

Shimpling Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Council

Monday 13th March 2023, 7:00pm at Shimpling Village Hall

Present:

Councillors: Gerry Shrimpton, Nathalie Brown, David Dunkley (Chair), Hans Engstrom, Liz Brunwin

District Councillors: Michael Holt, Stephen Plumb

County Councillors: Richard Kemp

Clerk: Natasha Byford

- 1.1 Election of Chair:** The Clerk opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. Cllr Haselhurst stepped down as Chair last week. The Clerk then asked for nominations for election of a new Chair. A nomination was received for Cllr Dunkley to Chair the council. This was seconded by Cllr Engstrom. There being no other nominations, this proposal was voted on and confirmed. Cllr Dunkley signed the acceptance of office declaration.

Action: Clerk to send the declaration of acceptance of office to the monitoring officer.

- 1. Apologies for absence:** Cllr Haselhurst sent her apologies, this was noted and accepted.

2. Declarations of Members Interest(s):

- a) To receive disclosure of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest(s) including gifts of hospitality in excess of £25:** None received.
- b) To consider requests for dispensation for the agenda item(s) under discussion:** None received.

3. Public Participation session

No members of the public (MOP) attended.

4. Approval of minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 9th January 2023 were approved.

Action: Clerk to publish these on the website and Social Media.

5. Chair's report:

Chair Dunkley summarised the below report from Cllr Haselhurst's last couple of months as Chair:

It has been a quiet period in the Parish.

There has been lots ideas and initiatives which require discussion, all of which will be on this agenda.

Thank you to our District Councilors and Richard Kemp's Locality Grant for the donations towards the village gazebos which have arrived. A group of us gathered to have a trial run which was successful, and they will be well used during the forthcoming events in the village.

The much-anticipated goal post, which was voted for by children in the village, will be installed on 30 March. Thank you to Richard Kemp for the donation towards this goal post from the Locality Grant.

A big thank you to Natasha, our Clerk, who as always is working very hard behind the scenes, keeping us informed of local enterprises and grants and giving us sage advice at every step. We are so grateful.

- 6. District Councillors report:** Cllr Holt read out their report and there were no further questions on this. The report is in Appendix A below. Cllr Shrimpton did question the District Cllrs on levelling up in rural communities. It was also discussed that it would be a good idea to try and get the police in to do a talk as was planned pre Covid. There was also a brief discussion and questioning over a neighbourhood plan. Cllrs were concerned over two AVRAs that were removed from the Local Plan and Cllr Plumb explained that that these items should now be on a neighbourhood plan. It was also suggested that the PC email Tom Barker about our concerns with the local plan. Cllr Plumb explained that a lot of local Parishes have now done their neighbourhood plan, or are underway with it and that other Parishes have used a consultant to assist with this and that there may be some grants available to assist with the fees for this. Cllrs decided that we should revisit the neighbourhood plan on the next agenda.

Action: Clerk to email Tom Barker with the PCs concerns over the Local Plan and Clerk to add the neighbourhood plan to the next meeting agenda.

Cllr Plumb and Cllr Holt left the meeting at 7:50pm.

- 7. County Councillors report:** Cllr Kemp read out his report and there were no further questions on this. The report is in Appendix B below. Cllr Shrimpton did question the Cllr Kemp on levelling up in rural communities.

Cllr Kemp left the meeting at 7:20pm.

8. Crime matters:

The new county wide newsletter available was dated January 2023 and is available online:

<https://www.suffolk.police.uk/your-area/snt-newsletters>

The Clerk reported that the September newsletter was circulated to Councillors along with the papers for the crime update. Nothing Shimpling specific. Suffolk Constabulary was represented at a lot of events over the last couple of months and the cadets have been very busy and have now grown.

Action: Clerk to invite our police representative to a future meeting.

9. Village Hall:

a) Village Hall Committee – Update given from the VHC PC representative Cllr Brown as below; Last meeting held 23rd January

We are working hard to bring the VH up to date and more visible on social networks.

We have updated our entry on the Your Hall website and we are also working on a more user-friendly booking system.

The film equipment is proving to be a good investment

The first film night went well and the next film is booked for Tuesday 21st March then every 3rd Tuesday of the month.

There is a kids film morning booked in April during the Easter holidays and on Saturday we showed the Rugby and will do so again with the next England game this Saturday.

The rural caravan is well supported as are Zumba and Pilates.

A meeting was had regarding the kings coronation and a full weekend of activities in the village have been planned.

