

**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF BRENT ELEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2022 IN THE VILLAGE HALL COMMENCING AT 7.30PM**

Present:

Cllr Kevin Went (Chair)
Cllr Martin Austin
Cllr Natalie Helms
Cllr Karen Marshall
Cllr Francesca Scoones

Apologies:

County Cllr Robert Lindsay

In Attendance:

District Cllr Bryn Hurren
William Grosvenor (*Clerk to the Council*)

Item No	Item discussed
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22.83	Chair's welcome Cllr Went welcomed all present to the meeting.
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22.84	To receive apologies for absence Apologies were received from County Cllr Robert Lindsay.
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22.85	Declarations of Interest
22.85.01	To receive Amendments to the Register There were no amendments to the Register.
22.85.02	To receive Declarations of Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda There were no declarations of Pecuniary Interest in respect of Items on the Agenda.
22.85.03	To receive Declarations of Non Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda There were no declarations of Non Pecuniary Interest in respect of Items on the Agenda.
22.85.04	To consider Full / Partial Dispensations for Pecuniary Interests Declared It was noted that there had been no requests for dispensation for Pecuniary Interests declared.

22.86	Minutes of the previous meeting It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 13 October 2022 and sign them as a true and accurate record. Proposed by: Cllr Marshall Seconded by: Cllr Scoones
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22.87	To receive the District Councillor's report Cllr Hurren reported as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Babergh's budgetary situation for 2023/24 will be challenging. The Government is allowing an increase of up to 5% in Council Tax. He will propose an increase of only 3%. It costs about £20m a year to run Babergh, with 50% of that coming from Council Tax. Babergh made income of £400k last year from solar panels and £2m from commercial investments.• On the positive side the refurbished Gainsborough House is now open. It received Lottery funding towards the works and Babergh contributed Community Infrastructure Levy money as well. The former St Peter's Church in the centre of Sudbury is being transformed into a music centre.• At Full Council earlier in the week there were two important debates – one on concerns about the discharge of sewage into rivers, and the other entitled "Debate not hate" – around attacks on councillors via social media.• Babergh and Mid-Suffolk and East Suffolk Councils have between them received £4m in funding to build housing on derelict land.
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- In terms of Brent Eleigh, Cllr Hurren mentioned the Iron Bridge and planning issues relating to Bennett's Piece, Cock Lane. These were covered in more detail later in the Agenda and each Item is reported below.
- In relation to the 112 bus service, Cllr Hurren will be having a meeting with the GoStart manager to see what the prospects might be for the service if a contribution was made of, say, £2.00 by each passenger.

22.88 To receive the County Councillor's report

Cllr Lindsay had previously distributed a report via email which was read out by the Clerk. The text of the report is appended below at **Appendix 1**.

22.89 To discuss any village matters

Cllr Helms raised a query about a vehicle which has been parked in the village for some time without any movement. She was assured that the issue would be resolved shortly.

22.90 To receive a report from the village Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

There was nothing to report.

22.91 To receive and consider reports on financial and governance matters

22.91.01 Financial update report

The Clerk tabled copies of the updated cashbook and bank reconciliation, which showed the balance in the Council's account with Lloyds Bank, as at 1 November 2022, standing at £5,714.47. From that current balance the following sums are continuing to be held as earmarked reserves:

- £1,000.00 as a contribution towards running costs / improvements at the village hall.
- £380.34 CIL payment received on 11 October. This has to be expended by October 2026 and will applied to a specific CIL funded project once more CIL monies are received.

22.91.02 Approval of payments

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following payments:

- £130.98 to Ken Grime & Son Ltd for wiring up the defibrillator installed at the Village Hall.

Proposed by: Cllr Scoones

Seconded by: Cllr Went

- £200.00 grant to Sudbury & District Citizen's Advice (see also Minute 22.91.08 below)

Proposed by: Cllr Went

Seconded by: Cllr Marshall

22.91.03 Salary award for 2022/23

The Clerk reported that the Local Government Association had agreed new pay scales for 2022/23 to be implemented from 1 April 2022. The hourly rate at Scale Point 6 increases by £1.00 and it was **RESOLVED** to apply the new scale backdated to 1 April 2022. The Clerk to advise SALC accordingly so that payment of the updated rate together with arrears can be made in the March 2023 payment.

Proposed by: Cllr Helms

Seconded by: Cllr Austin

22.91.04 Electronic banking

The Clerk reported that he now had online access to the Council's Treasurer's account with Lloyds Bank and was in possession of a business debit card, in accordance with the resolution of the Council at its meeting on 13 October 2022.

