

TOSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the full Council held on 14 May 2024 at 7.30pm in Tostock Village Hall

Present: Cllr Jane Storey (Chair), Cllr Michael Bauly, Cllr David Blundell, Cllr Paul Callow, Cllr Roger Cross and Cllr Julian Kearsley.

Cllr Sharkey joined the meeting after item 24.05.07.

In Attendance: District Cllr David Bradbury;
Two members of the public; and
Parish Clerk: Doug Reed.

24.05.01 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Cllr Cross, seconded by Cllr Callow, that Cllr Storey be elected Chair for the coming year. The proposal was carried.

24.05.02 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr Storey duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Chair.

24.05.03 Election of Vice-Chair

It was resolved that this position be left unfilled.

24.05.04 Apologies for Absence

Accepted from Cllr Sarah Cobbold who was unable to attend due to work commitments and Cllr Glenn Lebbon who was suffering from an injury incurred earlier in the day.

24.05.05 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

05.1 Interests: None.

05.2 Dispensation Requests: None.

05.3 Dispensation Decisions: None.

24.05.06 Minutes of the Last Parish Council Meeting

It was resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council, held on 12 March, be signed as a true record.

24.05.07 Casual Vacancy

It was resolved unanimously that Mr Andrew Sharkey be co-opted to serve on the Council until the next elections in 2027, whereupon Cllr Sharkey duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Sharkey joined the meeting.

24.05.08 Appointment to External Bodies

08.1 Village Hall Committee: It was resolved that Cllr Cross represent the Council on this Committee for the coming year.

08.2 Poors Estate: It was resolved that Cllr Bauly and Cllr Cobbold should continue to represent the Council on the Committee of this charity.

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24.05.09 Council Officers

The following appointments were agreed unanimously:

09.1 Tree Officers - Mr Ben Smith and Mrs Becky Smith.

09.2 Footpaths Officer - Cllr Sharkey.

09.3 Finance Councillor - Cllr Kearsley.

09.4 Internal Controls Councillor - Cllr Storey.

24.05.10 Working Groups

It was resolved that a Finance Working Group be created to oversee Council financial matters, to monitor the accounts and, at the appropriate time, to review the budget leading to a recommendation of the level of precept required for the next fiscal year. The Group would be led by Cllr Kearsley, as Finance Councillor, and include Cllr Callow, Cllr Sharkey and Cllr Storey with the Clerk providing information and advice as required.

24.05.11 Public Comment and Questions

Concern was expressed regarding the safeguarding of orchids on The Leys following maintenance work to the area and in the event that further work was needed in May and June when the flowers were in season. Cllr Bauly offered to speak with the relevant people.

24.05.12 Internal Controls

The Internal Control Statement and Report 2024 was reviewed, approved without amendment and duly signed by the Cllr Storey. The Council was assured that there is now a sound system of internal control in place which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives; ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and includes effective arrangements for the management of risk

24.05.13 Risk Register

Given the seeming absence, in recent years, of an overall review of risks facing the Council the new Register was welcomed and adopted without alteration. Necessarily, it will be monitored on an ongoing basis and updated as and when any significant changes occur, or decisions are taken by the Council which impact on one or more risks.

24.05.14 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023-2024

Given that the higher of gross Council income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less, and that the qualifying criteria had been met, the Council resolved to certify itself as exempt from a limited assurance review ('external audit') whilst committing to the publication, on the village website, of documents required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.

24.05.15 Council Governance

In compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it was resolved that Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability

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Return 2023/24 Part 2 - "Annual Governance Statement 2023/24" for Tostock Parish Council - be approved, completed and duly signed, as required, by the Chair and Clerk.

24.05.16 Finance

16.1 Responsible Financial Officer: It was noted that the NatWest current account stood at £27,132.24 and the reserve account at £38,249.51 further to which it was resolved that the reconciliation be approved. Of the £65,381.75 total it was noted that £55,713.87 was Community Infrastructure Levy funding which could not be spent on day-to-day matters. The 2023-2024 end-of-year situation, reported as being slightly healthier than expected, was also noted and approved.

