

MINUTES

TATTINGSTONE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Monday 15 April 2024, 6.30pm held at Tattingstone Village Hall

PRESENT: Cllr A Mendel, S Keys (Parish Clerk), Parish Cllrs Hawes, Lee, Page, Plumbly, David Brown (Chair of Village Hall and Playing Field Committees), Rodney Chadburn (Tattingstone Good Neighbour Scheme) and 3 members of the public

CHAIRPERSON: Cllr A Mendel

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from District Councillor Daniel Potter, Jane Connell-Smith (WI), and Parish Cllrs Abbott, Clarke and Stennett.

2. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Cllr Mendel welcomed all present to the meeting.

3. PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

I was honoured to be elected last May as your Parish Council Chair.

I would like to take the opportunity to pay huge respect and gratitude to the outgoing chair of our Council at that time, David Wood. David served on Tattingstone Parish Council for over 40 years. He also became a District Councillor in 1998 and then a County Councillor in 2000 in addition to taking the Parish Council Chair 9 years ago.

Simultaneously he was the Chair of Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB for 21 years. Finally after over 20 years of campaigning, a large and extended part of the Shotley Peninsula, south of the Stour, is now with the AONB.

David's tireless work over many decades has made our village and the peninsula as a whole, a better place to live in. Thank you David.

So, in May last year we saw not only a new Chair but several new councillors notably Councillor Janice Lee, Councillor Russel Abbott, and Councillor Brandon Plumbly.

In terms of maintenance projects we have replaced the benches in the village with hard wearing and low maintenance ones which should keep their good looks with a good wash down every year. The wooden grit bins have also been replaced with resilient weather proof ones. These were all paid for via CIL funding.

Work should be recommencing shortly, weather permitting, on the refurbishment of the 3 bus shelters in the village.

After a brief gap, the Tattler has made a very welcome comeback under the auspices of Tattingstone Events. The Parish Council funded a grant of £500 to Tattingstone Events to facilitate the relaunch costs. Other donations or payments made included £500 to the 2024 fete, £800 to the Churchyard maintenance, playing field grass cutting and other small donations including £50 to the Royal British Legion.

The Neighbourhood Plan continues to be a work in progress. Work began on formulating a plan in early 2021 by a team of working party volunteers. In August 2021 there was the first open "drop-in" event to show villages what a Neighbourhood Plan was and what its purpose was. The four key topic areas are Housing, Natural Environment, Historic Environment and Services and Amenities. Then each household was hand delivered surveys including youth surveys for those aged between 11 and 15, to establish what they really valued about living in Tattingstone and what improvements they wanted to see. 265 surveys were returned from those aged 16 or over.

From those surveys the feedback was collected and analysed and views appraised. Other, more technical reports were commissioned and together with the feedback from community engagement form the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Following this, the Pre Submission Draft was presented to and approved by the Parish Council in December 2023. There followed another open drop-in event on 20th January this year to view the Draft, which was itself followed by invitations to comment further.

The next stage will be to draw all the feedback and comments together to establish what may require amendments or additions to accurately reflect villager's views. Then it will be submitted to Babergh District Council, further consultation will follow as will an independent Examination, then a Parish Referendum and back to Babergh to adopt the Plan.

Cllr Andrea Mendel
Chairman
Tattingstone Parish Council

4. COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Councillor Harley highlighted points from the following report provided by email:

Suffolk NSIPs

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are major infrastructure projects of national importance, and the majority of Suffolk's NSIPs are associated with the generation or transmission of electricity. The decision to allow an NSIP to proceed is made by the relevant Secretary of State, not councils, although the county council is a statutory consultee for many projects. There are a high number of projects in Suffolk currently, with more in the pipeline:

- Drax – a gas power plant on the former Eye Airfield
- East Anglia Three offshore windfarm is under construction
- Two new offshore windfarms, East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two, were approved by the Secretary of State in March 2022
- EDF began construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station in January 2024
- National Grid are proposing grid reinforcement works from Bramford to Twinstead, with a decision expected later this year
- National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury stretch of the 'Great Grid Upgrade' programme, a controversial pylon route through the middle of the county
- Sealink proposals for an undersea cabling route between Suffolk and Kent is due to see significant onshore infrastructure at Friston, near Aldeburgh
- LionLink (previously known as EuroLink) proposes undersea cabling to link the UK with the Netherlands, with landfall proposed either above or below the Blyth estuary
- Sunnica Solar Farm, a 2,500 acre proposed solar development for Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk, has still not been approved by the government, with a decision due in April
- A new 750 acre solar farm, White Elm, has been proposed for Mendlesham in Mid Suffolk, with consultation due to begin in the autumn

Flooding in Suffolk

From end of October 2023, Suffolk suffered a winter of repeated flooding, most notably Storm Babet, when Debenham, Framlingham and Needham were particularly badly affected.