Saturday

*Screening of coronation at VH with sandwiches & cake

Quiz and nibbles at the bush

Sunday

*Cart race

*Big lunch @ the VH

*Lantern walk to arc vineyard to watch coronation concert

Monday- Family fun day

*Climbing wall , archery, axe throwing, arts and crafts and tug of war @ Hallifax place

*BBQ, bouncy castle and circus skills @ the bush.

The VH would like to request a donation to help towards these from the PC.

Maintenance:

Toilets and back room are due for redecoration and replacement or repair of both fire doors is needed.

A suggestion of a security light at the rear door and a safety mirror by the old school has been made.

We are going to have a big clear out of the back room and maybe find a way to utilise this space more efficiently.

Also, larger projects of double doors to the RHS of the hall have been mentioned to give easy access to the new gazebo's making the village hall a more user-friendly space.

A suggestion of picnic tables has also been made.

Cllrs discussed the report and wanted to ensure that the VHC becomes more self-sufficient going forwards. It was suggested that the constitution between the PC and VHC is revisited.

Action: Cllr Brown to get quotes for repair/replacement of the fire door.

- b) Members discussed the renovation ideas for the Village Hall, ideas such as gazebos out of the double doors were considered as well as a restructure of the internal layout of the hall. Solar panels were also considered.

Action: Cllr Brown to get quotations and look into funding for adding double doors to the side of the Village Hall that would lead out to the gazebos for events. Cllr Brown to get quotations and look into funding for adding solar panels to the Village Hall.

10. Responsible Finance Officer's Finance Report:

- 10a) The Clerk gave a finance report, details of which were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Clerk stated which invoices (please see below) needed to be paid.

Leaving balances as follows:

Treasurers Account	£548.22
Business Account	£29,509.46
Including CIL of	£3,514.26
Earmarked Reserves of	£11,089.67
General Reserves of	£4,698.00
COVID Grant of	£4,021.35

- 10b) To acknowledge payments made outside the meeting

- **Footpath Resurfacing** **£2,220.00**
(Highways Act 1980, ss.43,50)
- **Football Goal Deposit (Sovereign)** **£1,788.80**
(LGA 1976, s.19)
- **Zen Internet (16 Jan-15 Feb)** **£38.99**
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Zen Internet (16 Feb-15 Mar)** **£38.99**
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Gazebos** **£2,312.20**
(LGA 1972, s.145(1)(a))

10c) The following amounts were approved for payment:

• Clerk's Net salary after Tax	£432.83
• HMRC Tax payment	£108.20
• Clerk's expenses (Fuel/Postage)	£13.25
LGA 1972 s. 111 (ancillary Powers)	
• Football Goal (Sovereign)	£5,366.44
(LGA 1976, s.19)	
• S.Smith Shimpling Newsletter	£556.70
LGA 1972 s142 (newsletters)	
• SALC Payroll service	£27.00
(LGA 1972, s.111)	

The above payment schedule was approved by members apart from the football goal payment which members wanted to wait until after the football goal was installed before the invoice was paid.

10d) The Clerk noted that The Council have received money from bank interest of £14.57 and £16.24. We received £2,000 from Cllr Kemps locality budget towards the football goals. We have also received £500 from Cllr Kemps locality budget and £1,000 from the District Cllrs Locality budget towards the gazebos.

11. Clerks Report: A full copy of the Clerk's report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The following matters were considered for resolution:

11a) Summary of Progress: During the period (2nd Jan 23 – 5th March 23), I have worked 2.5 hours and under the given time frame of 5 hours per week, this included organising all the paperwork for the March meeting, agendas, actions from the January meeting, organising payments, quotes and grant applications, preparation and training for elections and trying to get organised ready for year-end as well as general administration. The Clerk's record of work was reviewed and accepted.

12. Storyboard

Cllr Shrimpton informed members that he wanted to collaborate with Cllr Engstrom on this so there were no formal quotations to share yet.

Action: Cllr Shrimpton to liaise with Cllr Engstrom on this and Clerk to add this to the next agenda.

13. Noticeboard

Members received the two quotes for moving the noticeboard from the bus stop to the playground and discussed how the noticeboards weren't really utilised as well as they could be and agreed to leave the noticeboards where they are.

Action: Clerk to go back to the suppliers and say that we are not going ahead with these works.

14. Footpaths:

Clerk updated members that this work was complete. Members noted that the new footpath was really good and it has improved the walk around the area.

