

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) of Wortham & Burgate held 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at 7.00pm in Wortham Village Hall**

**Council members present:** Cllrs S Rash, J Bradley, C Williams, J Piper, B Cole, P Burd, M Odams, , C Grocott J Lloyd, S Wright, D Ling  
County Cllr. J Fleming, 4 members of the general public & N Verkroost (Clerk to the Council)

1. **Welcome by the Chair of the Parish Council** – The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting
2. **Apologies for absences:** Cllr Kearsley
3. **To receive an annual report from the County Councillor, Jessica Fleming** – County Councillor Jessica Fleming summarised her report to those present at the meeting; full details can be located at Appendix A. Jessica was thanked for her report.
4. **To receive an annual report from the District Councillor, Diana Kearsley** – District Councillor Diana Kearsley sent her apologies as she could not attend the meeting but her report was read out to those present For the full report see Appendix B .
5. **To receive an annual report from the Mid Suffolk North Safer Neighbourhood Team** –Wortham & Burgate are now covered by the Stowmarket Branch of the Safer Neighbourhood Team, In general the public wanted the police to target 3 main areas: Licenced Premises with the intension of reducing demand on Frontline Officers. Improving Safeguarding documentation at Care Homes.Reduce opportunist Crimes. Full details can be seen on our website.
6. **To receive an annual report from the Chair of the Parish Council** –Full details can be located at Appendix C.
7. **Parishoners Forum**
- 8.

A group of local residents concerned about Wortham Ling read out the following statement:

“Statement for 5 April 2017 Annual Parish Meeting

We’re here today, as members of the Ling community, because we are concerned about the obvious lack of any management of Wortham Ling since SWT left the site over 2 years ago. We are also concerned about how a lack of management might have an impact on the Ling in the future, if allowed to continue. In particular, the large pot holes next to the Diss end car park need urgent repair & the surface of Doits car park badly needs making good, not only to make the car parks easier and more attractive for the Ling’s many visitors to use, but also to discourage verge parking, which has become so prevalent and which is so detrimental to the Ling landscape, and its valuable verge habitats.

We have recently come to understand that the Ling is subject to a Scheme of Regulation & Management made under the Commons Act 1899. We understand the effect of this scheme is to vest full management responsibility and protection of the Ling in the district council, namely Mid Suffolk District Council. We are therefore asking MSDC for help, in dealing with some of the unresolved issues, that arise from the Ling’s heavy use as a public space (including the repair of Doits car park), and we are hoping that MSDC officers will agree to meet us.

We are already very proactive as a community in helping to look after the Ling and have some proposals that we are keen to put forward, that we believe will make MSDC’s management responsibility to the Ling, easier to achieve and less onerous. We have both a practical and a funding solution for Doits car park, and are asking that MSDC take ownership of this problem and liaise with the owner on the community’s behalf. We also believe that better communication to the Ling public is essential. We should like to propose to MSDC that they adopt SWT’s old notice board, which is still standing unused in Doits car park. This could be used to display a new information panel for the Ling, designed by the Ling community and funded by community grants.

<sup>1184</sup> We have been extremely forthcoming in our offers of help to the owner during the past two years. For example, we organised and carried out the last two years' ragwort pulls in cooperation with the owner's PA to show community willing. However, despite our efforts to foster a working relationship with the owner, we have been unable to engage him in dealing with those management issues that relate to the Ling's use as a common and public space. In any case, in the current owner's defence, the responsibility to deal with such public access issues seems to rest with the district council and not the Ling's private owners.

We are therefore looking forward to meeting MSDC officers to discuss possible ways forward, and hope too that a member of the parish council, and district councillor Diana Kearsley, as elected representatives, will participate in any future meeting.

The parish council is considering its participation in a meeting with MSDC at tonight's meeting of the parish council, and we should like to take this opportunity of thanking the parish council for their consideration of this important matter, and also for what we hope will be their continuing support of our community endeavour on the Ling's behalf.

