

Debenham Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Debenham Parish Council held on Monday, 20th of November 2023, at 7:30 pm, Dove Cottage, High Street, Debenham.

Present: Cllrs F Winrow-Giffin (Chair), K Barlow (Vice-Chair), J Baldwin, L Cockerton, G Helm, A Finnissy, L Robbins, M Hammond, J Sweet, S Phipps, M Carpenter, Mrs D Bedwell (Parish Clerk), District Cllr T Davis, and eight members of the public.

DPC/23/151: To consider apologies for absence: Apologies were received (and approved) from Cllr K Grimshaw.

DPC/23/152: To consider the co-option of a new member onto the Council: It was resolved to approve the co-option of Anne Finnissy (Filkins) onto the Council. Members also welcomed Cllr Lucy Robbins, who had joined the Council following a recent election.

DPC/23/153: Declarations of interest with regard to items on the agenda: Cllr F Winrow-Giffins declared a pecuniary interest in grass-cutting contract matters.

DPC/23/154: Public participation section: A member of the public read out a comprehensive report listing traffic issues on Low Road following the granting of planning permission for temporary vehicular access from Low Road to the new Landex development. Despite there being evidence of flooding in the area, as there had been technical issues at the time of the planning committee meeting, a video evidencing the risks had not been played. Neighbouring residents felt that MSDC had not followed due diligence in considering the various factors involved in the granting of this temporary permission. The member of the public also stated that they had video evidence of the unimpeded flow of the river in front of their property and photographic evidence of the field (about to be developed) under flood water. They added that more runoff and a new pinch-point on the site would increase flooding, which would affect neighbouring properties and accesses, and suggested that any new developments in the village should be carefully considered to avoid a repeat of the devastation caused by Storm Babet.

It was explained that the Debenham Parish Council had merely been a consultee in the planning process, and had recommended that the entrance to the site was from Ipswich Road instead. It was further suggested that all the evidence gathered should be forwarded to the Clerk so that it could be raised at the forthcoming meeting with County Cllr Matthew Hicks.

Another member of the public stated that they had emailed the Environment Agency and urged everyone else to do the same, as some action was urgently needed to deal with the excess silt on the river beds, and to better manage roads and ditches alike. They expressed their concern for how complacent the nation had become with the lack of appropriate services which could prevent some of what Debenham had recently endured.

It was also noted that the recent development of the new Denbury Homes and Seers Medical had included so much flat concrete that flood waters converged and flooded properties that had not been affected in the past; mitigating measures must be included with any new developments to compensate for the loss of natural drainage systems. It was clarified that although Denbury Homes had installed water retention mechanisms, these had not been fully operational at the time of Storm Babet.

A similar issue was raised for Little London Hill, but in this case, it appeared that the flood waters came down the hill but missed the drains altogether, and these should be repositioned more adequately.

A member of the public expressed concern that the Neighbourhood Plan allowed for more development to take place, which would affect the overall flooding risks in the village, and that the Plan should be reviewed to consider this aspect.

Councillors were asked whether there were any plans to raise funds to help those in the village who had suffered losses following Storm Babet, which was confirmed.

Cllr S Phipps reported that he had assisted a team from the Environment Agency on Sunday following the storm and that drone imagery had been captured of the whole parish, clearly showing the areas which had flooded. This could become an invaluable resource for future planning considerations.

Cllr M Carpenter reminded those present that MSDC was in the process of organising a parish-wide meeting at the Leisure Centre, which would involve all the relevant agencies and people affected, and asked if there may be scope to ask MSDC to review existing planning applications. Cllr M Hammond explained that the Neighbourhood Plan had included a policy requesting that any major development was built downstream. However, at the final stage, the Inspector recommended its removal as the Plan would not have been approved otherwise.

DPC/23/155: Reports

- a) District Councillor's report: Cllr T Davis's report had been circulated ahead of the meeting. Cllr Davis added that members of the Environment Agency would be attending the forum being organised by MSDC to take place at the Leisure Centre. Suffolk County Council was also in the process of carrying out legislation reviews, with some sixty ongoing, and Cllr Davis had asked that a S51 review be carried out for Debenham.

Cllr J Baldwin thanked Cllr Davis on behalf of the parish for all her assistance during the aftermath of Storm Babet.

- b) County Councillor's report: Cllr M Hicks's apologies were noted and his report had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting.

DPC/23/156: To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on October 16th 2023: Following an amendment to agenda item 140 c), it was resolved to approve the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held.

