

STURMER PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the **COUNCIL MEETING OF STURMER PARISH COUNCIL** held at **STURMER VILLAGE HALL** on **28 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 7:30 PM**

COUNCILLOR	IN ATTENDANCE
Cllr Diana Garrod (Chairman)	YES
Cllr Alan Carter	YES
Cllr Terrie Jones	YES
Cllr David Porth	YES
VACANCY	
VACANCY	
Cnty Cllr Peter Schwier	NO - meetings

CLERK – Locum Clerk - Luke Brown

0 Member(s) of the public

23/084	NOTE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR THE ABSENCE County Cllr Peter Schwier – other meetings
23/085	WITH REFERENCE TO THIS AGENDA MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO DECLARE ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE INTERESTS Cllr Diana Garrod – Item 23/095 (a) Footpath 3
23/086	APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON TUESDAY 10 OCTOBER – 2023 RESOLUTION – Approve the minutes of 10 October: Proposed Cllr David Porth; Seconded Cllr Alan Carter - unanimous
23/087	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION <i>This provides an opportunity for members of the public to raise questions and comment on items on the agenda or of import. Time for this session is limited to 15 minutes (03 minutes per person)</i> None present
23/088	RECEIVE COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS Full report – APPENDIX A
23/089	RECEIVE CLERK'S REPORT & NOTE CORRESPONDENCE Clerk gave report to the council. Full report – APPENDIX B
23/090	FINANCE – RECEIVE FINANCIAL STATEMENT - AGREE PAYMENTS Finance statement to be attached RESOLUTION- Approve finance statement: Proposed Cllr David Porth; Seconded Cllr Terie Jones Finance statement – APPENDIX C 23/090(i) - APPOINT AUTHORISER Cllr Alan Carter duly appointed Authoriser 23/090(ii) – CONFIRM CLLRS NOTED RECONCILED BANK STATEMENT

	<p>Cllrs duly noted Bank statement.</p> <p>23/090(iii) – APPROVE BACK DATED PAY AWARD FOR 2023-2024 WHICH INCLUDES A ONE OFF PRO RATA GROSS PAYMENT OF £281.06 (AMOUNT WILL CHANGE DEPENDING ON MONTH OF ACTUAL PAYMENT) WITH AN INCREASE TO THE SCP HOURLY RATE OF £1.00</p> <p>RESOLUTION – All Cllrs agree to the pay award. Proposed: Cllr David Porth Seconded: Cllr Terrie Jones</p> <p>23/090(iv) – CONTRIBUTE TO THE OUTLINE 2024-2025 BUDGET PREPARATION TO INFORM THE FINAL PRECEPT APPLICATION IN JANUARY 2024 Council considered the budget for the coming year with a proposed increase of 5%, although this may not cover the expenditure projected for tree management.</p> <p>23/090(v) – RECEIVE UPDATE ON ACCOUNT OPENING WITH UNITY TRUST BANK Currently no further update from Unity Trust Bank. Cllr's signed the document.</p> <p>23/090(vi) – CONSIDER GRANT BID FROM THE VILLAGE HALL FOR £850 Cllr's agree that this is to be integrated into the budget moving forward. RESOLUTION- Council approved the grant of £850. Proposed: Cllr Diana Garrod; Seconded: Cllr Terrie Jones CLERK to ACTION</p>
23/091	<p>REVIEW & COMMENT ON CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS/APEALS</p> <p>Ref. 23/02614/FUL Proposed security fencing, 2No. entrance gates, bin store and relocation of cycle store - Phoenix House, Phoenix Road, Sturmer Comment date 11 December 2023</p> <p>Having considered this application, the council has the following observations and or comments - The council has NO OBJECTIONS</p> <p>Ref. 23/02705/FUL Development of a ground mounted solar farm, including energy storage, associated infrastructure, access, landscaping and grid connection cable. - Land South Of Sturmer Hall, Church Walk, Sturmer Comment date 19 December 2023</p> <p>Having considered this application, the council OBJECT to the proposals and has the following observations and comments, Historic England to be invited to likewise comment on the proposals – see APPENDIX E</p> <p>RECEIVE ANY UPDATE ON THE ALLEGED FOOTPATH ISSUE AT THE WOODLANDS HOTEL DEVELOPMENT SITE No further input to date from site developer, to go on next agenda.</p>
23/092	<p>CONSIDER ENGAGEMENT OF QUALIFIED ARBORIST TO COMPLETE TREE SURVEY ALONG AMENITY WALK AND PRODUCE DETAILED REPORT ENABLING COUNCIL TO INVITE CONTRACTORS TO TENDER FOR THE IDENTIFIED WORK SCHEDULE. CURRENT OFFERS TO COMPLETE SURVEY PRICED AT Q1 £495, Q2 £600, Q3 up to £1,500, Q4 £960 (BDC has advised that the S106 fund could not be used for this purpose, nor the maintenance works to the trees along the Amenity Walk)</p>

