
Discharge of Conditions – Conditions 3 (Build Up) and 4 (Lime Render and Lime Wash)

Cllr Lamont reported that the updated drawing supplied with this application does not address the concerns of the Heritage Officer during application DC/24/00483. Cllr Mitchell noted that the Applicant has challenged this opinion.

Motion: that Application DC/24/00483 not be recommended for approval

Proposed: Cllr Ranzetta

Seconded: Cllr Mitchell

Decision: Approved unanimously.

(Note: subsequent to the Council Meeting the Heritage Officer determined that the paint proposed by the applicant is appropriate and removed the objection)



DC/24/03988

The Grove, 5 Lady St, Lavenham Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9RA

Application for works to a tree in a Conservation Area and protected by Tree Preservation Order WS41/T49 – Reduce an oak tree by up to 2m overall, to thin crown and allow more light.

Cllr Lamont reported that the application is for regular maintenance of this tree advised by the tree surgeon following a routine Piscus test. Following previous Piscus tests and routine maintenance this tree remains strong, despite the presence of disease. He commented on the commitment that the applicant is showing to support this protected tree rather than seeking to take more drastic action

Motion: that Application DC/24/03988 be recommended for approval.

Proposed: Cllr Robinson

Seconded: Cllr Ranzetta

Decision: Approved unanimously.

DC/24/04037

Balsdon Bridge Hall, Bridge St Rd, Lavenham, Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9SJ

Application for Listed Building Consent - Joinery repairs to existing front door frame and canopy. Replacement of front door and bay window including repairs to additional windows.

Cllr Lamont informed Cllrs that these works remove an unattractive conservatory that was fitted to the front of the property and add a bay window with doors in similar proportions and with similar materials to the existing bay window. The windows and doors will be timber utilising Slimlite 12mm thick double-glazing panels to allow for traditional width glazing bars. This will, he said, significantly improve the front elevation of the property and enhance the heritage aspects.

He explained that the removal of the conservatory and replacement by a bay window was approved in previous application DC/22/00587. This application also includes repairs to existing windows and provision of a replacement of a modern front door and frame.

Motion: that Application DC/24/04037 be recommended for approval

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Ranzetta

Decision: Approved unanimously.

DC/24/03268

Coppers, Sudbury Rd, Lavenham CO10 9QZ

Householder Application - Erection of two storey side/rear and single storey rear extension, including raising existing roof to front and rear projections to north west side of dwelling (following demolition of garage)

Cllr Lamont explained that this application is for changes to a building constructed 30-50 years ago. It is inside the Built Up Area boundary but outside the Conservation area.

He explained that there are no trees on the property covered by a tree preservation order, there is evidence of recent vegetation and shrub clearance but no requirement to replace any of this.

However, LNP 2016 Policy D1 does state: "All development proposals will be expected to retain and enhance vegetated boundaries as much as possible, particularly those intact of hedgerows and trees.any unavoidable loss of trees and hedges must be more than adequately offset by new planting". We would seek that a condition of the application for a landscaping drawing to be included.

He informed Councillors that the current building has an unattractive flat roofed garage to the left of the property. The proposal replaces the garage with a wing similar to the one to the right of the property giving a more pleasing appearance from the road. The roofline of the property is unaffected, although the roof line of the existing wing is raised.



The buildings on this section of the road are all modern and have a range of different styles and finishes. There is no requirement in the LNP 2016 to match any of the adjacent buildings, but to complement them see Policy D1 bullet point 2:

"Outside the Conservation area this means contributing positively to the street scene where choice of materials complements those on buildings nearby and by being of a height and scale that is in keeping with neighbouring buildings."

The extended roof is to be pantiles to match existing. The external to be painted render to match existing. The new window styles are more modern, matched throughout the property and are similar to adjacent properties.

He displayed a considerable number of photographs of the existing property and drawings detailing the proposed changes and expansion to the size of the floorplan explaining that the Planning Group had visited the site and had not, until the visit, realised the sizeable extent of the width and depth of the site.