THANK YOU “

Cllr Rash thanked the residents for their statement.

The residents have set up a group called FOWL ( Friends of Wortham Ling) and Cllr Rash asked them to clarify whether this group had been set up as a formal body with a constitution and minuted meetings. The group confirmed that this was not the case as yet.

Cllr Rash explained that in order for the Parish Council to engage with FOWL it would need to be a properly constituted group.

A resident of Union Lane expressed their concern about the condition of the road with large potholes and craters make the road dangerous and difficult to negotiate. Cllr Rash explained that this road is not adopted by SCC and it is up to the owner whether they wish to maintain it or not. The resident asked whether the PC would investigate the possibility of the road being adopted by SCC. Cllr Rash explained that although the road over common land is used regularly there is no prescriptive right to this and therefore it would make a case for adoption by SCC difficult. It was also explained to those present that adoption of roadways is a long and complicated process and unlikely to succeed.

Another member of the public complained about the condition of the road surface of Slade Lane. The resident was advised to use the online reporting tool on the Suffolk CC website in the first instance.

**Meeting closed at 7.45pm**

**Appendix A**



**Annual Report 2016/ 2017**

**Wortham & Burgate Parish Council**

By County Councillor Jessica Fleming, Hartismere Division, Suffolk

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A year ago we were looking at the prospect of a devolved Norfolk-Suffolk combined mayoral authority and 'The EU Referendum'. Now this picture has changed and Suffolk remains as before, but local authorities continue to reinvent themselves in response to changes in the way local services are funded. Waveney and Suffolk Coastal have decided to merge and in 2019 will form East Suffolk Council, Mid Suffolk and Babergh are increasingly working together jointly, they will join the County at Endeavour House later in 2017.

On a more local level, considerable resource has been invested on resurfacing roads; this will reduce temporary repairs and diversions in the longer term but may have been frustrating for local residents. The system for reporting minor defects such as potholes remains and in most cases responses have been prompt. The long-awaited road markings which are part of the 20's Plenty Scheme in Wortham are scheduled to be completed in mid April.

During 2016 the County contracted Community Transport out to 7 operators based on District/ Town boundaries. This aims to connect people to commercial buses and trains but also can offer door-to-door service along with other providers such as the Rickinghall-Botesdale Good Neighbour Scheme. No one should feel that they are stuck unable to leave home or get to appointments.

Some parts of north Suffolk are likely to experience pressure to accept additional housing growth. Master-planning and infrastructure funding have challenged both District and County Councils to work proactively together to enable school places, health and other services to be funded through use of pooled Community Infrastructure Levy funds and other means.

Neighbourhood plans are increasingly influencing the type of growth suited to particular areas; 3 plans are now adopted in Suffolk (Lavenham, East Bergholt and Mendlesham) and 14 others have started the process including Rickinghall-Botesdale and the Diss Area.

Protecting the natural environment is one of the Council's obligations and, as a Historic Environment Champion and Green County advocate, one of my own. During the past year SCC along with the University of Suffolk initiated design and construction of a new repository, The Hold, in Ipswich which will house most of the County's archives and offer better public access. It is due to open in 2019. Also the County Council now hosts the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS); among other things this publishes a list of 'priority' species and habitats which is helpful in understanding local wildlife, visit their website on <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/> Thank you for your support and participation over the past year. Please get in touch with any queries or comments

*District Councillor Report*

*Annual Parish Meeting - Wortham & Burgate*

**1) Economy & Organisational**

The refreshed Joint Strategic Plan was developed and includes a number of revised significant priorities. Due to the changes in the national framework, our two district councils will deliver enduring and positive changes for our communities and businesses over the next five years. The Joint Strategic Plan 2016/2020 puts our two sovereign councils in the best position to take advantage of the opportunities and changes in the way public services are delivered. To enable the successful delivery of the strategic outcomes, we need an enabled and efficient organisation – the right people, doing the right things, in the right way, at the right time, for all the right reasons – and be sure we are delivering value for money. Our aim is that this Plan acts as an inspiration for our communities, local businesses and other partners to work with us to achieve the outcomes. The three main priority areas that the two districts and their councillors have identified and will have the most positive impact are: *Economy and Environment - Housing - Strong and healthy Communities*

