

Shimpling Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Council

Monday 4th March 2024, 7:00pm at Shimpling Village Hall

Present:

Councillors: David Dunkley (Chair), Gerry Shrimpton, Liz Brunwin

District Councillors: Micheal Holt

Clerk: Natasha Byford

1. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies from Cllr Kemp and Cllr Plumb these were noted and accepted. No apologies received from Cllrs Engstrom this was noted.
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
3. **Public Participation session**

One member of the public (MOP) attended.
4. **Approval of minutes of the previous meeting:**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 5th February 2024 were approved.

Action: Clerk to publish these on the website and Social Media.
5. **Chair's report:**

Cllr Dunkley's read the below report from his last couple of months as Chair:

It has only been a month since our last meeting so there are only a few items to update the meeting on.

Work on the Shimpling Neighbourhood Plan is progressing well. A draft Landscape Assessment is due soon. Alongside this the team have been working on the questions which will form a survey document to the residents of the Parish. Once these documents have been developed, they will be brought to the Parish Council Meeting for ratification.

The new Village Hall lease is progressing, and it is expected that this will be completed before the current lease expires in April. The intent is to future-proof the lease, as much as that is possible, so that potential future uses of the site can be simplified.

An application to have an EV charge point at the Village Hall site has been made. Hopefully we will know if we are successful soon.

We still have not heard whether we are likely to receive an improved bus service as a result of increased funds to the County. We can only hope.

Progress on both of the previous projects is down to Gerry's hard work.

Lastly, we have again been affected by flooding at points across the Parish. Richard Kemp has provided prompt assistance and advice, in getting the issues with Slough Hill to the correct parties. A quick resolution before any further rain is hoped.

6. **District Councillors report:** Cllr Plumb read out the report and there were no further questions on this. The report is in Appendix A below. Cllr Holt did say that he was trying to arrange another meeting with the police for April/May time and Chair Dunkley said he would happily attend this.
Cllr Holt left the meeting at 7:15pm.

7. **County Councillors report:** The Clerk noted that Cllr Kemp's report was circulated with the papers and there were no further questions on this. The report is in Appendix B below.

8. **Village Hall:**

a) Nathalie Brown (Chair of VHC) circulated the following update prior to the meeting which the Clerk read out;

Not much to update you on since the last PC meeting a few weeks ago.

The Panto has been a huge success selling out all 3 performances!

All our regular bookings are well attended and we had a great attendance at the film night.

We have the My Thai food van booked for April and June film nights.

We are also beginning to prepare for Shimpling celebrates in May and the summer dance in August.

Maintenance

Outside lights-

The quotes from James Brown & Peter Rix should be under our agreed £1000 budget to supply and install the new exterior lights. Hopefully this will be done in March.

Peter is going to put up temporary exterior lights to ensure safety at the pantomime.

John Sinclair has cleaned the gutters, washed the windows and purchased new dehumidifiers for the window sills.

He is also going to paint the exterior around the new sensor light and touch up any paintwork around the new water heaters that were installed.

Solar panels - Unfortunately we didn't receive funding for the solar panels but hopefully we can apply again.

Double Doors - On hold awaiting funding

b) It was noted that we are still awaiting funding to be sorted before we can go ahead with the new patio doors.

c) We are awaiting funding before we can go ahead with the Solar Panels.

d) Members discussed funding between the Village Hall and the Parish Council. It was thought that the original constitution in 1953 and the update in 2010 with an accompanying letter in 2012 are now outdated and a new agreement is required. The PC and VHC will have a working party 6pm March 25th to agree the details.

Action: Clerk to email members the date and time in case they would like to attend.

