

# BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Tel: 01787 739317 Email: clerk@boxford-pc.gov.uk

**MINUTES of the MEETING of BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL** held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7.00p.m. in the Village Hall, Boxford.

**PRESENT:** Cllrs L Wortley (Chair), D Warren, H Watts, V Strafford, C Lawson. Z Rumsey (Clerk), CCllr J Finch, DCllr Hurren and 4 members of the public attended in person. No Video link was requested.

**1. Apologies:**

Cllrs K Couling & P Watt

**2. Declarations of Interest by Councillors:**

None received.

**3. Approval of Minutes of 28th January 2024:**

Accepted as correct.

**4. Matters Arising from the Minutes:**

All matters arising discussed further down on agenda.

**5. Questions from the Public:**

A resident asked for an update on the house prices for the new properties at Goodlands. It was raised by a Councillor that the matter was discussed at the February meeting, the Woodland Trust will be providing a path. The matter is out of the PC and BDC hands and it was suggested and agreed by Councillors that a line is drawn on the matter.

A resident reported that the pot hole on School Hill has become incredibly dangerous. This has been reported to SCC online. A Councillor advised that he was aware of a car in the village being badly damaged by the pot hole. CCllr Finch will look into the report as a matter of urgency. He advised that any matters that are not being dealt with promptly should be reported to him by email, rather than waiting for the meeting. Cllr Wortley advised that more people should report the matter online so it keeps flashing up the SCC to deal with.

A resident asked for an update on the Housing Needs Survey as it had been some time since the survey finished. The Clerk advised that Hugh Phillips had agreed to continue with the matter and had arranged to meet with Community Action Suffolk to discuss. The PC will make contact with Hugh to ask for an update.

A representative for Natural Boxford asked the PC whether there are plans to replace the trees that have been removed from the village as per the Biodiversity Statement. Cllr Warren advised that the trees were removed due to being dangerous and it was not thought being planted back in the same place was the best way forward. He asked if Natural Boxford could make suggestions of where in the village more trees could be planted; the PC will then make arrangements.

The meeting was updated on the works being carried out at The Old Gaol. Materials have been decided for the historic information, volunteers are getting together to complete the painting; it is hoped to be open by the end of May.

The PC were asked for an update on the village car park. Cllr Strafford advised that Heads of Terms have been agreed with the owning family. A valuation with outline planning permission is being sought for Bell House. The representative for Natural Boxford pressed the importance of ecological surveys in line with the Biodiversity Statement.

The meeting was updated on the disappointing decision to continue with the closure of the Surgery. The volunteer group received a letter from the ICB. The group will now reconvene to agree the next stages. It is felt the community response was not even read. The debate is still on going.

**6. District Council Report:**

DCllr Hurren told the meeting that he was not happy with the process from the Planning Department regarding the development at Goodlands. He has arranged to meet with the manager of the Woodlands Trust regarding the path. They are open to negotiations. DCllr Hurren has requested support from the PC at the meeting.

# BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Tel: 01787 739317 Email: clerk@boxford-pc.gov.uk

The attached report was received and distributed to Parish Councillors ahead of the meeting. DCllr Hurren commented on the Devolution White Papers, the submission has gone to the Government for 3 smaller unitary Councils. DCllr Hurren also commented on the Joint Local Plan – there is to be an increase to build dwellings by approximately 75%.

## 7. County Council Report:

The attached report was received and distributed to Parish Councillors ahead of the meeting. CCllr Finch commented on the Devolution White Papers, a business plan has been submitted to the Government.

CCllr Finch advised the PC that a formal acceptance has been requested from SCC for the Church Street parking yellow lines and the requests to changes to the Speed limit changes.

## 8. Finance – Bank Balances and previously agreed payments for the January period.

18<sup>th</sup> December 2024 Opening Bank Balances: £106,287.21.

Income: £66.00 cemetery fee, £500.00 BDC locality fund, £121.13 interest (deposit account), £152.43 interest (reserve account) locality grant totaling £839.56

The following pre-agreed payments paid: -

28/02/25 Z Rumsey - £454.09 - Clerk Salary  
18/03/25 E.ON - £31.13 - Bell House Electricity  
19/03/25 Mortimer Contracts - £728.40 - Grass contract  
Suffolk Cloud - £205.00 - Website hosting  
Boxford Village Hall - £95.50 - Mar Hall Hire

The sum of the payments made was £1,513.92.

26<sup>th</sup> November 2024 Closing Bank balances:

Community Account £27,143.50

Deposit Account £34,368.14

Reserve Account £44,101.21

Total of £105,612.85

### Consider the following items: -

#### a) Authorise payments

SLCC (CiLCA training) £45.00

Village Hall Apr £86.00 (BPC meeting, WIFI & APM)

Village Hall Extraordinary meeting £11.00

Housing Needs Survey £2,176.62

Clerk Expenses – working from home allowance 7 months x £26 = £182.00

It was resolved to approve all payments.