In order to enable the Council to operate its banking arrangements fully electronically, there is a need to arrange to add the Clerk as an authorised signatory (to be the first signatory) and to arrange for the existing Councillor signatories to have online access to approve (so one of them can countersign). The Clerk will make enquiries of Lloyds Bank to obtain the necessary paperwork.

22.91.05 Budget / Precept for 2023/24

The Clerk tabled a budget statement showing the budgets for 2022/23, the year-to-date actuals, the projected year end figures and a provisional budget for 2023/24, assuming that the Council decides to keep the precept at its current level.

Babergh had previously supplied indicative tax base figures for the financial year 2023/24 and these had been distributed to Councillors in advance of the meeting. Due to an increase in the parish tax base, if the Parish Council decides to keep the council tax requirement the same as in the current year, i.e. £30.13 for Band D, it will yield an additional £64.00 in precept. If the Council wants the actual precept total cash receipt to remain the same, i.e. £2,700, then Councillors can reduce the overall sum required by 2.31%. It was **AGREED to NOTE** the position, and a full debate will take place and a decision on the budgets and precept for 2023/24 made at the January 2023 meeting of the Council.

- 22.91.06 The Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Bench project**
It had been confirmed since the previous meeting that, as expected, the grass triangle is Highways' land and the Clerk will apply for a street furniture licence using the link provided by Cllr Lindsay. Once that has been granted the seat can be constructed and erected in position.
- 22.91.07 Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2022/23**
The Clerk reminded Councillors that there was an urgent need to make an appointment and Cllr Went promised to make contact with a suitable person.
- 22.91.08 Grant requests – Headway Suffolk and Sudbury & District Citizens Advice**
Requests for grant aid had been received from Headway Suffolk and Sudbury & District Citizens Advice.
It was AGREED to NOTE the request from Headway Suffolk. The request from Citizens Advice was already considered and a donation agreed (see Minute 22.91.02 above).
- 22.91.09 Litter and dog bin emptying service – price increases**
Babergh has advised that the annual price for emptying each litter bin will rise to £39.73 from April 2023 and for emptying each dog bin will rise to £46.53 from the same date. Whilst Brent Eleigh does not use these services at present, Councillors will need to bear the costs in mind if either of these services is required in the future.
- 22.91.10 Community Infrastructure Levy briefings**
The Clerk reported that Babergh is providing a CIL briefing session on various dates in December 2023. Full details had already been forwarded to Councillors in case they wish to attend one of the sessions which will take place remotely via Teams.

22.92 To receive reports from Councillors

22.92.01 Defibrillator - update

Thanks to a generous donation this had now been installed in the porch to the Village Hall. Training sessions on its use and first aid will be arranged in the new year.

22.92.02 Home to school transport

Cllr Helms advised that the issue previously reported in relation to Suffolk CC applying the 3 mile rule and refusing to allow children access to the free home to Lavenham school bus once they reach the age of 8 has now been resolved for the time being. As previously agreed the Clerk had drafted a suitable email expressing concern, and recommending that SCC should reassess the route and allow pupils up to the age of 11 access to free transport from Brent Eleigh to Lavenham Primary School. This will now be kept on file in case something similar is required in the future. Concern however was expressed by Councillors at the weekly cost of transport on the school bus to the Ormiston Academy - £26.00 per week for each child.

22.93 To receive the Clerk's report

22.93.01 Rural England Prosperity Fund Engagement

The Rural England Prosperity Fund supports the aims of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme, enabling funding for capital projects that support small businesses and community infrastructure that specifically help to address the challenges faced by rural areas. Babergh has asked parishes to complete a survey to help to help in identifying the District's priorities for this fund. The Clerk had distributed the survey to Councillors in advance of the meeting. Following discussion Councillors felt that they had no comments to make and **it was AGREED to NOTE** the survey.

22.93.02 Iron bridge adjacent to A1141 - update

Following the provision of some excellent photographs of the existing bridge / site by Cllr Went, the Clerk had forward them on to the Babergh Heritage team, together with a site map (it is on Highways' land), and a request for any information that the team can provide on its historical / architectural / engineering significance. A response is awaited.

22.93.03 Protection for the grass area around the village sign

As Highways had not responded to the Clerk's request relating to the feasibility of erecting oak posts around the corners of the triangle to deter vehicles from driving across the grass, he had contacted Cllr Lindsay with a copy of the original email and is awaiting a response.

22.93.04 Cundys Lane

Following confirmation from Highways Records that Cundys Lane south of the A1141 is a highway maintainable at public expense (it is recorded as an un surfaced unclassified road), the Clerk will liaise with the manager of Brook Farm over the company's responsibilities in relation to the maintenance of trees and hedgerows.

