

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF THEBERTON AND EASTBRIDGE PARISH
COUNCIL HELD AT JUBILEE HALL, THEBERTON ON WEDNESDAY 11TH MAY 2023 AT 7:00 PM**

Attendees:

Cllr. Stephen Brett - Chair
Cllr. Hilary Ward - Vice Chair
Cllr. Laura Bonnett
Cllr. Tom Lagden
Cllr. Adam Hurrell
Cllr. Stephen Morphey
Cllr. Paul Collins
Cllr. Nat Bacon
Cllr. Bob Flindall

Apologies for absence:

District Cllr. Russ Rainger
District Cllr. Tony Cooper

In attendance:

Sharon Smith - Clerk/RFO
County Cllr. Richard Smith (part of the meeting)
District Cllr. Tom Daly
No members of the public

3. Annual Reports

- a) Parish Council – Cllr. Stephen Brett read out his report - Appendix A.
- b) Suffolk County Council – written report taken as read - Appendix B.
- c) East Suffolk Council – District Cllr. Tom Daly summarised his report - Appendix C.
- d) Community Council - the Clerk read out the Chairman's report - Appendix D.
- e) Jubilee Hall Management Committee - no report received.
- f) St Peter's Church - written report taken as read - Appendix E.
- g) Minsmere Levels Stakeholders Group – Cllr. Paul Collins read out his report - Appendix F.
- h) Stop Sizewell C – Cllr. Paul Collins read out his report - Appendix G.

4. Annual Reports from any other groups

No further reports were received.

5. Briefing from Guest Speaker

The Council received a virtual briefing from National Grid Electricity Transmission about the Sea Link Project.

6. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Council agreed the date and time of the next Annual Parish Meeting which is scheduled for Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm.

Appendix A – Parish Council Chairman’s Report

Introduction

- It has been another busy year for the Parish Council.
- We welcomed four new Councillors - Adam, Laura, Tom and Bob.
- No increase was made to the precept for the coming year to support our community in these times of rising energy and food costs.

Sizewell C

- The potential impact of the Sizewell C project on the parish has taken up much of the Council’s time both within and outwith meetings.
- We continue to engage with Stop Sizewell C, the Anglian Energy Planning Alliance, neighbouring Parish Councils and EDF about the implications for the parish. Thanks to Cllr. Paul Collins for leading on this.
- During the year, we hosted two public meetings about EDF’s proposals for a Pretty Road bridge and interventions for the B1122 which were big victories for the parish.
- A further public meeting will be held tomorrow to hear an EDF briefing on the Deed of Obligation and a revised Property Price Support Scheme. All are welcome to attend.
- We are striving to obtain the best mitigation and compensation for the parish if the Secretary of State grants approval of the DCO on 25th May.

Playing Fields

- The Council continued to maintain and improve the recreational facilities in the parish.
- A petanque piste was created at Theberton playing field and a new basketball backboard and hoop has been purchased and will be installed shortly.
- A free oak tree was planted at Theberton to commemorate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee as part of the ‘Treebilee’ initiative. Thanks to Cllr. Laura Bonnett.
- Native hedgerow saplings were planted at Eastbridge and Theberton, courtesy of the Suffolk Tree Wardens. Thanks to Cllr. Nat Bacon and Cllr. Laura Bonnett.
- A new dog waste bin has been installed near Theberton playing field.
- A ‘Talking Bench’ will be installed in each playing field to encourage residents to speak to each other to tackle loneliness.

Eastbridge Burial Ground

- Repairs are ongoing to the storage shed, which is now watertight. Thanks to Cllr. Stephen Morphey.
- A new litter bin has been installed.

Other Initiatives

- Many of the parish roads were successfully designated as Quiet Lanes and the signage will be installed shortly.
- A dozen litter picking sets were purchased for community use.
- Dash Astro conducted an assessment for Dark Skies in the parish which, as expected, showed great results. Designating the area as a Dark Sky needs approval from the District Council but unfortunately they are not endorsing any community policies at this time. The Council intends to reapproach the District Council about this. District Cllr. Tom Daly said he will follow this up.

New Projects

- Platinum Heritage Trail – a working group of Councillors and members of the community are progressing plans to create a walking trail around the parish with information boards in various

locations celebrating the parish's heritage assets. To hear more about this exciting project, come along to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations at the Jubilee Hall during the bank holiday weekend.

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- Theberton Heritage Assets – the Council has plans to restore the kissing gate to the footpath near the Theberton Lion and perhaps reinstate the old Jubilee well on Church Road, subject to obtaining the necessary permissions.
- Village Signs – the gold inlay on both signs will be retouched and the landscaping around the Theberton sign will be improved.