9. Responsible Finance Officer's Finance Report:

9a) 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	£8,389.98
Business Account	£25,274.34
Including CIL of	£3,318.06
Earmarked Reserves of	£24,529.17
General Reserves of	£4,698.00
COVID Grant of	£1,038.87

9b) To acknowledge payments made outside the meeting

- **Zen Internet (16 Jan-15 Feb)** **£38.99**
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Parish Online Subscription** **£48.00**
(LGA 1972, s.111)

9c) The following amounts were approved for payment:

- **Clerk's Net salary after Tax** £424.66
- **HMRC Tax payment** £106.20
- **Clerk's expenses (Fuel and Paper)** £30.45
LGA 1972 s. 111 (ancillary Powers)
- **Lucy NP Landscape Architect** £4,125.00
(Town and County Planning Act 1990, s.61F(1)(2))
- **Ian Poole NP Consultant** £2,038.28
(Town and County Planning Act 1990, s.61F(1)(2))
- **Birketts Solicitors (Ashtons Fees)** £3,600.00
(LGA 1972, s.133)
- **Newsletter – Sarah Smith** £458.55
(LGA 1972, s.142)
- **SID Maintenance Contract** £469.06
(Highways Act, 1980, s.274A)

The above payment schedule was approved by members.

9d) The Clerk noted that The Council have received money from bank interest £26.05 and £27.87. We have also received £75 from Newsletter advertising – totalling £306.25 income from Newsletter advertising.

10. **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:

Summary of Progress: During the period (1st Jan 24 – 25th Feb 24), I have worked 2 hours under the given time frame of 5 hours per week, this included organising all the paperwork for the January and February meeting, agendas, actions from the February meeting, organising payments, quotes and grant applications, neighbourhood plan correspondence, newsletter advertising correspondence, as well as general administration. This was approved by members.

11. **Welcome Letter:**

Members discussed the welcome letter and thought it was best to come from the PC, using the standard letter, rather than the one with events in the requires updating each month. Cllr Brunwin said she was happy to take this on and drop them through doors of new residents.

Action: Clerk to send Cllr Brunwin the welcome letter.

12. **WIFI:**

Members discussed changing WIFI suppliers for the VH. Clerk updated members with the quotations they had received. Members decided that it was worth going back to 999 Networks to see if that was the best deal he could offer and to check whether the quotes were residential or business rates quotes.

Action: Clerk to speak with Dave and check the quotations received from others.

13. Neighbourhood Plan:

The Chair updated members that the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party was working hard, they have this evening received the first draft of the design report from Lucy the Landscape Architect and that the working party are almost finished putting together the resident survey for sending round to residents.

14. Odd Job Person:

Members discussed that they believe Steve was happy to do this but on an ad hoc basis.

The PC agreed that it would be good to have a self-employed position where the odd job person invoiced the PC. This would need management and a list of jobs that would be required to be drawn up, ideas were looking after the SIDs, cleaning the playground, keeping the footpaths clear. Chair Dunkley has prepared a list. It was also asked that we check the insurance of the person who may want the position in order to cover the PC.

Action: Cllr Shrimpton to speak with his contact, Mark regarding the position.

15. Planning:

Planning Decisions: None

Planning Applications: None

16. Covid19 Emergency Fund:

No applications received.

17. Village Hall Lease:

Chair Dunkley gave an update regarding the lease, this is ongoing. The EV charger installation at the Village Hall was agreed in principle by the Richards.

Action: Cllr Dunkley to keep overseeing this.

18. Flooding:

It was reported that a ditch on Slough Hill required some tree stumps removing from the pipe in order to help drain better. Cllr Dunkley had spoken to Cllr Kemp regarding this and Cllr Kemp had passed it on to the highways support.

Action: Cllr Dunkley to report this using the highways reporting tool.

19. Correspondence Received:

None

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

Just a note to say that the bus situation is still ongoing and Cllr Shrimpton is carrying on with this.

Also Cllr Shrimpton noted that the bench still had not been moved.

Action: Clerk to email Oliver regarding this.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 8:10pm.

Appendix A: District Councillors report:

Support pledged for environment, economy and communities – despite warning of ‘financial cliff edge’

In agreeing its 2024/25 budget, Babergh District Council has outlined its determination to create a ‘more resilient and sustainable future’ for the district, despite severe financial pressures.

