

STUSTON PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held at 7pm on Tuesday 21 November 2023 at Diss Golf Club,

Present: Philip Gerrie (Chair), Matt Herbert (Financial Officer), Steve Leigh (Vice Chair), Faye Gerrie (Clerk), Cllr. Fleming, Cllr. Weller and 12 residents.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence: Philip Gerrie welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Vicky George, Martin & Megan Wilkinson, Yvonne Herbert, Darren and Nicky James Harley and Clive and Lesley Allen.

2. Approval of previous minutes: Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 was proposed by Roger Lay and seconded by Richard Dear.

3. Parish Financial Status

3.1 Current balance and forecast: The Financial Officer reported there was £752 in the bank and that the forecast for the end of the year would be £315. After allowing for £165.00 for the servicing of the first Speed Indicator Device, which is recommended every four years. Following a question raised by a resident, it was agreed that the Parish Clerk arranges to move the original Speed Indication Device to the other end of the village.

3.2 Likely Precept: An early indication is that the Precept for 2024 will be £650.00 which would be the same as the current year. The Mid-Suffolk Tax Base for Stuston remains £88 per household, the same as the current year.

3.3 Internet Banking: Due to difficulties with amendment to cheque signatories, the Financial Officer suggested a move to Internet Banking. This suggestion was proposed by Richard Dear and seconded by Dick Pass – a vote followed, and the suggestion was carried unanimously.

4. Report from County Councillor: Cllr. Jessica Fleming had sent her report to the Clerk to post onto the Stuston Parish website. Cllr. Fleming went through key points, which were discussed by residents.

4.1 The first question raised by Cllr. Fleming was had any residences or businesses been affected by the recent flooding, going on to say that the Council was looking into how the farmers plough their fields and how frequently they cleared their ditches. Residents raised concerns about enforcement of penalties in this respect, which it appears very difficult to police. Residents felt that there should be some kind of legislation, as prevention is better than cure in such circumstances.

4.2 Cllr. Fleming stated that this area is suffering from a severe shortage of water and there is a large pipeline being constructed from Lincolnshire to Suffolk as part of a water transfer scheme. The Vice Chair confirmed that this is part of the program towards water neutrality and offered further detail as required.

4.3 Cllr Fleming said that Suffolk County Council seeks views from Suffolk residents, as it decides on its 2024/25 budget and Council Tax this January, going on to say that 2/3 of the annual budget goes on Adult Social Care and that the Council was looking at reversing their previous decision to outsource services. Residents were urged to be involved in the consultation. Please do participate.

4.4 Cllr. Fleming also urged residents to participate in the consultation on Suffolk Libraries to ensure that branches were retained.

4.5 Highways signage is being looked at due to some being very dilapidated. The Clerk agreed to survey signs in the village and to report issues on the Suffolk Highways Reporting Tool, with photographs.

4.6 There is no news on the foot and cycle path. This appears to have stalled, as an estimate of construction cost needs to be prepared before it could be considered. (please see Agenda item 7 below).

4.7 One resident raised the question of potholes saying they were very dangerous and Cllr. Fleming urged residents to send her an email regarding these issues and continue to report on the Highways Reporting Tool, with photographs.

4.8 Cllr. Fleming asked if the defibrillator was checked regularly, citing a situation in another village where there was a requirement to use the defibrillator only to find the battery was flat and other sources of help had to be called upon. The Chair assured the meeting that everything was in hand with personnel nominated to ensure maintenance was in hand and that there would be training held on 23 November 2023 for the device.

5. **Report from District Councillor:** Cllr. Weller apologised for his late arrival to the meeting due to matters beyond his control. Cllr. Weller's report had been forwarded to the Parish Clerk who would post it onto the website. He then went on to highlight some of the points made in the report.

5.1 Cllr. Weller spoke of a statement of intent about Solar Farms saying several communities were opposed to this concluding that solar farms should not be placed on prime agricultural land.

5.2 Cllr. Weller then mentioned a Grant for warm spaces and services tackling social isolation being available of £500 - £2 000 to societies if they are already delivering a service to be claimed by 17 December 2023. A resident asked Cllr. Weller to explain the scheme. The Grant was available to communities including Parish Councils and in answer to the question Cllr. Weller suggested the Grant could be applied for in relation to the usage of the Parish Church.

