

Copdock & Washbrook Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 4th February 2025, 7.00pm
at the Village Hall, Old London Road, Copdock

Present: Cllr A Ward (Chair), Cllr L Butters (Vice-chair), Cllr D Tyrrell

In Attendance: Mrs S Frankis, Parish Clerk & RFO
District Cllr, Dave Busby
3 members of the public

The meeting was chaired by Cllr A Ward.

Due to technical difficulties, the meeting was not broadcast.

2777/2425 APOLOGIES: to RECEIVE and APPROVE Apologies for Absence

The Council resolved to receive the apologies received from Cllrs Downey and Green for their absences due to work commitments.

Apologies were received from District Cllr J Whyman.

2778/2425 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: to RECEIVE any Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

2779/2425 DISPENSATIONS: to APPROVE any Requests for Dispensations

No requests for dispensations were received.

The meeting was adjourned.

2780/2425 PUBLIC FORUM

(i) To RECEIVE Reports from the County and District Councillors

A written report had been received from Cllr Whyman prior to the meeting and circulated to the Council.

District Cllr Busby advised that following the recent Government announcement regarding the NPPF, it is felt that neighbourhood plans should now include site allocations.

He advised that Babergh's 2025/26 budget proposals will be going forward to Cabinet on 11th February 2025, and to Council on 26th February for final approval. Due to increasing pressures on their budget, Babergh District Council intends to increase council tax by the maximum allowed, 2.99%. They will also be increasing fees and charges where they can and are looking to achieve cost savings despite the need to 'dip into' their reserves to fund the forecast deficit of £633k for the year. Government funding this year will be £1.33m, down from £1.51m last year.

Babergh has identified £2.56m of further savings, cost efficiencies and income, including £1.4m additional income from services and £700k of staff savings.

Their Medium-Term Financial Plan shows an increasing deficit over the next five years and a complete depletion of reserves.

Within Babergh's Housing Revenue Account, housing and garage rents will be increased by 2.7% and sheltered housing service charges will be increased by 9% to reduce the subsidy received from housing rent. Babergh has a new 30-year HRA business plan to ensure that all future commitments for renovating and installing energy efficiency measures in the housing stock can be met; building and acquiring new properties remains a challenge.

Cllr Butters asked if a parish has a Neighbourhood Plan with no allocated sites for development, what will Babergh's stance be when considering a planning application within that parish? Cllr Busby considered that such a Neighbourhood Plan may not carry as much weight as a Plan that includes allocated sites, and so an application may be more likely to be granted, if not by Babergh then by HM Planning Inspectors on appeal.

Cllr Ward reiterated that it was the Parish Council's most important priority to retain our village identity and not to be overwhelmed by large scale developments with insufficient supporting infrastructure. As the Copdock and Washbrook Neighbourhood Plan has already been submitted to Babergh DC, it won't be bound by the new NPPF. However, the implications of this are unclear and how BMSDC / HM Planning Inspectors will handle applications within Parishes that have adopted a "no sites" Neighbourhood Plan is unclear. For the immediate future, Parish Councillors are committed to continuing to take the Copdock & Washbrook Neighbourhood Plan through examination and on to a referendum whilst continuing to stay as close as possible to events in local Government as they unfold.

No report had been received from County Cllr Hudson.

(ii) To RECEIVE Comments from Residents of the Parish on Current Agenda Items

Members of the public advised that litter and fly tipping incidences have increased at Whight's Corner; reports have been submitted to Babergh DC.

There has also been an increase in the number of HGV's parking up overnight at Whight's Corner, creating a noise nuisance to residents during the early hours of the morning. Cllr Ward advised that residents have been advised to report noise nuisance incidents to Babergh DC.

Mr M Watling advised of the Tennis Club's intention to submit an application for CIL funding from the Parish Council. He also advised he had prepared an action plan for the future of the Parish Council's defibrillators, to include training / awareness, responsibilities, a Parish Council policy, the need for a third defibrillator. Cllr Ward thanked Mr Watling, on behalf of the Parish Council, for the monitoring of the defibrillators that he undertakes, and suggested that a review of the roles and responsibilities associated with the defibrillators needs to be carried out. Cllr Ward asked for an agenda item to be included for the next meeting to consider 'Defibrillators – Roles & Responsibilities'.

