

MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Ms Jane Challis

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING of MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 17th APRIL 2025 @ 6:30PM IN MELLIS MEMORIAL HALL

Present: Cllr L Read, Cllr A Cross, Cllr L Farley, Cllr N Lockett
Clerk – J Challis

Apologies: Cllr G 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 Paterson were approved unanimously.

2 To receive Declarations of Interest on agenda items

Cllr Farley declared a non-pecuniary interest against agenda item 15 due to the request being received from a family member.

3 To consider requests for Dispensations on agenda items

It was agreed for Cllr Farley to participate in the discussion for agenda item 15, but refrain from voting. Approved unanimously with 1 abstention (Cllr Farley).

4 To resolve the draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 27th March 2025 are a true and correct record

The draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 27th March 2025 were approved unanimously.

5 Report from County Councillor

CC Cllr Fleming's report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

6 Report from District Councillor

DC Cllr Warboy's report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

7 Public Participation Session (10 minutes set aside)

No members of the public present.

8 Chair's Report

- Cllr Read reported that he has received another request to carry out Duke of Edinburgh award volunteer work. This will be an agenda item for the next meeting.
- Cllr Read has been advised by an individual affected by the East Pye NSIP proposal in South Norfolk, that there has been a recent change to the compulsory purchase law, and

reinstatement of public rights of way following construction, which may affect consideration of the energy projects around Mellis.

9 Clerk/RFO's Report

- A remittance has been received from MSDC, advising that a Parish CIL payment of £2,217.47 is due to be received this month.
- DC Cllr Warboys has asked Aura Power (re DC/23/05426 Land north of Lion Road Palgrave and Wortham), for information regarding decommissioning of their proposed solar array, and forwarded their response below. This is in relation to the decommissioning process being questioned at the previous meeting.
Decommissioning of the solar farm is assured by a number of means. This is legally bound by: our lease agreement with the landowner and the conditions of any planning consent. A decommissioning bond is put in place which starts accumulating midway through the lease term, with the asset owner making annual contributions into a secure escrow account. In the event that the asset owner becomes insolvent before decommissioning, these funds will be available for the landowner to facilitate site restoration. This process is contractually outlined in the lease agreement. Additionally, the high value of scrap metal provides a financial incentive for the removal of equipment at the end of the project's life cycle.
As the land is effectively turned into a nature reserve with more vegetation and no interference from pesticides and fertilizers, it is expected that the land will be in a much better condition than it is at present. The panels are mounted on tables which makes them easy to remove.
Additionally, up to 96% of the panel itself can currently be recycled with the second-hand panel industry constantly improving. There are a number of companies specialising in obtaining damaged or end of life panels that can either be recycled or completely refurbished to use in developing markets such as countries in Africa.
- Bron Curtis, MSDC Principal Planning Officer, has advised that the map showing all in progress energy projects in Suffolk, is still being worked on in conjunction with Suffolk County Council.
- The Internal Audit has been booked with SALC.

10 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) EcoPower Suffolk – proposal for energy farm with solar PV and battery energy storage system (BESS) consultation

At the 17th March 2025 meeting, councillors agreed their objection to this proposal, with a detailed response to the current non-statutory consultation to be approved. The deadline to submit the response is the 22nd April 2025.

A meeting was arranged by the Clerk on the 15th April in the Memorial Hall, with Cllr Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform & NSIPs, and Phil Watson SCC Strategic Energy Projects Manager, to discuss EcoPower Suffolk and other local energy proposals. Representatives from Brome & Oakley, Wortham & Burgate, Gilsingham, Occold, Thrandeston, and Yaxley parish councils, Eye town council, and Stuston parish were invited. Cllr Read, Cllr Cross and Cllr Lockett attended on behalf of Mellis, and reported that it was a very productive meeting, with Cllr Rout emphasising the need for councils to do as much as they can to mitigate and influence the proposals they are being affected by.

Councillors discussed their reasons for objecting to EcoPower Suffolk, and it was agreed for Cllr Lockett and the Clerk to collate the comments, for quorate email approval prior to the submission deadline.

ACTION – Cllr Lockett/Clerk as above.

The approved objection response submitted to EcoPower Suffolk, can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

11 Regener8 Power proposal for 'Stone Cottages' solar farm

This proposal is for a solar farm on land at Stone Cottages, east of Botesdale, west of Wortham, and north west of Burgate Little Green. Regener8 Power have requested feedback prior to the application being submitted via the TCPA process in May.