Thank You

Finally, I would like to say thank you to my fellow Councillors, our Clerk, our District and County Councillors, the Community Council and Hall Management Committee and to all who have volunteered their time and expertise in service of the community over the last year.

Appendix B – Suffolk County Council Report

The last year has been the second consecutive year severely affected by the Covid-19 virus, from which I suffered during November and December 2021.

In the main, County Council staff have been encouraged to work from home and to hold meetings via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This edict has also applied to Councillors who have been discouraged from going into the County Council's headquarters, Endeavour House in Ipswich.

These restrictions are gradually being lifted and life is to some extent resuming some of its former character, with Councillors having unrestricted access to County buildings and staff being encouraged to come to the offices "two or three days a week". It seems to me, among other Councillors, that many staff are very reluctant to come back at all, as they have become used to the advantages of home working. I have criticised this reluctance, and wonder what is really happening to productivity levels. But politicians lack the power and authority to ask staff to work more often from the office as the decision lies with the Chief Executive, acting as 'Head of Paid Service'.

We have all become used to on-line meetings and, to be frank, sometimes they are useful, especially for short meetings which for participants avoids the need to travel. But I do not enjoy them because I prefer face-to-face contact, and especially looking Officers who are giving me advice straight in the eye. It may be shocking but Officers have been known not always to tell Councillors the whole truth! On-line meetings also lack a spontaneity, the ability to spark ideas off one another and to have conversations to one side of the meeting.

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste I do try to have my briefing sessions each month with Officers with all of us in the room at Endeavour House. This has been happening as much as it can, but has been somewhat scuppered by the large incidence of staff becoming infected by the Omicron variation of Covid. Even though their infection has usually resulted in mild symptoms, often little more than a nagging cough, they take a week or so before two consecutive negative test results can enable them to return to work. This is all frustrating, but totally necessary, of course.

The work of the County Council has continued despite everything. In February we approved a 3% increase in Council Tax at the budget-setting Council Meeting. The fact that the increase is considerably less than inflation is down to two main reasons – first, the County Council's careful financial monitoring and second, that we received more in grants from Central Government than we expected. In this financial year the County Council will spend £625 million. Yes, that is a large sum of money but three-quarters of it, that is £3 in every £4 that we spend, goes on our care services to a relatively small number of people in Suffolk such as those elderly people in care homes who cannot pay their own fees, individual care packages to help adults with disabilities and other mobility needs and to safeguard children against the ever-present risk of harm and abuse. None of this comes cheap, and I am pleased that when we are judged by external assessment bodies, we do score well. A baby 'P' or suchlike in Suffolk would necessitate spending on a huge scale to correct failings and I hope we never have to face such a dreadful scenario.

All other Council services have to be funded from the remaining 25%, and that is the main reason why available spending on our roads is so constrained. Almost all of us use our roads and we all know that they are not in the state that we would wish them to be. We do urgent maintenance, but the more routine tasks have to wait ever longer. That is one reason why we have borrowed £20 million which is now starting to be spent on two specific targeted areas – improving our pavements and tackling roadside and property flooding. This extra money will not solve all the problems, but it will make a considerable dent in the backlog of cases awaiting attention and action.

It is an honour for me to represent Blything Division – Saxmundham and the twelve parishes of Blythburgh, Bramfield, Darsham, Dunwich, Kelsale-cum-Carlton, Middleton, Theberton, Thorington, Walberswick, Wenhaston, Westleton and Yoxford. I try to attend as many Parish Council meetings as I can to give a report and to allow Parish Councillors and any parishioners present the opportunity to ask me questions. My contact details are widely disseminated and I always try to reply to emails as quickly as I can. I can't always promise to fix every person's problems, but I do try, and I feel I work well as part of a team with my Town and Parish Councils, and their Clerks, who are a first-rate body of people.

My elected mandate was renewed a year ago and I have three further years to serve as your County Councillor, until May 2025. I will continue to try to serve you well and to do the best for you all, both individually and collectively.

County Cllr. Richard Smith, MVO
May 2022

Appendix C – East Suffolk Council Report

East Suffolk Council is emerging from the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic with a clear determination to ensure that its communities, residents, businesses and other stakeholders receive the services they want and need.

Central to this has been the delivery of clear outcomes based around the key priorities established in our Strategic Plan. There are five – Economy, Communities, Financial Sustainability, Digital and the Environment – each of which detail the areas which we believe matter most to us and to council tax-payers.

Economy Theme

A key element of our economic approach is creating greater certainty for investors in East Suffolk and there are few better examples than the construction of tidal flood walls in Lowestoft as part of a scheme to protect 1500 homes and 825 businesses.

The town's East Point Pavilion is also being repurposed into an exciting community and events space and 72 contemporary beach huts are also under construction.