#### b) Using Receipts and Payments accounting

After receiving information regarding Receipts & Payments versus Income & Expenditure prior to the meeting, it was resolved to revert the account back to the R & P method for total transparency.

#### c) Policies & Procedures renewals

The below policies and documents were reviewed:

- Freedom of Information – It was resolved to adopt the updated document.
- Risk Assessment – It was commented that The Croft and Permissive Path should be added to the document. With these additions it was resolved to approve the document.
- Grant Policy – It was agreed to remove point 4 and to change point 5 from Finance Committee to “full Council”. The form should read “There are a range of grants available and funds are limited”. With these additions, it was resolved to approve and adopt the policy.
- Internal Controls – it was resolved to approve and adopt the new document.

# BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Tel: 01787 739317 Email: clerk@boxford-pc.gov.uk

- Asset Register – It was commented that the Croft gates and bollards should be added to the register. With this addition, it was resolved to approve the document.
- Standing Orders – it was resolved to approve the document.
- Financial Regulations – With various points agreed, it was resolved to approve and adopt the new Financial Regulations.

It was also agreed that the PC should adopt a Social Media Policy. Clerk to action for the next meeting.

## 9. Planning – Report on Decisions from the Planning Authority.

DC/25/00474 The Grange, Stone Street – Raise no objections

DC/25/005086 The Causeway – Raise no objections

DC/25/00728 Chequers, 7 Church Street – Raise no objections

DC/24/05537 The Arc – Granted with Conditions

### Consider the following items: -

- a) DC/25/00936 - Riverhall, Ellis Street, Boxford, Sudbury Suffolk CO10 5HH. Application for Works to Trees Subject to Tree Preservation Order - BT389/T1 -Reduce 1 No. Sycamore (T1) to previous pruning posts, Reduce 1 No. Ash (T2) to previous pruning posts. It was resolved to raise no objections.
- b) DC/25/01066 - Twelve 12 The Causeway Boxford Sudbury Suffolk CO10 5JR. Notification of works to trees in a conservation area- Reduce Gleditsia Tree by approx. 40% 2 Reducing a White Beam and a Maple located in the rear garden to the back of the house by approx. 40 pct. Info; All 3 trees were last reduced 5 years ago or more. It was resolved to raise no objections.
- c) DC/25/01123 - The Grange Stone Street Boxford Sudbury Suffolk CO10 5NR. Notification of works to trees in a Conservation Area - T1 Willow tree - reduce to previous pruning points, approx. 6 meter reduction ADDED; 10th March 2025 - T2 - Conifer Tree - remove to ground level. It was resolved to raise no objections.
- d) *Any other urgent planning matters:*  
There were two planning matters raised after the Agenda had been sent out. It was resolved to ask for an extension of time, to allow discussions to take place at the next meeting.

## 10. Cemetery and Churchyard

### a) *Grave reservations*

The Clerk reported that having spoken to a local grave digger, it seems many Parish Councils are no longer accepting plot reservations to allow for keeping a better track of plots available. It was resolved that with a survey carried out and a better plan of the cemetery there is no reason why we cannot continue to accept reservations for residents.

### b) *Quote for Survey works*

The Clerk has requested a quote from a Surveyor to carry out a survey and create a plan of the cemetery. The Clerk informed the PC that she has a financial interest in the company as the owner is her partner and she also works for the firm. It was resolved to approve the quote.

### c) *Grave Markers*

A quote has been received to purchase more metal grave markers. The Clerk felt that the cost was not necessary as once the plot is filled, the marker is no longer needed. It was thought that a permanent metal marker could still be used for the reserved plots, but reusable markers would be better for short term use. It was resolved to purchase 10No. slate reusable markers and if a plot is reserved we can order a more permanent style.

### d) *Prices for 2025/2026*

It was resolved to increase the fee for reservations to £99 for Boxford Residents. The other fees need more research and will be delayed until the next meeting.

## 11. Environmental and Ecology

Nothing to report.

## 12. Public Realms

Nothing to report

# BOXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Tel: 01787 739317 Email: clerk@boxford-pc.gov.uk

## 13. Car Park

This was raised and answered in the public questions above.

## 14. The Croft

It has been requested that the PC revisit the quote from C.Smith to ensure that all works are approved and the funds are available for all works listed: tree work, wet land, pond & path, including machinery and equipment. The quote is more than the original budget set but it is more work than initially thought. It should be noted that the tree works went ahead after approved at the last meeting due to the impending danger with some of the trees. It was resolved to re-approve the quote and go ahead with the works, with the possibility of using reserved funds if needs be.