Suffolk's total rainfall during October 2023 was 117.9mm (4.5in) which the Met Office report as being 90% more than the average expected rainfall for the month. The drainage systems in the county were unable to cope with the volume of water. Suffolk County Council have committed an extra £1m for flood investigations to try and prevent future incidents; where usually there are only three or four such investigations each year, for 2023 the number is likely to be near 100 investigations.

The government offered funding to household affected by flooding, with many also able to access further money for preventative works.

RAAC/Condition of School Buildings

In September the council held a scrutiny session on the condition of school buildings, which was very timely as the news has just begun reporting on the number of schools with RAAC, some of which had to delay the start of term or close buildings due to safety concerns. RAAC, which stands for Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete, is a lightweight building material, cheaper than concrete, which was used extensively in buildings between 1950 and 1990 but has a lifespan of 30 years. Nine schools in Suffolk reported they had RAAC onsite, out of around 230 nationally.

New Suffolk Fire and Rescue Control Centre

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have recommended that the council leave the current control centre partnership with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire councils and open a new control centre in Suffolk by the end of 2024. This would create significant extra cost, but it was agreed that it was necessary for the safety of Suffolk residents as the Fire Service had significant concerns about the running of the joint venture, particularly a new IT system which had been significantly delayed. A new temporary site for the control centre was needed from December 2023, and work will now begin to find a more permanent site in the centre of the county close to major roads.

New Highways Contract

From 1 October 2023, Suffolk County Council entered into a new Highways contract with Milestone, following the end of the previous contract with Kier. The new contract promises better communication with councillors and Suffolk residents, and contains incentives for the new contractor to work efficiently – for example, undertaking other works needed in the same geographical area when they are called out. The performance of the contract will be scrutinised after 12 months to assess Milestone’s performance and is for an initial period of 10 years, with the option to increase it a further 10 years. At the same time, a new contract for street lighting was entered into with McCann. This contract is due to last for seven years.

Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined

In February 2024, the Council’s budget for 2024/25 was voted in. The Conservative budget proposed an increase in council tax of the maximum 4.99%, which breaks down into a 2% rise for the Social Care Precept and a 2.99% increase in general tax.

Council services have faced another year of spiralling demand and additional cost pressures, and the council’s administration have had to draw £16m from council reserves to balance their budget.

The proposed budget included a 100% cut to arts and museums funding, with a temporary fund set up for 2024-25 using the remaining Covid funding from the government to allow some time for these organizations to adapt and find other sources of income.

It also proposed that all local archives and records be centralised to The Hold in Ipswich, a decision which has been vigorously opposed in both Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds, where communities want to keep their record office buildings in the area.

My group acknowledged the difficulty of the council’s financial position and proposed a minor amendment – that instead of using all of the leftover Covid funding for arts and museums, half should be allocated to supporting young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), a service the Conservatives were planning to cut.

Funding for the Arts

The element of the budget which proved most controversial (and even reached the nation press) was the Conservatives’ decision to cut 100% of arts funding from April 2025. As mentioned above, their budget proposed to use the last of their Covid funding from the government to provide arts and museums funding for the 2024-25 financial year.

We proposed that £250k of the 2024-25 funding for arts and museums be allocated from the council's core funding, as this is an important distinction for arts organizations when they are applying for other sources of income. This amendment was declined.

The Conservatives backed down on the 100% reduction in funding from April 2025 onwards, and shortly before the budget meeting announced a £500k funding pot which arts and heritage organisations can bid for in the 2025-26 financial year. This could mean the funding for arts and museums is spread more thinly, but means more organizations are likely to benefit. As budget decisions for 2025-25 will not be made until the February 2025 council meeting, this decision is not yet ratified.

