

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 3 JULY 2025 AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Parish Councillors: Cllr B Francis, Cllr M Lock, Cllr P Clarke, Cllr P Sullivan and Cllr P Hines.
Cllr Joanna Spicer (Suffolk County Council Councillor).

L Hibbert (Clerk).

4 members of the public.

Cllr Francis opened the meeting at 7pm. She announced that the meeting would be recorded. No objections were received.

1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1. Apologies were received and accepted by the Councillors from Councillor Andrew Smith (West Suffolk Council).

2. Co-option of new Parish Councillor

- 2.1. None

3. Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

- 3.1. To receive disclosures of personal and prejudicial interests from Councillors on matters to be considered at the meeting.

Cllr Clarke declared an interest in any issue relating to the Bowls Club of which he is a member, should the Bowls Club arise (although the Bowls Club is not on the agenda).

- 3.2. To consider any applications for dispensations in relation to declared pecuniary interests:
None received.

4. Meeting open to the public

- 4.1. It is requested that this item not exceed 15 minutes and that no member of the public speak for more than 3 minutes.

- 4.2. A resident made representations in respect of the Village Volunteers Group and, in particular, the upcoming Coney Weston Open Gardens day on Saturday, 12 July. The resident commented that there were brambles overgrowing on to the footpath on Thetford Road which could be a danger to members of the public walking between the gardens. In addition, the Village triangle (where the Village sign is located) and the area opposite the telephone exchange did not look like they were being looked after. Would volunteers be doing anything about this and, if so, could they do this in the next week before the Open Gardens day?

Cllr Clarke commented that volunteer days had previously been held but there had been indifferent support. Some villages volunteer to take on particular duties eg litter collecting. Cllr Francis said that she would hedge trim the bend on the Thetford Road where the brambles had overgrown. The farmer could be invited to clear the ditch and Cllr Francis proposed that he be written to in this regard. **ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS AND CLERK**

As regards the Village triangle, Cllr Francis noted that this is no longer on WSC's grass cutting schedule. Cllr Francis will contact WSC to be cut and also the areas in front of the Telephone pole at the Village triangle. Paddock Farm is on the schedule.

Cllr Spicer suggested the point be raised with West Suffolk Cllr Smith. The Triangle is Highways Agency land. They have a contract with WSC so whether the triangle is within the ambit of that contract could be checked. **ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS AND CLERK**

Cllr Francis informed the meeting that the flowers in the Village triangle had been replaced in the last 2 days but needed watering. Bren will contact the relevant volunteer to water the flowers. **ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS**

5. Report from Suffolk County Councillor Joanna Spicer

5.1. Cllr Spicer reported that there had been a lot of activity around bus routes 73 and, in particular, 73A. There would be significant changes in the timetable from September (the impetus coming from the villages). In this regard, Cllr Spicer recorded her thanks to the Chair of Barningham Parish Council who had been verifying the timing of the bus journey times very regularly.

Funding from WSC for the bus routes had been secured until the end of next year. It would be difficult to ask for a longer period in case the service is not used. Barningham Parish Council will lead a publicity campaign in September/October and will be asking for contributions to the costs of flyers, posters, taster trips etc from the Parish Councils for villages which also benefit from the bus services.

Cllr Clarke commented that a flyer drop may be useful before the amended service begins in September because the bus service will be withdrawn if it isn't used. The 73A is a school bus so there is a good case to keep it. The 73A currently only goes to Thurston so people have to change bus if they want to get to Bury, or use the 73.

Cllr Clarke reported that another Parish Council had suggested that there may be grant funding available for a new bus shelter. Cllr Clarke and Cllr Francis had looked at the area in front of The Swan as a possible site. However, they were of the view that it was not practical. It is on a bend and The Swan will have a front garden when it is converted into a residence leaving only 1 metre between the garden and the road. The bus currently stops on demand.

Cllr Spicer commented that bus shelters come in plastic/glass and can be an eyesore as well as at risk of vandalism. They mustn't obstruct visibility or pathways. If a bus shelter is grant funded, Cllr Spicer believes it will belong to the Parish Council which will then have to pay for its maintenance. Cllr Spicer concluded that there is no urgency in this, the funding won't be lost. If any realistic proposals are made for a new bus stop, these can be considered.

