

Minutes of Coney Weston Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 9th January 2025 at 7:00pm in Coney Weston Village Hall.

Present Cllrs M Lock, B Francis, P Clarke, P Sullivan, P Hines, West Suffolk District Council (WSDC) Councillor A Smith & Suffolk County Council Councillor (SCC) J Spicer.

1. Co-option of new Parish Councillors

No candidates were presented for co-option.

2. Apologies for absence

None received.

3. Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations:

3.1 To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda. None.

3.2 To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests. None.

3.3 To grant dispensations as appropriate under Section 33 of the Localism Act. N/A.

4. Minutes - The minutes of the Thursday 7th November 2024 Parish Council meeting were agreed and approved as a correct record.

5. Meeting open to the public

Residents present raised concerns again about the condition of the Playing Field, with the old tube, from the slide being left on site and damage to the waste bin. The Clerk will write to the Trustees to see what plans they have for the field. The land has recently been Vested with the Official Custodian of the Charity Commission. Following this successful process there are now plans to try and get the land registered in the name of the Official Custodian of the Charity Commission, rather than being registered in the name of an individual, as is the case at the moment. See also under item 8.3.1

Action Cllr Clarke/Lock/Clerk

Cllr Smith informed those present, following a question from the public, that work, at the solar farm, planned at Land East Of Firsfield Bowbeck Bardwell, should start mid-year. Despite previous indications, was likely to be under construction for 12 months.

6. Report from Suffolk County Council (SCC) Councillor: J Spicer.

To include any update on:

6.1 Village drainage. Cllr Spicer is hopeful that the works, carried out so far in the village, will have a positive effect on the issues of flooding in the village. Cllr Spicer is not as up to speed on the current situation and asked that we let her know if we need her to do anything. Cllrs Lock and Clarke provided a further update under item 8.1.4 Village Drainage. Cllr Spicer thanked them for the work they are doing, along with local resident, John Hogg.

6.2 Loss of 73A, Thurston School bus, through Coney Weston.

Cllr Spicer thanked Cllrs Smith, Clarke and the Clerk for their continued work regarding securing the bus service for the villages in our area. The bid, submitted at the end of last year was successful. However, the bus needs to be used if it is to continue to be viable. Coney Weston is under threat of losing the service as, sitting on a 'dogleg' it will not be viable to keep the service going unless it is used. The Councillors will do all they can to try and push the use of the service. The Clerk and the Chairman from Barningham are doing some work on trying to retain the 73a, school bus for Coney Weston. They are going to be driving the routes to look at timings. The next meeting of the Support Our local buses Group is being held on Friday 7th February, at Barningham Village Hall.

Cllr Spicer attended a Suffolk County Council meeting where it was agreed to submit a bid for inclusion in the government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). This decision followed a debate and vote involving all county councillors.

As part of the government's English Devolution White Paper, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet recommended Suffolk for the DPP, which could lead to the creation of a directly elected Mayor (potentially covering both Suffolk and Norfolk) and a reorganisation of local government. This would replace the current district, borough, and county councils with a streamlined unitary council structure.

The government's proposals aim to restructure councils in two-tier areas like Suffolk, claiming that unitary councils deliver better outcomes for residents and allow cost savings to be reinvested in public services.

Additionally, the government is proposing the establishment of new Mayoral Authorities. These would have a single directly elected Mayor overseeing larger regions, such as Norfolk and Suffolk, with strategic powers in areas like transport infrastructure, health improvement, and emergency services.

7. Report from West Suffolk District (WSD) Councillor: A Smith.

In addition to the update on the solar farm, Cllr Smith reported that the local plan, looking to, in part, provide additional homes was inspected by the Planning Inspectorate, with examination hearings being held over eleven days between 5 November and 11 December 2024. West Suffolk Council has now responded to all of the action points raised. If all goes to plan the revised Local Plan should go to public consultation in mid-2025. Cllr Smith continues to add his support to the 'support our Local buses' task group. Cllr Smith is trying to help with an ongoing situation, effecting some residents, in the Village.

8. Councillor's Reports

8.1 Cllr Clarke: - To include any update on:

8.1.1 Defibrillator.

The defibrillator was removed, on the instructions of Ambulance Control, to help a resident in the village. Fortunately, it was not required, and Cllr Clarke was contacted to arrange to have it reset and returned.

8.1.2 Audio system for the Village Hall.

This matter is still in hand.

8.1.3 Village group liaison- volunteers.

Coles Path

Residents are very grateful to two village volunteers who tackled the Cole's Path footway which had recently been flooded and covered in debris and leaves.

WW2 Land-Army Girls, Penny and Dee are part of a small team of villagers who have each volunteered to take responsibility for a specific area in the village, keeping it neat and tidy.

8.1.4 Village Drainage.

Cllr Lock provided those present with the following update, from Steven Woodward MCIHT Principal Engineer (Highways) | Milestone Infrastructure regarding the drainage issues in the village.