16.2 Payments and Income: It was resolved that the schedule of payments be approved. The schedule comprised the following:

- ◆ Clerk: salary (April) - £359.32;
- ◆ HMRC: PAYE (April) - £83.20;
- ◆ Clerk: homeworking allowance (April) - £26.00;
- ◆ Mr A Jones: reimbursement of mower diesel - £28.29;
- ◆ Gipping Press Ltd: "Tostock Chronicle" (April/May) - £313.00;
- ◆ Clerk: salary (May) - £359.32;
- ◆ HMRC: PAYE (May) - £83.20;
- ◆ Clerk: homeworking allowance (May) - £26.00;
- ◆ Suffolk Cloud: website provision - £120.00;
- ◆ Heelis & Lodge: internal audit fee - £170.00;
- ◆ Mr O Holland: litter-picking - £56.25;
- ◆ Mid Suffolk District Council: loan repayment (third and final instalment - £2,334 plus £41.78 interest) £2,375.78;
- ◆ CAS Ltd: mower insurance (April-October) - £123.79; and
- ◆ Suffolk Association of Local Councils: subscription - £269.47.

Income received was duly noted as follows:

- ◆ Mid Suffolk District Council: precept (April-September) - £6,161.50;
- ◆ NatWest: reserve (deposit) account interest - £50.08;
- ◆ Mid Suffolk District Council: cleansing grant (January-March) - £166.72;
- ◆ "Tostock Chronicle": advertising - £125.00; and
- ◆ HMRC: VAT refund (2023-2024) - £140.34.

16.3 Community Infrastructure Levy: The funding position was noted. There had been no changes since the last meeting.

16.4 Budget 2024-2025: It was resolved that the revised budget, updated to reflect money carried forward from 2023-2024 and further known costs, be confirmed and approved.

16.5 Internal Audit: The internal audit carried out by Heelis and Lodge was received and the report with recommendations noted. Given that there had been insufficient time ahead of the meeting for councillors to fully review and explore the recommendations it was resolved that the report be deferred until the July Council meeting when full consideration would be accorded the findings and appropriate action could then be agreed.

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16.6 Accounting Statements 2023-2024: In compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, it was resolved that Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 Part 2 - "Accounting Statements 2023/24" for Tostock Parish Council - be approved, completed and duly signed, as required, by the Chair and Clerk.

16.7 Community Infrastructure Levy: Councillors noted the completion and signing of the 2023-2024 Community Infrastructure Levy monitoring report for submission to Mid Suffolk District Council and publication on the village website.

16.8 Notice of Public Rights (2023-2024 Accounts): Notwithstanding that residents may request and be given access to Council financial records at any time, it was confirmed that the statement of accounts 2023-2024, i.e. the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Form 2, the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records be formally made available for inspection by any person interested from Monday 3 June to Friday 12 July 2024 inclusive.

24.05.17 **Asset Management**

The outstanding queries having been sorted, the Register was confirmed as accurate. The physical inspection of assets had been unable to be carried out to date, but Cllr Cross and Cllr Storey committed to pursuing the task ahead of the next meeting.

24.05.18 **Reports**

18.1 County Councillor: Cllr Mellen was unable to attend and had sent apologies. His written report had been circulated to councillors and was available, with the agenda for this meeting, on the village website.

18.2 District Councillors: Cllr Davies had sent apologies. Cllr Bradbury noted the availability of new capital grants from Mid Suffolk District Council but otherwise confirmed that there was nothing further to add to the written April report from himself and Cllr Davies which had been circulated previously to councillors.

18.3 Flooding: The Council received the detailed and informed report from Cllr Blundell concerning areas of the village prone to flooding, with recommendations for potential solutions. It was accepted that, regrettably, the Council had no money to fund the options suggested but that situations would continue to be monitored and reported to relevant authorities, and that letters would be sent to local landowners requesting any help they could put in place to help deal with the issues raised. The report itself would be published in full on the village website.