Cllr Muckian commented that whilst the maximum height of the roof does not change the height of the roof is increased in a number of places, she asked if there will be any additional overlooking issues. Cllr Lamont explained that there will be no windows in walls where there currently are no windows and that the distances to neighbouring properties are not insubstantial.

Cllr Ranzetta asked if neighbours had commented on the plans. Cllr Lamont said that they had not.

Cllr Mitchell commented that the removal of the vegetation had removed the privacy of a neighbouring property. She added that the growth in the floorplan is most significant. She expressed concerns that the proposed building will dwarf the bungalows on either side of it. She welcomed the bringing back to use of a derelict property.

Cllr Robinson highlighted the significant size of a number of nearby properties. Cllr Sherman agreed.

Cllr Mawford said that he considered the front of the proposed development very acceptable but the extent of the two storey development too great and that should extra interior space be required there should be further development at ground floor level at the rear of the property. He considered the development not compliant with policy LAV38 in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan concerning over-development and overlooking.

Motion: that Application DC/24/03268 be recommended for approval subject to the incorporation of a landscaping plan to include the replacement of green boundaries.

Proposed: Cllr Robinson

Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Motion carried. Cllrs Bourne, Lamont, Morrey, Robinson and Sherman voted in favour. Cllrs Mawford and Mitchell voted against. Cllr Ranzetta abstained.

10. Clerk/RFO Report

Accounts for August 2024:

The Clerk reported that for the five months ended 31 August 2024 the surplus is £15,873 compared to a budgeted surplus of £2,529, a difference of £13,344. He explained that the main reason for this was the unbudgeted Car Park and Toilet Donations of £7,156. He displayed a graph and the detailed accounts which showed all the reasons behind the surplus.

He then displayed a forecast covering the whole year explaining the reasons behind each of the whole year estimates detailing which costs are still included in the forecast and which costs are not. He highlighted the need to build, in a clear and transparent way, a sinking fund.

He displayed a very preliminary estimate of the budget for 2025/26 explaining that a very preliminary estimate of the rise in Council Tax required to break even was 12%. He advised therefore that 'next years numbers don't look good' and suggested that it might be prudent to not spend the predicted surplus for 2024/25 and use this to reduce the increase in Council Tax required in future years.



He then displayed to Councillors a forecast of the Council's likely financial position as at 31 March 2025 explaining that the likely cash position at end March 2025 is £369,000 representing 8.7 months reserves. Council policy is to hold 8 months reserves. Should Council vote to charge the cost of the First Meadow Bridge and the 2024/25 cost of the telephone box refurbishment to NCIL the surplus would be 11 months. Such a charge would reduce the likelihood of any unspent NCIL having to be refunded to Babergh Council and should also allow the Council to have low annual increases in Council Tax for the next three years or so whilst the sinking fund is built up to about £70,000 which would be a sensible level.

He concluded by saying the big question coming towards Council is whether to go ahead with the 20mph zone which will likely use all the NCIL and make all new projects extremely difficult without increasing Council Tax.

Cllr Lamont commented that Council would still be able to apply for District CIL to fund projects needing only to find 25% of the costs from its own resources. The Clerk agreed with Cllr Lamont but reminded him that District CIL has restrictive rules concerning what it can be used for and must be applied for through an arduous process.

Cllr Mitchell suggested that the outline budget included an amount for interest receivable that was too high adding that this was not a material item. She asked the Clerk what his desired level of sinking fund is. The Clerk replied that this is an excellent question and one which involves considerable judgement. Surveyors reports are not available to assist with this estimation. He highlighted the poor quality construction of Lady St, the age of the Chapel, the complicated nature of the Water St Car Park surface and the ageing of the Playground equipment concluding that £70,000 or so would be a prudent amount.

Cllr Sherman suggested that when the Sinking Fund gets to £60,000 to £70,000 Council could reduce the amount being 'salted away' each year, the Clerk agreed.

Cllr Robinson expressed his thanks to the Clerk for the clarity of the presentation and the work behind it. All other Councillors agreed.

