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## **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, commencing 7.30 pm. in the Village Hall.

Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, October 2023 Meeting Pack. Paper copies are also available.

### **Present:**

Chair: Cllr Irene Mitchell.

Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Matt Chick, Lizzie Falconer, Iain Lamont, Janice Muckian, Mary Morrey and Jane Ranzetta.

Babergh District Cllr: Paul Clover

Suffolk County Cllr: Robert Lindsay

Five members of the public.

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

The Chair began by welcoming everyone and introduced herself.

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

Apologies received from Cllr Domoney. The Clerk reported that the absence had been explained.

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

No further declarations of interest had been received.

#### **3. Requests for Dispensation**

The Clerk reported that no further dispensation requests had been received and that all dispensation grants, as reported in the minutes of the Council meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023, remained valid.

#### **4. a) To approve as accurate minutes of the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 meeting of the Council**

**Motion:** to approve as accurate the minutes of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 meeting of Council.

**Proposed:** Cllr Ranzetta

**Seconded:** Cllr Morrey

**Decision:** The minutes of the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 meeting of the Council were approved as accurate with no votes against.

#### **b) To approve as accurate minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 meeting of the Council**

**Motion:** to approve as accurate the minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 meeting of Council.

**Proposed:** Cllr Falconer

**Seconded:** Cllr Bourne

**Decision:** The minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 meeting of the Council were approved as accurate with no votes against.

### **5. Public participation session**

The Chair began by welcoming all observers to the meeting of Council 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 the 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 who wish to ask a question, or make a statement, have 3 minutes. She explained that if a question cannot be answered tonight Members of the Public should inform the Clerk of their email address and will receive a written response within 28 days.



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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

The Chair asked who would like to speak and two Members of the Public raised their hands.

A Member of the Public asked whether there is a Lavenham Flood Plan, how she could obtain a copy of it and if one does not exist she requested that one is written.

The Member of the Public also asked who is responsible for the maintenance of the rivers, streams and ditches particularly those going into the River Brett commenting that debris in the River Brett adjacent to her property on Lower Rd had not been cleared for at least three years.

The Member of the Public concluded by asking who controls the sluice gates, some of which she believes to be on private property, and commenting that the water discharge pipe in her garden which feeds the River Brett with water from gardens in Bolton St has never been checked.

The Chair thanked the Member of the Public explaining that she did not immediately have detailed answers to all the questions. She asked the Member of the Public to submit her questions in writing explaining that she would, together with the District and County Councillors present, find answers to the questions which had been asked.

The Chair explained that a number of agencies will be involved including The Environment Agency, Anglian Water, Suffolk County Council, and asked County Cllr Lindsay and District Cllr Clover to comment.

Cllr Lindsay explained that Sluice Gates would be a matter for The Environment Agency as they have responsibility for the River Brett, both Councillors echoed the Chair's request for a written question.

A Member of the Public asked why no Donation Boxes have been put in local businesses in recent years to raise funds for Christmas Lights and whether Council was intending to do this in future. The Chair explained that she would ask the Clerk to answer this as part of his report.

## **6. Local Authority Councillors' Reports**

### **Received:**

An oral report from County Councillor Lindsay.

Cllr Lindsay began by re-emphasising (having written about this matter in his October report) that because Lower Road is lower than the river level when the river is high, blocking the gulleys will not stop flooding but will prevent the water draining away. An option is to have permanent signs but permanent signs for temporary flooding tend to be ignored after a while. He recommended forming a Self Help Scheme in which Lower Rd resident volunteers are trained and provided equipment and signs by Highways to put out when there is a flood.

Cllr Lindsay explained that the County Council has some new money from central Government that it has to use for new or extra bus services within a short time frame. The Council is looking for bids, spearheaded by a Parish Council champion, which show some evidence for demand. It could be a fresh route somewhere where current operators don't run, or an extra service on a route than an existing operator already runs. He urged Council to work with Chambers Bus Company.

Cllr Lindsay reported that he believed that he and Parish Council have pushed Highways as far as we can for as great an extent of 20mph as we can in the village and that we now have to decide whether to go ahead with consulting on the outline design they have come up with, or scrap the idea. Any extensions he said would either delay the project for years or substantially raise the costs or both.

**Received:**

An oral report from County Councillor Clover.

District Councillor Clover emphasised the need to speak with Chambers explaining that he knew that they are suffering from a shortage of bus drivers. The Chair thanked Cllr Clover for this and said that this would be done.