22.94	Planning issues
22.94.01	<p>To consider planning applications received</p> <p>1. DC/22/05490 – Macs Folly, Brent Mill Drive - householder application for the erection of a single storey extension.</p> <p>Following discussion it was AGREED not to make any comment on this application. The Clerk to advise Babergh accordingly.</p>
22.94.02	<p>Neighbourhood planning</p> <p>Following confirmation by Monks Eleigh PC that they are interested in developing a joint Neighbourhood Plan and would be having further discussions at their November meeting, the Clerk will make enquiries as to the funding position. It was AGREED to defer further consideration of this until the next meeting.</p>
22.94.03	<p>Planning enforcement issues – Bennetts Piece, Cock Lane</p> <p>Following the exchange of emails between the Planning Enforcement Officer and Cllr Hurren, the Clerk forwarded comments to the Enforcement Officer which were read out to the meeting. A response from the Officer is awaited.</p>
22.95	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>19 January 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Cllr Marshall requested that Clay Lane be put on the Agenda.</p>
22.96	<p>Chair’s closing remarks</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00pm.</p>

APPENDIX 1: REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR ROBERT LINDSAY

Triangle with village sign

Your clerk has copied me into his correspondence about this and I am chasing Highways on whether you can put up posts here and whether you need a licence for a seat. If it is Highways land then you will need a street furniture licence. Details here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-licences/street-furniture-licence/>

Elected leader – not a mayor

Suffolk County Council’s leader has agreed to a deal with central Government that will create the post of directly elected leader of the county council. This person will be able to appoint their own cabinet from existing county councillors. But the Government have at this stage not made clear what powers, if any, it is devolving from itself to the elected leader. The prospect of an elected leader of a different political party to the majority of county councillors could create stalemate.

Bildeston Food Bank Update

Soaring food and energy prices mean there is now a record 23 families regularly using Bildeston food bank, that represents 53 people, including 19 children.

The Food Bank has just launched its domestic oil winter appeal and is working with the Mrs LD Rope Trust to provide 500 litres of heating oil to each of six families that have requested it.

Heating Bildeston Project

The project has now received a thumbs up to go to the next stage from a feasibility study conducted by an independent consultant. The study found that a scheme requiring about 10 boreholes and a small “energy centre” where heat pumps are used to bring up the temperature of borehole water, would be technically and financially feasible and would qualify for a Government grant for 50% of the capital cost. However the group first needs to identify £50k to do the second phase feasibility including drilling a test borehole. I have put them in touch with county grant’s officers to help them identify funding.

Automatic Numberplate Recognition

This week, (8th November) Suffolk’s cabinet is likely to decide to apply to the Government to give itself powers to enforce moving traffic offences. This will allow it to use numberplate recognition cameras to fine people for driving on streets or through bus gates where private motors have been banned. It intends to pilot four roads in Ipswich to start with. Each

camera costs around £20k plus £5k annual maintenance fee and it wants the fines at each site to at least cover the costs at each site.

Roundabout Magazine

Roundabout magazine's printer is on its last legs and they need £10k-£12k. They have about £4k already in their kitty so I have match funded that with another £4k from my locality allowance. Nedging PC are holding that £4k contribution in their account until the magazine publishers purchase the machine.

Budget Survey

Suffolk County Council is predicting a £16.2 million overspend on its £625m budget for the full year to March 2023, according to its Quarter 2 projections. This is mainly due to a surge in spending on children in care. There are six children in particular who warranted very intensive care which required purchasing places in very expensive special homes.

But there is also more spending on specialist school travel (taxis) for Special Needs children and higher inflation is driving costs higher than expected. The overspend will be met by extra cash from reserves.

Meantime the county is asking residents for their thoughts on the upcoming 2023/24 budget. It will consider a summary of responses when deciding how to spend your money. With inflationary pressures, it is unlikely the government will leave out local authorities from spending cuts – meaning council reserves may have to be used.

I recommend you share your thoughts on how the Council should spend their money, as well as highlight vulnerabilities you see in your communities that need further addressing.

For a link to the online survey, click here: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/7BQY0J/>

Suffolk Cabinet approves more spending for special needs education

The Cabinet met on October 11 for the first time since the summer political recess. The Cabinet agreed to spend £2m on a special school for Children and Young People in Felixstowe. In addition, SEND services received £10m to provide more specialist units in Suffolk. This is good news as it should help remove the number of families needing to travel cross-county for support.