ACTION: Cllr Butters and Mr Watling are to organise defibrillator training/awareness and to bring a proposal for going forward to the next meeting.

Mr Watling asked if the Parish Council will be marking the VE-80 commemorations on 8th May 2025.

District Cllr Busby advised he had awarded a grant of £1k to the Cricket Club to help fund the cost of the extension works.

He advised the Bentley solar farm application is to be considered by Committee tomorrow; it has been recommended to be refused.

The meeting was reconvened.

2781/2425 MINUTES: to RECEIVE and CONFIRM the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th January 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2025, having been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting, were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting; the minutes were duly signed by Cllr Ward.

2782 MATTERS ARISING: to CONSIDER Matters Arising from the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th January 2025

Re. minute number 2767/2425

The Recreation Field Information Sign has been installed on the gate to the field.

Cllr Butters advised of her intention to ask Clubb Creative to design a mock-up sign for the village hall & sports clubs' site, to use as a tool to seek the views of all stakeholders.

ACTION: Cllr Butters is to contact Clubb Creative to ask they design a mock-up sign for the village hall and sports clubs' site.

Mr Watling left the meeting.

2783/2425 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

(i) **SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS: to Approve the Schedule of Payments for February 2025**

Payments were approved as listed below.

No.	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Total
P101	Lloyds Bank	Corporate card	7.57	0.92	8.49
P102	Tesco Mobile	Clerk's mobile telephone	7.50	1.50	9.00
P103	Birketts LLP	Professional fees	16.80	0.00	16.80
P104	Mrs S Frankis	Home broadband	15.00	0.00	15.00
P105	Mr S Downey	Microsoft 365	66.66	13.33	79.99
P106	Clubb Creative	Newsletter and sign	383.00	76.60	459.60
P107	Mrs S Frankis	January salary	719.07	0.00	719.07
P108	Moser Groundcare	Hedge cutting	850.00	170.00	1,020.00

(ii) **BUDGET & FINANCE REPORT: to AGREE the January 2025 Budget and Finance Report, including the Bank Balance**

The January 2025 Budget and Finance Report and the Cash Book had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting and were agreed. Cllr Ward verified the bank balances totalling £116,369.10.

(iii) **BUDGET HEADING VIREMENTS**

The Clerk had undertaken a further review of the 2024/25 budget position which included a forecast of the total expenditure to the year end, 31st March 2025; an analysis of the findings had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting.

The Council unanimously agreed to vire £40.00 from 2024/25 budget heading 'Allotments' to 'Bank Charges' and to vire £750.00 from 2024/25 budget heading 'General Reserves' to 'Clerk's Salary'.

(iv) **ALLOTMENT RENT REVIEW: to RECEIVE the Allotment Rent Review January 2025 and to AGREE to defer the 2025/26 Allotment Rent Increases**

The Clerk had recently become aware that Anglian Water hadn't been reading the water meter and that subsequently, a significant number of bills had been charged on estimated readings over

time. A meter reading had been submitted on 16th October 2024, which triggered a quarterly revision and a final bill which shows a credit balance of £514.49.

The Clerk has since undertaken a review of the forecast figures for 2024/25 and 2025/26, which had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting, with a suggestion that the introduction of the increase in charges, previously agreed by the Council, be delayed until 1st April 2026, and a notification to plot holders be issued.

The Council agreed to contact the Copdock Allotment Group to ask for their views with regards to (i) if and when a rental increase should become due? (ii) where is the Group at with regards to holding funds themselves? (iii) are there any aspirations for project expenditure? (iv) is there any infrastructure expenditure likely to become due over the next 12months?

ACTION: The Clerk is to contact the Copdock Allotment Group to ask for their views with regards to (i) if and when a rental increase should become due? (ii) where is the Group at with regards to holding funds themselves? (iii) are there any aspirations for project expenditure? (iv) is there any infrastructure expenditure likely to become due over the next 12months?