Cllr Clover presented his previously submitted written report beginning with detailing that on October 13th he and Councillor Maybury had met with three Babergh officers including the Operations Manager to walk around Lavenham. Sites visited included the Meadow Close parking and play area. He reported that the play area has been significantly smartened up and consideration is being given to whether the climber/slide unit for toddlers should be repaired or replaced.

Other topics for the walk included Tenterpiece parking including the provision of disabled bays and trip hazards on the pavement and the parking problems in Spring Street. Pegtile Court had been visited as had the Church Street car park which was badly affected by the flooding due to blocked drains.

On 16<sup>th</sup> October, with Cllrs Maybury and Morrey and the Parish Clerk, he had met with two Babergh Housing Officers to discuss various issues at Meadow Close. These issues included illegal parking on council land, fly tipping, disrepair of housing, overgrown vegetation, access requirements and illegal boundaries being installed. Babergh Officers have been busy dealing with flood related issues but he would continue to press for progress and resolution of these issues.

Finally Cllr Clover updated Councillors with matters arising since he had submitted his written report. Babergh are going to conduct a Consultation with respect to the Planning Restrictions on Listed Buildings with the aim of making it easier for these buildings to make sensitive energy efficiency improvements.

**7. Chairman's Announcements**

The Chair

- a) Reported that the Council has been notified that an Application for Listed Building Consent for solar panels with the Conservation Area has been refused. This relates to DC/23/03523 Pegtile Court. The reasons for refusal given are:

"The proposal fails to preserve or enhance the character and setting of Lavenham's historic setting, as well as the Lavenham Conservation Area and surrounding Listed Buildings. The harm posed to the significance and setting of the designated heritage asset is considered to be a 'less than substantial' level of harm - within the meaning provided by the National Planning Policy Framework - and there are no public benefits that would outweigh that harm."

The full decision notice will be distributed to Councillors and the public may access this information on the Babergh Planning Portal.

- b) Reminded Councillors that the annual commemorations of respect to the fallen will take place in the Market Place on Sunday 12th November, followed by the Church Service. The Chair will represent the Council but all Councillors are invited.
- c) Asked all Councillors to help with setting up and tidying up the room before and after Parish Council meetings.



## **8. Proposal to adopt a 20 mph scheme**

The Chair explained that the scheme has been in development for some years. The history of the scheme is set out in the Working Papers distributed with the Agenda.

She added that since 2020 many surrounding villages have adopted 20mph limits and that Lavenham's has taken longer because it is more complicated as an A road and a B road run through the village.

The Chair then described the Public's Aspirations for the Scheme. In 2013 in preparation for the 2016 LNP, the public were asked to respond, 'yes' or 'no' to "The speed limit in Lavenham should be 20 miles per hour?" 63% said yes in 376 responses. The response rate to that survey was 68%. The public were asked again in 2021, this time the question was "should there be a 20mph limit in the Core Area." 193 respondents said yes, representing an 84% response rate. There is therefore, she said, a consistent body of opinion which wants a 20 mph scheme. The Chair counselled that surveys only provide a picture of opinion at a snapshot in time and there is no way of knowing whether some people have changed their views or simply did not answer the questionnaire in 2021.

In July 2020, the Parish Council proposed a scheme to Suffolk County Council (SCC) to introduce a 20mph zone to replace the existing 30mph limits. The Council, in 2020 had, de facto, defined 'the Core' as the 30mph zone.

County Council policy states that 20mph speed limits will not be considered on A or B class roads unless exceptional circumstances are cited. Our proposal noted the unique nature of Lavenham including narrow streets and footways, heavy traffic flows and types, substantial pedestrian traffic and an above average older population. This rationale for 20mph on A and B roads was accepted by the County Council.

County Council policy also states that mean measured speeds must be 24mph or less. Surveys conducted by Highways showed speeds on Lower Road and Church Street were borderline.

In October 2021, the first version of a scheme was received from the County Council. A map of this version is included at Appendix 1. This scheme fell significantly short of the aspirations expressed by the Council in 2020. It included most of the central core but Lower Rd was not fully in the scheme and only a small section of Brent Eleigh Rd was included.

This Council and our County Councillor considered the reduced scheme and in particular, other developments within the village which had taken place between conception and receipt of Version 1 from SCC and asked the County Council to reconsider. consequent of the traffic arising from the Osier View development, to have Bears Lane included in the 20mph zone and a request to extend the scheme onto Sudbury Rd to take account of the pedestrian movements crossing at the junction of Melford Road to access the bus stop.

A revised provisional scheme was designed by SCC and considered by this Council in April 2023 as shown in Appendix 2. This is version 2 and contained many enhancements which the Council had not specifically asked for but would have aspired to in the fullness of time. Version 2 was provisional until Suffolk Police and other statutory bodies were consulted. Version 2 significantly extended the proposed 20mph zone and also proposed other speed reductions on Brent Eleigh and Sudbury Roads.