	<p>RESOLUTION- Council would like to go with the contractor based at Lavenham (Q4) – Clerk to confirm. All Cllrs agree.</p> <p>23/092(i) – CONSIDER DEVELOPMENT OF TREE MAINTENANCE POLICY, example circulated to members Policy to reflect survey. Item deferred to the next agenda.</p>
23/093	<p>RECEIVE ANY AVAILABLE UPDATE TO PROPPED BRIDGE INSPECTION WORKS No update.</p>
23/094	<p>RECEIVE UPDATE ON REQUEST FOR ANDREW BILBY, ESSEX HIGHWAYS, FOR SITE VISIT REF. DROPPED KERB AND ROAD CROSSING ON A1017 ADJACENT TO BUS SHELTER</p> <p>Some Cllrs have not received the report. Further comment deferred to the next agenda.</p>
23/095	<p>RECEIVE REPRESENTATIVES REPORT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Footpaths - Footpath 3 has not been cut, barriers remain in place and has not been walked. Footpath 17, 18, 19, and the bridle path 24 have all been rolled by the landowner/contractor. b) Flood Action Group – SFAG report attached – APPENDIX D c) Play Area – Council to consider replacing the slide. Possible use of S106 money. Council to contact the public to find out their opinion. Also consider changing areas of wood chip to hard standing surface where safe to do so, to reduce weed growth. Cllr Alan Carter leaf blowing this month. d) Parish Maintenance – Last cut has been done. e) War Memorial – Large metal poppy chained to the war memorial, council agreed take it away and keep it in storage in the village hall until the next Memorial. f) Village Hall – Fright night went well even the police got involved to make the night a success. <p>[f](i) – Defibrillator function – All in good working order, volunteers still in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g) Highways – Popes Court, Light No1 Unit ID 187691, the unit turned live which means that the outside turns electric and can be dangerous. UKPN were called out to disconnect the service from the unit. This is now waiting to be repaired and reconnected. The ECCLlr cannot give a time frame of when this will be done.
	<p>MOTION TO BE AGREED - <i>Approve exclusion of the public</i> <i>Members of the public will be asked to leave the meeting for the next item, Exclusion of Public and Press - Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the following item on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt and commercially sensitive information</i></p>
	No public or press present.
23/096	<p>RECEIVE UPDATE ON THE VG52 LAND SALE PROPOSALS No update.</p>
	<p>MOTION TO BE AGREED – <i>Approve readmission of the public</i> <i>Members of the public to be readmitted to the meeting</i></p>
	No public or press present.
23/097	REVIEW OPEN SPACES ACTION PLAN (now called Potential Open Space Improvements Plan)

	Suggestions by the parish council for the POSIP. The Parish Council (PC) should add replacement play equipment to the plan. New signage, safety railings and boundary fences. Resurfacing dips, holes, and areas that puddle. Increase biodiversity, such as new planting and animal nesting. An amendment regarding the redundant allotment, which states the SPC own it but they don't.
23/098	ITEMS OF REPORT TO BE NOTED OR ADDED TO NEXT COUNCIL AGENDA Light (ECC) at Pope's Court, Water Lane (flooding monitoring update), Unity bank, budget and precept to be finalised, dropped kerb to be discussed. Any other matters arising from these minutes.
23/099	DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 9th January – CLOSE @ 8:50

Signed.....Date.....

APPENDIX A

District Councillor's Report to Parish Councils November 2023

Cllr. Diana Garrod - Bumpstead Ward

Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders & Roadworks

Intended closure of Camps Road, Helions Bumpstead. Due to commence on 28th November for 3 days whilst Anglian Water undertakes meter exchange.