5.3 Cllr. Weller said a review of maintenance of Council housing stock was being undertaken. A resident queried if this covered migrants and immigrants, the response was no. Cllr Fleming said she was aware of concerns about the loss of facilities at the Park Hotel.

6. **Update on expenditure of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy:** The Parish Clerk gave a report on spending, including the parish notice board, the dog waste bin, defibrillator and posts for the new Speed Indicator Device, mentioning that former Cllr. David Burn had funded the device itself from his Locality Award. She went on to say that the village gates required work and both Councillors suggested that there could be some money available for new gates made from recycled plastic. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk approach companies to quote for the work required and research Highways requirements.

7. **Update on Proposed Foot and Cycle Path into Diss:** A resident asked about removal of vegetation that was obscuring vision for pedestrians crossing the A143 from Stuston. The Parish Clerk reported that she had been in touch with the Highways representative who said he had been swamped with work on flooding but promised he would get the protocol assessed. The Parish Clerk would follow up this promise.

8. **Polling Station Review:** It was generally agreed that Palgrave Community Centre was satisfactory

9. **Acceptance of Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan:** The Vice Chairman reported that both South Norfolk and Mid Suffolk District Councils had signed off the official version of the Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan which will now be enacted. The Vice Chair went on to say with the unique situation covering Stuston Common there are no plans for any developments in the village. He concluded that it is interesting to note that Diss and the associated villages will become the major

hub within the new Waveney Valley Parliamentary Constituency. The Chair thanked all those persons involved for their efforts and time spent on the Plan.

10. **Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations:** The Chair asked if everyone had read these. A resident raised a query in respect of 5.3(b) saying if in the unlikely event of more than two candidates being proposed and seconded for any post; would it not be better to eliminate the candidate with the lowest votes scored – there could be a situation that somebody was elected with less than 50% of the total votes. Cllr. Weller suggested checking with the Monitoring Officer that they would not have any disagreement with this. The Parish Clerk agreed to ratify the need to hold a meeting before mid-March and that in the absence of Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Financial Officer could chair the meeting. Once the review of this document was completed it would then be reviewed every 3 years.
11. **Membership and Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee:** The Chair reminded residents that currently Tara Darrell and Yvonne Herbert formed the Planning Committee and asked if anyone would be interested in joining them. Kim Archer and Richard Dear said that they would be happy to help. The Parish Clerk said that she had sought the advice of the Vice Chairman with his surveyor background with regard to land drainage matters. The Vice Chairman offered his continued support in this regard.
12. **Report of the Social Committee:** The Chair thanked all members of the Social Committee for their hard work during the year. Tara Darrell responded saying they had tried to put on a variety of events to appeal to all ages. There would be a coffee morning this Friday (24 November) and a carol service followed by mince pies and mulled wine on 21 December at 6pm. She went on to say that they were looking into another musical event as there was some musical talent available in the village. Cllr. Fleming said that there could be financial support for renting toilet facilities at the church for any such event.
13. **General Village Maintenance Tasks:** The Chair thanked villagers for their help in relation to these tasks. One resident said he regularly removed ‘adverts’ from the central island crossing the B1077 and A143. Another resident asked if those responsible for placing the ‘adverts’ needed to make a formal request through Planning Committee and the Parish Clerk agreed to pass details on to that resident. The Chair went on to say that the Millenium Bench needed to be retreated, as did strimming round the Coronation Oak. Cllr. Weller suggested a bid for ‘Pride in your Place funding’. Cllr. Fleming if the Parish Meeting wished for the signs at the village gateways to be moved then just send an email to Cllr. Fleming. In view of the Vice Chair’s mention that Stuston would be part of the Waveney Valley village, a resident asked if the new gates could include signs stating ‘a Waveney Valley village’. The Vice Chairman added that perhaps there could be signs ‘beware of concealed entrances’.
14. **Date of Next Meeting:** This would be forwarded to all residents in due course.
15. **Any Other Business:** A resident who had offered her apologies for non-attendance at the meeting had requested the Chair raised the matter of highway drains not being cleared and vehicles passing her property causing water to enter her garden and, in some circumstances, splashing her front door. She had placed cones along the B1077 in an effort to keep traffic away from the flood. She had reported the situation to Highways and was monitoring the time they provided to respond. Another resident asked if the Parish Meetings could continue to take place at the Diss Golf Club on a permanent basis to which the Chair responded in the affirmative.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.