

# Flempton cum Hengrave Parish Council

## Draft Minutes from Parish Council Meeting

Monday 13 January 2025, 1830, at Brookes School, Flempton Road, IP28 6QJ.

These draft minutes will be approved at the Parish Council Meeting on 10 March 2025.

**Present: Cllrs Janet Davies (Chair) and Jean Lindsay, Ken Borrow, Gill Martin, David Hudson, District Cllr Susan Glossop, County Cllr Rebecca Hopfensperger**

### Agenda Items

1. Chairman's welcome, opening remarks and to receive apologies for absence

Cllr Davies wished everyone a happy new year and welcomed them to the meeting. Cllr Davies confirmed that Justin Hook, Parish Clerk, had tendered his resignation on November 22<sup>nd</sup> prior to the end of his probationary period thus requiring only a week's notice. Cllr Davies and Cllr Hudson accepted all Parish Council files and electronic documents from him on Nov 27th. Cllr Martin agreed to minute the meeting. Matters relating to the recruitment of a new Clerk were tabled for item 7 of the agenda. Cllr Davies advised that the website had been extensively updated to include information to support the recruitment of new Cllrs and where to report items such as potholes and find new bus timetables.

**Apologies received: Dave Bambury.**

2. (i) To receive members Declarations of Interests. **None received**

(ii) Council to consider any new written requests for dispensation and/or requests, which have been received. **None received.**

3. To approve minutes from the Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**Council resolved to approve and adopt the minutes. The Chair signed them.**

4. To receive County Councilor's report from Cllr. Hopfensperger.

**Local Government Re-organisation/Devolution:** Following the Full Council meeting and the cabinet meeting Cllrs decided that Suffolk should be fast tracked for devolution and local government reorganisation. Following an invitation from ministers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet had agreed to recommend Suffolk for inclusion in the government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), which would see the creation of a directly elected Mayor (likely covering Suffolk and Norfolk) and the replacement of existing council structures with a streamlined unitary council being set up. They recommended that elections should be postponed until next year due to allow time and focus for the development of a transition plan. There was also reference to the planning process changing and that Parish Councils might no longer have involvement as consultees.

The Parish Council responded that any savings and efficiencies from the reorganisation should demonstrably deliver better services and investment in the county and infrastructure as such reorganisations are prone to promising much and delivering little in improvements. The Parish Council also made it clear that not having the ability to consult on planning applications would be perceived as a significant blow to local democracy by the community.

**The Links:** Cllr Hopfensperger confirmed that she had submitted the service request to enable SCC to restore the grassed area and install a barrier and planters to deal with the illegal parking issues.

**Contribution to village gates:** As the Parish Council had not yet secured the licences for the siting of the gates, it would be necessary to reapply for the funding in April.

5. To receive District Councillor's report from Cllr. Glossop.

**Contribution to village gates:** Cllr Glossop advised that as the gates for the villages had not been finalised during the previous year that the donated costs from her locality budget (£850) might also have to be returned and reapplied for in April.

**Almshouses:** Cllr Glossop had received a request for accommodation in one of the Almshouses but confirmed that there were currently no vacancies.

**Damaged flint wall in Flempton.** The wall which needs repairs due to the flints falling out is situated on the left-hand side of the A1101 just past the bus shelter going towards Bury St Edmunds. Cllr Glossop contacted James Waters twice and he has acknowledged the messages saying his mother will send out someone to carry out the repairs. The land belonged to Terry Waters who sadly died last year.

**Fire damaged cottages:** Cllr Glossop updated the council on the situation for both sets of fire damaged cottages.

The plots at both Mill Road and 3-6 are both still legally owned by the former residents.

The **Mill Road** residents have not found a buyer for the plot. One resident has not agreed to the sale of their cottage in the row which leaves the other owners unable to offer the plot for sale and redevelopment. This may need to be made subject to a legal challenge given the significant financial impact it has on the other owners.

The unsafe end wall of number 17 and the condition of the terrace generally has been reported to Richard Sill, Principal Building Control Inspector, who has responded that the owner at number 17 has shown willingness to take action and remove the danger. The two chimneys are an ongoing concern due to their height, hence they are attempting to get the owners to take action to make them safe. Due to the construction and the mutual support the two chimneys derive from each other, works need to be coordinated between the two owners so they are attempting to get them to organise this.

