

NEEDHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the virtual meeting of the NEEDHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL held on Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 7:30pm.

Present: Cllr JE Lea (In the Chair), Councillors: BE Annis, R Darnell, J Kett, I Mason, MG Norris, M O'Shea, M Ost, S Phillips*, L Rix, X Stansfield and P Wright.

Apologies for Absence:

Cllr J Reardon – Work Commitment

Suffolk County Councillor Kay Oakes (Unwell)

In Attendance: Mid Suffolk District Councillors Mike Norris and Steve Phillips, the Town Clerk.

C022/21 To confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 17th February 2021.

The Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held Wednesday 17th February 2021 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

C023/21 To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest for Matters on the Agenda.

Cllr BE Annis – Accounts for Payment (Community Centre)

Cllr I Mason – Agenda Item 8

Cllr MG Norris – Planning Matters

Cllr X Stansfield – Accounts for Payment (Community Centre)

C024/21 To receive reports from the County Councillor, District Councillors and to take questions from members of the public.

Suffolk County Councillor Kay Oakes had provided a report, which was circulated to Councillors, and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book. The report headlines were:

- Automatic Number Plate Recognition to help improve visits to Suffolk's recycling centres.
- Unique Suffolk project to save up to 600,000 tonnes of water each year.
- Suffolk County Council increases budget to support most vulnerable residents and county's recovery from Covid-19.
- Highways doubles drainage budget following £27.2m announcement.
- 16 new COVID-19 rapid testing centres to open in Suffolk.
- Suffolk County Council's cabinet confirms its support for Freeport East.

District Councillor Mike Norris referred to the following District Councillors' report which had been circulated to Councillors, and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book:

Covid-19 Community Testing: 1 in 3 people who have Covid-19 do not have symptoms and may be unwittingly spreading the virus to other people without knowing. To tackle this, Suffolk has introduced community testing (also known as lateral flow testing or rapid testing) for those who are unable to work from home. A number of community testing centres have recently opened across Mid Suffolk, including sites in Stowmarket, Elmswell and Needham Market. To find out more, or to make an appointment go to [the Suffolk County Council website](#).

Covid support grants for businesses: There are several business support grants available which cover different local and national lockdown periods. For businesses mandated to close (including those in retail, leisure and hospitality) that have applied and received a lockdown grant since November 2020, MSDC's plan is to automatically pay additional grants following pre-payment checks. However, for businesses that may be eligible but have not heard from MSDC, or are yet to apply for any grants, they are encouraged to find out more and to submit an application form as soon as possible. Further information about all the covid business support grants can be found on MSDC's [grant funding schemes webpage](#)

Councils pledge to provide further financial support for struggling households: Thousands of households across Mid Suffolk will be eligible for a reduction in their council tax bill after councillors approved further support for residents facing financial difficulties due to Covid-19. More details are available on the Mid Suffolk District Council website.

Councils confirm support for Freeport East: Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils have confirmed their support for Freeport East. The bid, which includes Gateway 14 in Stowmarket, has been formally submitted to Government by Hutchinson Ports.

An extra £3m for warmer, greener Suffolk homes: More Suffolk residents, including those in Mid Suffolk, are set to benefit from Government Green Homes Grants thanks to a further successful bid for £3m funding by a Suffolk consortium of local authorities.

Census 2021: All households across Mid Suffolk should have received a letter containing their household access code and are asked to take part in Census 2021 this Sunday 21st March 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter. The census, run by the Office for National Statistics, is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales, and provides information to help plan services such as transport, education and healthcare. It has been carried out every ten years since 1801, with the exception of 1941, and can be completed online via www.census.gov.uk.

Plug in Suffolk: Plug in Suffolk is now providing grants for the installation of Electric Vehicle charging points at non-profit locations such as community centres, parish council car parks and village halls. Visit [Green Suffolk's website](#) or contact Suffolk County Council's environment strategy officer [Peter Frost](#) to find out more about the funding.

Postponement of the Women's Tour: The Women's Tour, the international cycle race originally scheduled to finish in Suffolk on 12 June 2021, has been postponed due to COVID-19. Organisers, Sweetspot Group, have requested alternate race dates of Monday 4 to Saturday 9 October from the sport's governing body. Once new dates are confirmed, MSDC will begin their community activity and work with local schools and businesses to promote the tour coming to the district.

Mid Suffolk District Councillor Norris added the activities being undertaken at the School Street pond site continue to be monitored by the appropriate District Council Officers.

Cllr Annis asked whether the issue of potential electric car charging points in Needham Market has been raised by the District Council. Mid Suffolk District Councillor Norris said he will follow that point up.

Cllr Mason referred to the recent lowering of the clearance height allowed at the Coddham Road railway bridge and the impact the change had on vans etc.

C025/21 To receive a report of the activities of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on behalf of the Town.

There was no activity to report.

C026/21 To receive a report from the Needham Market Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Cllr O'Shea reiterated his earlier report that the Statutory Consultation required under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 was complete and Mid Suffolk District Council has collated responses received. It is hoped the process will move to independent examination, under Regulation 17 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, as quickly as possible.