Council leaders warn of ‘catastrophic effect’ of Suffolk County Council budget plans

Proposed changes to Housing Related Support ‘could impact on our most vulnerable residents’.

Parking charges petition is heard as council considers next steps

‘We don’t want to lose free parking, but we have tough decisions to make’ – the message from Babergh councillors as a petition objecting to new tariffs is debated.

Tax premiums agreed for owners of second homes and empty properties

Councillors at Babergh District Council have agreed higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties as part of a raft of measures to bring more homes back into use.

Council’s loft insulation offer for Suffolk homes

Funding is available to help residents make their homes warmer and save money on their energy bills.

Making Suffolk’s older properties more energy efficient and cheaper to run

A free event to explore how to make Suffolk’s older homes more energy efficient is at The Hold in Ipswich on March 6.

More of Suffolk’s tree cover and orchards to be restored

Suffolk County Council has secured £201,213 from the government’s Local Authority Treescapes Fund for 1,877 new trees in a bid on behalf of all Suffolk councils – including Babergh District Council. The funding will go toward planting and maintaining the trees – many of which will be ‘standards’, which are around six feet in height when planted.

Appendix B: County Councillors Report:

Information Updates Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infoLink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infoLink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infoLink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infoLink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

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

Council Budget for 2024-25

At Council on 15 February, Suffolk councillors met to discuss and vote on the administration's budget proposals. The council is borrowing heavily from its reserves to meet the growing demand for social care for adults and children, and council tax is due to rise by £74 annually for Band D properties from April this year. There will also be cuts to Family Hubs (children's centres) and Housing Related Support, which supports vulnerable people like care leavers to find accommodation. Funding for arts and museums will be maintained for 2024-25 but not from SCC core funding, and subject to a bidding process for grants from April 2025. The Bury St Edmunds local archives will be moved to The Hold in Ipswich, which like the arts funding cuts has been controversial locally.

My group were concerned about the lack of core funding from Suffolk County Council to arts and museums, as this is how they secure funding from other sources, and we proposed an amendment to this effect. We also suggested that some of the council's remaining Covid funding from the government be used to support young people not in education, employment or training, as this cohort had suffered a lot of upheaval in their final years of schooling and exams. Support for young people not in education, employment and training is one of the services that is due to be cut in the administration's budget plans. Our amendment was declined by the Conservatives, as was the Labour amendment which also proposed to reverse some of the planned cuts.

Ofsted/CQC SEND Inspection Report

As you may have read in the local press, Ofsted and CQC published their joint report into SEND services in Suffolk at the beginning of the month. The report was scathing about the county's SEND provision and detailed the failures of the council to communicate and work with parents and carers, improve the EHCP and annual review processes and waiting times, improve outcomes and reduce exclusions. My group was disappointed and concerned that the services are yet to get to grips with improving a service that has now received a third poor inspection result in a row and we offered our assistance to the Local Area Partnership (Suffolk County Council and NHS teams) in preparing the Priority Action Plan they now need to submit to Ofsted and CQC by 7 March.

The poor report led to the resignation of the Cabinet members for SEND, Education and Children's Services and prompted a reshuffle of the political leadership at the council. This report will be devastating for parents of children with special needs in Suffolk, and the council will need to work hard to make improvements quickly and build back trust.

Suffolk Devolution in Sight

Devolution is something there has been a lot of talk about in Suffolk in recent years, and it looks like it may be happening from 2025. The deal the government is offering Suffolk is the same as the one for Norfolk and would give the county more freedom on decisions and funding for transport, skills and adult education, regenerating brownfield sites and retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient. If the deal is approved, the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk - every four years, residents will be given two votes, to elect their local county

councillor AND the leader of the county council. The first election would take place in May 2025. The council will be consulting on the deal soon and residents will be able to give their opinions on the changes proposed. For more information, see <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Changes to Local Archives

Following the recent controversial proposal in the county council's budget to move local records from Bury St Edmunds to The Hold in Ipswich, the council have announced that they will be inviting community representatives from both Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds to form two new Working Parties to consider local access to historical material. This could allow relevant collections to remain in the local area, but any proposals would need to be funded locally rather than by Suffolk County Council. This is not a reversal of the council's decision, and the majority of the records are still planned to move to The Hold, with the North-East and West Suffolk branches of the archive service to close.