(v) SAVINGS OPTIONS: to AGREE to Apply for New Savings Product(s) and to AGREE the Allocation of Funds to be Invested

The Clerk had researched savings options and circulated the findings to the Council prior to the meeting.

The Council unanimously agreed to apply for a Hinckley & Rugby Building Society 90-Day Notice account @ 3.60% interest rate and to invest £85k in it, and to keep a minimum working balance of funds in the existing Unity Trust Bank Current Account, moving any surplus into the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access Account @ 2.50% interest rate.

ACTION: The Clerk is to apply for a Hinckley & Rugby Building Society 90-Day Notice account and to invest £85k in it, and to transfer surplus Unity Trust Bank Current Account funds to the Unity Trust Bank Instant Access Account.

(vi) ASSET REGISTER: to AGREE the 2025 Asset Register

The Council unanimously agreed the Asset Register 2025, as circulated to the Council prior to the meeting.

(vii) RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY: to AGREE the Risk Management Strategy 2025

The Council unanimously agreed the Risk Management Strategy 2025, as circulated to the Council prior to the meeting.

(viii) RISK MANAGEMENT REGISTER: to AGREE the Risk Management Register 2025

The Council unanimously agreed the Risk Management Register 2025, as circulated to the Council prior to the meeting.

(ix) FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT and MANAGEMENT REPORT: to AGREE the Financial Risk Assessment and Management Report 2025

The Council unanimously agreed the Financial Risk Assessment and Management Report 2025, as circulated to the Council prior to the meeting.

(x) INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT: to AGREE the Internal Control Statement 2025

The Council unanimously agreed the Internal Control Statement 2025, as circulated to the Council prior to the meeting.

(xi) INTERNAL CONTROL REPORT: to APPOINT a Councillor to Draft the Internal Control Report 2025

ACTION: Cllr Ward is to draft the Internal Control Report 2025.

(xii) VAT RECLAIM: to AGREE the VAT Reclaim

The Council unanimously agreed the VAT 126 reclaim of £1,784.40.

2784/2425 CLERK'S REPORT: to RECEIVE the Parish Clerk's Report

The Clerk's Report had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting; a copy is published on the Parish Council website.

2785/2425 PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND DECISIONS

The Planning Schedule for January 2025 had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting.

To RECEIVE Decision Notices:

- DC/24/05126 Babergh District Council Granted
- DC/24/05127 Babergh District Council Granted
- DC/24/04716 Babergh District Council Granted

Cllr Ward advised that it is assumed the Brockley Wood application will be heard by Committee at their March 2025 meeting.

He has put a 'call-out' to James Cartlidge MP asking for his help in protecting the community from the environmental and road safety threat presented by the Brockley Wood application, following his recent EADT article regarding the HGV issue in neighbouring Sproughton.

District Cllr D Busby left the meeting.

2786/2425 PARISH COUNCIL EMAILS: to AGREE Actions as Required

Cllr Ward had been advised by Cllr Green that the administration has now been set up and that the next step is to back-up emails.

2787/2425 COMMUNITY SPEED MANAGEMENT: 20'S PLENTY : to AGREE Actions as Required

Cllr Tyrrell advised that the Suffolk County Council Traffic Survey Team have scheduled the surveys to be installed on The Street, Back Lane and Elm Lane on 5th February 2025 and collected on 13th February 2025.

Cllr Ward considered that the newly installed S.I.D.s were having a positive impact on traffic speeds in the village.

2788/2425 SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS & DRAINAGE UPDATES

Cllr Ward advised that the footpath clearance works along the Old London Road remain outstanding despite assurances from Suffolk County Council that the works were due to be completed by the end of January 2025.

Cllr Ward had contacted Mr M Lee, of Suffolk County Council Farm Estates for an update on outstanding works, who advised that he is due to meet with the proposed contractor on site this week to look at dredging the Brook; he has also promised to look at the lease for Jubilee Meadow and will advise on the maintenance responsibilities for the bridge.

Members of the public confirmed that the Chapel Lane tree works have been carried out and that the area is much improved.

2789/2425 INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

(i) Active Travel Scheme

There were no updates to report.