C027/21 To receive an update on Council's proposed restructure.

The Clerk referred Councillors to documentation circulated prior to the meeting, that set out revised and substantially updated Standing Orders.

Councillors endorsed the updated Standing Orders for referral to Council's 21st April meeting for adoption alongside the Council's move to a new Committee structure.

C028/21 To consider the requirement of s.85 Local Government Act 1972 (6-month Rule for Councillors attendance at Council Meetings).

The Clerk referred Councillors to the terms of s.85 Local Government Act 1972.

Councillors acknowledged the provisions of s.85 Local Government Act 1972 and agreed the item should remain on Council's meeting agendas for the time being.

C029/21 Clerk's Report and Correspondence to be noted.

There was no report.

C030/21 SECTIONS

C030/21/1 Finance and Governance

C030/21/1a Accounts for Payment and Confirmation.

Cllr Annis presented the accounts for payment, which were tabled and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

Cllr Lea proposed adoption of the accounts. Cllr Mason seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

C030/21/1b To receive a report from the Section Leader.

Cllr Annis presented the following Notes from the meeting of the Finance & Governance Section held on Tuesday 9th March:

1. Apologies for absence None

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th January had been presented and adopted by the full meeting of the Town Council on 20th January 2021 (Minute No. C009/21/1b)

3. Consideration of the allocation of grants and donations for the year 2021/2022.

The Clerk outlined Council's policy on the distribution of grants/donations and referred to letters received from 3 charities (outside the core group identified in the policy) requesting support.

The meeting considered the Town Council accepted policy of maintaining the core recipients of grant funding and agreed it should be applied and to recommend the following grants:

Citizens Advice Bureaux £3,000

Community Minibus driver's wages £1,500

This would leave £2,710 from the agreed budget of £7,210 for available distribution as and when any further grant applications were received. The meeting was also reminded of the Council policy to prioritise grant aid to those organisations which immediately affect the local community and thereby declined the 3 requests received from national/regional charities.

4. A review of the Town Council Financial Management.

The current financial software package (Sage) was under review following a recommendation from the Internal Auditors to replace the system with a more appropriate package. There was a notable cost implication in doing this, and investigations were continuing to establish and ensure the Council is getting the full value from use of our existing system.

The end of the financial year was approaching and the year- end accounts were in the course of preparation.

The necessary details of the implementation of on-line banking for the Town Council were proceeding.

5.A Review of the Town Council's Risk Assessment.

The current Risk Assessment is satisfactory and this item will be an agenda item for a future F and G meeting.

6. To receive an up-date on the re-structuring of the Town Council's Governance

The Town Clerk was currently working on a revision of the Town Council Standing Orders. This revision will indicate how the proposed new structure of the Town Council can be implemented. A

draft copy of the revised Standing Orders will be circulated to all councillors for their comments, and it is hoped that it can be an agenda item for the next Town Council meeting.

7. Employment Committee Report

There were no particular items for discussion, but it was noted that once the new Governance Framework was adopted, the Employment Committee would meet to assess the impact on its office staff.

8. Consideration of Financial matters raised by Section Leaders.

Town Property. Councillor Lea reported that work on the Barretts Lane Toilets had re-started and a contractor had been appointed. The cost of this work was within the existing budget. Although the Christmas trees remained in place, arrangements for their removal were in hand once the Covid restrictions were eased. The Town Property budget had covered the cost of the Barking Road bench replacement.

Recreation and Sport Councillor Phillips reported that the various projects proposed for Crowley Park which included the skateboard park, the revised play area, the outside gym equipment and the Barretts Lane fencing were all items which would be financially funded by external grants and/or by S 106 money. He suggested however that the installation of the outside gym might be undertaken sooner rather than later, using existing Sports and Recreation Section funds.

The refurbishment of the Playing Field Pavilion which had been undertaken by the Football Club was nearing completion with the cost being covered by grants from the Football Foundation and with minimum cost to the Town Council.

Highways and Lighting Councillor Norris expressed his thanks to County Councillor Oakes for her support of the project to re-paint the bridge railings on the Stowmarket Road, albeit that the cost appeared to be extremely high. He pointed out the high cost and impracticality of revising the time limits of the on-street parking in the Town.

Newsletter and Communications. Councillor Phillips reported that an April edition of the Newsletter was in the course of preparation. The Assistant Town Clerk was in contact with the advertisers and with the printers and contributors, and although it might be somewhat reduced in content, it will be published. Because of the decision to waive the advertising charges during the pandemic there will be a cost implication on the newsletter budget. The local distributors had been contacted and were agreeable to distribute the April edition. He expressed thanks to them.

Planning Councillor O'Shea sought assurance that our Planning Consultant had been paid and expressed his thanks for the excellent work she had done in her report regarding the Barking Road Planning Application. He highlighted the cost implication of a possible planning application in respect of land at the end of School Street.

9. A Report from the Civic Events Working Group.

Councillor Phillips gave an update on Operation London Bridge. He acknowledged the importance of the Council keeping abreast of the situation.