At Statutory consultation stage, Suffolk Police objected to both the Brent Eleigh Road and some of the Sudbury Road inclusions. The Police provided some speed data to SCC for Sudbury Road, a little to the south of the proposed 20mph proposed limit, the mean traffic speeds were shown to be just above 30mph. SCC advised that we would need to install significant safety engineering works to reduce traffic speed to an acceptable level, and this is outside the scope of the original scheme and would require additional design time, and money. This objection from Suffolk Police has led to Version 3 which we now need to consider.



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The Chair concluded her words of introduction by saying that, in her opinion, where we are now is a significant improvement from Version 1, but still some distance from the original proposal dated 2020. Version 3 excludes significant roads where speeding traffic is evident and where a substantial number of our population live. The Plan does not include Melford Road and Preston Road and is not ideal for Sudbury Road where most residents enter the B1071 from concealed driveways.

She suggested that the Council considers this to be Phase 1 of a programme of traffic management change which also includes the measures in place in Water Street. Further phases will likely emerge from the work of the Traffic Working Party in the next few years.

If Councillors approve this proposal this evening, Suffolk County Council will advertise the scheme and conduct formal public engagement, most likely be in written form. Advertisements will be placed in the press and on websites. Dates are as yet unknown.

To support this and to give Members of the Public the chance to have their say the Parish Council will convene a public meeting on 30th November 2023 to provide the opportunity for all residents to learn about the scheme and discuss with each other the Version 3 scheme in detail.

Drawings of location and types of signage will be placed on the Parish Council website and on the Council Noticeboard.

The Chair then invited Cllr Lamont and the Clerk to take Councillors through the actual changes being proposed in Version 3.

**Discussion:**

The Chair commented that Version 3 does not cover the Melford Rd with the reason given by SCC being that changes to the speed limit would require an engineering solution as well as a signage solution. She added that this could be part of future phases.

Cllr Falconer asked why Brent Eleigh had been excluded. Cllr Lamont explained that the reason given was that an extended 20 mph zone would lead to an unreasonably short 30 mph zone with too many changes of speed limit in a short distance. Extending the 30mph zone further towards Monks Eleigh is considered to be impracticable because of the rural nature of the setting.

The Chair noted that she had received comments welcoming the inclusion of Bears Lane in the scheme from a number of older residents who have told her that they had difficulty hearing the growing number of electrical vehicles.

Cllr Falconer expressed her reservations about the restricted nature of the scheme and the lack of enforcement of it adding that despite those concerns it had her support as that is what it seems the village wants. Cllr Muckian echoed the thoughts of Cllr Falconer highlighting the desire of the village for a scheme and the enforcement issues. Cllr Morrey commented that no better scheme is possible at this time. Cllr Chick commented that it may not change much road behaviour but the scheme is the only one available and is what people want.

The Clerk asked what the likely cost of the scheme was. Cllr Lamont explained that the SCC Engineer will now be asked to cost the scheme.

**Motion:** Approve the Version 3 preliminary design prepared by Suffolk County Council and to issue an order to proceed to public consultation.

**Proposed:** Cllr Lamont

**Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta

**Decision:** Approved with no votes against and no abstentions.



**9. Parish Council response to the Acton Neighbourhood Plan Consultation and Parish Council response to Suffolk County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan.**

The Chair reported that the Parish Council has been invited to make representations, as part of the Reg 16 Consultation process, with respect to the Acton Neighbourhood Plan, a lengthy document, 127 pages.

The Chair explained that this is the same process the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan went through. This Council needs to check for compatibility with Lavenham emerging neighbourhood plan The LNP2 group has stepped forward to undertake this task and will draft a recommended response for this Parish Council.

Consultation opened on 23rd October and the deadline for responses is Wednesday December 6. This timetable imposed on this Council has not permitted draft responses to be put before this November 2nd meeting.

The Chair reported that, as detailed by County Cllr Lindsay, Suffolk County Council has requested responses to a consultation exercise designed to help direct where Suffolk CC spends its Government Funded Bus Service Improvement Plan+ funding. There is £1.8 million to spend each year in 2023/24 and 2024/25 on enhancements to the current passenger transport network. This Council was informed of this on Friday October 27 and the deadline for responses is Monday November 6. This timetable imposed on this Council has not permitted draft responses to be put before this November 2nd meeting.

**Motion:** To delegate authority to the Chair and Vice-Chair in conjunction with the Clerk to make appropriate representations, with respect to both items, on behalf of Lavenham.