The Suffolk Highways delivery team and milestone subcontractors have confirmed that the Phase 1 works to the Three-Ways junction were delivered in accordance with the works design package with one additional chamber.

The works comprised of ditch clearing to the sections of ditch to Rushford Road and Thetford Road at the Three-Ways junction, adding a new gully to the western kerb line to increase capacity to clear surface water, repairing a damaged/blocked section of the outfall pipe under the carriageway leading towards Gerandol and cleansing the drainage throughout to ensure it is flowing. They were grateful for being allowed access to the chamber in Gerandol's garden to enable the completion these works. In addition, an extra chamber was added on site in the carriageway at the location of the pipe repair as a further pipe was found under the carriageway, which was also damaged, so this too has been connected into the drainage system at the new chamber. Further downstream (west) from Gerandol the outfall pipe was cleansed alongside the Rustlings/Plantation House southern boundaries. Whilst the full length of this pipe could not be cleared due to a deviation in the line of the pipe, the pipe is providing a passage for water, and it is

confirmed to be flowing. This pipe outfalls into the ditch to the south side of the meadow which was cleared along its length.

Going forward they will be reviewing trial hole information from The High Street which was carried out as part of the recent works to locate services to properties along The Street. This is aimed to find a suitable route through these services for a new pipe along The Street to connect through to the village hall carpark and School Meadow, and onwards to the outfall at the southeast corner of the meadow as a Phase 2 works package.

There are still concerns over access and ownership of the land that part of the ditch runs through at Coles Path. It was hoped that a working party will be put together to tackle the issue of the blocked ditch, Cllr Lock will lead on this and will contact Steven Woodward to ask for assistance and advice. The Clerk and Cllrs Clarke and Lock will continue to investigate land ownership. The Clerk has arranged a free trial of some mapping software to assist with this, however it may be that we need some further information from the land Registry, which will carry a small fee.

Action Cllrs Lock/Clarke/Clerk

8.2 Cllr Francis: - To include any update on:

8.2.1 Community Development.

8.2.2 New residents.

Cllr Francis will keep an eye on the newly sold property in Crown Lane and provide a new residents letter when the new people move in. The Clerk and Cllr Francis will do some work on the current welcome letter.

Action Cllr Francis/Clerk

Cllr Francis is liaising with Chris Flood about setting up a separate Facebook pages for the Community and the Parish Council.

Action Cllr Francis

Cllr Francis is still waiting for a response from Suffolk Libraries regarding her query about making hearing aid batteries available on the mobile service.

8.2.3 Highways Community Self-Help training Session.

Cllrs Lock and Francis both attended the above training session. Completion of this means that the Parish Council will be covered by Suffolk County Councils insurance, if, under supervision of either Cllrs Lock or Francis, works are carried out on the highways. This does not cover works on the carriageway but relates to works on the public highways, including footpaths, verges etc. We are very grateful to both the Councillors for undertaking this training.

8.3 Cllr Lock: - To include any update on:

8.3.1 Playing Field "Task and Finish" group, to include contact information.

The Clerk has made contact with the trustees, and they have confirmed that they would like to receive the grant from the Parish Council for the grass cutting. They were not sure of the exact amount but would confirm this as soon as they have it. The Clerk suggested that they might want to explore alternative arrangements for the grass cutting. This is a suggestion she will make to them for consideration. Following the discussion at the last meeting the Clerk has written to ask about the Trustees position regarding dogs on the field. This matter had been discussed previously, and they had agreed that dogs should not be allowed on the field. They would support any initiative that would enforce this.

Following on from the discussion in the public forum, regarding registering the playing field in the name of the Charity Commission, rather than an individual, it was agreed that as part of the process to regularise the legal status of the Playing Field land, The councillors requested the Clerk to submit a completed Land Registry form (AP1). This will enable the name on the Title Deed to be changed to that of the Official Custodian of the Charity Commission. Additionally, the councillors authorised the Clerk to represent the Council in front of a Notary Public, in order that her identity could be legally verified in order to comply with the rules of the Land Registry. There are likely to be some fees associated with this work. It was proposed to allow an amount of up to £500 in the first instance to avoid any delay in progressing the matter. All the Councillors were in agreement with this suggestion. Cllr Smith would share some information with the Parish Council, regarding a recommendation for a notary he had used previously, at a very reasonable cost.

9. Clerk's Report

9.1 To note attendance and receive any feedback from:

SCC Winter Maintenance forum. It was noted that SCC Highways look at road temperatures, not air temperatures to decide when to grit. Roads can often be a lower temperature than the air and this is why you sometimes see the gritters out, but the weather forecast is not predicting freezing weather. It was further noted that SCC grit all A and B roads and in addition roads that support a 5 day a week bus services where practicable.

SALC Sole Trustee training.