Intended closure of Braintree Road, Halstead Road, Queen Street, Potter Street, Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, due to commence on 15th January 2024 for 6 days whilst Essex CC undertakes machine resurfacing. Details at: <https://one.network/?tm=135750313>

Wethersfield Asylum Centre Update

Since the decision was taken by the Home Office to use the site to house asylum seekers, Braintree District Council has used legal routes to challenge the decision.

On 29 March 2023, BDC started legal proceedings to challenge this decision by applying for an injunction. This was on the grounds that we believe the Home Office could not rely on the use of permitted development rights (known as Class Q) as a way of getting around the need for planning permission. The injunction application to restrain the Home Office from using the site for this purpose was heard on 19 April 2023 and the High Court decided not to grant BDC with the injunction. BDC took this to appeal and on 23 June 2023 we received the Court of Appeal's judgement that this was not successful.

In July, Braintree District Council was given permission to pursue a judicial review which took place at the High Court over a two-day hearing on Tuesday 31st October and Wednesday 1st November. This was alongside another legal challenge by a resident from Wethersfield and West Lindsey District Council for the RAF Scampton site.

Mrs Justice Thornton considered arguments from both parties, with Braintree District Council challenging the Home Office on their reliance of the use of permitted development rights (Class Q), the Environmental Impact Assessment screening direction and compliance with the Equality Impact Assessment. A decision in relation to the challenge on the Home Office's use of RAF Wethersfield to house asylum seekers will be made at a later date after the High Court reserves judgement, so we will have to wait a little while longer for a final decision.

Braintree Local Highway Panel and the Bumpstead Ward (update)

At the July meeting it was reported that the following schemes had been cancelled. It was not known how much of the funding allocated to these schemes would be carried over to the 2023/24 financial year as this was dependent on how much had already been spent on them.

LBRA168003 – (Public Rights of Way) Public Right of Way improvements, Byway 43, Steeple Bumpstead
Estimated Cost:- £45,500

It was decided that the following schemes be recommended for approval and included in the programme of work for 2023/24:-

LBRA213006 – Provision of dropped kerb, A1017/Crunch Croft, Sturmer
Estimated Cost:- £14,500

It is recommended that the following schemes, the status of which has been assessed as ‘red’ as they do not meet the criteria, are removed from the list of potential schemes subject to the specific comments denoted:-

LBRA173003 – Footway improvements, Hill Lane, j/w the A1017, Sturmer
Estimated Cost:- Not known

That the following schemes be subject to the specific comments denoted:-

LBRA222066 – Relocation of 30mph sign, Finchingfield Road, Steeple Bumpstead

Estimated Cost:- Not known

(Note:- (Classified as ‘in validation’). This scheme is within Hedingham Division, not Braintree Eastern Division. K Louis to update the ‘Schemes Awaiting Funding’ report).

LBRA222067 – Speed reduction, Water Lane, Steeple Bumpstead

Estimated Cost:- Not known

(Note:- (Classified as ‘in validation’). This scheme is within Hedingham Division, not Braintree Eastern Division. K Louis to update the ‘Schemes Awaiting Funding’ report).

At the September meeting it was decided that it be recommended that due to the exact value of Braintree Local Highways Panel’s remaining budget not being known and to the limited time remaining within the current year to implement works, priority be given to those schemes listed in the ‘Schemes Awaiting Funding’ report which relate to ‘design’ works, or to the ‘design’ element of those schemes which have been identified as ‘total schemes’ and that once it has been confirmed how much funding will be available, Members of the Panel be advised by E-Mail and requested to approve the schemes recommended for funding. Also that the following schemes be subject to the specific comments denoted:-

LBRA203002 – Design for new footway, Water Lane, Steeple Bumpstead

Estimated Cost:- £26,000

(Note:- (Classified as ‘green’). It was noted that Essex Highways Design Team had expressed concern about commissioning this scheme due to legal issues. D Maclean agreed to contact the Design Team to discuss what could be done with this scheme and whether it could be given priority).

NB: Kandice Louis - Highway Liaison Officer, Essex Highways has now stepped down. It was noted that another Officer had been appointed to replace Kandice and that they would be in post prior to the Panel’s next meeting on 18th January 2024.

Essex Recycling Centre Bookings Consultation

Whilst I expect many in the Bumpstead Ward use the Haverhill centre in Suffolk. I know that sometimes it is necessary to travel to Saffron Walden, Essex for some items. The consultation about the bookings process takes just a few minutes. The consultation closes Sunday 19th November 2023.