Meanwhile, further down the coast – and as part of ongoing investment in Felixstowe's South Seafront - a new iconic café has now been delivered and the new beach village is set to be built. We hosted last stage of 2021 Woman's Tour too, showcasing Felixstowe to international audiences and supported the three-day 'Felixfest' festival.

In 2021/22, we secured funding to support economic growth which includes £24.9m for Lowestoft from the Towns Fund programme and £8.3m to help deliver Freeport East. We were also responsible for distributing over £135 million in Covid-related Business Grants across the last two years to support local businesses which have been impacted by the pandemic. Meanwhile, our East Suffolk Towns initiative is boosting local economies – including a digital towns project to install free public WiFi in East Suffolk town centres and seafronts.

In a further boost to local areas, we collected £6.2m from developers as Community Infrastructure Levy payments and, as part of the funding that has been distributed, a new community centre for Framlingham has received £700,000. We also dealt with 5443 planning applications in 2021/22 ensuring the best possible built environment.

Communities Theme

Our East Suffolk Community Partnerships are delivering funding for schemes that local people want and need, including tackling social isolation and loneliness, employment projects, an ambassador programme in schools and a successful self-neglect and hoarding project led by Access Community Trust.

Meanwhile, all 55 East Suffolk Councillors have utilised an annual Enabling Communities budget of £7,500 and more than 130 projects have been funded in East Suffolk.

Housing delivery is a crucial element of our wider responsibilities and we completed 223 affordable homes this year. We have also supported 331 disabled facilities grants, achieved 164 homelessness preventions and housed 607 applicants from the housing register.

We are also helping people make safe and healthy decisions by inspecting food premises and 98% are now rated 3-5 in the district. In addition, we are also increasing participation in leisure activities, with 787,617 taking place this year.

Financial Sustainability

Managing our finances is critically important and in difficult times we delivered a balanced budget - an overall spend of £129 million committed to delivering essential services across 57 different service areas.

We are also taking a dynamic and business-like approach to our operational services and we're creating a brand-new trading company called East Suffolk Services – a commitment to seek the best possible value for money for residents, businesses and all local stakeholders.

Digital Theme

Digital Transformation helps us deliver services in different ways while also reducing unnecessary contact and protecting resources. This year, 81.6% of all one-off payments were made to us digitally. We are pleased with how well we support people online and our average customer rating is 4.3 (out of 5) stars. Over 90,000 e-forms were submitted and there were over 2.5 million website visitors.

Our GIS public mapping project is live, providing greater access to information about the area and we've designed and delivered a new website for Lowestoft Beach Hut Hire. Additionally we've delivered a range of digital solutions, including a full rollout of MS Teams, Telephone enhancements and hybrid broadcast of council meetings.

Environment Theme

The environment is critically important, and we are working to achieve our Net Zero Carbon targets by 2030. Our carbon footprint of activities is down 18.9% and Solar PV systems across council assets have generated renewable energy avoiding approximately 38 tonnes of Co2 emissions.

We've also created 100 eco areas promoting biodiversity and supporting wildlife and 40.37% of waste goes to recycling, reuse and composting with the rest sent to energy plants. We are also delivering the Deben Fields scheme - 61 new properties, 42 of them affordable, using green technology to achieve 'Passivhaus' certification.

Meanwhile nine electric fleet vehicles are helping us avoid a further 10 tonnes of Co2 and we've reduced pesticide spraying by 145.

We're working closely with coastal communities to enable a climate resilient coast and (finally!) we also dealt with 883 noise complaints to help our residents enjoy our beautiful district in peace.

Cllr Tony Cooper
Cllr Russ Rainger
Cllr Tom Daly

Aldeburgh Leiston Ward - East Suffolk Council

Appendix D - Community Council Report

The Community Council have been unable to organise many events due to the pandemic. We had the post covid BBQ last summer when lockdown restrictions were lifted. This was a great success and an opportunity for the villages to come together, after along period of isolation.

Subsequently we then went into another period of restriction and the Cheese and wine night had to be cancelled.

Since then we have not held any events. The hall has been open to some clubs and private functions.

The CC has welcomed 3 new members, Julie Nicholls, Chris Whitewick and Michelle Moulton.

Memorial benches have been installed. On the playing field in memory of Maurice Harper and by the hall in memory of John and Jennifer Raison.

The CC has planned a Jubilee celebration for the 5th June and the villages summer fun day, planned for the 18th June.

Hopefully we will have some more events planned for later this year.

Regards

Steve Nicholls
Chair

Appendix E - St Peter's Church Report

Following the end of restrictions, it is wonderful to have services in person in the church again. Technology meant that during lockdown we were able to worship together but a screen is not the same as being together.