15. Playground:

- a) The Clerk informed members of the quotations for the playground inspection and members discussed and agreed to go ahead with the quotations from Playquip to do the annual inspection and the zip wire inspection.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Playquip and get the inspection booked in.

- b) Clerk informed members that the playground football goal install was booked for Thursday 30th March.

16. Planning:

The Clerk gave an update on planning applications:

Planning Decisions:

- a. AP/22/00010 Land Opposite To Stone Cottages, Bury Road, Shimpling, Suffolk - Appeal - Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for an Existing Use or Operation or activity including those in breach of a planning condition. Town and Country Planning Act 1990: Section 191 as amended by section 10 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. Town and Country Planning (General Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 - Conversion and use of former second world war building as a dwellinghouse – Appeal in progress
- b. AP/22/00071 - Aveley House Aveley Lane Shimpling Part In The Parish Of Alpheton IP29 4HB - Planning Application - Erection of 1No detached holiday let. – Appeal in progress
- c. DC/22/06130 - Barn At Mount Farm, Blooms Hall Lane, Shimpling, Bury St Edmunds Suffolk CO10 9BY - Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses (C3) and for building operations reasonably necessary for conversion. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q - Conversion of barn into 1no. dwelling – Prior approval required. Prior approval given subject to conditions.

- d. DC/22/04186 Clutter Cottage, The Street, Shimpling, Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP29 4HS - Householder Application - Erection of two storey side extension (following removal of conservatory), single storey rear extension (following removal of outbuilding), first floor rear extension and porch (following removal of existing porch) – Granted
- e. DC/22/06142 - The Hermitage, Bury Road, Shimpling, IP30 0JL - Planning Application. Erection of stables and two-storey outbuilding. Refurbishment of existing outbuilding. Stationing of temporary outbuilding for storage. Additional detail as per Design Access and Heritage Statement – Awaiting Decision
- f. DC/22/06143 - The Hermitage, Bury Road, Shimpling, IP30 0JL - Application for Listed Building Consent - Erection of stables and two-storey outbuilding. Refurbishment of existing outbuilding. Stationing of temporary outbuilding for storage. Additional detail as per Design Access and Heritage Statement. – Awaiting Decision
- g. DC/23/00095 - Laburinthos Cottage Bury Road Shimpling (part In The Parish Of Alpheton) Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP30 0JJ - Full Application - Erection of detached annex for family members (following demolition of outbuilding/s) - Awaiting Decision
- h. DC/23/00950 - Mount Farm Vineyard, Mount Farm, Blooms Hall Lane, Shimpling CO10 9BY - Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for Proposed Erection of a Building for Agricultural Use. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) Schedule 2, Part 6 - Erection of new machinery and garage building – Formal Approval NOT Required

Planning Applications: None

17. Covid19 Emergency Fund:

No applications received.

18. Meeting Dates:

Members agreed to amend the May meeting date to Monday 15th May, to follow the Annual Meeting of the Parish and the Annual General Meeting due to the extra Bank Holiday and the election dates.

19. Meeting Length:

Members agreed to amend Standing Order 3X so that a Parish Meeting length will not exceed 3 hours, rather than 2 hours.

Action: Clerk to update the Standing Orders and publish these on the website.

20. SID:

Members discussed whether to fund the final £700 for the second SID in the Village. Cllr Kemp kindly agreed to give the PC £3,000 for this from his local highways budget to make up the full cost. Members agreed to go ahead with this. It was asked whether we could try and get a grant for the final £700, possibly from the police community trust, if not then members would take the funds from their CIL budget. Cllr Kemp also said he would ask the Highways Speed and Safety Management team to visit Shimpling with speed camera devices to help discourage speeding through the Village.

Action: Clerk to confirm with Cllr Kemp that we would like to go ahead with his kind contribution. Clerk to try and get a grant for the remainder of the SID. Clerk to order the SID.

21. Jubilee Tree Plaque:

Members received the quotes for the plaque for planting next to the tree for the Queens Jubilee and were happy to go ahead with this out of general funds.

Action: Clerk to order the plaque.

22. Village Hall Lease:

Members discussed the wording on the old emails regarding the lease for the Village Hall and asked the Clerk to call Sophie from Ashton Legal to see if she would have an informal chat regarding the lease.

Action: Clerk to call Ashton Legal.

