

## **NEEDHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of NEEDHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL held in Needham Market Community Centre on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7:30pm.

**Present:** Cllr J Reardon (In the Chair), Councillors: BE Annis, G Cave, R Darnell, C Goodchild, T Lawrence, J Lea, M Norris, M O'Shea, M Ost and A Reardon.

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Cllr I Mason - Holiday

Cllr S Phillips - Recuperating

Cllr X Stansfield - Recuperating

**In Attendance:** Suffolk County Councillor Kay Oakes, Mid Suffolk District Councillor Terry Lawrence, 32 members of public and the Town Clerk

In view of public attendance and the obvious focus of those attendees, Cllr J Reardon introduced item 5 on the agenda and proposed that matter take priority.

### **C001/24 (part 1) To consider the impact of recent flooding incidents in the town.**

Cllr J Reardon asked a member of public, who had carried out analysis of recent flooding incidents, to present his findings. The presentation related to the flooding incidents which had affected the Pinecroft Way area during Storm Babet and subsequently. It included a lot of detail relating to past and present water courses and the factors that contributed to recent flooding events.

Cllr J Reardon then opened the meeting, firstly for Councillors to make comment/raise questions and then members of the public, for the same purpose.

The discussion included reference to the following:

- In the Environment Agency scoring of locations subject to a risk of flooding, the Pinecroft Way area has been assessed, as five or more properties had suffered internal flooding, as a priority.
- In Foxglove Avenue, properties have been flooded on 4 occasions.
- The route and nature of the Lion Barn Drain, which used to run straight into the River Gipping, has been altered many times.
- There is an important drain which runs parallel to the Needham Market to Ipswich railway line, which has been neglected for many years and, to allow it to perform its function, needs to be dug out and cleared of debris.
- It was commented that the Environment Agency will not clear culverts and other crucial pieces of drainage infrastructure.
- References were made to the historical flooding of Foxglove Avenue going back to 1978.
- It was reported that the local MP, Dr Dan Poulter, had recently visited the Pinecroft Way area.

Cllr J Reardon invited Suffolk County Councillor Kay Oakes to present her report on the flooding issues. County Councillor Oakes reported non-return valves are to be fitted to the drainage infrastructure which serves the Pinecroft Way area. The report also confirmed the locations where Suffolk County Council is undertaking investigations under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and made reference to four parts of the town where flooding has occurred and the approach being taken by Suffolk County Council to each.

Cllr J Reardon informed the meeting that the Town Council is to arrange a community engagement meeting with the Environment Agency in attendance.

The meeting was adjourned for a short period to allow members of the public who wished to leave the meeting, to depart.

**C002/24 To confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023.**

Cllr Lea proposed the Minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023 Town Council meeting be adopted. Cllr Norris seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

Councillors expressed their thanks to Andrew Farrow for his time served as a Town Councillor.

**C003/24 To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest for Matters on the Agenda.**

There were none.

**C004/24 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.

District Councillor Terry Lawrence had provided a District Councillor's Report, which was circulated to Councillors, and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

District Councillor Ross Piper had provided a District Councillor's Report, which was circulated to Councillors, and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

**C001/24 (part 2) To consider the impact of recent flooding incidents in the town.**

Cllr J Reardon reiterated a virtual meeting is scheduled to take place the following day (18<sup>th</sup> January) between a representative from the Environment Agency, District Councillor Ross Piper, Town and District Councillor Terry Lawrence and the Town Clerk. The meeting is to discuss the arrangements for a Community Engagement event involving the Environment Agency.

Councillors agreed one of the crucial matters for the Town Council is to manage expectations on the basis that responsibility for dealing with the issues raised during the public discussion rests with the principal authorities, the Town Council having no resources to enable it to make more than a nominal response.

Councillors agreed the following extract from District Councillor Terry Lawrence's report should be included in the Minutes:

'Needham Market is having a Section 19 Flood Investigation undertaken following the flooding from Storm Babet. The investigations will be undertaken in partnership with the local community and the resulting reports will highlight the probable causes of flooding (this includes all sources), identify options to reduce future flood risk and increase property resilience and make recommendations for actions by relevant responsible organisations, landowners or homeowners.'

**C005/24 To receive a report of the activities of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on behalf of the Town.**

The Mayor had nothing to report. He thanked Cllr Lawrence and Josh Reardon for their help with the Christmas Trees installed in the High Street.

The Deputy Mayor had nothing to report.

**C006/24 To receive a report from Council's Civic Events Working Group.**

Cllr Lea reported a meeting is to be held with the organiser of the 2023 Needham Market Christmas Fayre to start early dialogue on the 2024 event.