DPC/23/157: Planning matters

- a) **Application: DC/23/04658 - The Old Library, Gracechurch Street** - Re-consultation - Alterations to the existing front porch, and existing driveway, demolition of the existing steps and pathway. Replacement of boundary fence between The Old Library and 3 Gracechurch Street and between The Old Library and 7 Gracechurch Street: It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.
- b) **Application: DC/23/05310 - 5 Gracechurch Street** - Erection of single-storey rear extension inc. conversion of part of existing garage to form w.c/utility room and erection of summer house: It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.

- c) **Decision: DC/23/04829 Kiln Cottage, 8 Low Road** - Works to Trees in Conservation Area - (T1) Eucalyptus pollard to 5m and trim roots - No objection raised: Noted.
- d) **Decision: DC/23/04478 11 Cross Green** - Erection of outbuilding (following removal of existing)- Granted: Noted.
- e) **Decision: DC/23/04325 39 Chancery Lane** - Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/23/00992 - Conditions 3 (Works to Underlying Fabric) and Condition 4 (Insulation) – Conditions discharged: Noted.
- f) **DC/23/03887 Poplar Hall Barn, Low Road** - Subdivision of dwelling to form two dwellings including erection of front porch extension to Unit B – Granted: Noted.
- g) **Decision: DC/23/04310 17 High Street** - Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area- Cut back overhanging branches on 1 No. Plum (T1), Remove 1 broken branch from 1 No. Ash (T2), prune and reshape 1 No. Plum (T3), 1 No. Pear (T4) and 1 No. apple (T5) by approx. 1-1.5m all round. Fell 1 No. Plum (T6). Reduce and reshape 1 No. Hawthorn (T7) by approx. 2m all round. Fell 1 No. Conifer (T8). Reduce and reshape 1 No. Cherry (T9) by approx. 2m all round. Reduce and reshape 1 No. Ash (T10) by 2m all round to the last position. Reduce and reshape 1 No. Cherry (T11) by approx. 4m all round. Fell 1 No. Spruce (T12). Fell 1No. Cherry (T13) - No objection: Noted.
- h) **Second pre-submission consultation - Wetheringsett cum Brockford Neighbourhood Plan: the Debenham Parish Council:** The Parish Council did not wish to make any comments.

DPC/23/158: Finance and Administration

- a) To approve accounts for payment (including a request for reimbursement for loss of stock) and note receipts and bank balances/reconciliations: The invoices, bank statements and monthly reconciliations had been circulated to members. Following due consideration, it was resolved to approve the accounts for payments (except for one item queried where a settlement figure was agreed at £200 instead of £300) and receipts. In terms of a request for reimbursement of lost stock during Storm Babet by a local group, members were concerned that its approval could set a precedent and would not be sustainable. Therefore, a decision to not support the request was made.

Payments:	November
	£
Salaries, HMRC, pensions	2,032.51
Clerk expenses	168.27
Website Editor	120.00
Public Conveniences	946.40
Grass Cutting Contractor	1,949.00
Pest Control Solutions (Street Warden)	1,333.00
Rialtas (Year-end process)	594.00
Action Play and Leisure (Recreation Ground Phase 1 and deposit Phase 2)	41,900.40
Debenham Angel Community Ltd (funding)	2,600.00
Debenham VH&PFT (Fireworks event funding- insurance)	500.00
Tuddenham Press (Green Team materials-funding secured)	351.60

Mrs J Walton (Green Team equipment-funding secured)	37.83
Cllr J Sweet (Recreation Ground padlock)	11.65
East of England Co-op (Storm Babet emergency provisions)	389.01
Debenham VH&PFT (Food provision-emergency centre)	56.31
Mr Julian Dean (Allotment project funding)	1,587.10
Wave (Public conveniences water and rates)	34.83
Bierton and Woods (War Memorial refurbishment)	840.00
Mr R Blackwell (SID maintenance and reporting)	30.00
E-ON (Public conveniences)	205.89
E-ON (Telephone kiosk)	45.70
BT Group (Dove Cottage Wi-Fi)	37.99
Total:	53,792.49
Woodland Group- Westrup Contracting (Tractor mulching)	390.00
Receipts:	
Allotment rents (to be provided once bank mandate is completed)	TBA
MSDC- Cleansing grant	2,404.42
MSDC- Pride of Place grant-funding (Green Team)	400.00
Total:	2,804.42
Balances: Not available (bank mandate change in progress)	

- b) Council Action List: The Action list was reviewed and updated. It was suggested that completed actions could be removed from the action list following their first report to reduce the size of the document.
- c) To approve the Council Calendar for 2024: It was resolved to approve the calendar of meeting dates for 2024. It was also agreed to hold the Parish Surgeries on the first Monday of every month (except where noted).
- d) To approve the accounts for the second quarter (to 30 September 2023): Deferred to the next meeting as the Clerk was unable to access online banking due to the change of bank mandate.

DPC/23/159: To consider a request for a donation to the Citizens Advice Bureau Mid Suffolk: It was resolved to donate £300 to the organisation.

DPC/23/160: Committees, working groups and representatives -To receive reports and consider recommendations / agree on actions:

- a) **Play provision** -To receive an update from the Play Areas Working Group (Cllr JS) and consider correspondence to be sent to the schools regarding damage to play equipment (Cllr FW-G). A brief report was received from Cllr J Sweet. Following a recent incident with some of the new equipment, it was also agreed that the DPC Representatives within the local schools should approach the Heads to agree on a strategy to involve the children at the various stages of the process (installation of new

equipment at the Recreation ground) and encourage ownership and community-led caretaking.

b) Emergency Plan:

- To form an EP Working Group to review the Plan and prepare recommendations to the full Council: Members discussed some of the events following the recent Storm Babet and the effectiveness/shortfalls of the Debenham Emergency Plan. Although it was agreed that all Councillors should be involved with the review of the document itself, it would be more practical to begin the process with a smaller group, which would in time consult with the relevant stakeholders that formed the main Joint Partnership. Councillors J Baldwin, K Barlow, A Finnissy, S Phipps and J Sweet were appointed to the Working Group. It was also agreed that Working Group Terms of Reference would be needed due to the multi-agency nature of the project.

District Cllr T Davis volunteered to join the Group as the MSDC representative, which was welcomed by members.

- To consider acting as a fund-holder for donations towards those affected by the recent storms/floods (Cllr JB): The proposal to hold funds which could be used to support local victims of Storm Babet was warmly received and unanimously approved by Councillors. There were some questions as to whether a system of Escrow would be necessary, or whether the current system of holding funds for a third party and accounting for these via separate cost centres would be sufficient, and this would be verified with the Council's Auditors.

- c) **Highways** - To consider proposals to be included in a Traffic Regulation Order; To consider commissioning a traffic survey for data on traffic movements (Cllr JB): County Cllr M Hicks had invited Parish Council representatives to attend a meeting with SCC Highways to discuss the various areas to be considered for a formal Traffic Regulation Order proposal. Members were asked to provide a list of any such items raised by the electorate, which would be added to the existing list in preparation for this meeting. Cllrs F Winrow-Giffin, J Sweet and K Barlow volunteered as attendees.

The Clerk provided members with quotes for traffic surveys as had been requested. Members debated over what issues were a priority and what areas should be surveyed to provide evidence for a potential addition to the TRO in terms of HGV restrictions similar to Eye. As there were differing views about what specific information should be requested, it was agreed to ask Cllr M Hicks for the data already available through the various surveys conducted by SCC Highways, identify where there may be any gaps relevant to Debenham, and agree on the specific details at a later date. In the meantime, expenditure of up to £800 was approved should the Clerk be in a position to request the said surveys following the meeting with Cllr M Hicks.

- d) **St Mary's Church**- To consider the quotes received for the repair of the village clock: The quotes were considered, and it was resolved to approve the one from Haward Horological. It was also suggested that the Clerk should check whether the costs would be covered by the Parish Council's insurance and what the future premium increases were likely to be in the event of a claim.

- e) **Green/Eco projects**: To consider the provision of EV charging Infrastructure for Debenham (Cllr JB): Cllr J Baldwin had circulated a report on the matter ahead of the meeting and offered a suggestion that Councillors with the Green portfolio could look into it in more detail and report back for further consideration. Cllr J Baldwin also volunteered to assist if necessary. Cllr M Hammond recommended that such an initiative should be introduced through the planning system. Debenham had attempted to incorporate a policy in the Neighbourhood Plan that required all new developments to offer the

provision, but unfortunately, this had not been supported at the time by the consulting bodies.

- f) **Community Projects:** Social Isolation and Loneliness Advice; Youth Provision; Creating a Safe Environment for Persons with Disabilities - Initial Considerations (Cllr JB): Cllr J Baldwin had again circulated a report on the various proposals. Examples were given on how the Warm Hub and Saturday Coffee Mornings were well supported, but there was currently no provision for a scheme in the evening- Could the Parish Council support extend to additional sessions to meet this need, or could other funding be sought?