23. Gazebo:

a) Clerk updated Members that the gazebos were purchased and had arrived so were ready for use! Members said they looked great when they arrived so it is hoped they will be a great edition for village events.

b) Clerk gave members quotations for gazebo flooring and also the option of hiring flooring. Members thought this seemed expensive and were concerned about storage space and amount of time it would be used and decided to hold off on this for the time being. Members also considered that the gazebos may need weights.

Action: Cllr Brown and Cllr Engstrom to look into weights for the gazebos and bring quotations to the next meeting.

24. Projects:

Members discussed projects that the PC may like to implement, if funding was available. This was agreed as a good idea so the PC have ready made projects for when funding is available. Cllr Dunkley has come up with a draft list for this.

Action: Cllr Dunkley to send round the draft ideas list for projects.

25. Dropbox:

Clerk reported that they were running out of Dropbox storage and in order to share papers etc this was required. Members received quotes for additional storage and it was agreed to upgrade to Dropbox plus for £95.88 per year.

Action: Clerk to upgrade the current Dropbox plan.

26. Bus Service:

Cllrs Dunkley and Shrimpton updated members that the next meeting was on the 24th March and so we would have an update via email in due course.

27. Stopping Up:

Members discussed the application for stopping up at Shimpling House. Members want to go back and note that they strongly disagree with this application, Cllrs were concerned regarding the fact that this could change the character of the street if this land were to be fenced in and that this application would then set a precedent for the future of the Village and its green spaces.

Action: Clerk to respond to the application.

28. Parking:

Members discussed parking on the Village Green. It was discussed that this appeared to be a one-off event and the councillors decided to do nothing further at this time.

29. Coronation:

- a) Members discussed the Village Hall application for the Coronation events and agreed to donate £250 towards the Village events.
- b) Members discussed the purchasing of momentums for the children of the Village and agreed to donate a further £250 to the VHC so they could purchase a mug for each child within the Village.

Action: Clerk to pay the donation of £500 to the VHC.

30. Communication Channels:

Members agreed to postpone this discussion until the next meeting. A working party will be set up to have an in depth discussion regarding all communications.

Action: Clerk to add this to the next agenda and arrange a working party for this discussion.

31. Village Newsletter:

Members discussed Sarah's email regarding the newsletter. Members agreed that printing a lower quality colour would be a good idea to cut costs slightly. Members wanted to add this into the communication channels agenda item for the next meeting.

Action: Cllr Brunwin to go back to Sarah and ask if she would print in a lower quality colour.

32. Going Green:

Members agreed to postpone this discussion until the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to add this to the next agenda.

33. Correspondence Received:

a) An email from a resident regarding Grit Bins within the Village. Members discussed this and it was decided to revisit this at the end of summer this year so that if it went ahead then the grit bin would be in place for the bad weather.

Action: Clerk to respond to resident and update them.

34. Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the council:

There was mention of logs and a sale sign just next to the recycling banks which has been there a while and looking very untidy. Cllr Engstrom offered to discuss it with the owner. Cllr Shrimpton gave thanks to Alan Cook who moved the Quiet Lanes signs.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 10:05pm.

Appendix A: District Councillors Report:

Babergh budget agreed – protecting rural services

Babergh District Council has agreed its budget for 2023/24 – ensuring rural communities have access to the services they need and providing ongoing support for the district's residents, businesses, towns and villages.

New £12m depot would 'future-proof' services for residents

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are exploring plans to consolidate three aging operational sites into a shared £12m depot – future-proofing services for residents and improving conditions for their staff.

New service aims to turn more than 1,000 empty houses into homes

With over a thousand homes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts currently classified as empty, 'Houses4Homes' encourages owners of vacant residential properties to come forward for advice and support in turning their property into a home for another family.

First look at culture, heritage and visitor economy strategy for Babergh and Mid Suffolk

The first steps towards a dedicated cultural, heritage and visitor economy strategy could be taken, should proposals be approved by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' cabinets in March

Food network approved to help people through cost-of-living challenges

Action to support even more people through the cost-of-living challenges will be taken in Suffolk as food bank usage rises.

VCFSE Resilience Fund: Councils launch third sector funding 'lifeline'

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are delivering vital support to incredible organisations already helping those in our communities most exposed to the cost-of living crisis.

Target to end rough sleeping in Suffolk

Suffolk's public sector leaders, including those from Babergh and Mid Suffolk, are targeting an end to rough sleeping across the county by 2027.