This was a very helpful and informative training. It may prove useful if we ever find ourselves in the position of having to have to take over from a charity in the future.

9.2 Village Hall contact information.

The Clerk has been in contact with the Village Hall committee to ask for clarity regarding booking etc. Jackie Hargreaves provided some helpful information. She confirmed that Maureen Blake is their Treasurer and therefore handles the accounts. Roger Blake is the person to contact for Hall bookings and they currently do not have a Chair. In addition, she reported that they do not have access to the Wi-Fi anymore, they found that it was an expense they could do without as demand wasn't there. The Clerk thanked Jackie Hargreaves for this information.

9.3 To discuss updating of Community Emergency Plan.

The Clerk has been contacted by the new Emergency Planning Officer for West Suffolk, Tarik Foley. The plan needs to be updated. Cllr Francis will do some work on this. **Action Cllr Francis**

9.4 to discuss changes to agenda format.

The Clerk would like to change the format of the agenda slightly. She is recommending the removal of Cllr names and just using the headings for various areas of discussion. This should help to streamline the document moving forward. The councillors were supportive of this idea.

10. Finance

10.1 To approve/note payments/receipts.

The Following accounts were approved for payment:

Description	Supplier / customer	Total
Expenses	Vicki Gay	£86.32
Village Hall Car park lease 2024	Amy Mann	£150.00
Administration	various	£968.00
The Swan public meeting	Coney Weston village Hall	£7.50
PC meeting hall hire	Coney Weston village Hall	£10.00
Accounts software	Mijan EasyPC Accounts	£32.50
Sole Trustee training	SALC	£42.00
Payroll services 30 Sept 2024	SALC	£46.80

Cllr Francis carried out the additional accounts checks at the meeting.

10.2 Bank reconciliation and accounts update.

The Clerk provided the Councillors with a schedule of payments, a bank reconciliation, and a budget report for information.

10.3 Budget to confirm items to be included in the 2025/26 budget, including request from St Mary's Church and precept request for submission to WSDC.

The Councillors held a working party meeting to discuss the budget and the associated Precept request. The Clerk has calculated that by the end of the financial year (31st March 2025), the Council would have approximately 12 months' worth of running costs in reserves.

It is recommended that Local councils maintain reserves to cover unexpected expenses and avoid running out of funds before the year ends. It is generally recommended that councils hold reserves equivalent to 3–12 months of expenditure. Given Coney Weston's smaller size and limited budget, it is advised to maintain 12 months' reserves to safeguard against unforeseen costs.

A Precept request of £12,603 is being proposed. This represents a 19.80% increase, equating to an additional £12.32 per year, just over £1 a month for a Band D property. This amount includes approximately £2,000 for contingencies and to support local groups.

A request for assistance with Churchyard maintenance has been received, and it was agreed to allocate £1000 towards these costs. This would leave approximately £1,000 to help support other village groups or to cover unexpected expenditure. For instance, the fees potentially involved in registering the playing field name with a corporate body, rather than that of an individual as discussed under item 8.3.1. The budget and associated precept request was agreed by all the Councillors. The Clerk will arrange for the request to be submitted to West Suffolk Council.

Action Clerk

11. Speed Indicator Device (SID)

11.1 To receive latest speed data.

There has been an issue with the battery, which Cllr Lock has addressed now.

11.2 To receive update on receipt of new device.

The new device has been ordered, and the Clerk has been chasing for a delivery date.

12. Planning. (to include any applications/decisions received since the agenda was posted).

No application received.

13. The Swan Pub (currently closed)

13.1 To confirm successful extension of moratorium period to 30th March and receive any update on current situation.

Local resident Ron Martin was leading the Community Interest Group (CIG). He carried out a poll in the village but unfortunately there was not enough interest, either financially or through practical measures, to make the project viable. This means that the CIG will no longer be pursuing this project. The Clerk will contact West Suffolk Council and the owner of the pub to update them of this.

Action Clerk

14. Correspondence for consideration/Information

14.1 SCC, loft installation offer. (circulated)

14.2 WSDC Suffolk Community Foundation Surviving Winter Campaign. (circulated)

15. Items for Future Agenda

None received.

16. To receive resignation of position of Parish Council Chair, from Cllr Clarke.

16.1 To elect new Parish Council Chair.

Cllr Clarke has taken the decision to stand down as Chair to the Parish Council. He intends to remain on the Council as a Councillor. After discussion Cllr Lock, following a nomination by Cllr Francis, accepted the position of Chair. This was agreed by all. It was further agreed that we would have a rolling Chair, with the Chair, for the following period being elected at the end of the meeting. The Councillors thanked Cllr Clarke for his hard work and dedication to the role.

17. Date of next meeting: - Thursday 6th March 2025 7pm at Coney Weston Village Hall.

18. To consider the exclusion of the public and press in the public interest for consideration of the following items:

18.1 Personnel Issues. None

18.2 Legal Issues. None.