Ofsted/CQC Inspection of Suffolk SEND Provision

Suffolk County Council and its NHS partners who provide SEND services (the 'Local Area Partnership') were inspected by Ofsted and CQC in November 2023, with the inspection report being published on 30 January 2024. The inspection found 'widespread and/or systematic failings' in the county's SEND provision and is the second poor inspection result since SEND inspections were introduced in 2016 (the previous inspection being in November 2016). The Local Area Partnership had to submit a priority action plan to Ofsted and CQC by 7 March 2024 detailing how they would address the systemic problems rapidly, including improving the quality and timeliness of EHCP plans (previously known as statements of special education needs) and annual reviews, improving communication with families and reducing school inclusions for young people with special educational needs.

As a result of the inspection, the two Cabinet Members for children's services and education at the council stood down, and new Cabinet Members have been appointed to these roles. A new full time and permanent Director for Children's Services (DCS) has also recently been appointed, who will start at the council in July.

Suffolk Devolution Deal

After much talk of devolution in the last few years, it looks like this may now happen in Suffolk.

Devolution is a process by which regions or cities in the UK can have greater control over decisions in their areas. The government agrees a deal with the area which gives them more freedom to make local decisions about how to spend government funding. This is due to happen in Suffolk from 2025 in areas such as transport and adult education. There will also be a £16m annual investment fund for economic growth, a £5.8m lump sum to regenerate brownfield sites across the county, and a £3m one off investment in retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient.

The devolution deal also means the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk, so every four years residents will have two votes, one to elect their local county councillor and the leader of the county council. The first election for the directly elected leader will be in May 2025, which is the next county council election. There could be problems with having an elected leader if they are from a different political group to most of the other councillors; the leader can choose a Cabinet and control the council's agenda, but without the votes in the council chamber they might find it difficult to get things done.

There is a consultation being held about the deal right now, and you can find out more about it and fill out the survey here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Libraries Consultation

On Tuesday 25 March, Cabinet reviewed the results of the recent consultation about the Suffolk library service, which is due to go out to procurement in the summer. Broadly, the members of the public who responded to the survey agreed with what libraries currently provided, including community and digital services, and the mobile library and home library services for people who were housebound. Recent pop-up libraries in village halls did not score highly in the consultation and it is unlikely these will form part of the service in future. It is also likely that mobile libraries will run from smaller vehicles in future. The successful bidder for the new libraries contract is likely to be announced in

November, with the new contract starting from June 2025. The contract will be for six years with an option to renew for a further six years.

Sizewell C Construction Begins

In January 2024, construction work officially began for Sizewell C nuclear power station on the coast near Leiston. EDF are building a two-reactor nuclear power station that will generate 3.2 gigawatts (GW) of electricity that could power the equivalent of six million homes. The development is highly controversial, not only for those opposed to nuclear power, but also to those in the local communities opposed to the upheaval and impact of the construction on the natural environment, the beauty of the coastline and the effect on tourism and transport routes during the construction period. The construction is projected to take between nine and 12 years, but in practice nuclear power stations often take far longer than planned to build – for example, Hinkley Point C nuclear power station, which began construction in 2017, is now predicted to be operational in 2036, 11 years after it was supposed to be finished.

The government and EDF still need to raise an extra £20bn for the project from private investors which they claim will be in place by the end of 2024.

Motions to Council

My group passed one motion successfully during the year in May 2024, which was for the council to work with its partners to better signpost members of the public to benefits they may be entitled to. This motion was raised as a result of reports that over £15bn of means tested benefits are going unclaimed because people were not always aware of the support they could access to help them, even in times when costs of living are putting serious pressures on families all over the country.

Other motions the group had been unable to bring forward or were voted down by the Conservative administration included solar power 'Roofs before Rural', to ask the council to commit to prioritise solar panels on buildings and brownfield sites over solar farms on good quality agricultural land, and to lobby the government to reduce barriers to community energy projects. Community energy projects enable local people to produce electricity (for example, by solar panels on schools) to reduce bills, with any extra electricity sold to the grid, making a profit which can be reinvested locally.

In July my group proposed a motion to make it easier for communities to lower speed limits on rural roads where the safe speed for driving is clearly lower than the current National Speed Limit. The motion suggested that on these roads, a lower speed limit than 60mph would encourage many drivers to slow to a more appropriate, safer speed, thereby reducing accidents and making roads safer for all users. This motion was voted down by the Conservative administration.