## 15. Member's Reports

- Cllr Strafford wished to advise that the resident has agreed to re-open the permissive path and has already cleared hedges and installed CCTV. A caveat has been requested that the PC cover the cost of insurance, this needs further investigation and discussion. The resident will keep the responsibility of maintaining the path.
- Cllr Warren raised the need for a grit bin as discussed in a previous meeting. The Clerk informed the meeting that Clarkes of Walsham no longer stock grit bins. Cllr Warren has found one for £40, it was resolved to Cllr Warren can make the purchase and claim back the cost.

**The chair declared the meeting closed at 21.47.**

## Boxford PC report 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

The devolution opportunity as offered by the government is taking shape now and it is becoming more clear as to what is on offer and what the powers of the new Mayor will be.

The remit of the new upper level of government includes, power over highways, policing, (hopefully at the expense of the dreadful current Police and Crime commissioner post) general transport (including railways) and health, also the bigger planning decisions across the new region of Norfolk and Suffolk. A huge remit indeed but maybe not education and social care.

Sadly no idea of what funding will be given for this, although the new mayor/mayorress will have their own precept raising opportunities, presumably from the current system of local council tax. Although the new unitarities may be cheaper to run than the current two tier system and we could hopefully be losing the ever increasing Police and Crime Commissioner budget, I do feel that our local taxes may see a severe increase and more demand on the local population to fund the new governance scenario. The coming months will hopefully bring more clarity and information on this matter.

The unitary council or councils that sit below the new upper tier and hopefully feed into it are being debated at this very moment and it is now clear that although the County Council favour one huge unitary across the whole of Suffolk, the District and Borough Councils very much favour 3 smaller unitaries across Suffolk and I understand that all Norfolk Councils including their County authority feel the same.

For BaberghMidSuffolk this was agreed at our meetings on 20<sup>th</sup> March to meet the Gov deadline of Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March and we await the outcome of all of the Suffolk and Norfolk submissions.

For Suffolk the proposed 3 new unitaries, if accepted would be Greater Ipswich, East Suffolk and West Suffolk, including the current Babergh area in which you now live.

Nearer to home Babergh are focusing with ever increasing speed on our Joint Local Plan to accommodate the new housing demands of the new government, 775 new dwellings for Babergh alone in the coming year.

We are now trying to focus on the latest demands from central Government to collect glass and household compostable waste from all properties as a kerbside collection. A tough and unnecessary task in my opinion in a rural area.

About 2 weeks ago I had a long meeting with Steve Catton, who is the site manager at the Goodlands site for the six new houses being built there, he is expecting to finish the build out of the site and integrated site works by around the end of May. He is happy to fulfill the agreement to leave a gap in the fence for the Woodland Trust to install their access and kissing gate for pedestrians. Also maybe to help create the path itself but that depends on the goodwill of his employers and also very much on the wishes of what the new owners will allow and see as the natural solution for the site and new access route.

I have been in touch with their site manager who has responsibility for all of the Woodland Trust properties across East Anglia and even further afield and he has agreed to meet me at their property at Goodlands for a site meeting around the end of April.

I hope to be more mobile then and will take this meeting come what may, as feel it is off vital importance to the village but would like at least one rep from PC and possibly Be Natural group as well for help and input.

Very happy to grant aid the Save the heat initiative and the re-installation of the Stone St link footpath on the field side of the dangerous road from my locality budget and I look forward to seeing the finished improvements.

Will be with you this evening to present this report and answer any questions that may arise from councillors or public, as far as I am able.

All Best Regards. Bryn.

# A Report for Boxford Parish Council Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025 From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley

Tel: 01206 262993 (change) Mobile 07545 423796 Email: [james.finch@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:james.finch@suffolk.gov.uk)

## ➤ **The County Council leaders have proposed one council for Suffolk**

One council for Suffolk would make delivering public services simpler, cheaper and quicker, and better meet the needs of residents and businesses, county leaders have said.

Following a recent government announcement that Suffolk's county, district and borough councils will be replaced with a single-tier system, Suffolk County Council argues that consolidating all services under one unitary authority is the only effective way to deliver against the government's criteria for local government reform.

The move would see all council services, such as waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, highways maintenance, leisure, school placements and travel and street cleaning, all provided by one authority - rather than the six that currently exist in Suffolk.

Bringing together district, borough and county council functions is expected to reduce duplication, lower administrative costs and ensure a more coordinated and cost-effective approach to delivering essential services.

The council warns that splitting services among multiple bodies would force the duplication of essential functions - such as social care, highways maintenance and schools - currently managed at a county level.