Cllr Spicer had sought an update on flooding. She had received an e mail from the Flood Investigations office at SCC Highways today which she read out as follows:

Further to your request for an update on the Section 19 flood investigation undertaken in 2021 for the Coney Weston area. As part of the investigation, a number of actions were recommended for the relevant Risk Management Authorities.

We understand that Anglian Water has completed the actions assigned to them. Suffolk Highways have a scheme that is in development, although complicated due to the topography in the area. There are third-party negotiations currently in progress. Highways have a well developed design and the funding is in place if legal agreements can be obtained.

Other than the flooding reported during Storm Babet, we have not received reports of any other significant internal flooding within Coney Weston. We therefore believe that the actions taken to date have mitigated a large proportion of the flood risk in the area.

Kind regards,

The messaging is that the funding is in place, SCC have a scheme and Coney Weston is on the radar but urgency appears lacking.

Cllr Lock read out an e mail he had received yesterday from Suffolk Highways in respect of the same issue, as follows:

I am sorry there isn't any positive update yet. The designs are complete, but the legal formalities are not sorted yet. I have to hold my hands up and say that it was at our end not the landowners. Things are moving again and I can't see any reason why we cant get the agreements sorted out, but with legal issues its always unknown how long. Operations team can't plan in the construction dates until we have the agreements in place.

As such, the hold up at present is with SCC, not the landowners. In response to a question from Cllr Francis about the nature of the legal issue that is delaying matters, Cllr Lock said that he understood it was a wayleave for a pipe. Cllr Spicer will follow up with the relevant people at Suffolk Highways in respect of the e mail Cllr Lock has received. Cllr Lock has told Suffolk Highways about the residents' frustrations with the delay.

Cllr Spicer reported that the patching work on the A143 between Ixworth and Stanton had been finished in April but the final dressing work such as reinstating the cats eyes had not been completed. The reason is the diversions off the A14 which had been disruptive.

Cllr Spicer reported on the Masterplan published by Jaynic Properties for the land at Shepherd's Grove, Hepworth and Stanton as part of the strategic employment area allocation (the 'Masterplan'). It is a masterplan at this stage, not a planning application. She has not got the document in hard copy yet and it is large so her ability to provide an update at this stage is limited.

The previous planning application had been approved by the local authority officers at WSC but rejected by the Councillors for concerns over traffic. Cllr Spicer had supported the proposal because of the proposed relief road for Stanton.

The application is for lots of small businesses so regulating traffic would not be possible. It is possible to regulate large delivery vehicle traffic to large businesses where the route in and route out can be designated. Some sort of development of the area is going to happen. The site is an old airfield and has been designated for business use for many years, and already has mixed businesses on it.

Cllr Clarke commented that the Masterplan says it will focus on offices, research and development and distribution for example. The Masterplan won't include a public house or residential properties so is very different to the previous application. Cllr Clarke will speak to the Parish Councils at Hepworth, Stanton and Barningham to understand their views. The Parish Council will then put a response into the Consultation. The Consultation finishes on 12 August. **ACTION: CLLR CLARKE**

The link to the Consultation will be put on the Parish Council website and Facebook page.
ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

Cllr Spicer reported on the issues caused by the fire at Bardwell in the context of the road closure. If it is possible to shore up the houses, the road could be re-opened. However, the houses will have to be repaired/re-built at some stage which will involve the road being closed again.

Cllr Spicer concluded her report at this stage and left the meeting.

6. Report from West Suffolk District Councillor Andrew Smith

6.1. Cllr Smith had given his apologies so there was no report.

7. Election of Vice Chair

7.1. The Councillors agreed that it would be helpful to appoint a Vice Chair of the Council for when the Chair is unable to attend all or part of a meeting.

7.2. Cllr Clarke proposed that Cllr Lock be appointed to the position. Cllr Hines seconded the proposal. Cllr Lock having agreed to accept the role, it was unanimously RESOLVED that Cllr Lock be appointed as Vice Chair of the Council. The Clerk will update the Council's website accordingly. **ACTION: CLERK**

8. Reports

8.1. The Clerk's report (circulated in advance of the meeting) was received.

9. Minutes

9.1. The draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council on Thursday, 1 May 2025 were considered. It was proposed by Cllr Lock that they be approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Clarke. The Cllrs (excluding Cllr Hines who had not attended the meeting on 3 May) RESOLVED that the draft Minutes of the meeting be approved as a true and accurate record.

9.2. The draft Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday, 24 June 2025 were considered. It was proposed by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Francis that the draft be approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The Councillors (other than Cllr Sullivan who had not been at the meeting) RESOLVED that the draft Minutes be approved as a true and accurate record.

10. Councillor's Reports

The Masterplan

- 10.1. Cllr Clarke recorded that the issues he wished to report on in respect of the Masterplan had all been dealt with during the discussion as part of SCC Cllr Spicer's report.

Defibrillator

- 10.2. Cllr Clarke reported that the defibrillator is registered with The Circuit (the organisation that keeps an up to date list of defibrillators and ensures they are registered with Ambulance Centre). The planned overnight power cut next week would impact only the defibrillator cabinet, not the defibrillator itself.
- 10.3. Cllr Clarke reported on the application to the Land Registry in respect of the playing field. It may be possible for the Land Registry to expedite the application because it relates to a children's playground. In response to a question from a member of the public, it was recorded that there was no other update and there had been no communication from the trustees. Cllr Francis confirmed that the playground is not the responsibility of the Parish Council. Cllr Clarke confirmed that the Land Registry is currently inundated with applications. In the meantime, the Land Registry has written to the Clerk in terms that they were missing the Vesting Order and needed this to progress the application. The Clerk confirmed he was dealing with this. **ACTION: CLERK**

Drainage/Highways

- 10.4. Cllr Lock – see 5.1 above.

Speed Indicator Device

- 10.5. Cllr Lock reported no update on the Speed Indicator Device itself. However, the Village Hall committee had asked the Council to desist from charging the device at the Village Hall because they perceived it to be a fire risk. In response, Cllr Lock is now charging the device at his house. He will review the position regarding any fire risk and also speak to Hepworth and Barningham Parish Councils about where they charge their devices. **ACTION: CLLR LOCK**

Facebook

- 10.6. Cllr Francis reported that the last Speed Indicator Device statistics that had been posted on Facebook had been viewed 265 times. She had also checked how many people had looked at the Parish Council and Community pages. This showed 1089 visits to the Community page in the period 4 May to 4 June, rising to approximately 2,000 visits in the period 5 June to 2 July indicating more people were now visiting the Community page.

A link to the Community page will be put on the website. **ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS**

New residents

- 10.7. Cllr Clarke reported that a new resident in the village had received the new resident's letter and the parish news.

11. Approval of the Letter of Engagement of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils for the audit 2025

- 11.1. As set out in the Clerk's report, the SALC internal audit of the Council dated 9 April 2025 for the year 2024-2025 had identified that the Council had not formally approved SALC's Letter of Engagement for the audit.

To remedy this, Cllr Lock proposed, seconded by Cllr Clarke that the Letter of Engagement be approved by the Council. It was unanimously RESOLVED that the Letter of Engagement is approved and that the Clerk inform SALC accordingly. **ACTION: CLERK**

12. Correspondence for information and items for future agenda

- 12.1. The Masterplan had been discussed earlier in the meeting.
- 12.2. An update on the Council's banking arrangements will be given at the next Council meeting.
- 12.3. A review of the Council's policies and procedures will commence.

13. Finance

- 13.1. The Council received the Budget Report, Bank Reconciliation, Schedule of Payments and Invoices for Payment from the Clerk.
- 13.2. The additional accounts check, including against the bank statement, was undertaken by Cllr Lock at the meeting. Having done so, Cllr Lock and Cllr Francis approved the following payments:

<u>Supplier</u>	<u>£</u>
Village Hall (hire for Extraordinary Meeting on 24 June 2025)	£16
Vertas (playground grass cut for April 2025)	£144.95
Vertas (playground grass cut for May 2025)	£144.95
Vertas (playground grass cut for June 2025)	£144.95
Suffolk Association of Local Councils (Clerk's Training)	£118.80
Administration Costs	£1,492.03

- 13.3. It was noted that Lloyds Bank is now charging a small monthly fee. Alternative banking arrangements, including the possibility of earning interest on funds are being investigated. In the meantime, the possibility of putting some funds on some sort of interest bearing deposit with Lloyds was suggested by Cllr Lock. **ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS AND CLERK**

14. Date of Next Meeting

- 14.1. The date of the next meeting of the Parish Council is Thursday, 11 September at 7pm at Coney Weston Village Hall.

15. Exclusion of the Public and Press

15.1. The meeting was closed to the public and press to consider Personnel Issues.

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Councillor Bren Francis
Chair