

## LINDSEY PARISH COUNCIL

## CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

The Annual Parish Meeting for Lindsey was held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 7.02pm in the Village Hall, Church Road, Lindsey. The Chair of the Parish Council, Councillor Arthey took the Chair for the meeting.

1. Welcome: Cllr. Arthey welcoming all to the meeting. In attendance were Parish Councillors: R. Corcoran; M. Hainsworth; B Howe; Mrs. R. Howe, J Moore and A. Sturgeon, as well as Mrs V Waples (Clerk); County Councillor James Finch (in part) and one member of the public.
2. Apologies for absence: apologies for absence were received from District Councillor Leigh Jamieson.
3. Minutes of the previous meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were approved by all present and signed by the Chairman of the Parish Council as a true and accurate record.
4. To receive a report on Village Issues that have arisen over the past year: there were no issues raised at the previous Annual Parish Meeting.

*The following reports were then given as follows:*

5. MR JAMES FINCH - COUNTY COUNCILLOR – County Cllr. James Finch's was invited to submit his report in which he covered the following matters:
  - Library Services – the Council has underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk, as it approved plans in May to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries, now an independent charity. This will enable the service to continue operating at its current level, until the end of the contract in July 2024 when a new contract will be drawn up.
  - Suffolk Fire Service to bring control room back to the County - SCC Announced plans in June to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk independently of Cambridgeshire. The company behind a project to deliver a new IT system as a joint venture, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This will protect and upgrade the call centre specifically for Suffolk residents.
  - £100m broadband investment in Suffolk under government's Project Gigabit - Better broadband is on its way for around 80,000 properties across rural Suffolk in a £100million investment under a £5billion government infrastructure programme. This will build on our Better Broadband for Suffolk programme which has helped to deliver wider access to superfast broadband to be installed by City Fibre.
  - Highways Repairs - Following the ever-increasing demand for road repairs, the SCC Cabinet approved an extra £10million in November to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk over 3 years. This was followed by the Government announcement to invest £609m into highway maintenance in the East of England of which £107.5million has been ringfenced for Suffolk over the next decade, including £3.4million in financial year 22/23 just ended.
  - Almost £1 million extra committed to investigating the flooding following Babet - since the storm, targeted recovery work has been carried out across the county to ensure damaged highway infrastructure is repaired, those whose properties were flooded get help and that investigations can start which will identify how to reduce flood risk. As lead local flood authority, the county council has a duty to investigate significant flooding and establish the source of flooding, factors which may have caused the flooding, the impacts on people, services and infrastructure and any actions which could be taken to increase resilience to future storm events. In any usual year, Suffolk County Council carries out around 3 or 4 of these investigations. Following Babet, up to 100 are likely to be needed.
  - Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care service rated Good overall by Care Quality Commission - following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve this standard. CQC's final report rated the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good" and highlighted areas of strength including, the quality of its leadership, the culture of learning and support for staff, the range of digital care options available under CASSIUS, the good relationship between social care and health colleagues and locality team knowledge and understanding of community needs. This rating is also a testament to the high levels of financial investment the council has consistently put into Adult Social Care over the years, especially during the dark days of the pandemic, and shows how through imagination and service transformation, they are delivering on the priority of us all to put people's health and wellbeing at the top of your local authority our agenda for adult social.
  - Budget 23/24 Overspend - Over this last 12 months, budgetary control and forecasting has been a major challenge for the County Council. Special Educational Needs, SEND school transport and care costs are

the main factors for SCC forecasting to spend £22.3m over its original £688.1m budget for the 23/24 financial year.

24/25 SCC budget - Approved with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable adults and young people. Suffolk County Council has confirmed its financial budget for 2024-25. The £752.8m package was approved at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 15 February 2024, with the priority to protect vulnerable adults and children across the county. This represents an increase of £64.7m over the 23/24 financial year. Despite the recently announced uplift in government funding and asking for an increase in council tax of 4.99%, it is still not sufficient to cover the rising costs imposed by inflation, or more importantly the increasing levels of demand for services - in particular children's care, special educational needs, and disabilities (SEND) and home to school transport.

Focusing on those children who have extremely demanding needs and no-one else to turn to, is the right thing to do. SCC have therefore confirmed that 60 new members of staff will be recruited to drive forward important reform to the way special educational needs and disability (SEND) services are delivered in Suffolk. This includes an increase in permanent SEND staff of nearly 15%. These new posts will support the improvement of the quality and timeliness of assessments, plans, reviews, and communications with families. To provide care and services for vulnerable children and adults, the next two years will see an additional £42.7million allocated to children's services, and an additional £29.9million for adult services. However, this means £64.7million of savings needs to be found at the same time over 2 years which include:-

- £11million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
- £30.6million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme.