We also tabled a motion on flooding in December, which among other things, proposed to increase the frequency of clearing drains and gullies around the county; however, the Conservatives proposed an amendment removing this recommendation and passed a weaker motion which did not include any changes to the usual schedule of drainage works.

A member of the public asked when the roads in Suffolk would be repaired by Suffolk Highways to an acceptable standard. Cllr Harley responded that he continued to highlight issues with Suffolk Highways.

5. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

No report submitted

6. REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

6.1 TATTINGSTONE CHURCH REPORT FROM ST MARY'S TATTINGSTONE

TATTINGSTONE

Parish Council

Simon Harley informed the meeting that the Church now has a new Vicar, Chris Willis, in post. The old benefice has now been split and a new one has formed between Tattlingstone, Bentley, East Bergholt and Brantham which is working well. The Church is still experiencing low congregation numbers and lack of funds.

Work has commenced on a project to install toilets at the Church which will hopefully enable the space to be used in new ways and to draw in new funding.

6.2 TATTINGSTONE EVENTS

Janice Lee informed the meeting that the Tattlingstone Events group continues to organise monthly Indoor Markets events which have now been running for over a year and now holds a database of over 100 stallholders over a rolling market programme.

The group has also held two beetle drives and have the following events coming up:

- Indoor Garage Sale
- Kids Film afternoon

6.3 TATTINGSTONE GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME

Rodney Chadburn informed the meeting that the group has had a good year and continues to provide services to the community. He noted that calls to the telephone have dropped since Covid due to changing needs. The activities Committee of the GNS continues to provide Keep Fit classes, a local walking group and a Welcome to Tattlingstone leaflet for new homeowners in the village.

The group will be promoting the emergency GNS phone number using a fridge magnet that will be circulated with the next edition of the Tattler.

The good work of one of the GNS organisers (Tricia Connolly) has been recognised by Radio Suffolk with a "Making a Difference Award". The group has also been selected to be considered for the "King's Award for Voluntary Service". The results will be announced in November 2024.

6.4 ALTON BELLES REPORT 2023-24 (WI)

Alton Belles is an active Women's Institute with around 20 members. Members come from villages around Alton Water including Holbrook. We are a registered charity affiliated to the Nation Federation and our local East Suffolk Federation of Wis. The WI is now over 100 years old and has always been a campaigning organisation on behalf of women's rights, from Suffragettes to Diagnosis of ADHD in females, to Keep Britain tidy. Our resolution for the coming year is regarding access to dental services.

We meet every third Thursday in the village hall and this year, because many of our elderly members do not like driving in the dark, we now have meetings October to March in the afternoon at 2.30pm and the summer months at 7.30 pm.

Alton Belles has had another successful year. We have enjoyed an excellent and varied programme, covering all manner of subjects from The Witchfinder General to Felting, from The Radar Station at Bawdsey to Scouting and Guiding. Congratulations to the programme committee. Forthcoming meetings include Bell ringing, Learning British Sign Language and writing poetry. The Photographic Club continues to meet and take some fabulous photographs, some of which have been used in the SEFWI calendar for next year.

This has been my second year as the President. I would not have been able to do it without the fantastic committee. On behalf of myself and everyone, I would like to thank our committee for their hard work and support.

We always welcome new members or visitors. If you would like to learn more about our friendly group, please give me a ring on 07798 752147 or mjanecs@yahoo.co.uk.

TATTINGSTONE

Parish Council

Jane Connell-Smith
President Alton Belles WI

6.5 PLAYING FIELD COMMITTEE REPORT

David Brown, Playing Field Committee Chair informed the meeting that the planning permission for the new play equipment has now been approved. Funding for the project from Babergh District Council will be requested in the funding rounds in July .

Last year the group hosted its first Fete in some years, money raised from that event was donated to the local Church, School and Village Hall. The next Fete will be held in June 2024.

6.6 VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE REPORT

David Brown, Village Hall Committee Chair informed the meeting that planning permission for the new roof and solar panels has now been granted.

Following a complaint about noise the recycling bins have now been moved to the other side of the car park and their original spot will become a parking space and raised flower bed.

7. QUESTIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

None received.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed

Meeting closed at 7.03pm