

Debenham Parish Council

**DRAFT** Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting  
Held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024, Dove Cottage, Debenham

Present: Cllr K Barlow, Cllr J Baldwin, Cllr L Cockerton, Cllr I Collins, Cllr K Grimshaw, Cllr L Robbins, Cllr S Phipps, Cllr J Sweet, Cllr F Winrow-Giffin (Chairman), Clerk C Usher, District Cllr T Davis and 6 members of the public

*Chairpersons Announcement – Welcome to this meeting of Debenham Parish Council, The Council, members of the public and the press my record / film this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Parish Clerk. Please switch all mobile phones to silent. May I remind all those present to be courteous and not to have private conversations whilst the meeting is in progress.*

DPC/24/126 To Receive and consider apologies for absence  
*Cllr A Finnissy, Cllr G Helm*

DPC/24/127 To receive members declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda  
*Cllr Sweet and Cllr Winrow-Giffin declared an interest in item 24/132.*

DPC/24/128 Public Participation

*2 members of the public raised concerns regarding the flooding of the village as it appears nothing has been achieved so far and it's a year since the flooding. Some residents were starting to clear the rivers near their property but were unsure what to do with the debris, the EA have given no clear guidance and some elderly residents who are close to the river cannot clear their patch of the river so what happens to these areas. The EA need to provide a timetable when these matters will be addressed. Residents were also concerned about sewage and what Anglian Water will be doing to address this.*

*A member of the public asked if the dead trees that lay run along part of the boundary of St Mary's churchyard could be removed and the vegetation cleared. The Council confirmed that this was the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council, and they should approach them first.*

*A member of the public introduced himself as the owner of Hogg's Kiss Coffee Van and explained to the Council why he was looking for a site in the village to trade and to be more involved in the village community.*

DPC/24/129 To receive reports from the District and County Councillors

*The District Councillor reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was highlighted that this weekend was MSDC's Big Weekend where free tickets to events across Mid Suffolk would be released. Residents would need to apply online. MSDC were encouraging local businesses to attend workshops being held across the district. The MSDC Planning meeting was being held on 25<sup>th</sup> September which will be discussing The Angel. The District Councillor also confirmed that the Council's comments regarding the Low Road application had been submitted and spoke on behalf of the Parish Council. The application had been approved but with a large number of conditions. The temporary bridge will be removed once the main road into the site had been completed. Other concerns highlighted by Parish Councillors were flooding and moving forward with this and that SCC have a flood schemes team that could assist, Aspall Road and the footpath and the crossing that had not yet been installed yet.*

*The County Councillor report had been circulated prior to the meeting.*

DPC/24/130 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> July were approved and the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> August were approved.

DPC/24/131 Planning Matters

DC/24/02129 – Condition 12 (Details of Estate Roads and Footpaths) and Condition 21 (Scheme of Sustainability Measures) – Land South East of Low Road – *Councillors noted the decision.*

Notice of Appeal – Change of Use from mixed C3/Drinking Establishment (Sui generis) use to 1 No. Dwelling House (C3) – The Angel Inn, 5 High Street – *Councillors agreed to submit a response to the Planning Inspectorate and for the same comments to be forwarded to MSDC Planning Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> September.*

*It was proposed by Cllr Barlow and seconded by Cllr Baldwin and unanimously agreed to recommend refusal –*

*The plans are contrary to the Mid Suffolk Local Plan Policy E6. Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Policies DEB 10, DEB 11, DEB 13, DEB 18. Supplementary Planning Guidance on the Retention of Shops, Post Offices and Public Houses in Villages Sections 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 5.4, 6.0. The National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 8c, 83, 91, 92, 191, 192, 197, 212 & 213.*

*Mid Suffolk Local Plan Policy E6 concerns the importance that should be placed on the effect on employment resulting from the change of use from commercial to residential. There should be "significant benefit".*

*Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Policy DEB 10 Supporting financial Sustainability. The policy is designed to "support the development of a sustainable local economy; and develop tourism initiatives".*

*Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Policy DEB 11 Employment. The reason for this policy is to "support economic growth and job opportunities" and states that "Any non-employment use proposed on sites and premises used for employment purposes, and that is expected to have an adverse effect on employment generation," should only be approved under exceptional circumstances.*

*Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Policy DEB 13 Debenham's retail core. Change of use to residential from retail or services should only be approved where the sale has been attempted diligently. Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Policy DEB 18 Historic Environment. The idea behind this policy is to preserve the history of the village. Other policies against which this application should be judged are from The Supplementary Planning Guidance on the Retention of Shops, Post Offices and Public Houses in Villages, adopted by MSDC in Feb 2004.*

*The Supplementary Planning Guidance on the Retention of Shops, Post Offices and Public Houses in Villages, adopted by MSDC in Feb 2004. One of the SPG's 3 objectives as per section 2.2 is "To enable the reopening of a service or facility at a future stage by resisting specific building alterations that would prevent reopening". Section 2.3 gives the Local Planning Authority the role of resisting changes of use for pubs where there is "local support for the retention of facilities".*

*Section 3.2 points out that rural pubs, are particularly prone to being redeveloped for residential use but that the disappearance of a pub affects the quality of life, as a focal point for the community disappears.*

*In the policy statement for village pubs Section 5.4 the change of use of a village pub will not be permitted unless the applicant has demonstrated that reasonable efforts have been made to sell or let and that it is not economically viable, also that there is no evidence of community support for the retention of the public house.*

*Section 6.0 gives the criteria on which to judge whether to resist change of use. Such criteria as; significant expression of public support, concern from the Parish Council, impact of alterations on listed building. The applicant must show that the property has been advertised for sale for a minimum of 12 months, should provide information on the annual accounts, efforts made to maximise the returns.*

*The design, layout and dimension of the proposed development and alterations are out of character and proportion with regards to the site and to nearby buildings and their settings in the conservation area. The proposed extension is considerably large and appears to show no consideration to the neighbouring properties. The approval of such an application would undoubtedly result in the loss of a very important heritage asset.*

*The Parish Council is also concerned that the plans and drawings submitted to the planning department are not clear and can be misleading. The applicants intimated that the building used to be two storeys high, and evidence suggests that that is not correct. The Planning Department does not appear to have conducted a pre-planning application meeting (which we would expect when considering the impact of this application in Debenham). HB3 is also a concern; as the applicant does not appear to have provided details of the materials to be used to ensure they are, in fact, local heritage materials.*

*With regards to the Policy statement for village pubs- the change of use of a village public house to an alternative use will not be permitted unless: at least one other public house exists within the settlement boundary or within easy walking distance to it; and it can be demonstrated by the applicant that all reasonable efforts have been made to sell or let (without restrictive covenant) the property as a public house, and that it is not economically viable; and there is no evidence of significant support from the community for the retention of the public house. if permission is granted for change of use, preference will be given to the premises remaining in some form of community or employment use; as long as there is no significant traffic, amenity, environmental or conservation problems as a result.*

*We believe that the applicant has not demonstrated that the unit is not reasonably capable of continuing as a public house. Further, no evidence has been submitted that any other commercial or community uses have been fully explored and no robust marketing information or financial viability information has been submitted. Therefore, the proposal would, if approved, result in the formation of a dwelling house in the 'district centre' without satisfying the local planning authority that this is absolutely necessary to secure the future of the rural facility. Such separation would be contrary to long established policies that look to protect the amenity of the countryside and encourage sustainable patterns of development.*

*The Angel has a long-standing history of over six hundred years, and it is unique in character and style in the village. Approval of these plans would remove the one appropriately sized pub as a resource from the community of Debenham and as a facility for the growing and attractive tourist business that Mid Suffolk is developing.*

*Importantly, the scale of the development and the proposed removal of mature trees and plants would have a significant effect on the local flood plain.*

*A survey carried out by the Community group "Save the Angel" (with a response of nearly three hundred completed questionnaires) shows overwhelming support for the retention of the public house and has re-affirmed the views and feelings of the community.*

DC/24/00924 – Conversion and extension of barn to form 1No. Dwelling – 28 High Street - *It was proposed by Cllr Baldwin and seconded by Cllr Barlow and unanimously agreed to recommend refusal – The Parish Council raises concerns regarding the right of access for the other properties across this site and the boundary to this site. Ownership of the area was not clear with no registered owner and that there was still a Public Right of Way across this site. Concern is also expressed that correct procedure had been adhered to by the District Council as some adjoining residents had not been informed of this application. This is also believed to be a Conservation Area. The proposed boundary wall was very high, and this would block out natural light to some residents.*