The council's budget will therefore increase by 9.6% (from £693.0million to £752.8million), some of which is generated by a 4.99% increase in the council's share of Council Tax, and additional government funding. The increase of 4.99% to council tax is made up of a 2.99% increase in general council tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care. This will see the council's share of a Band D property's bill rise by £1.12 per week, compared to last year.

*Crossroads along A1141 – again this verge was in need for attention due to the issue of visibility and was still impacting the safety of those using the crossroads. Cllr. Finch agreed to raise this issue and ensure that there was a regular cutting regime imposed.*

*Potholes – the clerk was asked to continue to add potholes onto the Highways Reporting Tool and if no action is forthcoming to submit them once again.*

6. **MR LEIGH JAMIESON - DISTRICT COUNCILLOR** - Mr. Jamieson had previously submitted his report in which he commented on the following items:

In terms of the council, the year started with the district elections back in May last year. This turned out to be a particularly good time for Green Party councillors, who were successful in getting ten members elected. This did not just increase our numbers significantly but made us the largest group within the Council.

As the largest group on the new administration, we have had a major say in setting the Council's key priorities that will be the basis of all plans for the next 4 years. These are an Increase in climate change action, close collaboration with communities, and a focus on good housing.

The administration also set out short-term ambitions including ways of improving the energy efficiency of listed buildings; a relaunch of neighbourhood plans; identifying more land for community housing and improving planning enforcement using the Considerate Constructor's scheme, most of which have started.

In terms of the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS). This is something I proposed a couple of years ago. Although approved by full council at the time, nothing happened. Thanks to our increased presence in the administration things have now moved on. The scheme sets out how construction teams should respect neighbours, minimise impact on the environment, and have an inclusive and healthy workplace.

When developers receive planning permission, we will encourage them to sign up to the scheme. We also aim to make it mandatory in communities where construction could have a severe disruptive impact. The council is looking to strengthen this approach in the future.

Part one of the Council's Joint Local Plan finally came in to affect. The decision which has been long in coming will provide the council with up-to-date policies to direct planning decisions. Meanwhile, over the next two years part 2 of the plan will review sites put forward for possible development. A call for these sites went out to landowners and parishes last year.

One area that is presenting significant challenges is Housing. The council was already facing compliance issues following their social housing referral in 2022. On top of this there was still a backlog of repairs dating back to Covid.

Unfortunately, we also discovered significant issues with the state of Council housing stock across the district. The group have made this matter a priority and will be pushing the council to improve on the situation as soon as is possible. To help with this the council have released £943,000 from reserves to help clear the repair backlog. The money would also support wider improvements to the council housing service in the district.

The housing team have also developed a new strategy to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. This strategy, developed by the new team, focusses on early prevention & intervention, and making rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurring, among other things.

The council have also approved higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties in an effort to tackle the homes crisis without the need to rely on new builds.

The finance team highlighted the Council's financial issues at the backend of 2023, leading into this year. The budget received approval, but it was not easy and was only possible with use of earmarked reserves along with increases in council tax, rents, and fees.

The Council had to increase Council Tax by 2.99%, which equates to a rise of 10p a week on a band D home. Council tenants also saw an increase of 7.7%. Social rents increased by £7.92 a week and affordable rents increased £11.13 a week.

Ongoing financial pressures, however, still remain a concern for the council with a potential budget gap of £6.7m in the coming years. With income falling short of this the council needs to look at all income and funding streams.

The financial challenges led to one of the most controversial decisions that the Council have had to make, the introduction of parking charges in Hadleigh, Sudbury and Lavenham. The charging proposal, approved by the cabinet last month, start at £1 for an hour in the short stay parking and £1 for two hours in the long stay. This then increases by 50p an hour up to four hours in the short stay.

The decision was called-in to Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) last week by Hadleigh and Sudbury councillors. O&S reviewed the decision and decided that cabinet did not give the option of 1-hour free parking fair consideration. The car parking charges decision will now return to Cabinet for review in June. While implementation of the charges will happen now, the tariffs may be different.

Other news

- CIFCO, the council's commercial property arm, is still generating decent income for the council and is currently generating 11% of Babergh's income.
- The Council have installed twenty-eight new electric vehicle chargers across their car park network this year, to help tackle climate change.
- The Council won the council of the year award at the iESE Public Sector transformation awards.

## 7. REPORTS FROM THE COMMUNITY:

i) Village Hall Management Committee - on behalf of the Committee, Mr Clive Arthey reported that regular users of the Village Hall include Zumba on Mondays and table-tennis on Tuesdays. The hall is also used occasionally for 'mindfulness' sessions and parties. The EV charger is still attracting occasional users and the Village Hall car park is used on Wednesday evenings when the church hosts a choral group. The hall is of course the venue for parish council meetings and recently a polling station for the PCC election. We also provide tables and chairs to parishioners for private events.