The Clerk explained that at this meeting Councillors are not setting precept and that the motions are the usual monthly ones plus motions to approve a reforecast and use the NCIL

Motion: to approve the accounts for the month ended 31 August 2024.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman

Seconded: Cllr Robinson

Decision: Approved unanimously.

Received: The report prepared by the Clerk listing the August 2024 Receipts and Payments.

Noted from the Report: The Clerk explained the larger amounts and how the report ties up to the Bank Statements. No receipts or payments required further explanation.

Motion: to approve the Receipts and Payments for the month ended 31 August 2024

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Mawford

Decision: Approved unanimously.

Motion: to approve the reforecast for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell

Seconded: Cllr Morrey

Decision: Approved unanimously.

Motion: to charge the 2024/25 costs of the telephone box repair and the First Meadow Bridge repair to Neighbourhood CIL.

Proposed: Cllr Morrey

Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Approved unanimously.



The Clerk gave Councillors a brief update concerning improvements to the Public Realm explaining that the First Meadow Bridge had been completed with a number of very favourable comments received. Two replacement Dog Poo bins have been purchased and installed and two Dog Poo dispenser bag posts have been replaced. The first Melford Rd Speed Indicator Device will very shortly be put up and the telephone boxes will be returned in the next couple of weeks. Nothing had been heard from Suffolk County Council with respect to lorry signage east of the village or from Babergh Council concerning the possibility of more frequent emptying of the street litter bins.

Suffolk County Council had reacted favourably to suggestions that the PC could move the First Meadow Gate a little along Brent Eleigh Rd so it is not by the corner and instal gate type entrances to the village to slow down road traffic but are not prepared to financially contribute to either.

The Clerk has answered three Freedom of Information requests.

11. The Heritage Standpipes

Cllr Morrey presented her report highlighting that these were last repaired in 2010 when David Deacon was Chair of the Council and that he has been most helpful explaining what had been done at that time. Two are damaged, the steps have broken off.

Council contacted a local iron craftsman who wrote 'My suggestion would be to remake a replica step in mild steel as it will be more resilient to kids jumping on it and won't snap like cast. Ball park to make, paint black (possibly green if you supply paint, or paint code) and fit is £395 each, assuming both are done at same time. Also assumes the 3 mounting bolts all release without shearing or stripping threads - if they do, additional labour charges would apply. Look forward to hearing from you'.

In parallel Council has engaged a local handyman to repaint the standpipes funded from the public realm maintenance budget.

Councillor Mitchell asked if this was destroying the heritage status of the items. Cllr Morrey replied that they were not listed. Cllr Robinson suggested keeping the original plates in store. Cllr Morrey agreed.

Motion: Council engage local iron craftsman at a cost of £790 plus £210 contingency, total £1,000 to make and fit two replica steps to the heritage standpipes. Power to spend money for the encouragement of Tourism is granted to the PC in the Local Government Act 1972, section 144.

Proposed: Cllr Bourne

Seconded: Cllr Sherman

Decision: Approved unanimously.

12. Box Bushes

Cllr Morrey reported that she happened to be in the Churchyard when the pruning was done. The Contractors report the bushes to be in a much better state. Cllr Lamont agreed commenting that the bushes are much thicker. She added that the Clerk will contact the Contractor to obtain his advice and costs for the 2025/26 maintenance work and this will form part of the budgeting discussion for 2025/26.

Motion: To ask the Contractor to feed the bushes in March 2025 at a cost of £380. PC has the power and sometimes the duty to maintain closed churchyards under the Local Government Act 1972 s215.

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell

Seconded: Cllr Ranzetta

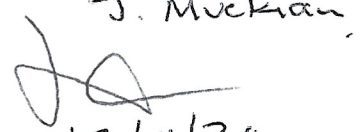
Decision: Approved unanimously.

13. Play Equipment and item 14. 20 mph zone

The reports were noted

Date of next meeting

Thursday 7th November 2024 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.
The meeting closed at 10.03pm.

J. Muckian

12/11/24