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/news/2023/recycling-centre-bookings-consultation>

Flooding – Government announces funding for flood-hit areas

There were areas in the Bumpstead Ward which were recently impacted by flooding. The Government announced new funding to help recovery and make homes and businesses more resilient for the future.

Details at:- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-support-for-flood-hit-areas>

Essex County Council is the authority responsible for Flooding, Drainage & Manhole Covers. However, I will of course continue to raise concerns and assist where possible. Residents should be made aware of how to report problems to ECC. This is done at: <https://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us>

Essex County Council say: *"If you or your residents do come across flooding it can be reported through the 'tell us' tool on the Essex Highways website. Our communications teams will also put information up on the Essex Highways social media channels, so make sure you are following these for the latest information. If it is an emergency - such as a fallen tree - and potential risk to life, please call 0345 603 7631."*

There is also information, including flood strategies and responsibilities at: <https://flood.essex.gov.uk/>

Parish Council's may wish to keep a copy **Braintree District Council's Public Emergency Response Plan** with their own Emergency Plan. This can be found at: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/homepage/52/emergency-plan-for-the-braintree-district>

Police Fire & Crime Commissioner - Meeting

Braintree Public Meeting - 22nd November 7pm to 8pm

Venue - Braintree Town Hall Fairfield Road, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3YG

Roger Hirst says: "For me, safe and secure communities are the bedrock on which we build success and prosperity. Good policing means our residents feel secure and safe in their homes and on Essex streets."

Fly Tipping

Last month I provided information about fly tipping and was asked further questions:-

2022/23

- Number of fly tipping incidents investigated - 183
- Number of prosecutions - 4
- Number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued - 10

2023/2024 to date

- Number of fly tipping incidents investigated - 78
- Number of prosecutions - 3
- Number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued - 6

The number of Fixed Penalty Notices and Prosecutions is dependent on evidence being found in a fly tip. Unfortunately, in lots of cases evidence is often not available, and we are unable to take any further action. In areas where there are persistent fly tipping problems, we use CCTV to try and identify the perpetrators. You can report fly tipping at: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/streets-transport-parking/report-fly-tipping>

Ice Rink at Braintree Shopping Village

From 10 November until 7 January 2024. Currently offering a discount on bookings.
<https://braintree-village.com/ice-rink-2023>

Various Funding Opportunities Available at:-

I would be grateful if parish councils would convey to local groups and organisations:-

<https://www.community360.org.uk/blog/category/funding/>

<https://rsnonline.org.uk/rural-funding-digest-november-2023>

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding>

<https://www.find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants>

<https://tescostrongerstarts.org.uk/>

<https://www.sportengland.org/funds-and-campaigns/our-funds/small-grants-programme>

Cllr. Diana Garrod

Braintree District Councillor - Bumpstead Ward

APPENDIX B

Tree on neighbouring land riverbank along Amenity Walk is due to be reduced or may be removed by now?

Cement works confirmed they are operating within their licence terms but recent additional works are ending or may have ended by now?

Council has four quotes to provide tree survey services, Q4 being the closest to Sturmer, members have been circulated sample tree survey reports

S106 funds not available for spend on tree works along Amenity walk, urge members to revisit the Open Spaces Action Plan now called (POSI) Potential Open Spaces Improvements document

Footpath issue through Woodlands site being resolved by developer

Members have been advised that all areas of Outstanding National Beauty have been renamed National Landscapes

Members have been advised of the following - A request from Andrew Rutter, Suffolk CC Planning Officer requesting further information from Acorn following the consultation. He has highlighted some very salient points and we await Acorn's response - they have 30 days to reply and may well ask for an extension.

Council are still able to submit objections, so if you have not already done so, or have other issues you wish to raise, please do contact Suffolk County Council

The council have received various communications from the bodies that support this sector including BDC and ECC and all other matters are covered by the agenda.