10. Any Other Business

No matters raised.

11. Date, location and timing of the next F and G meeting.

It was agreed that although it would normally be arranged in June, in view of the possibility of the earlier introduction of the re-structuring of the Council, it will be called as and when required

Cllr Annis proposed Council adopt the Notes. Cllr Rix seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

C030/21/2 Recreation & Sport

C030/21/2a To receive a report from the Section Leader.

Cllr Phillips reported he will be in touch with his Section members prior to the final combined Council Sections meeting being held on 14th April.

C030/21/3 Town Property and Services

C030/21/3a To receive a report from the Section Leader.

Cllr Lea reported:

- The works to allow operational use of the new Barretts Lane toilets are underway.
- The cost of repair of Town Council owned fencing on the Jubilee Crescent development is to be claimed from the insurers of the vehicle driver who caused the damage.

- An electrical lead hanging from one of the High Street Christmas trees carries no current and is sufficiently high not to create a risk to the public.

Cllr Lea added a request for a dog waste bin in the Hill House Lane area has been received and confirmed; the Council does not provide dog waste bins but allows for the disposal of wrapped dog waste in the many litter bins located across the town and, each bin incurs an increasing annual cost to the Town Council for its emptying by Mid Suffolk District Council.

Cllr Lea proposed the consideration of providing additional bins be taken after the Council has adopted and is operating under its proposed new committee structure. Cllr Mason seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

C030/21/4 Newsletter and Communications

C030/21/4a To receive a report from the Section Leader

Cllr Phillips reported the production of an April edition of the Needham Market Newsletter is on track.

C030/21/5 Planning

Cllr O'Shea confirmed he continues to manage, in consultation with Planning Section Members, planning notices received. He presented his report that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

C030/21/5a Planning Decisions and other Notices received

Cllr O'Shea reported the following Decision Notices had been received:

DC/21/00023 74A High Street. Change of use from commercial to residential. Planning Permission Granted.

SN/20/00533 Former Car Park Site, Hurstlea Road. Proposed street name Horsepond Place being processed by MSDC with the developer and Royal Mail.

C030/21/5b Planning Applications Received

Cllr O'Shea reported the following Planning Applications and Planning Notices had been received:

SN/20/00549/SN Street name request for new housing on the Former Middle School site. "Teachers Close" submitted to the District Council for consideration.

SCC/0003/21MS/VOC Debtrac Centre, Ipswich Road. Current use is for waste management and application proposes extending the site working hours. The Town Council submitted a response asking that a trial period of 3-6 months be allowed to see what impact it made on the nearby housing. If MSDC cannot give such a limited consent, then the Town Council objects.

Cllr Lea referred to the fact the original planning application for use of the Debtrac Centre for Waste Management purposes was granted on a temporary basis. Cllr Norris agreed to look back at the District Council's planning records to confirm the status of the original approval.

DC/21/01252 2 New Houses, Hill House Lane. This site is where the very last building (agricultural) on the N side of the lane is located. It is directly opposite an area of land which enjoys planning permission for a housing development, albeit won on an Appeal. This implies that Mid Suffolk District Council objected to that development proposal, meaning that they *may* not be supporting this application either. On the site of the current application is a comparatively new agricultural building. The Planning Section has yet to conclude its consideration of the application. The deadline for commenting to MSDC is 24th March.

Cllr Lea proposed a resolution on Council's response to the application be delegated to the Planning Section. Cllr Mason seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

DC/21/01010 45 Steggall Close. Proposed single storey extension to existing house. A response supporting the application had been submitted.

DC/21/00487 Land off A14 slip road. Proposed site for teaching construction and agricultural work. There is a clear view of the whole site from the riverside and the proposals will inevitably involve machinery and plant. The Section believes that another site more suitable for this type of use should be sought and an objection to the application has been submitted.

C030/21/5c Planning Report.

Cllr O'Shea suggested Council should try and get on the front foot in anticipating a planning application being registered for development of the pond area off School Street. He and the Planning Section are to draw together material that will be relevant should a planning proposal consultation be received.

Cllr O'Shea reported the Planning Section will continue to manage its consideration of planning matters, as it has done during the COVID-19 period, until further notice.

C030/21/6 Highways, Lighting and Footpaths.

C030/21/6a To receive a report from the Section Leader.

Cllr Norris referred to numerous local road closures, details of which he had forwarded to Councillors. A request for an additional grit bin to be located on a new housing development in the town had been received, which would be discussed alongside a review of the entire stock of grit bins, later in the year.

Cllr Mason reported on large vehicles turning into The Causeway from the High Street and then getting into great difficulty if they needed then to access School Street. Cllr Norris replied signage to deter drivers of large vehicles using that route has been recommended to Suffolk County Council Highways and he would follow it up with a further report.

C031/21 Questions under Standing Order 40.

There were no questions.

The Meeting closed at 8:38pm.

Chairman Date

*Due to technical problems Cllr Phillips did not join the meeting until 7:55pm. Cllr Lea stayed in the Chair throughout the meeting.