There was also almost no provision for the Youth of Debenham, and this was something to be considered.

In terms of “creating a safe environment for those with disabilities”, Cllr J Baldwin had been trying to “recruit” mobility champions who could identify the problems within the existing infrastructure. The goal was to empower those with disabilities by addressing them, even if that resulted in pressure being applied to other local authorities to address needs. The unsuitability of some of the pavements was one of the issues, for example, which Suffolk County Council should address under their remit. Cllr J Baldwin ended her presentation with an agreement to put together a list of ideas for further debate at a later date.

- g) **Village maintenance** - To consider improvements to certain areas of the parish (Cllr JS); URC maintenance: Cllr J Sweet reported that some areas on the High Street, such as near Webster's Newsagents and The Angel required further maintenance, as weeds were growing through the pavements and litter was gathering in corners.

Cllr M Carpenter added that although the oak fence on the High Street had had some sections repaired, others still needed attention.

Cllr S Phipps remarked on how the greens on Aspall Road had been churned up by passing traffic, particularly heavier goods vehicles. Although he had planned to rebuild the verges manually, his work commitments made it difficult, as it would take some time due to the intense labouring nature of the job.

The Clerk informed members that the Warden had been unable to address some of the overgrowth in front of some of the properties, as some residents were reluctant to affect any wildlife that may be present and preferred to let nature take its course. However, she had made an appointment to walk the High Street with the Warden and Cllr L Cockerton to note what areas could be better managed so that action could be taken as soon as possible.

Cllr K Barlow and Cllr F Winrow-Giffin had visited the URC to look at the overgrown boundaries reported by a parishioner. They had found the area in need of considerable maintenance, which could only be achieved by a specialised contractor rather than the existing Parish Council ones. It was also suggested by both Cllr K Barlow and Cllr M Carpenter that a portion of the grounds could become a managed conservation/wildlife area (such as the Nature Reserve Scheme), with neighbouring residents asked to remove any items that they had started storing on the grounds, and for the site to be open and welcoming to the general public. It was agreed that the Clerk would seek some initial quotes for the main maintenance needs ahead of further considerations.

DPC/23/161: To note any further correspondence (all correspondence is circulated to members ahead of the meeting or included on the agenda for consideration):

- a) SALC conference notification 29/11/23 9:30 am to 3:30 pm (reminder): Noted, but no representatives were available to attend.
- b) Correspondence re Deb-Fest re future events (to be actioned by DLC reps): No further action, pending response from the DPC representatives.
- c) Confirmation of approval of Community Grant of £10,000 towards play provision: Noted. It was also noted that a further grant of £400 had been received from MSDC and allocated to the Green Team.
- d) MSDC consultation on local building consent orders (10/11 to 29/12): Noted, and no further comments.
- e) Parishioner correspondence re. Deben Rise (considered under Highways agenda item): To be added to the list of items being considered for inclusion in a Traffic Regulation Order.
- f) Review of Polling Districts: Noted, no further comments.

DPC/23/162: To receive any reports from Councillors/requests for addition to a future agenda (no decision can be made unless exempt or under delegated power):

Cllr J Sweet thanked the volunteers who had placed the poppies around Debenham, as well as Cllr K Barlow and all those involved with the RBL for a brilliant service on Remembrance Day, and Cllr J Baldwin and all the volunteers who had helped during Storm Babet.

Cllr G Helm recommended that the Parish Council consider the adoption of a “Slack Policy”, with clear guidelines about its use, as well as the recording of Parish Council meetings to avoid any future issues.

Cllr M Carpenter suggested that the local Nature Recovery Strategy should be incorporated into the work of the Parish Council-Clerk to add to the January meeting.

It was also raised that the public conveniences were in a poor state and their refurbishment should be considered at the January meeting. Clerk to action.

DPC/23/163: Date of the next meeting: 11th December 2023: Noted.

DPC/23/164: To consider the temporary exclusion of press and public: *That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission at meetings) Act 1960 the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed:* It was resolved to exclude any remaining members of the public. *The remaining members of the public left the meeting at this point.*

DPC/23/165: Contractual matters – To consider amendments to existing contracts: Deferred to the January meeting.

DPC/23/166: Employment matters - Annual review – cont. (Cllr GH): Employment Committee to agree on a date for their next meeting to agree on recommendations on any outstanding matters before full Council consideration.

With no further matters to be transacted, the meeting ended at 9:43 pm.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

