

MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Ms Jane Challis

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING of MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 16th JANUARY 2025 @ 6:30PM IN MELLIS MEMORIAL HALL

Present: Cllr L Read, Cllr N Lockett, Cllr A Cross
Clerk – J Challis, DC Cllr Warboys, CC Cllr J Fleming and 4 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr Farley and Cllr Paterson

1 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence

Cllr Read welcomed everyone to the meeting, and apologies received from Cllr Farley and Cllr Lockett were approved unanimously. The members of the public indicated that they were present in relation to agenda item 15.

2 To receive Declarations of Interest on agenda items

None.

3 To consider requests for Dispensations on agenda items

None.

4 To resolve the draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 28th November 2024 are a true and correct record

The draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 28th November 2024 were approved unanimously with 1 abstention (councillor who was not present at the meeting).

Cllr Read proposed moving to agenda item 15. Approved unanimously.

(15 To discuss reported illegal grazing of the common)

Complaints have been received by the Clerk, DC Cllr Warboys and individual councillors, from residents, regarding the ponies currently being grazed on common land. Numerous concerns have been raised, notably whether they have permission to graze, loss of the public rights of way, damage to the common, and implications to personal safety and road safety.

6:40pm PC Adam Ferguson arrived, having been invited to the meeting by the Clerk and DC Cllr Warboys, due to the above complaints, which include reports of a foal straying onto the road.

PC Adam Ferguson said that PC Buckle from the Rural Crime Team has arranged to meet on site next week with Redwings, to discuss the situation and look at whether the ponies have microchips and passports. He asked for confirmation of the landowner; confirmed to be Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Mr Spence, and contact details for the owners of the horses. PC Ferguson said he will try to arrange a meeting with all parties involved, and confirmed that Norfolk Police will be the lead authority. In addition, he will arrange for a resident perception survey to be undertaken in the form of physical feedback forms which he will hand deliver to all properties. Cllr Cross volunteered to help deliver the forms.

There was a discussion regarding the common rights holders and rights to graze, and the feedback received from the landowners. Both SWT and Mr Spence confirm that they have not given permission for the ponies to graze, but have not taken any action to resolve the situation. The members were given permission to contribute by Cllr Read. They reiterated their concerns regarding public safety, the implication on public rights of way and use of the common, and the damage being caused by grazing the common all year round which is contrary to the way it is historically managed. Cllr Cross stressed the safety concerns, reporting that one of the horses was found loose on the railway line by a resident, dragging their tethering chain. Fortunately, the resident was able to lead the horse off the line and secure them.

Cllr Fleming said she will speak to Suffolk County Council's legal team to see if they are able to provide any help/advice.

Cllr Warboys will follow up the damage to the common with MSDC's Public Realm Officer. PC Ferguson confirmed he will keep Cllr Warboys and the PC updated.

Cllr Read thanked PC Adam Ferguson and the members of the public for their input and attendance.

5 Report from County Councillor

CC Cllr Fleming read through her report which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. Cllr Fleming highlighted the Government's Devolution proposals, confirming that Suffolk County Council held an extraordinary meeting on 9th January, and agreed to recommend Suffolk for inclusion in the government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), which would see the creation of a directly elected Mayor (likely covering Suffolk and Norfolk) and the replacement of existing council structures with a streamlined unitary council being set up.

6 Report from District Councillor

DC Cllr Warboys read through his report which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. He said the District Council will be debating the County Council's decision regarding the Devolution proposals next week.

Cllr Warboys provided an update on planning application DC/22/00416, saying that there are issues with a lack of transparency regarding the drainage. He requested S106 funding to investigate the drainage on the west side of the A140, but was unable to secure it.

Cllr Read thanked Cllr Fleming and Cllr Warboys for their reports.

8:08pm Cllr Fleming and 4 members of the public left the meeting.

7 Public Participation Session (10 minutes set aside)

PC Ferguson reported that there has been an increase in both domestic and commercial crimes across Suffolk. The majority of which is theft.

Cllr Cross reported that there was a recent attempted car theft in Mellis, which PC Ferguson said he is aware of.

More details, including how to report a crime, are available on the Suffolk Constabulary website: <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/area/your-area/suffolk/stowmarket/mid-suffolk-north-and-east/about-us/top-reported-crimes-in-this-area>

Cllr Read said that the main issue in Mellis is in relation to traffic and speeding.

Cllr Lockett reported that the Mellis Community speed watch has progressed and through engagement with Suffolk Constabulary, sites have been approved. They are now waiting upon Suffolk Constabulary to arrange training for the volunteers. PC Ferguson said that he will make the arrangements for this to be done. Cllr Lockett also asked if the resident perception survey is a platform for residents to raise other concerns, such as traffic and speeding, in addition to the grazing, which PC Ferguson confirmed it is.

8:15pm Cllr Warboys left the meeting.

8 Chair's Report

- All covered on the agenda.