(ii) Parishioner Request for a Nature Reserve

Cllr Ward advised that the Parish Council had received a request from a parishioner asking for the field adjacent to the property known as 'Belldown', Old London Road, Copdock to be leased by the Parish Council, from Suffolk County Council, for the development of a nature reserve. The request was followed by a call for the Parish Council to apply for a conservation area status for the whole of Copdock and Washbrook.

The Council, having considered the requests, felt unable to pursue them. The Council was of the mind that the prospect of Suffolk County Council agreeing any lease of their field would be very remote as in the recent past, the land was subject to an application for 170 homes; this was only withdrawn after the previous Neighbourhood Plan was not supported at referendum. Undeterred, the landowner (together with the other landowners south and east of Back Lane) have offered it for development again through Babergh District Councils' Call for Sites process as part of their Joint Local Plan formulation. The notion, therefore, that they would be happy to lease the land to the Parish Council for a nature reserve rather than sell it with permission to a housing developer does seem extremely improbable.

With regards to the request for an application to be made for a conservation area status, Cllr Ward advised that it would be a major undertaking in terms of both time and cost and an analysis of the very specific criteria involved suggests that, on the face of it, any application would not be supported.

The idea of creating a nature reserve somewhere suitable in the village and creating a conservation area is, on paper, very attractive however the Council unanimously agreed that it does not have the resources to pursue the requests at this time.

The Council agreed that in the short term, it needs to prioritise time and efforts on securing support for the Copdock and Washbrook Neighbourhood Plan, which at this time, remains the only possible defence against the huge housing numbers that the Government is imposing on Babergh. The Council is keen for parishioners to know that it will keep all of these possibilities, (nature reserve, conservation area status) in mind as it is the number one strategic priority to preserve the identity as a village and not to be overwhelmed by unsustainable levels of development.

ACTION: Cllr Ward to open an exploratory dialogue with Babergh District Council to discuss the feasibility and suitability of any sites within the Parish.

2790/2425 PARISHIONER REQUEST FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL TO PROVIDE DOG WALKING FACILITIES

The Parish Council had received a request from a parishioner asking for the Council to lease a field within the parish for the dedicated use of dog walkers. With twenty-two miles of footpaths within the parish, the Council unanimously agreed it could not support the request to rent/lease land for dog walkers.

However, within the parishioner's correspondence, the Council noted the mention that several styles were broken and required attention. The Council unanimously agreed to look at modernising the styles within the parish to make them accessible to all by changing them to 'kissing-gates'.

ACTION: Cllr Tyrrell is to undertake an audit of the styles within the parish.

2791/2425 NEXT MEETING: to CONFIRM the Date and Time of the Next Parish Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Council is to be held on 4th March 2025 at the Village Hall, Copdock at 7pm.

2792/2425 MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS

Cllr Butters asked if a spring clean litter pick is to be organised.

ACTION: Cllr Butters is to liaise with Mr J Mellish to organise a spring clean litter pick.

2793/2425 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Cllr Ward asked for an agenda item to consider the renewal of the grass cutting contract.

The meeting closed at 20:48.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:

2780/2425 PUBLIC FORUM

(ii) To RECEIVE Comments from Residents of the Parish on Current Agenda Items

ACTION: Cllr Butters and Mr Watling are to organise defibrillator training/awareness and to bring a proposal for going forward to the next meeting.

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ACTION: Cllr Ward is to draft the Internal Control Report 2025.

2789/2425 INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

(ii) Parishioner Request for a Nature Reserve

ACTION: Cllr Ward to open an exploratory dialogue with Babergh District Council to discuss the feasibility and suitability of any sites within the Parish.

Area Status application process with Babergh District Council, as a matter of interest.

2790/2425 PARISHIONER REQUEST FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL TO PROVIDE DOG WALKING FACILITIES

ACTION: Cllr Tyrrell is to undertake an audit of the styles within the parish.

2792/2425 MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS

ACTION: Cllr Butters is to liaise with Mr J Mellish to organise a spring clean litter pick.

Mrs S Frankis, Parish Clerk & RFO to Copdock and Washbrook Parish Council

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