**Proposed:** Cllr Mitchell

**Seconded:** Cllr Falconer

**Decision:** Approved with no votes against and no abstentions.

**10. Report to Council- Public Engagement Green Willows Footpath.**

The Chair tabled her Report as contained in the Working Papers commenting that she was grateful to Mr Howe and Mr Theobald for their help with organising the survey and to the residents of Green Willows for their high response rate and the very helpful comments they had provided when completing their questionnaires.

This report will be forwarded to Babergh District Council to support the bid for funding for the footway.

**11. Report to Council- Update concerning the Bellward award.**

The Vice-Chair reported that the Committee met on October 12<sup>th</sup>. This was an extremely successful meeting. Documentation, eligibility criteria and a nomination form have been developed. Posters will be displayed around the village and full information will be available on the Parish Council website once the date of the Annual Parish Meeting has been agreed.

The Chair asked to be reminded who is on the Committee. The Vice-Chair responded that the members of the committee are Rachel Chick, Phil Smith, Cllr Morrey and the Vice-Chair.

The Clerk updated all, that he has now heard from Mrs Bellward and that he will speak further with her with a view to scheduling the Annual Parish Meeting for the third week in April 2024.

## **12. Clerk/RFO Report**

- a) Updates on Christmas Lights, Box Bush care, Business Rates, Community Emergency Plan, Grants, the Lavenham Exhibition and Museum Trust and Public Realm maintenance including repair of the First Meadow Footbridge.

The Clerk explained that he had met with the Ms Sam Bennett, Chair of Love Lavenham, and that she had proposed a plan to resolve the issues concerning the anomalous charging arrangements. Essentially each business will pay the Parish Council £20 to put their lights up and the Parish Council will pay the electrician. The Chair of Love Lavenham talking with all the businesses explaining to them the proposed arrangements and gathering from them information as to their proposed arrangements for Christmas 2023. Some local business owners have suggested reintroducing the collection of donations to fund the maintenance and enhancement of the Christmas Lights and he will work with local business owners to collect these. He confirmed that such funds can and will be held separately to general Parish Council funds.

The Clerk informed Councillors that a very generous donation had been received to cover the cost of the two pieces of work on the Box Bushes that Council had, at its October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, decided to do. The work has now been completed with reports received that the work has been very well done. Council, he said, will have to decide, in the Spring, the next steps and emphasised that no further donations are guaranteed.

The Clerk detailed that he and the Chair had met with the Surveyor from Babergh DC and had explained to him the unexpectedly high Business Rates bills received and paid with respect to the Church Street office and toilets. The Surveyor has agreed to consider whether a reduction can be offered to the office rent of £1,000 pa previously suggested and whether the lease conditions with respect to repairs and maintenance can be revised to reflect the Lavenham PC money put into the project. The Clerk also advised that he has written to the Valuation Office notifying them of the construction of the Prentice St toilets. These should be exempt from Business Rates. He will shortly do so re Water St on which Business Rates should be payable.

The Clerk is updating contact details and will then publicise the Community Emergency Plan including drafting a much more accessible Executive Summary.

Applications for Council Grants must be submitted by end of Monday November 20<sup>th</sup>, no applications have been received so far.

Council has received a letter from Lavenham Exhibition and Museum Trust asking who we wish to nominate as a trustee. He has written to Lyn Gurling asking if she would like to continue and received a very gracious acceptance letter from Lyn Gurling by return.

Public Realm: A list of repair projects has been agreed and we have asked our contractor to progress. The 1st Meadow Bridge needs replacement. It is rotten beyond repair and rests on the earth and not on proper concrete footings. This is likely to cost between £5,000 and £10,000. Quotes have been requested.

The Clerk concluded by explaining that efforts to move all Councillors to .gov email addresses continue. Issues had emerged about the age and compatibility of Councillors private mobile phone and IT equipment with the .gov system. He will therefore draft a policy for Council to consider concerning the provision to Councillors of appropriate equipment to enable all members to communicate properly by email with each other and the general public.

### **Discussion:**

Cllr Ranzetta asked about the temporary looking repair of the bridge in Bridge St Road. The Clerk explained that this is a Highways responsibility and that he would ask them what their whole plan for the repair is.

Cllr Muckian asked whether Suffolk CC has accepted responsibility for the repair of the footbridge near the Lavenham railway walk, damaged in the recent floods. The Clerk replied that it had.

Cllr Falconer asked whether it was the intention of Council to organise singing of Christmas Carols on Christmas Eve. The Chair responded that it is the intention of Council to do this each year but volunteers to organise this had not yet come forward. Cllr Falconer offered her assistance.