“Where we are now” – the districts of Babergh and Mid Suffolk form the heart of Suffolk and cover an area of over 1,400 sq.k (540 sq.m). The ‘heart’ is predominantly rural in nature, with a number of market towns; it is a special place to live and work with 6,400 listed buildings, 60 conservation areas and two areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We have a comparatively low wage economy - available figures show that we are approximately £70 per week below the national figure. But figures released for Suffolk recently show that 54.5% of Suffolk pupils achieved five or more A\* - C grades where the national figure for all schools was 53.8% - this is the first time Suffolk figures have been above the national average for several years, which is encouraging progress and play a major part in the economic growth.

Last year the Council Tax rose by 1.9% for Band D properties and for 2017/18 the Council budget includes a small Council Tax increase – announcements have been sent out regarding the council tax increase. This increase is set at £2.61 for the year for a Band D property, with the larger homes paying £5.22 more over the year and the smallest properties seeing an increase of £1.74 p.a.

**2) Housing**

Given the shortfall in homes actually built in our area in recent years, and the growing need for new homes due to economic growth, aging population and the changing scene of households, we need to increase the number of new homes ensuring they are the right type, right tenure and in the right place.

New homes delivery – in recent years the need for homes in our area has outstripped delivery, which has been slowed down in recent years due to the recession slowing down new build. New homes are critical, not only for existing residents but also to attract new skilled workers to support the economic growth. We are building 65 new council homes across the two districts, with 14 already completed with new occupants. £460,000 grants funding from the DCLG for Community-led-housing and will be used to kick-start the delivery of new affordable homes. The two districts are looking to increase supply and expand our ‘market making’ role in terms of creating the right conditions for developers and private landlords to work with communities to deliver the much needed housing.

The number of empty homes reduced as a result of a survey and 97 empty homes were brought back to provide homes, generating £130,000 of income to the local economy during this period. A

financial inclusion project has helped over 150 referral, helped tenants claim £33,106 more and averted 13 evictions.

3) **Environment**

Since the installation of the Solar PV project on our housing stock, the ‘green energy’ generated an income of £460,000 this year. These panels provide greatly reduced energy costs to our tenants. This project has reduced CO2 emissions by 3.7 million tonnes since June 2014.

The continuing improvements on our ‘recycling’ initiative have seen a 6.5% increase in our business waste service and 20 tonnes of glass is being collected and recycled every month.

4) **Communities**

Working with our communities is essential as we focus on how we can stimulate sustained growth in new housing and business to lead to greater economic prosperity. In particular we want to attract skilled people into our area and retain and enhance essential community infrastructure and facilities such as schools, health services, village halls, sports facilities and play areas. By concentrating on these priorities we will help retain our district as a safe and healthy place to live. Through our focus on preventative programmes and activities, we will help ensure that our residents have every opportunity to take responsibility for leading active, healthy and safe lifestyles. An important part of the programme is to improve mental health and wellbeing to enhance the lives of individuals and families. The Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board together with partners have all been involved in this vital work to get the best possible outcome for adults and young people to make sure they have every opportunity to improve their mental health and wellbeing – the work continues.

Neighbourhood Plans – we have empowered communities to bring forward their Neighbourhood Plans across the district and the first 3 plans have now been adopted with a further 14 in progress.

Grant funding – we have provided over £725,000 in grants to our community groups, comprising £492,184 in revenue and £233,526 in capital funding. These grant payments help our villages to maintain the best possible facilities and activities in our rural settings.

*Cllr Diana Kearsley  
Member for Gislegham Ward  
Mid Suffolk District Council*