The key benefits of one council are:

- **Simpler for residents** – one council would make it easier to understand and contact local government
- **Clearer accountability** – there would be less confusion over who is responsible for what
- **Better use of funding – a more coherent, strategic, financially sustainable, county-wide approach to budgeting**
- **Better alignment of services** – since everything is under one roof, services can be more easily coordinated, creating opportunities to improve services for residents
- **More efficient decision-making** – with just one council, decisions can be made more quickly
- **Stronger leadership** – a single, visible and accountable body providing a clear strategic voice for Suffolk.

*The council will submit its initial proposal to the government by 21 March, with a more detailed business case to follow later in the year. The government will then undertake a public consultation.*

## ➤ **New cabinet role to lead on devolution and local government reform in Suffolk.**

A new Suffolk County Council cabinet role responsible for devolution and local government reform has been created. Cllr Richard Rout has been appointed to the role – which comes as Suffolk is one of only six areas in the country chosen by the government to be fast-tracked for devolution and local government reform.

The reforms will see all six of Suffolk's district, borough and county councils disbanded, to be replaced by one or more unitary (singular) authorities responsible for delivering all local services that are currently delivered by the different tiers of local government.

It will also see the election of a mayor (covering Suffolk and Norfolk) in May 2026, who will take control over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, economic development, health improvement and blue light services – along with devolved government funding to deliver positive change. The mayor would not run the unitary councils or have oversight of them.

## ➤ **£1.6 million investment proposed following inspection of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service**

Further funding is earmarked for the county's fire service following a key report by Government inspectors. Suffolk County Council (SCC) is proposing to invest an extra £1.6 million over two years into Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) following a government inspection.

Inspectors from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found SFRS effectively operates its 35 stations, 43 fire engines and a range of specialist vehicles strategically situated around Suffolk.

The inspectors rated the service as good at preventing fires and risk, and protecting the public through fire regulation, and that it met requirements for responding to major incidents, plus managing and developing its leaders.

However, the assessment highlighted some areas where inspectors feel the service needs to improve – leadership, culture, commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and IT infrastructure.

A targeted action plan is already being developed with staff to drive improvements in areas highlighted within the report. These include IT infrastructure, staff cultural changes and risk management.

➤ **Suffolk's 45 libraries see new investment as Suffolk County Council plans to take service back in house**

All Suffolk's 45 libraries would remain open, see no change to opening hours and have new mobile libraries and computers as part of a plan to bring the service back into Suffolk County Council. The formal Cabinet decision for this was made on 18th March 2025, staff running Suffolk's library service – along with their years of experience and love for libraries - will transition to the direct employment of the County Council on 1st June 2025.

The county council would invest £200,000 in replacing Suffolk's aging mobile libraries with a further £157,000 for new books and to replace public computers in libraries across Suffolk. This is in addition to the £6.6 million a year budget available for Suffolk's libraries.

It follows an attempt to secure an external provider for a new year contract (with the option to extend for up to a further six years) which had to be abandoned due to difficulties in aligning submissions with the service requirements and budgets.

Following the end of the procurement process, Suffolk County Council entered negotiations with Suffolk Libraries (the current provider) to reach agreement on a shorter-term contract. The intention was to secure the immediate future of the library service from 1 June 2025, while the longer-term future was considered. However, Suffolk Libraries were unwilling to accept those terms and proposed different terms which were not acceptable to Suffolk County Council and would have breached procurement law.

In addition, serious concerns about the viability of Suffolk Libraries also surfaced. The concerns included their proposal to reduce opening hours by 30% and issues with the financial stability of the organisation. There is also concern about the cost of their head office, including senior managers, which equates to 33% of their annual staffing costs. Suffolk County Council believes that more of the library budget should be invested in frontline services.

➤ **Suffolk County Council confirms 2025/26 budget**

Suffolk County Council has confirmed how it will spend its money in the forthcoming financial year - an £803.7 million plan focused on protecting essential services and supporting the county's most vulnerable residents.

The council's budget for 2025/26 was approved at a meeting of all councillors on Thursday 13 February, with an emphasis on meeting rising demand for children's and adult care services.

For every £1 the council spends in the next financial year, 77 pence will go directly toward Adult Care and Childrens Services which support the health and wellbeing of people in Suffolk.

The remaining 23 pence will fund other critical areas such as fire and rescue, highway maintenance, climate initiatives, waste management and bus services, as well as the infrastructure, staff, and technology required to keep services running efficiently.

➤ **Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions for the Stour Valley**

Fostering is a flexible role with options for short term care from a weekend a month to longer term opportunities, all providing life-changing support for local children. If you want to find out more about what it's like to foster or adopt with us, please call a member of the team on 01473 264800

**My Priorities**

*Education - Supporting Vulnerable People - Jobs and Growth - Localism and the Stour Valley - Building on Suffolk's Strength all underpinned by strong financial management and fair council tax.*