Julia Brown continues to organise the ringing of the bells for half an hour before most services on Sunday and has a small enthusiastic band that makes this possible. If anyone would like to learn then please contact her or a churchwarden - you would be most welcome.

The PCC is about to embark on £50,000 of repairs and restoration. This is mainly pointing of the tower and repairs to the windows. The most noticeable involves the removal of the east window above the altar for conservation. This will take about 6 weeks.

The Annual Church Parochial meeting will be held in St Peter's church at 6pm on the 24th May. This meeting is to elect churchwardens, review the annual accounts and anything else that are issues in the village. All are welcome and if anyone would like to join the PCC then please let one of the churchwardens know.

The PCC is grateful for all the help that volunteers offer with cleaning, flowers, churchyard maintenance as well as supporting fund raising events.

Simon Ilett
Churchwarden

Appendix F – Minsmere Levels Stakeholders Group Report

The SZC DCO Examination has taken up a significant amount of time this year.

MLSG contributed to a number of the hearings on environmental, coastal and marsh impacts. We collaborated with two of Suffolk Coastal Friends of the Earth specialists on ground and surface water as well as with other organisations within Suffolk Coast Action for Resilience (SCAR) and Stop Sizewell C.

We were able to arrange expert advice from some academics in Northern Ireland, who specialise in coastal issues, and they were able to submit a report and comments to the Examining Authority in support of our concerns, questioning statements within the DCO application. Whilst most of the funding for these efforts came from Stop Sizewell C, both MLSG and the Alde and Ore Association also contributed towards costs.

As part of these efforts, we are immensely grateful to both Nick Scarr (an Engineer based in Aldeburgh) and Bill Parker (ex-head of Coastal Partnership East) for their efforts, help and advice throughout the DCO process and earlier, as without their expert opinions and reviews of the many technical reports and pronouncements by EDF, we would have been sorely tested.

We continue to contribute to SCAR, and this year attended SCAR's first face to face AGM in two years. Lord Deben (President SCAR) and Karen Thomas were speakers and Therese Coffey MP and Peter Aldous MP were both present at the meeting.

John Rea Price and Paul Collins
Co-Secretaries MLSG

Appendix G – Stop Sizewell C Report

This has been a busy year with the SZC Examination and subsequent questions from the Secretary of State taking up much of our efforts.

Alison and Paul covered all of the 10 Issue Specific Hearing sessions sometimes with both of them contributing orally to the various topics scheduled for discussion and submitting written submissions of their contributions along with additional information that could not be presented through the Microsoft Teams environment.

A number of additional submissions were also created and sent covering specific issues such as Biodiversity Net Gain and Coastal impacts.

Whilst some sessions were dominated by the legalistic arguments of EDF's barrister, supported by technical staff, other sessions were characterised by poor EDF coordination between technical presenters and odd occasions where information was revealed that was not immediately obvious in the DCO documentation. We managed to raise these in responses during those sessions and found that SCC and ESC were sometimes surprised by what they were hearing.

On the publicity front Alison has continued to arrange events that kept Sizewell C in the papers and on TV which is still going on. Highlights were beaming Stop Sizewell C messages onto the Sizewell B dome back in March and our tube and clean pavement advertising in London that is active this week.

On the downside, publication of the Energy Strategy and its reliance on up to 10 nuclear reactors/sites, one per year, is a significant blow, especially when you consider the significant lack of commitment to energy efficiency measures and land-based wind turbines (the cheapest form of electricity and quickest to build).

However, it is notable that the current NSIP Energy Strategy started 11 years ago and was supposed to produce around 5 new nuclear sites with one or two reactors on each. So far all we have is the dual EPR site at Hinkley Point, Moorside (Toshiba – 3 reactors) and Wylfa (Hitachi – 2 reactors) both fell by the wayside. Bradwell (33.3% EDF and 66.7% CGN) seems to have run out of steam along with the government's stated intention to bar China from our National Strategic Infrastructure. EDF in France are now worried that CGN will not step up with the additional 20% funds when the increased costs for Hinkley Point C are released later this month.

We continue to oppose Sizewell C and have raised issues of predetermination by the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister at a meeting with Greg Hands MP who is the Minister with nuclear power in his portfolio.

We are turning our attention now to the process that will determine whether a Financial Investment Decision can be achieved and are targeting potential investors such as Aviva who seem to be rolling back on a statement that they were unlikely to invest in nuclear power. Other pension companies who are infrastructure investors have said they won't invest, but there remains an issue that sovereign wealth funds and other overseas investors might find a RAB supported scheme with 20% shareholding each by EDF and the UK Government attractive enough to override their Environmental, Social and Governance commitments.