A prospective buyer has been identified for **3-6 Bury Road**, however, one resident still has not yet agreed to the sale which means that the buyer cannot progress the sale of the plot for redevelopment or submit designs for planning permission.

An inspector from Suffolk County Council has visited the site at number 5 after reports of a parking area having been installed and used for vehicles including a caravan had been reported. He confirmed that, were an application to be made for a dropped kerb there, it would not be approved given that it was situated on the bend in the road and therefore considered too dangerous. It is illegal to drive over a pavement without a dropped kerb.

There was a discussion regarding the continuing and unacceptable blight that both burnt out sites have on the local community over the past three years. Hengrave is a conservation area and both sites have a significant impact on the appearance of the village from the road. It affects the value and saleability of neighbouring properties, it has an impact on a significant local business such as Hengrave Hall and there are also increasingly serious environmental health and safety implications. The Harris fencing at 3-6 had recently fallen onto the pavement after bad weather and the foot anchors are obstructing the pavement. The chimney stack at number 5 looks increasingly precarious and is leaning in the direction of the A1101. Cllr Davies confirmed that rats had been

sighted in the gardens of 3-6 (likely due to chickens being kept in derelict property number 5) and also in the garden of a neighbouring property. The owners have recently been asked by the immediate neighbours to appoint a pest controller to survey the site and provide remedial actions and it has also been reported to West Suffolk Council by a member of the public. No assurances that it has been dealt with effectively have been received as yet.

**It was resolved that the Parish Council would officially write to all the owners** to remind them of their responsibilities for both the safety of the buildings and those covered by the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. Under this legislation owners and occupiers have a responsibility to keep their land free from rats. The council may serve on owners and occupiers of land a notice under the above legislation requiring them to undertake, within such a reasonable period as may be specified, such reasonable steps for keeping their land free from rats.

6. Public open session up to 15 minutes - questions and issues on matters arising from the agenda and from the villages. There were no members of the public in attendance.
7. To receive updates from Councillors on the following matters:
  - a. Resignation of Clerk and recruitment plans:  
The role is being advertised via SALC as it was previously. Cllr Davies has assumed interim control of the Clerk's inbox to monitor correspondence and maintain the smooth running of the Parish Council until a new Clerk or a locum can be appointed.
  - b. Church meeting update:  
Allie, the vicar, has yet to set a date to meet with Cllr Davies. Mark Prina has completed a lot of work in the churchyard removing ivy from the walls and clearing the Commonwealth War Graves. There are tentative plans to host coffee mornings to hopefully integrate the church more firmly with the community.
  - c. Parking at The Links: Covered in Cllr Hopfensperger's report earlier in the minutes.
  - d. Pruning of trees on The Green due Jan 16<sup>th</sup>: Cllr Hudson advised that if the fallen apples were not removed by the tree surgeons, he would remove them.
  - e. Entrance gates to villages: Cllr Davies advised that the Clerk had not yet gained the license to erect this street furniture. This project will need to be re-started and funding applied for after April.
  - f. Hengrave Hall overhanging trees. Although previously assured the matter was 'in hand', a reminder had also been sent the previous week. There has been no further response. An officer from Suffolk County Council Highways had agreed to see if he could assist us when Cllrs met at The Links last autumn.
  - g. Bus stop, signs and timetables: Cllr Bambury has managed to get one timetable for Flempton. He is still trying to get one for Hengrave. The sign in Flempton is still ridiculously low and need raising. The former Clerk has raised it with the authorities.
  - h. Village newsletter/update: The Lark Valley Benefice magazine will now be published bi-monthly. Our former Clerk, Justin Hook, is the new Editor. Cllr Davies has been supplying copy on behalf of the Parish and will continue to do so. Cllr Davies has also updated the 'Useful Contacts' page on the website to reflect the suggestions that Cllr Borrow had previously put forward.
  - i. Repairs to time capsule on The Green: Cllr Davies advised this was now complete. A story and a photo are featured on the parish website.
  - j. Notice & information board on the Green. Cllr Hudson advised that Steve Brown would repair and restore as soon as the weather was acceptable.