Suffolk's Exemplary Commitment to Retrofitting Homes

Commendable efforts are being made across Suffolk to ensure the retrofit of energy inefficient homes. More information Suffolk councils secure £2.2m to improve tenants' quality of life Suffolk's district and borough councils have secured £2.2m of Government funding to improve the standard of private rented homes in the county – tackling poor housing conditions and improving tenants' wellbeing.

Babergh Chairman raises thousands for Blossom Appeal

Babergh District Council Chairman, Cllr Kathryn Grandon, raised over £11,000 at a recent fundraising Civic Dinner... for a cause very close to her heart.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Land Charges team shortlisted for new national award

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are in the running for a national award, for making a critical step in the house buying process as easy as possible for residents.

Belle Vue House development opportunity

Developers interested in regenerating Belle Vue House in Sudbury have until noon on 13th March 2023 to submit a bid to Babergh District Council on an informal tender basis.

Supporting the elections this May

As you know, the local and parish elections are due to be held on Thursday 4 May. You can now see a full election timetable on our website.

• Voter registration

We will be supporting the Electoral Commission's 'Got 5?' campaign running through March and April to raise awareness of upcoming elections and drive voter registration. The Commission will be advertising across a combination of channels including TV, radio, posters, social media, website

banners, cinema advertising, and Google search. We will also be sharing the messages through the council's social media channels and invite our towns and parishes to do the same.

- **Staffing**

There are still positions that need to be filled to ensure the elections are run smoothly across the districts. If you want to get involved, or know someone else who is interested please see our website or email the Babergh and Mid Suffolk elections team to find out more.

- **Voter ID**

The UK Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station, which will be implemented in the upcoming local and Parish elections in May. More information. We will continue to support the Electoral Commission's national awareness campaign through all available council channels and ask that you also help where possible. You can find Electoral Commission resources, including posters and social media, here: [Voter ID resources | Electoral Commission](#)

- **Webinar by the Electoral Commission**

The Electoral Commission is hosting a pre-election webinar on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 12pm – 1pm for candidates and agents taking part in the upcoming elections.

The webinar will provide an opportunity to gain essential information on the nomination process and the spending and donation rules, including information on:

- standing for election
- the nominations process
- when the spending rules apply
- how much you can spend
- notional spending rules
- who you can accept donations from
- what you need to report after the election

There will also be a chance to ask questions. To confirm attendance please email Stuart Butler on sbutler@electoralcommission.org.uk For those unable to attend, we understand the Commission plans to publish slides from the webinar after the event.

Appendix B: County Councillors report:

Information Updates

For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving For information on supporting Ukrainian refugees in Suffolk, email: refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk or ukrainesupport@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

Homes for Ukraine: One Year Anniversary of War

The 24th February marked the one-year anniversary since Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. Suffolk continues to do its part through the Homes for Ukraine programme – hosting refugees fleeing the war. In total, 1256 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Suffolk through the programme. Currently, we have around 330 host families, supporting 750 Ukrainians – with others in private accommodation. Suffolk is in need of new hosts, to continue to offer a safe haven for Ukrainian refugees who are not yet ready to enter private accommodation. Based on numbers, Suffolk needs 50 new hosts in the coming months. If you think you can help, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/Ukraine. Hosts are entitled to £350 per month, which increases to £500 after 12 months.

Household Support Fund: Extension Granted by Government

The Government has agreed to extend the Household Support Fund, meaning local authorities will continue to receive funding to help residents through the current cost-of-living crisis. The grant is distributed through small payments to support vulnerable household meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities. To apply for help, visit Suffolk's Cost-of-Living support leaflet at:

<https://suffolk.pagetiger.com/cost-of-livingsupport/scc1>

SCC Financial Budget

At the beginning of February, the Council's budget for 2023/24 was voted in. The Conservative budget will now increase tax by 3.99% - broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in general tax. Council services have faced a gruelling year of demand and additional cost pressures. In addition, the Council is not on track to achieve Net Zero by 2030, as they have promised to do so. Therefore, we proposed an additional 0.89% increase (19p weekly increase) to ensure vital services were protected from cutting support to residents, and that more direct action is taken to reduce carbon emissions. Our Group proposed to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a stronger pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we proposed to facilitate a review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities. We proposed using £1m to actively recruit, retain and reward frontline staff in adult social care, as well as providing more for Suffolk Libraries to help maintain services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we wanted to invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through EV vehicle usage. The Conservatives voted against our budget amendments, saying our proposals were ill thought-out and not appropriate. Labour did not submit a budget response, nor did they vote in the budget meeting. They stated that they couldn't make a difference to any result.