9 Clerk/RFO's Report

- Devolution; The English Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024, set out the government's vision to simplify local government structures. The proposal will see the district and county councils replaced by a unitary council and an elected mayor. As reported by Cllr Fleming, SCC have already agreed to recommend Suffolk for inclusion. SALC have set up a dedicated information page for members, the details of which have been shared with councillors.
- VE Day 80th anniversary; there will be an official beacon lighting ceremony at 9:30pm on Thursday 8th May 2025. Plans for the anniversary will be an agenda item for the next meeting to discuss further.
- BMSDC Joint Local Plan update: in December, the Government announced new housing requirements for every District and Borough Council in the country. These increased the housing requirement in Babergh to 775 homes a year (up 86%), and in Mid Suffolk up to 734 (up 37%). BMSDC feels that there is no option but to formally review the joint local plan. A revised timetable will be published no later than March following agreement at meetings of the Councils. <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/joint-local-plan>
- Suffolk Climate Change Partnership which is made up of all Suffolk's local authorities including Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils, have teamed up with High Loft, the UK's leading eco loft insulation brand, to create a fantastic offer that allows anyone in Suffolk to get 50% off their loft insulation rolls (up to £200) with free delivery: <https://highloft.co.uk/pages/suffolk-council-200-loft-insulation-contribution>
- Notification from Fisher German on behalf of UK Power Networks, regarding their proposed alterations to the electricity network on part of the common, was received by post yesterday. The deadline for comments on the consultation is the 15th February 2025. Fisher German have confirmed that this deadline cannot be extended. This means the consultation will fall outside of the council meeting dates. Councillors indicated that they did not wish to call an extraordinary meeting to discuss the proposals, and are aware that this means the council will not be able to submit a response. Cllr Cross reported that he has not received details of the consultation, despite being a commons rights holder, because Fisher German are still using a grossly out-of-date list of rights holders.

10 Field Yaxley – proposal for a battery storage system (BESS) on land to the south east of Yaxley Substation

Cllr Cross reported that he attended the public consultation event held on the 5th December, in Mellis Memorial Hall. He found it to be very poor, providing no further information to that which is already available on the website: <https://www.fieldyaxley.co.uk/>. The planning application will be considered by the PC once it goes to formal consultation.

11 National Grid Norwich to Tilbury update

Councillors were very disappointed with the recent update from National Grid, stating that they have dismissed their Waveney Valley alternative proposal to use underground cables across this 2km stretch. The final route proposals are due to be made public in the next few weeks. <https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-to-tilbury>

12 Planning

To Consider: None.

To Receive an Update on:

- DC/24/05112 – Application for works to trees in a Conservation Area – Fell 1 No. sycamore tree as too big for area, located in a ditch and overhanging shed. Elm Tree Stables, Thrandeston Road, Mellis, IP23 8DR – **GRANTED.**

- DC/22/00416 – Application for Outline Planning Permission (All matters reserved) – Erection of petrol and electric charging facility with associated shop; roadside restaurant with drive through facility; E(g) (formerly B1) and B8 starter units; HGV lorry parking facility for rest area and drivers’ facilities as a phased development. Land Adjacent North Roundabout A140, Ipswich Road, Brome Part in the Parish Of Thrandeston, IP23 8AW – **Awaiting decision.**

13 Tree Warden’s Report

No report.

14 Footpath Wardens’ Report

Cllr Farley reported prior to the meeting, that the dog bin on the junction opposite Judas Lane is welcome and well used already. Members of Mellis Canicross have asked when the new ones are due to be installed.

ACTION – Clerk to chase delivery of new dog bins, as agreed with SWT.

15 To discuss reported illegal grazing of the Common

Discussed above.

16 To consider River Waveney Trust Natural Flood Management (NFM) Scheme

The RWT (River Waveney Trust) would like to arrange a meeting to discuss the impact of recent flooding following events such as Storm Babet in 2023. Funding is available from the local levy to deliver NFMs within the Waveney catchment area. The Clerk has provisionally arranged a meeting in the Memorial Hall on Monday morning. Cllr Lockett and Cllr Cross confirmed that they would like to attend, and asked the Clerk to confirm the meeting.

ACTION – Clerk to confirm meeting with RWT as above.

17 Memorial Hall car park and pond maintenance update

Ongoing; the Clerk has contacted MSDC regarding planning requirements for the work to the car park surfacing, and is checking the Land Registry documents regarding ownership of the pond. Cllr Cross and Cllr Lockett will ask the RWT for their advice regarding maintenance of the pond at the meeting on Monday.

ACTION – Clerk/Cllr Cross/Cllr Lockett as above.

18 To discuss speeding and traffic concerns in the village

As reported by Cllr Lockett during public participation, progress have been made to get the speed watch team up and running.

The application for funding from Cllr Warboys’s locality budget for a VAS device, has been successfully submitted. A remittance advice has been received from MSDC to say that the payment is due to be made to the PC shortly.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange order of new VAS device

19 Mellis Garden (Newsteads Land) update, including ongoing maintenance contract

Cllr Cross said that the new benches need to be secured to the ground with stakes. He is seeking quotations for the stakes for consideration at the next meeting. Cllr Read said the local contractor requested immediate payment for the one-off clearance, (this work was approved at the 19th September 2025 meeting). Cllr Read paid him directly and will claim reimbursement via submission of expenses, with all supporting documents.