18.4 Allotments - Water Supply: Cllr Bauly reported on a recent meeting of the Poors Estate trustees when the matter of water supply to the allotments was considered further to the topic being the subject of recent concerns, including being raised by a resident at the Council meeting in March. After considerable discussion, the trustees felt that, currently, there was a constant and reliable source of water available to any plot-holder and that, consequently, there was no need for any action to be taken.

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24.05.19 Correspondence

Cllr Storey reported on items both sent to and received by the Council. She noted the following in particular:

◆ She would be attending a meeting on 24 May which would be discussing work to be undertaken to a weak bridge on the A1088 at Stowlangtoft. The work was expected to be lengthy, and to require significant diversions as a result. The meeting would review the situation and, in particular, the potential impact upon surrounding villages.

◆ The Council had received, via the Cabinet Office, a large framed photographic portrait of King Charles III. It was agreed that this be donated to the Village Hall Committee.

24.05.20 Ongoing Matters

20.1 Speeding Concerns and Speedwatch: There were no matters to report at this time but the subject would be retained as an agenda item.

20.2 Wayleave (The Green): In the absence of any communication from the solicitor acting for the residents in this matter, Cllr Storey offered to try to make progress on behalf of the Council by seeking information and advice from a surveyor, particularly with regard to the value of any wayleave agreement.

20.3 Village Drainage Plan: This had already been discussed earlier during the meeting.

20.4 Village Sign: It was noted, with very grateful thanks to Mr Michael O'Reilly, that the sign had now been successfully repaired and reinstated.

24.05.21 Planning:

21.1 New Applications:

DC/24/02074 and DC/24/02075 Old Rectory, Norton Road - erection of orangery and entrance gates; and Listed Building Consent. The Council had NO OBJECTION.

21.2 Decisions:

The following application results were noted:
DC/24/00145 and DC/24/00202 The Gardeners Arms, Church Road - application for advertisement consent - replacement signage including one front and one rear on render illuminated fascia sign, one illuminated hanging post sign, one post chalkboard sign and one pavement chalkboard sign. New signage including one car park disclaimer, one post amenity board, and two car park directional signs; and Listed Building Consent. GRANTED;

DC/23/05815 1&2 The Lodge, Norton Road - Listed Building Consent - erection of rear extension and treatment of beams. Works to reinstate the two dwellings into one dwelling, as per Heritage Statement. GRANTED;
DC/23/05826 1&2 The Lodge, Norton Road - erection of cart lodge with log store. Erection of rear extension. Reposition oil tanks. Reinstatement of the two dwellings to one dwelling. GRANTED;

DC/24/01224 Old Rectory, Norton Road - application for Listed Building Consent - replacement of two ground floor windows. GRANTED;

DC/24/00784 Willow Cottage, The Leys - works to trees in a Conservation Area - to remove branch overhanging towards property on pine tree, remove one branch growing towards property on pine tree, a two metre

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reduction to top and sides of birch tree, reduce and re-shape as well as a one metre reduction on a few lateral branches on oak tree, remove dead birch tree and a one metre reduction of birch tree. GRANTED;
DC/24/01323 The Coach House, Church Road - erection of single storey rear extension. GRANTED; and
DC/24/01627 4 Ashley Close - conversion of existing double garage to home office and erection of log cabin. GRANTED.

21.3 Applications Awaiting Decision: None.

24.05.22 Policies and Procedures

22.1 New Policies: Further to continuing work to revise and update policies and procedures the Council resolved to adopt the Equality and Diversity, Home Working and Financial Reserves Policies.

22.2 Biodiversity Policy: Given local authorities were given a requirement under the Environment Act 2021, the Council resolved to adopt the Biodiversity Policy and to consider the production of a biodiversity plan for the village. It was agreed that the latter might best be compiled by someone with a particular knowledge of the subject and, accordingly, it was felt that the opportunity should be advertised in the "Tostock Chronicle".

24.05.23 Matters for the Attention of the Council

None.

24.05.24 Next Meetings

It was noted that the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council would be held on Tuesday 9 July at 7.30pm in Tostock Village Hall.

Thereafter, meetings through to the next Annual Meeting of the Parish Council were confirmed as scheduled for:

2024 - September 10 and November 12; and

2025 - January 14, March 11 and May 13.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.42pm.