DPC/24/132 Finance and Administration

- a. To approve the accounts for payment and note receipts and bank balances/reconciliations – these had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. *Cllr Baldwin expressed concern regarding the payment being made to the Green Team that correct financial procedure had not been adhered to. Full Council had not given approval for the grant from MSDC for Litter Picking to be spent on these items. Other members agreed that these grant monies were specifically for this team and they were happy for these monies to be spent on these items.*

*Cllr Grimshaw proposed and Cllr Barlow seconded to approve. Cllr Baldwin abstained. The payments were approved.*

<i>Clerks Wages September</i>	<i>£1593.60</i>
<i>Clerks &amp; Employers PAYE September</i>	<i>£356.84</i>
<i>Rialtas Data Entry</i>	<i>£369.60</i>
<i>Rialtus Move Software to new laptop</i>	<i>£30.00</i>
<i>Richard Blackwell Speed Indicator August 24</i>	<i>£30.00</i>
<i>Debenham Parochial Council Hire of Room Aug 24</i>	<i>£157.50</i>
<i>Dawn Thompson Cleaning and Unlocking/Closing</i>	<i>£355.00</i>
<i>Dawn Thompson Painting Railings Toilets</i>	<i>£135.00</i>
<i>John Sweet Expenses</i>	<i>£67.93</i>
<i>Debi Sage Website Aug and Sept 24</i>	<i>£240.00</i>
<i>Control Solutions Street Cleaning August</i>	<i>£1333.00</i>
<i>Richard Giffin Grounds Maintenance Aug 24</i>	<i>£2175.00</i>
<i>Joy Walton Green Team Expenses</i>	<i>£112.34</i>
<i>EON Feeder Pillar Village Green July</i>	<i>£37.31</i>
<i>BT Group Ltd (DD) Internet</i>	<i>£40.99</i>
<i>Tesco Mobile Top Up</i>	<i>£10.00</i>
<i>Control Solutions Street Cleaning July</i>	<i>£1333.00</i>
<i>Control Solutions Expenses</i>	<i>£40.50</i>
<i>G. Coe Remembrance Wreath</i>	<i>£420.00</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£8,837.61</b>

## **Receipts**

<i>MSDC Parish Precept Part 2</i>	<i>£44,385.00</i>
<i>HMRC VAT Refund</i>	<i>£19,027.00</i>
<i>Bank Interest</i>	<i>£783.72</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£64,195.72</b>

<i>PC Community Account</i>	<i>£44,446.04</i>
<i>PC Business Account</i>	<i>£236,329.03</i>
<i>Woodland Community Account</i>	<i>£948.71</i>
<i>Woodland Business Account</i>	<i>£78,372.00</i>

- b. Council Action Sheet – *The Clerk reported that from this meeting the action sheet will be revised and circulated prior to the next meeting.*
- c. Debenham Memorial Garden – Update Charity Commission details – *The Clerk reported that in order for the Charity Commission to accept changes to the contact details, the changes needed to be agreed at full council. It was proposed by Cllr Cockerton and seconded by Cllr Barlow that the details be changed to the Parish Clerk, Claire Usher with the postal address as Dove Cottage. It was noted by all Councillors that the Parish Council's address for all communication will be Dove Cottage, High Street, Debenham IP14*

## DPC/24/133 Committees, Working Groups and Representatives

- a. To approve the minutes of the Finance Working Group held on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024. *Proposed by Cllr Cockerton and seconded by Cllr Sweet the minutes were approved.*
- b. Debenham Neighbourhood Plan Review – *Cllr Barlow had circulated the minutes from the last meeting prior to the meeting. As regards the flooding of the village the group would be writing to MSDC to ask if what is added in the Debenham Neighbourhood Plan could be included in MSDC Local Plan. It was agreed that the Clerk to minute all future meetings of this group.*
- c. Allotments – *The Clerk reported that with Cllr Robbins all the allotment plots had been re measured and notes taken regarding the condition of the plots that have not yet been let. All allotment holders had been sent their renewal paperwork including notification of the increase for this year 2024/25. The Clerk reported that full council needed to make a decision whether to increase the allotment rent for 2025/26 as this needed to be agreed a year in advance. It was proposed by Cllr Phipps and seconded by Cllr Barlow that the allotment rent for 2025/26 be increased from 20p to 22p per square metre. This was agreed unanimously.*
- d. Eco/Green Projects – *There was nothing to report.*
- e. Play Areas – *Cllr Sweet informed the Council that the gym equipment had been placed in the wrong area within the recreation ground. He and Cllr Barlow had met with the contractor who has confirmed that the company will move the equipment to the correct area. This will move the equipment 17 feet from the boundary fence. This work would commence within the next 2-3 weeks. He reported that 2 members of the public had raised concerns regarding the proximity of the*