SCC Cabinet Meeting

The Cabinet met in February to discuss the forecasts for the Council's current budget. The latest forecasts show that SCC is having to use more Reserves than anticipated to cover additional costs in running its services. Our Group are concerned with the long-term effects of the Council's financial strategy, especially when the Conservatives voted against our amendments to create extra revenue and additional income generation. In addition, the Cabinet agreed to move the West Suffolk Archives in Bury St Edmunds to a new location in the town on Western Way. Our Group were concerned about the lack of sufficient public transport access to the new location – being far from the train station with an irregular bus service. Finally, the Cabinet discussed the Fire & Rescue Service's new risk management plan. The plan outlines all foreseeable risks in Suffolk and indicates the service's priorities and proposals to improve the service. Currently, the service suffers from low recruitment,

poor retainment of officers, unmet response targets, and an increase in demand through extreme heatwaves caused by climate change. Our Group support the plan, hoping more investment can now be provided to the essential and increasingly ever-needed service.

New Highways Services: Contract Agreed

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded SCC's new highways services contract. The contract, worth between £800m-£1bn, will begin 1st October 2023 and will last up to 20 years. The service will provide maintenance of roads, pavement, Rights of Way, drainage, hedges, construction of new roads, and snow clearing – this is not an exhaustive list. Our Group campaigned last year for Suffolk Highways maintenance to be brought back in-house. This was due to the extortionate prices the previous provider, Kier, gave for simple jobs such as tree cutting and speed bump designs (i.e., £5,000 for a pair of dropped kerbs, £7,500 to cut down a single tree, £10,000 to design four humps in a road). Our Group has been given reassurance from Suffolk Highways that the same mistakes will not repeat, and that the contract is more robust to deal with the inflated quotes previously received. However, our Group will closely monitor to ensure this is the case.

In-person Citizenship Ceremonies return in Suffolk

Following an almost three year break due to the Covid pandemic, Citizenship Ceremonies are now once again being held in person at Register Offices across the county. During the pandemic, like many other services, Citizenship Ceremonies moved to being conducted online. 563 new citizens were welcomed in virtual ceremonies in 2022. In-person Ceremonies have once again been taking place since 18 January 2023 and take place every month at the Ipswich Register Office and on alternating months at the Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft offices. The most recent ceremony took place on Monday 13 February. For the thirty-four participants at the ceremony, this was the last step on their journey to British citizenship: Judith, a secondary school teacher from Felixstowe, said "I came to Britain from Zimbabwe as a teen. It feels great to be a British citizen now and to be part of the British culture and share in British values". Natalia moved to Suffolk from Greece. Having made Sudbury her home, she says she's excited to become a British citizen now. She said: "I've been here for eight years now. It just made sense to apply for citizenship and become a part of Britain." Citizenship Ceremonies can only be booked once an application has been approved by the Home Office, and an official invitation has been sent. Please call our Ipswich Office on 0345 607 2050 to book or email citizenship@suffolk.gov.uk. For more information, please visit the Citizenship Ceremony page on our website.

West Suffolk Archives Branch to move to Western Way in Bury St Edmunds

Suffolk County Council has approved plans to move the West Suffolk Archives branch in Bury St Edmunds into the new Western Way development, due to open in 2025. The new development will improve accessibility, enabling more people to use the service. Its purpose-built strongroom will create accrual space for the West Suffolk Collections for the next 30 years. The move will also unlock new opportunities to work with the health and leisure partners on site to develop community-based projects to support health and well-being. As part of long-term planning for the Suffolk Archives service, the county council's cabinet was presented with options for either remaining at its current location in Raingate Street or moving to the planned new Western Way community hub being developed by West Suffolk Council. Recent investigations have shown that if the service were to remain at Raingate Street, alterations requiring significant investment would be needed for the long-term future sustainability of the building. Suffolk County Council approved the proposals to move the service to the new Western Way Development at a meeting of the council's Cabinet on Tuesday 21 February. The first phase of the new development at Western Way is anticipated to open to the public in Autumn 2025, with the new West Suffolk Branch of Suffolk Archives located on the ground floor. Phase one will also include sports and leisure facilities, health services and a pre-school. Until then, the West Suffolk Archive Service will continue to operate from its current location in Raingate Street in Bury St Edmunds.