<https://regener8consultations.co.uk/stonecottages/>

After discussing, councillors agreed to submit feedback regarding the lack of information provided regarding this proposal, and the poorly arranged, rushed public consultation. A detailed response will be given when the planning application is received.

ACTION – Clerk to submit feedback as above.

12 Regener8 Power proposal for 'Red House Farm' BESS (battery energy storage system)

This proposal is for a 520MW BESS (battery energy storage system) on land at Red House Farm, east of Mellis. Regener8 Power have requested feedback prior to the application being submitted via the TCPA process in May.

<https://regener8consultations.co.uk/redhousefarm/>.

After discussing, councillors agreed to submit feedback regarding the lack of information provided regarding this proposal, and the poorly arranged public consultation, with the council initially being omitted as a consultee in error. A detailed response will be given when the planning application is received.

ACTION – Clerk to submit feedback as above.

13 To discuss communication and engagement with residents

Cllr Lockett reported indirect feedback received via a Mellis community WhatsApp group, regarding a lack of public information and understanding of the various energy proposals. It was agreed for Cllr Lockett to join the community WhatsApp group, as a point of information only, for the energy proposals and council meeting dates etc, with no other engagement being given. It was agreed for the Clerk to approach the editor of the Messenger publication, to see if the council can have a recurring page providing contact details and updates. The Clerk will also create a dedicated page on the council's website with information on all the current energy proposals.

ACTION – Cllr Lockett/Clerk as above.

14 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' 'Planning for the future' briefing pack in response to the Government's new housing requirements

In response to the government's new housing requirements, MSDC has forwarded a briefing pack, shared with councillors, which explains why this has led them to review the Joint Local Plan, plus the timetable for the review. Indicative figures for what the Government's new housing requirements could mean at town and parish level, and the importance of Neighbourhood Plans and what support is available to help develop one. The indicative new housing requirement for Mellis is 70, reduced to 48 taking into account development already approved.

After discussing, it was agreed to consider a Neighbourhood Plan. This will be an agenda item for the June or July meeting.

15 To consider film studies work experience request from resident

A resident approached the council during the public participation session at the previous meeting, with reference to work experience they would like to carry out for their film studies course. They are intending to conduct activities such as interviewing residents to record a living history of the parish. They are not making a request to carry out their work experience on behalf of the council, but would like to make the council aware, to ensure there are no objections.

After discussing councillors agreed they have no objection, and felt the intended work experience to be highly commendable, and something which could benefit the history of Mellis which the council is in the process of archiving. Approved unanimously with one abstention (Cllr Farley having previously declared a non-pecuniary interest).

The request also raises the implications of work experience and volunteering work being carried out on behalf of the council. Cllr Read asked for this to be an agenda item for next meeting.

ACTION – Clerk to add to next agenda as above.

16 Illegal grazing of the common

CLLr Cross has received reports from residents that horses are again being illegally grazed on parts of the common owned by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. This is not the same owner previously served with a Community Protection Notice by PC Ferguson, who subsequently moved to Wortham common. PC Buckle is currently on long term leave, but PC Ferguson is aware and Suffolk Wildlife Trust has served the owner with notice to leave. Councillors noted the report, and that there is currently no action for the council to take.

17 Planning

To Consider:

- DC/25/01576 – Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area – Reduce crown of 3 No. Cherry trees (G1) by 2m, Reduce crown of 2 No. Cherry trees (G2) by 2m. 1 Aggas Acre, Mellis, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 8DP.

Councillors agreed they have no objection to this application. Approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to add comment to MSDC planning portal as above.

To Receive an Update on:

- DC/24/05535 - Full Planning Application - Erection of a Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure including access, drainage, landscaping and other incidental works. Land South of Eye Airfield Industrial Estate, Castleton Way, Yaxley, Suffolk, IP23 8AW - **AWAITING DECISION.**
- DC/25/00598 - Full application- Change of use of domestic stables to provide part-time equine assisted psychotherapy services (employment). Tree Tops, The Common, Mellis, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 8EE – **GRANTED.**
- DC/25/00780 - Householder Application - Proposed window replacement. Saddlers Cottage, The Common, Mellis, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 8EB – **AWAITING DECISION.**
- 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.**

18 Norfolk & Suffolk Devolution Consultation – proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk & Suffolk - update

The Clerk collated councillors’ comments and drafted a response detailing the council’s objection, which was approved by quorate email. The response was submitted by the 13th April deadline, and can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

SALC are conducting a survey asking for feedback from councils on the Government’s consultation by the 9th May. The Clerk will forward the details to councillors for their feedback.