Our thanks to Ron Mills for his continued support to keep everything maintained and the grass cut. He also managed to secure the removal and re-location of a bees' nest in the roof.

We are in desperate need of a treasurer and committee members and would appreciate anyone interested getting in touch.

The Village Hall continues to be a valuable facility for our community, and we thank the parish council for its continued support and grant contribution toward our overheads.

ii) St Peter's Parochial Church Council – on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, a report was read out from the Churchwarden and Treasurer, Mr Frank Taylor, which stated that although Covid-19 was still affecting the community in 2023, there were no restrictions on the holding of services and the church was open to the public throughout the year.

Four regular services were held in 2023. An Easter service of devotion attended by fifteen adults and two children, a Patronal service in July attended by twenty-five adults and one child, a Harvest Festival service attended by eighteen adults and two children, and a Christmas Carol service attended by twenty-three adults and four children. In addition, a funeral service was held for Shirley Ann Macgregor in October attended by forty-five family members and friends. The Copt Hall choir continued to rehearse in the church throughout the year. The churchyard was maintained throughout the year by Lister Countryside Services. The organ was repaired and tuned in June by Mike Osborne.

iii) Parish Council - on behalf of the Parish Council, Mr Clive Arthey, Chair, submitted his report in which he stated that 2023-24 was the first year of the Parish Council's four-year term of office. During the

year we have undertaken a review of our governance documents, responded to consultations on various planning applications and considered our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) budget. Commitments during the year are part funding of a defibrillator, sited at the Lindsey Rose, and stone sett reinforcement of corners to the triangle at the Drakestone Lane Junction and outside Old Forge Cottage. The issue of drainage at the White Rose junction has continued to be an issue, but it may be that recent works at the barn access have improved the situation. The Parish Council has continued with its work on the global issue of climate change. Councillors James Moore and Andrew Sturgeon have been tasked with raising awareness within the village and helping householders with energy efficient measures in their homes. Councillor Sturgeon also arranged another Thermal Imaging survey to help identify where properties were losing heat and give advice on remedial action.

We were pleased to arrange a Remembrance Sunday event, including the lighting of the beacon, which also involved our new 'Tommy' statue. Many thanks to Cllr. Mark Hainsworth who kindly funded its commissioning and installation. The beacon will also feature in the D-Day 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration on 6<sup>th</sup> June.

My thanks to the Parish Councillors, Rhett Corcoran, Mark Hainsworth, Ruth Howe, Ben Howe, James Moore and Andrew Sturgeon for their attendance and support throughout the year. Also, thanks to our District and County Councillors for their regular attendance and reports. My final thanks are to Vicky Waples, our clerk. We may be a small village, but we must attend to the same regulatory and governance requirements as all parish councils, so we are fortunate to have someone as experienced and qualified as Vicky who ensures we are fully compliant in everything we do.

We continue into 2024-2025 with a full complement of Councillors who are available to everyone in the village, both individually and together at our regular meetings.

- iv) Friends of St Peter's Church – on behalf of the Friend's Committee, the Chair had submitted a written report in which it was stated that during the year the work that had been scheduled in the church and the churchyard was completed and the Friends provided £7,000 towards the necessary cost. The annual Strawberry Refreshment Fund Raiser which has taken place at Lodge Farm on their Open Farm Sunday in May for a number of years, unfortunately did not take place in 2023 due to the new arrangements at Lodge Farm. We hope to resume this event in the future. There have been no other events held this year, but should the PCC need further funds for the upkeep and repairs of our beautiful medieval church, the Friends will continue to provide support.
- v) Kersey Village School – despite a request for a written report, none was forthcoming. The council was disappointed that one had not materialized. County Cllr. Finch, as one of the governors of the school, agreed to chase for a report and it was agreed that should a report be forthcoming, it would be appended to these minutes.
- vi) Lindsey Newsletter – on behalf of the Editorial Team, Cllr. Corcoran reported that the Lindsey Newsletter is available four times per year. Most copies are now sent electronically as we no longer have sponsorship for printing. There is no charge for the newsletter. We try to include items that are pertinent to our village. Contributions of recipes & articles are most welcome & we would like more of these from villagers. The newsletter displays some adverts & we charge £20.00 per year for their inclusion.

8. PUBLIC FORUM: there were no issues raised.

9. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: it was agreed that the Clerk would liaise with the Red Rose Community Farm informing them that the Annual Parish Meeting for Lindsey had been held today (8<sup>th</sup> May) where local organisations give an annual report, and it was agreed that a request would be submitted in future years for a report from the Red Rose Community Farm. The clerk would action this in time for the Annual Parish Meeting in May 2025.

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.44pm by thanking all for their attendance.

Signed.....

Date: 14.05.2025

Chair of Lindsey Parish Council