Cllr Ranzetta asked about the handling of letters and other communications received by the Council. The Chair responded that should Cllr Ranzetta wish for any further information concerning a matter she should ask the Clerk and reminded all Councillors that a major reason for the .gov project was that it would permit Councillors email addresses to be made public and mean that Members of the Public could connect more directly with Councillors.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for his efforts to update the Community Emergency Plan reminding Councillors that it does not and will not contain a Flooding Emergency Plan and that its focus is the use of the Village Hall in an emergency either here or in other parts of Babergh.

The Clerk and Chair updated Councillors that they had been able to assist the Bowls Club to secure from Babergh a grant to the Carpet Bowls Club for new mats.

- b) **Received:** The report prepared by the Clerk containing and explaining the September 2023 financial position.

**Noted from the Report:** The Clerk presented the September Income and Expenditure Statement highlighting the key variances as compared to the Reforecast. Income is £2,000 higher than reforecast mainly because Burial Income has been higher than anticipated. Costs are some £4,000 less than reforecast, some of this is timing and some is savings.

The Clerk explained that the main financial message was that the re-forecast was for a £5,000 surplus. Since then there has been an unexpected donation (in October) of £3,000, Audit fee savings and higher than expected interest rates were each contributing gains of £1,000.

Together with smaller changes in estimates and the unexpected business rate invoices of £3,000, his latest expectation is that the surplus for the year will be approximately £10,000 which could pay or very nearly pay for the replacement footbridge.

**Motion:** to approve the accounts for the month ended 30 September 2023.

**Proposed:** Cllr Muckian

**Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta

**Decision:** Approved with no votes against and no abstentions.

- c) **Received:** The report prepared by the Clerk listing the September 2023 Receipts and Payments.

**Noted from the Report:** The second and final instalment of the annual precept, due in September, had been received and no receipts or payments required further explanation.

**Motion:** to approve the Receipts and Payments for the month ended 30 September 2023.

**Proposed:** Cllr Muckian

**Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta

**Decision:** Approved with no votes against and no abstentions.

- d) **Received:** Quotation for the maintenance of the Water St Car Park. The Clerk explained that this maintenance was important to prevent the membrane beneath the car park being damaged by uncontrolled weed growth as well as keeping the car park tidy.





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**Discussion:** The Chair commented that the work was more expensive than she had expected but that this was due to the cost of the chemicals involved. Cllr Falconer asked whether a donation box had been considered. The Chair responded that it had been considered, but a combination of the lack of usage of the car park and the difficulty of finding a suitable spot had led to the idea not being pursued.

- e) **Received:** Environment Policy as approved by Council 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019. The Clerk talked Councillors through the Policy explaining that in his opinion the Policy is still appropriate and does not require any changes.

**Motion:** to approve the Environmental Policy

**Proposed:** Cllr Falconer

**Seconded:** Cllr Chick

**Decision:** Approved with no votes against and no abstentions

- f) **Received:** Claim for expenses, Printer Paper, received from the Clerk. The Clerk explained that the new Debit Card has been received from Barclays Bank and so no further claims of this nature are anticipated.

**Motion:** to reimburse the Clerk £29.99

**Proposed:** Cllr Chick

**Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta

**Decision:** Approved with no votes against and no abstentions

### **13 Planning**

**Received:** The Clerk explained that all decisions received in the month were in accordance with the recommendations of the Parish Council.

**Received:** A report and recommendations from the Planning Group.

DC/23/04410 APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION 15 The Paddocks.

Full Planning Application - Erection of single storey garden room. Comments by 3rd November.

This property is not in the conservation area. The garden room proposed has no details of finish or materials supplied, It is 9.5 \* 4.5m The location is adjacent to the Lavenham Walk and could be visible from the walk. However, Gardens Rooms are classed as outbuildings permitted developments so there is no justification for refusal. There is no evidence that Permitted Development Rights have been removed in The Paddocks original applications B/16/00437, DC/18/03615 & DC/21/06906

Recommend Approval.

DC/23/04879 Application for works to Tree subject to Tree Preservation Order (WS/173/A1) 53 Green Willows.

Proposal to re-pollard Willow Tree (T1) Comments by 8th November.

This tree is in a band of trees that is protected by a TPO Pollarding a Willow tree is a normal maintenance procedure for this species.

Recommend Approval.

**Motion:** to recommend approval of applications 04410 and 04879

**Proposed:** Cllr Muckian

**Seconded:** Cllr Bourne

**Decision:** Motion agreed with no votes against and no abstentions

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

### **Date of next meeting**

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.



14/12/2023