Cllr Lea reported she is keen to see some of the traditional Christmas period activities resurrected, they having been discontinued during the COVID19 restriction period. This includes the singing of carols around local hostleries.

Cllr Lea reported the need to make arrangements for the Needham Market Civic Service, which will take place on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

**C007/24 To consider a response to the Mid Suffolk District Council draft Scrap Metal Policy 2024-2029.**

The Clerk referred Councillors to the policy document that had been circulated to them prior to the meeting.

Councillors agreed no response.

**C008/24 To consider a response to the Mid Suffolk District Council draft Sexual Entertainment Policy 2024-2029.**

The Clerk referred Councillors to the policy document that had been circulated to them prior to the meeting.

Councillors agreed no response.

**C009/24 Clerk's Report and Correspondence to be noted.**

The Clerk reported Mid Suffolk District Council has confirmed there had been no call for an election during the notice period, following the resignation of a Councillor and the consequent vacant seat on Council. There exists now a casual vacancy, to which Council can co-opt, if it so wished.

**C010/24 Committees**

**Governance & Finance Committee.**

**C010/24/1a Accounts for Payment and Confirmation.**

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

Cllr Annis proposed adoption of the Accounts for Payment and Confirmation. Cllr Ost seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C010/24/1b To confirm Council's budget 2024/25 and agree the Council Tax Precept 2024/25.**

Cllr Annis confirmed Council's budget of £162,000 for 2024/25 and referred Councillors to a paper circulated to them which set out options relating to Council Tax Precept setting.

Cllr Annis proposed setting a Council Tax Precept of £161,909.19 for 2024/25, which represented a year-on-year increase of 4.9% and a Council Tax of £88.93 for a Council Tax Band D property. Cllr Ost seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

The Clerk referred to one of the unavoidable cost increases Council will face from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Mid Suffolk District Council is to increase its charge for the waste bin emptying service by 25%. The Town Council has 45 waste bins located across the town.

**C010/24/1c To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.**

Cllr Annis presented the Income and Expenditure accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and proposed they be adopted. Cllr Darnell seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

Cllr Annis confirmed the next meeting of the Governance & Finance Committee will be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

**C010/24/2 Community & Assets Committee.**

**C010/24/2a To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.**

The Clerk referred Councillors to the Skate Park Report produced by Cllr Phillips, which had been circulated and, a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

Cllr Lea pointed out any proposal relating to a skate park being created on the former Needham Market Middle School Playing Field, would need to take account of the proximity of residential property and there are also constraints within the lease the Town Council has obtained for the playing field, which prohibit uses.

The Clerk confirmed the lease for the playing field is finalised and an audit of what the land includes, and potential uses, will be arranged prior to public consultation on its future.

**C010/24/2b To receive a proposal from the Climate Action Group.**

Cllr A Reardon presented her report on the Community Orchard Proposal, which had been circulated and, a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book. The proposal included 4 unanswered questions. Question 3 referred to ‘Lease terms relating to planting and responsibility’.

Cllr A Reardon proposed, in the event the Climate Action Group ceases to maintain the Community Orchard, its responsibility would transfer to the Town Council. Cllr Lawrence seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

The Clerk confirmed he is engaging with Council’s insurer regarding appropriate cover for volunteers working on the Community Orchard.

Cllr A Reardon reported a further 6 residential properties had been surveyed under the Thermal Imaging Project using the Council’s own camera.

Cllr Lea proposed the end of meeting time be extended by 10 minutes. Cllr Annis seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C010/24/3 Planning Committee.**

**C010/24/3a To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.**

Cllr O’Shea presented draft Minutes from the Planning Committee held 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Cllr O’Shea referred Councillors to concerns raised in the draft Minutes relating to 129 High Street where planning permission has been granted and work is being undertaken, plus a planning application in respect of the quarry at Gallows Hill, which he described as involving technical issues.

Cllr O’Shea referred to a Call for Sites Notice received from Mid Suffolk District Council in relation to that Council’s progress with the production of the Joint Local Plan Part 2 DPD and which could lead to planning applications for substantial tranches of land for development. Cllr Lea commented it was a previous Call for Sites exercise that had prompted the Town Council to take forward the Relief Road Concept.

**C010/24/3b To receive a report on the review of the Needham Market Neighbourhood Plan.**

Cllr Ost presented his report, which had been circulated and, a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book. A further meeting of the Review Group is to be arranged.

A member of public representing the Needham Market Preservation Society spoke briefly regarding the long-term impact of potential housing development.

**The Meeting closed at 9:40pm.**

Chairperson ..... Date .....