- k. CityFibre Wayleave agreement and works relating the track around the Green. Document was signed and forwarded by Cllr Davies to CityFibre. CityFibre must restore the track to its original condition.

8. Finance update

- i. To consider and approve payment of the following accounts and outstanding invoices:

Payee & details	Total
Final pay – Justin Hook	£672.40
Final tax HMRC	£115.20
Email hosting invoice	£326.64
Key cutting, David Hudson	£16.00
Suffolk Cloud website hosting	£120.00
SC Brown repair for time capsule	£120.00
Total Payments	£1370.24

- ii. To receive bank balances correct to [31st December] (unless stated otherwise)

Current	£969.39
Savings	£20,422.63
Total	£21,392.02

- iii. Council approved invoices and bank reconciliation for December 2024

9. 2025/26 budget and precept

Precept form of £10,500 prepared by the Clerk was submitted by the Chairman and confirmed as received by Michelle Rolls, West Suffolk Council and accepted.

10. Internal Audit 2024/25

Council to note that the previous Clerk has instructed Vicky Waples to perform an internal audit. Cost circa £260, plus mileage as agreed at previous meeting. Further costings when a date is confirmed.

11. Planning

Council to discuss the following planning applications:

6, The Green, Flempton, single storey rear extension

DC/24/1747/FUL

DC/24/1747/LB

There were no objections.

12. Insurance update on volunteering cover and use of power tools.

Cllr Davies reported that the former Clerk had not had the opportunity to ascertain the situation at this time.

13. Flempton Pool Meadow to Flempton Bridge path creation -

Council to discuss proposal to create a footpath linking Flempton Pool Meadow to Flempton Bridge. Works quoted at £1225. Cllr Hudson said the land was owned by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and they were happy for it to go ahead.

The council resolved that as it hadn't been budgeted for, it would not be able to fund it at this time. Cllr Hudson agreed to pursue alternative funding options.

14. VAS equipment

Cllr Hudson to report on solar panel for Flempton VAS to avoid the need for battery changes as former Cllr Speed's staff will no longer be doing this for us. Cllr Hudson confirmed that our current equipment is compatible with a solar panel and the quote is £916.88 before 1 Feb when the price will be increased.

It was resolved that the Parish Council would retrofit the solar panel for the VAS in Flempton.

Action: Cllr Hudson.

15. War Memorial / Remembrance Garden

Action: Cllr Hudson will enquire about the cost to have the stonework cleaned and also enquire if we are eligible for a grant for improvement by creating a Remembrance Garden, with a bench, potential planting and the replacement of the metal cross on the War Memorial with a new stone cross. Potential cost £3-£4k.

16. Accreditation

Status update on Council to consider working towards an accreditation with the Local Councils Award Scheme by NALC.

It resolved that this item would go forward pending the appointment of a new Clerk.

17. Civility & Respect Pledge

Status update on Council to discuss working towards adopting the Civility & Respect pledge. See: <https://www.slcc.co.uk/news-publications/civility-respect-pledge/>.

It resolved that this item would go forward pending the appointment of a new Clerk.

18. Lithium-ion batteries

Status update on Council to discuss continuing support of both bills regarding lithium-ion battery safety. No further update required.

19. Grass cutting contract

Status update: The former Clerk had confirmed acceptance of the WSC quotation to cut the grass on the Triangle at an annual cost £418.01 for 8 scheduled cuts.

The Green at Flempton. Awaiting confirmation from Adam Rushworth for 2025 pricing.

Action: Cllr Hudson to contact him directly.

20. Correspondence

Letter from Nick Gilford at Grange Farm Barns relating to speed limits, the narrow footpath because of vegetation encroachment and anti-social behaviour near the bowling green.

It was resolved that quotes for contactors to clear the pavement would be sought.

It was resolved that Cllr Davies would respond to Mr Gilford regarding the background of the boundary speed limit and suggestions for making the entrance to Grange Farm more obvious to motorists. Anti-social behaviour needs to be reported to the police.

21. Date of next meeting

The next Meeting will be held on Monday March 10<sup>th</sup> 2025, commencing at 18:30,

Brookes School, Flempton Road, IP28 6QJ