20 Grass cutting of area around the goalposts and village sign update

No update regarding cutting of the area around the village sign. Cllr Cross has arranged for the goal post area to be cut, as agreed at the previous meeting.

21 To discuss Wellhead project

Deferred.

22 To consider and approve Precept Request 2025/26

After discussing, and taking into consideration the draft Budget 2025/26 agreed at the previous meeting, Cllr Cross proposed a precept request 2025/26 of £9,370.00 which is an increase of 4% on 2524/25. Seconded by Cllr Lockett and approved unanimously. Cllr Read and the Clerk then signed the completed precept request form.

ACTION – Clerk to submit precept request 2025/26 to MSDC by 31st January 2025 deadline.

23 Finance

A list of payments and receipts, expenditure against the budget, and bank reconciliation to 24th October was sent to councillors. Barclays bank account balance as of 22nd November 2025 - **£29,698.67**

ii) Review and authorisation of payments presented:

1	J. Challis	Clerk Admin January	£443.52
2	J. Challis	Expenses – ink cartridges	£14.99
3	Memorial Hall	January hire	£30.00
5	Memorial Hall	Rural Coffee Caravan December hire	£20.00
6	Memorial Hall	Rural Coffee Caravan November hire	£20.00
7	Message Makers	New VAS device	£4,069.85
8	L. Read	Expenses for Mellis Garden one off cut by Giles Pell, invoice no. 21	£150.00
9	A. Cross	Expenses – hard drive for digitisation of Mellis	£42.99
10	A. Cross	Expenses – MPC poppy wreath	£50.00

All payments above approved unanimously, with 1 abstention against L. Read expenses (Cllr Read), and 1 abstention against both expenses payments to A. Cross (Cllr Cross).

ACTION

- **Cllr Read and Cllr Cross to pay agreed payments above via online banking (dual authorisation).**

December payments approved by quorate email on the 18th December 2024, and paid online by Cllr Read and Cllr Cross (dual authorisation) on the 19th December 2024:

- 1) Jane Challis - Clerk admin - £411.84
- 2) Jane Challis - expenses (mileage for November meeting) - £5.94

iii) budget review – deferred

iv) internal accounts check - Cllr Read will conduct the review and report back at the next meeting

24 Matters for future consideration

- Wellhead Project
- Traffic/speeding concerns within Mellis
- Phone box-stained glass repairs
- Digitisation of the History of Mellis
- Printing of more Common leaflets for new residents
- Electric vehicle charging points outside the Memorial Hall

25 The date of the meeting is Thursday 27th February 2025 at 6:30pm in Mellis Memorial Hall.

Meeting close at 9:12pm.

**District Councillor’s Report:
Gislingham Ward
Mellis, Gislingham, Thornham, `Wortham & Burgate, Wickham Skeith
Parish Councils
January 2025**

Council meeting	There was no scheduled council meeting in December. The next meeting will be held on 23 rd January 2025.
Budget updates	Proposals for the General Fund budget were approved in this month’s second cabinet meeting, and discussed later on in the Overview & Scrutiny committee on the 19 th December. This shows the council’s finances to be surplus, unusual for District councils, in part due to expanded housing developments and income generated from Gateway 14, with these surplus funds being used to proceed with the Mid Suffolk Plan. Key figures include an increase of £1.689m in net revenue service expenditure, a £2.660m increase in gross expenditure, no increase in council tax from 2024/25, and a capital budget of £29.986m in 2025/26.
CIL Expenditure updates	New updates regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy programme were discussed in the first cabinet meeting of this month. This includes approval of half a million pounds of investment into the Stowmarket Health Education and Leisure Facilities (SHELF), and £188k of funding for Thurston Community College.
Devolution White Paper	<p>The White Paper regarding devolution was published 16th December, which despite not mentioning Suffolk directly, strongly suggests at a change to the two-tier local government structure. This could potentially suggest a large Unitary Authority covering all of Suffolk, abolishing the district councils altogether. The paper also includes the use of introducing a “Strategic Authority”, which is likely to include a Mayor for both Suffolk & Norfolk.</p> <p>Suffolk CC Administration following an extraordinary meeting on 9th January has written to the Govt asking to join the “fast track” devolution programme and also requesting to cancel the County Council elections in May.</p> <p>A reply from the government is expected by the end of January</p>
National Planning Policy Framework	Changes have been made to the National Planning Policy Framework to assist with the government’s housebuilding plans. This includes mandatory housebuilding targets for councils, with a priority on brownfield sites. The new plans have sparked both praise and backlash, with concerns over the role of individual councils. Mid Suffolk’s portfolio holder for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure Cllr Andrew Stringer has commented on the new proposals. Statement in response to Government's National Planning Policy Framework announcement - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk

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