*equipment to the cemetery and as reported this will be resolved. He also confirmed that the finance for this equipment was not related to the expenses for the swimming pool some years earlier. Annual Inspection for 2025 – The Clerk had received a letter from MSDC regarding the annual inspection. The cost for the inspection would be £58.00 plus vat. Councillors asked the Clerk to ensure that MSDC knew which sites were the Parish Councils. It was proposed by Cllr Sweet and seconded by Cllr Barlow that the Parish Council is happy to pay for the inspection.*

- f. Public Conveniences – Cllr Sweet confirmed that a new electric fused spear would need to be fitted for the new electric doors. This needed to be placed in a safe position and within the regulations. Having it unswitched would stop any issues. The vandalism in the toilet block continued as well as other areas within the village. Consideration of CCTV would be an agenda for the meeting in October.  
Cllr Sweet passed to the Clerk the completed COSHH booklet from the cleaner and a copy of the Public Liability Insurance certificate. A contract of employment had been circulated to all councillors and with 2 minor amendments this would be passed to the cleaner for signature.*
- g. Cemetery and URC Ground – The Council had received quotations for these two sites for hedge and tree clearance in February. To consider these quotes, this item is deferred to the October meeting.*
- h. Woodland – There was nothing to report.*

#### DPC/24/134– Further Correspondence

- a. Additional Bench in the village – The Parish Council had received a request from a resident for an additional bench. The resident would be happy to contribute towards the bench, but going forward would need to be added to the Council’s asset register and to be maintained. Councillors agreed to support this request.
- b. Lorries on Gracechurch Street - A resident had raised concerns regarding the number of lorries turning into Gracechurch Street. The Clerk to report this to SCC Highways.
- c. Parking on the village green – It was agreed to install 2 more bollards. A quote for these works to be obtained.
- d. Village signage – Cllr Sweet shared with the council a sample of a map indicating places of interest in Debenham that could be placed on the noticeboard. It was agreed that larger map be prepared including indicating where the public toilets are positioned to go on the parish noticeboard.
- e. Christmas Market – Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December – Councillors were happy to support this event.
- f. Hedges along Gracechurch Street – The Clerk to notify SCC Highways with details and for the Parish Council to ask residents to trim back the hedges concerned.
- g. The Hog’s Kiss – The owner of the Hog’s Kiss Coffee van had requested permission to place the van at Cross Green car park on a Friday afternoon / evening. Councillors agreed that the owner of the car park, MSDC, should be approached for clarification if this was possible. It was suggested that the owner approach the PCC to see if it would be possible to park in the churchyard in front of the church.
- h. Painting of posts at Cross Green – A resident would be happy to refresh these posts with a coat of paint. Councillors had no objections.

DPC/24/135 – SCC Flood Plan – Debenham Flood Investigation Report – The Flood Plan had been circulated to all Councillors. Cllr Baldwin informed the Council that there were a number of recommendations and would welcome a group of people getting together including residents, who had a good knowledge of the village and to invite a representative from both the EA, Anglian Water and SCC to talk about the flooding

and sewage and how the recommendations can be implemented in the village. The Council had received several emails from residents concerned about the progress and the condition of the rivers in the village, with some banks collapsing. It was agreed by all councillors that the Clerk approach both the EA and Anglian Water to invite a representative to a meeting in Debenham to talk about the next steps to prevent more flooding in the future.

DPC/24/136 – Items for Future Agenda – *There were requests to hold a highways group meeting, UV charging points, provision of dog waste bins, filling of grit bins and to include 2 council policies for review.*

DPC/24/137 – Date of Next Meeting – Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 at 7pm at Dove Cottage.

DPC/24/138 – Exclusion of the Public – All public left the meeting.

DPC/24/139 – Minutes of the Employment Committee – All Councillors noted the minutes.

Meeting closed 9.10pm

Signed ..... Chairman

Date .....