

# RICKINGHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held Thursday, 7 December 2023  
Rickingham Village Hall

**Present:** Cllr Gillian Crossley-Holland Cllr Andy Gordon  
Cllr Ian Patterson Cllr Brian Rhodes  
Cllr Geoff Short (Chair) Cllr Sally Smith  
  
County Cllr Jessica Fleming  
Several Members of the Public

7.30pm The Chair welcomed those present and opened the meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Parish Clerk – Leeann Jackson-Eve and District Cllr Gilly Morgan.
2. **Casual Vacancies:** There were no applications for seats on the Council.
3. **To confirm the minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2023:** The minutes, circulated prior to the meeting, were agreed as a true record.
4. **Magazine Input:** Cllr Gordon.
5. **Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations:** None.
6. **Public Forum:** Several members of the public attended the meeting, with the recent flooding events as the main matter of concern. On this subject Cllr Fleming took the opportunity to present her report (previously circulated to members of the Council): Referring to Storm Babet and the heavy rain experienced since, Cllr Fleming stated that SCC continued to compile evidence and asked that members of the public continue to report to the website that has been established for this purpose. She commented (in response to a query as to whether SCC pays any attention to what is reported) that unless it was reported we could be confident that nothing will be done, and therefore encouraged residents to report. She also drew attention to the advice available online for anyone affected by flooding, and to the specialist insurance company FloodRe; a joint Government and insurance industry initiative. She gave assurance that SCC would pay more attention drain and culvert maintenance; she stated that it was accepted that this had lagged in recent years.

Cllr Fleming also confirmed that SCC was finalising its budget for 2024/25, and that in doing so some unpopular decisions would be inevitable.

Cllr Rhodes asked Cllr Fleming when he should expect SCC to request the report he had prepared on the flooding events in Rickingham. Cllr Fleming suggested that although the deadline was the end of January, he should submit it without waiting to be asked.

Attendees expressed a great deal of concern regarding the failure to maintain drains and ditches on land owned by some members of the community, some of whom (it was suggested) either did not recognise this riparian responsibility, or failed to meet that responsibility. One attendee reported that he had been forced to clear a neighbour's drain when it became obvious that the responsible landowner had no interest in doing so. A specific example was cited regarding a ditch in Candle Street, and Cllr Rhodes agreed to include this matter in his report. It was queried whether the Parish Council could make arrangements for drains and ditches to be cleared and charge the relevant landowner and it was confirmed that the PC had no such powers.

Concern was expressed regarding ongoing building work on Gardenhouse Lane: It was felt that the new drain being fitted in front of the new building was too small. It was reported that the contractor, when questioned, offered to install a larger drain.

The general feeling of the public forum commentators was that although Storm Babet had generated a lot of news coverage, subsequent significant rainfall, including (but not exclusively) rain from Storm Henk, had again caused flooding to garages, outhouses, gardens and driveways. It was commented by several that due to changing weather patterns and farming methods we should expect flooding events to occur with greater frequency. There was a general concern that SCC did not appear to be taking any meaningful action to clear drains and culverts, despite responding to complaints by giving a

timetable for action to be taken – and then extending the timetable having taken no action by the deadline stated. Cllr Rhodes in particular expressed his frustration at having been given two deadlines for action by SCC, neither of which have been met. He reported that due to lack of action by SCC he was aware of members of the community taking it upon themselves to clear public drains and culverts.

Cllr Fleming stated that she was unable to give a definitive response to these queries and concerns; it would depend on the extent and cost of what needed to be done. She agreed to report back to the Parish Council when she had more information regarding the action to be taken by SCC. She also explained that there was a meeting established at SCC to discuss flooding, and that members of the public were welcome to attend. She agreed to send details of the meeting and its agenda to the PC.

A concern was also raised regarding the frequent occurrence of drivers speeding through floodwater on Bury Road, causing significant wash. It was asked whether the PC could fund flood signage to encourage drivers to slow down when the road is flooded. Cllr Fleming offered to investigate funding for this.

7. **Planning:**

7.1 **Planning Applications:** None.

7.2 **Notice of Intent to prune/remove tree(s) in the Conservation Area:** None.

7.3 **Notification of Planning Decisions by Mid Suffolk DC:**

7.3.1 **Newholme, Bury Road.** Ref. DC/23/05507. Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - A 1/3rd reduction of Walnut tree (T1) as it is beginning to interfere with next door neighbour's roof. NO OBJECTION.

7.3.2 **Rose Cottage, The Street.** Ref. DC/23/05589. Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Remove No1 Eucalyptus (T1). NO OBJECTION.

8. **Progress Reports:**

8.1 **Chair:** None.

8.2 **Clerk:** None.

9. **Correspondence:**

9.1 **MSDC:** The PC noted the increases in the annual cost of emptying dog and litter bins from £37.13 to £69.00 per litter bin and £43.49 to £69.00 per dog bin. Four and eleven bins respectively would cost £1,035.00.

9.2 **MSDC:** The PC noted progress with the production of the Joint Local Plan Part 2 DPD with an invitation for site submissions to be put forward for residential land use for consideration for future development, i.e. Call for Sites.

10. **General Items:**

10.1 **Annual Parish Meeting:** It was agreed to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on 8 April prior to the regular meeting of the PC. The deadline for community reports was 29 March.

10.2 **Litter Pick:** It was agreed to set a date for 20 April.

10.3 **Internal Audit Review:** Cllrs Smith and Short would carry out the annual review and report no later than the March meeting.

10.4 **Flooding:** The PC considered the draft Storm Babet Evidence Form prepared by Cllr Rhodes. Cllr Rhodes was thanked for a most thorough report and it was agreed that it be immediately submitted to SCC, with any relevant amendments to reflect the significant comments and concerns expressed at this meeting.

10.5 **Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan:** The Clerk had written to previous participants.

11. **Finance (as of 31/12/23):**

11.1 <b>Account Balance:</b>	£ 33,415.85
<b>Bank Balance:</b>	£ 33,415.85
<b>Income:</b>	£ 0.00

11.2 **Accounts for Payment:**

Admin Payments	£ 963.74	Not itemised due to GDPR
Street Sweeping etc.	£ 182.35	St Clean January 2024
CC & Tree Services	£ 570.00	Wherry Land hedge/tree trimming

RESOLVED, with all agreed, to approve payment of the accounts above.

- 11.3 **Draft Budget 2024-25:** It was RESOLVED, with all agreed, to set a BUDGET of £36,700 for the year 2024-25 and to retain earmarked funds of £27,731.32, making a total fund of £64,431.32. The PC RESOLVED, with all agreed, to sign the form requesting a precept of £34,300 from Mid Suffolk District Council. This represented an overall 7% rise on the amount received in 2023-24.
12. **Highways Issues:** It was reported that there was a fallen tree across the footpath that ran to the north side of St George's Drive. There was also some concern regarding the state of the public boardwalk that ran behind the Great Events Company facilities.
13. **Welcome Pack:** None.
14. **Councillors' Reports:** None.
15. **Matters to be brought to attention of the Council:**
16. **Next Meeting:** 1 February 2024

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:35pm.