ACTION – Clerk as above.

19 To discuss plans for VE Day 80 anniversary 8th May 2025, including approval of expenditure.

It was agreed to light the beacon at 9:30pm on the 8th May 2025, in line with the national beacon lighting ceremony. Residents will be invited to gather around the beacon and bring their own refreshments. Due to the energy proposals received, there has not been time for the council to make any further arrangements.

20 Tree Warden’s Report

Deferred.

21 Footpath Wardens' Report

Deferred.

22 Memorial Hall car park and pond maintenance update, including approval of quotations

Approval of the quotation for work to the car park was agreed at the 18th October 2024 meeting. At this meeting it was also agreed to submit a funding application to the Progress Power Community Benefit Fund. The next bid round opens in May and runs until the 30th June 2025. Councillors have been considering work to clear out the pond next to the Memorial Hall as part of this funding application, however Cllr Read and Cllr Cross reported that no quotation has been obtained yet. A discussion ensued as to whether this work is actually necessary, following which it was agreed to apply for funding from the Progress Power Community Benefit fund for the work to the car park only, and to defer the pond work for now.

ACTION – Clerk to submit funding application as above.

23 To discuss ongoing speeding and traffic concerns in the village

Cllr Lockett reported that Speed Watch Team has already carried out some initial speed checks, and recorded 30-40 motorists driving at speeds over 35mph. These motorists will be receiving a police letter. Cllr Read asked Cllr Lockett to pass the councils thanks and appreciation to the Speed Watch Team.

24 Phone box repairs and consideration of updated quotation

The stain glass artist has confirmed that their quotation for repairs dated April 2024 remains the same. Cllr Cross proposed proceeding with the quotation, seconded by Cllr Farley and approved unanimously. Clerk to look at eligible funding options.

ACTION – Clerk as above.

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

Cllr Read has details of a gardener who may be interested in carrying out a one-off clearance, with a view to it becoming an ongoing arrangement. His rates are £35.00 per hour. Cllr Read proposed arranging for the gardener to carry out an initial 4 hours work totalling £140.00. Seconded by Cllr Lockett, and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Cllr Read/Clerk to arrange for gardener to carry out work as above.

26 To discuss Wellhead project

The council has received approximately 200 old roof tiles, which have been donated free of charge. No other updates.

27 Arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parish Council Meeting

The Annual Parish Council meeting will be held at 6pm in Mellis Memorial Hall, followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm.

28 To approve Accounting and AGAR statements 2024/25

Deferred.

29 To approve CIL expenditure report 2024/25

Deferred.

30 To approve Internal Audit comments 2024/25

Deferred.

31 Finance

i) A list of payments and receipts, expenditure against the budget, and bank reconciliation to 24th February was sent to councillors. Barclays bank account balance as of 24th March 2025 - **£28,943.72**

ii) Review and authorisation of payments presented:

1	J. Challis	Clerk Admin April	£475.20
2	J. Challis	Expenses – mileage & Copy paper	£11.88
3	Memorial Hall	March hire – 3 meetings	£80.00
5	Memorial Hall	Rural Coffee Caravan March hire	£20.00
6	Memorial Hall	March Rural Coffee Caravan hire	£20.00
7	SALC, inv 29990	Annual subscription	£273.42
8	Suffolk Cloud, inv 2024/059	Annual hosting	£20.00

Cllr Read proposed approval of all payments above, seconded by Cllr Lockett and approved unanimously.

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

iii) Approval of councillor to conduct quarterly account checks – Cllr Lockett; approved unanimously with one abstention (Cllr Lockett)

32 Matters for future consideration

- Digitisation of the History of Mellis
- Printing of more Common leaflets for new residents
- Electric vehicle charging points outside the Memorial Hall
- Consideration of a Neighbourhood Plan
- Process for volunteer work/work experience requests

8:48pm Cllr Farley left the meeting.

33 The date of the Annual Parish Council meeting is Thursday 29th May 2025 at 6:00pm in Mellis Memorial Hall.

Meeting closed at 8:51pm.