Suffolk's wettest ever winter breaks highway response records

After months of extreme and sustained downpours, highways teams in Suffolk are breaking response and repair records whilst battling their most challenging operational period ever. Storm Babet saw nearly two months' worth of rain fall in 24 hours, the subsequent storms and severe weather events saw more sustained rainfall, leading up to what Met Office described as the fifth wettest February on record since 1836 with several days still to go.

As a result of the extreme weather, Suffolk Highways has seen an 82% increase in requests for action on the highway - 18,000 additional customer reports so far during the 2023/24 financial year.

The number of drainage and flooding issues have increased by a staggering 364% in the last five months when compared to the same period in 2022/23. Suffolk Highways has also responded to 2,117 emergency incidents in the same period, which represents a 64% increase on last year.

The increased wet weather coupled with occasional freezing temperatures this time of year results in a sharp rise in pothole breakouts. Despite these challenges, highways has completed 34% more repairs to potholes in 2023/24 when compared with the previous year.

To help keep up with this unparalleled increase in demand, Suffolk County Council is investing more resource and trialling new ways of working, including:

- Increased highway funding allocated to fix potholes, resurface roads and repair drainage
- 70% increase in highway crews to maintain and repair the roads
- Launching a trial of new 'Dragon Patcher' equipment – a pothole-repairing machine which can repair potholes up to five times faster than traditional methods
- Trialling a 'Road Mender' – a patching machine used in urban areas which will help boost productivity and present more environmental benefits

Council to review weed control for roads and pavements

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet will reconsider how Suffolk Highways uses chemicals to control weed growth. In February 2022, the council agreed to stop using glyphosate in its routine weed treatment programmes, to find more natural alternatives to help protect the local environment.

However, the alternative products proved unable to meet requirements, which was further exacerbated by exceptional growing conditions. Multiple applications were sometimes needed which could introduce other negative environmental impacts. It has proved a challenge to reduce high performing treatments, whilst significantly mitigating the environmental impact.

Other local authorities locally have experienced a similar situation. Regular weed treatment on our highway network will continue using a variety of methods, with plans for glyphosate being considered only when appropriate – the ambition still remains to reduce the use of glyphosate as far as possible.

Teams will continue to monitor and research the different approaches being used to remove weeds on our roads and pavements. Where needed, glyphosate would be used responsibly as it is one of the most cost-effective and long-lasting solutions.

Applications open for new Suffolk Business Board

Suffolk County Council is inviting applications for a new Suffolk Business Board which aims to drive economic growth in the county. Inspirational and influential local businesspeople are sought to form the board, which will represent the local business community and will help steer the local economic strategy to create a stronger and higher-skilled economy for Suffolk.

The board will meet 4-6 times a year to help shape economic strategy and priorities for Suffolk, to oversee delivery of funded programmes such as business support and skills training for Suffolk, and to work closely with partners such as District councils, neighbouring counties and national economic and trade bodies.

The county council is seeking candidates who represent the diversity of Suffolk's people and economy, whether that be sector, geography or business type. Expressions of interest should be emailed to businessboard@suffolk.gov.uk by Friday 22 March, with a short biography or CV and a brief cover letter outlining your interest in the opportunity and what area(s) of expertise you feel you could bring.

Board membership is a voluntary position and terms are for up to three years from the date of appointment. The Business Board will be supported by a dedicated team of council officers. The establishment of the Business Board follows the Government's announcement in 2023 that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would be integrated into upper tier local authorities. The Suffolk Business Board will succeed the existing New Anglia LEP Board which ceases on 31 March 2024.