APPENDIX C

Sturmer Parish Council Finance Statement - November 2023								BUDGET	ACTUAL	BALANCE	
								11,937.00	7,118.85	6,236.76	
Date	Supplier	Description	Invoice	BACS/DD	Minute Ref	Rec	Credit	Debit	VAT	NETT	Cost Cnt
Month Closing Balance							18654.56				
	A&J Lighting	Lighting maintenance	37738	DD		Y		27.00	4.50	22.50	Lighting
	DRAX	Electricity Lighting	22252/24767	DD		Y		25.86	1.23	24.63	Utility
	Employee	Expenses - Travel	Nov claim	FPO				16.20		16.20	Admin
	Employee	WFH allowance	N/A	FPO				26.00		26.00	Admin
	Employee	Salary	PAYE	FPO				470.75		470.75	Clerk
	DH Maintenance	Parish maintenance	Inv1224	FPO		Y		150.00		150.00	Maintenance
	HP Inc - IB	Printer Ink / 6	818485	FPO				2.75	0.46	2.29	Admin
	ICO	Subscription	N/A	DD		Y		35.00		35.00	Subscription
	UKPN	Wayleave	N/A	BGC		Y	3.45				Income
NOVEMBER							18658.01	753.56	6.19	747.37	
Month Closing Balance							17904.45				
S106	Source - Exp 30-04-27	Open - Spend to date	Description	Balance							
	Wheel Chase	20,103.56		20,103.56							
Oct-20		5,664.00	Play equipment	14,439.56							
Jun-23		1,410.00	WM & Bench	13,029.56							

APPENDIX D

Dear Alan

Please give the following update from SFAG to the PC meeting on 28 November:

Sturmer Station Bridge

Cllr Schwier and Stuart Froud of Highways Structures visited the village to see the flooding events recently.

We understand a budget has been allocated for rerouting utilities on the bridge in 2024/25 but this has to be approved by ECC Members - possibly at the Cabinet meeting on 16 January 2024.

Hill Lane

Glenn Shaw from Essex Flood Team visited the village to see if woody dams could be installed at the top of Hill Lane to hold back some of the water which floods the lane and the A1017. It is not possible because if they overflowed they would flood the Highway. He will contact Highways to see if Highways can help with other problems in the lane.

Thanks

Linda Bevan

SFAG

28 November 2023

APPENDIX E

Date: 02/01/2024

Planning Dept
Braintree District Council

Dear Sirs,

Ref. 23-02705-FUL

Development of a ground mounted solar farm, including energy storage, associated infrastructure, access, landscaping and grid connection cable. - Land South Of Sturmer Hall, Church Walk, Sturmer

Having considered this application the council OBJECTS to this proposal and wishes the following comments and observations to be taken into consideration –

The site sits within very good quality agricultural land with 28.3 hectares (92.5%) being Grade 2 and the rest is Grade 3a land, classed as best and most versatile land (BMV). The NPPF requires local planning authorities to take into account all the benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV). This solar farm development will have a harmful impact on the UK's food security for at least the next 40 years (2), but with the probability of this being extended.

The site location lies within the Stour Valley Project Area and is an area of particular outstanding beauty. The Dedham Vale AONB (now National Landscape) states that this site is within their much aspired 'Project Area'. In 2020 Alison Farmer Associates (Cambridge) produced a Valued Landscape Assessment for the Stour Valley Project Area (on behalf of the Dedham Vale AONB) which included the area in which this site sits. The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to protect and enhance valued landscapes and

sites of biodiversity and recognise the character and beauty of the countryside and the benefits of the best and most versatile farmland in the policies and decisions.

It is not in the Local Plan and will cause visual harm, harm to this treasured amenity and harm to the openness of the landscape.

Less than one mile away, and partly within the historic village of Sturmer, another application for a solar farm awaits a decision by West Suffolk Council. The cumulative effect of large numbers of solar farms in this area are dramatically altering wildlife habitats, the views of this valued countryside and the key features that punctuate it. A second solar farm in this small village will dramatically change the bucolic visual aspects, open spaces and walking areas for residents, who have made a constructive choice to reside in this much-loved, rural village.

- 1] The loss of the appearance of open countryside within the vicinity of the development, the site seemingly industrial rather than agricultural.
- 2] The loss of productive arable land potentially for up to 40 years.
- 3] The proximity of the site to properties both in Sturmer and Steeple Bumpstead
- 4] The effect of both glint and glare from the panels on properties in both Sturmer and Steeple Bumpstead.
- 5] The need for attenuation of water runoff from panels to limit water level rise in Bumpstead Brook which would have an adverse effect on water levels in Sturmer
- 6] There should be no access to the site, if permitted. from Hill Lane, Sturmer.

Yours faithfully,

I Brown

Ian Brown
Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer