

TOSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the full Council held on 14 January 2025 at 7.30pm in Tostock Village Hall

Present: Cllr Jane Storey (Chair), Cllr Michael Baully, Cllr David Blundell
Cllr Paul Callow, Cllr Roger Cross, Cllr Julian Kearsley,
Cllr Glenn Lebbon and Cllr Andrew Sharkey.

In Attendance: County Cllr Andrew Mellen and District Cllr Harry Richardson;
One member of the public; and
Parish Clerk: Doug Reed.

25.01.01 **Apologies for Absence**

None. Cllr Sarah Cobbold was absent as she had resigned from the Council due to increased personal commitments. Cllr Storey expressed the gratitude of all for what she had achieved and for the commitment and thoughtfulness she had demonstrated during her time in office.

25.01.02 **Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

11.1 Interests: None.

11.2 Dispensation Requests: None.

11.3 Dispensation Decisions: None.

25.01.03 **Minutes of the Last Parish Council Meeting**

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

25.01.04 **County and District Councillors' Reports**

04.1 County Councillor: Cllr Mellen highlighted potential major changes to the way local government was structured and delivered in the county which, in the short term, could result in the elections, scheduled for May, being postponed until 2026. The longer term aim would see a new unified authority with Norfolk County Council led by a mayor.

04.2 District Councillors: Cllr Richardson noted that he was pleased to attend his first meeting of the Council as new District Councillor. His written report had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting.

25.01.05 **Public Comment and Questions**

Mr Chris Howells, who managed the SID (speed indicator device) used around the village, was present to discuss the potential acquisition of a second device. He noted that extra volunteers were still needed to assist currently and would certainly be required if a further SID was purchased. Updated prices would be sought from the supplier (Westcotec Ltd) ahead of informed discussion at the next meeting. Cllr Callow, Cllr Cross and Cllr Sharkey offered their help with the present device.

25.01.06 **Correspondence**

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

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- ◆ Having written to major contributors to the "Tostock Chronicle" seeking their help to limit their content such that the newsletter could be restricted to 16 pages, she was pleased see the latest issue had achieved that target.
- ◆ She had received information about Council furniture that was available and would retain the details in case of any future requirements.

25.01.07 Finance

07.1 Responsible Financial Officer: It was noted that the NatWest current account stood at £5,783.06 and the reserve account at £63,016.90 further to which it was resolved that the reconciliation be approved.

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

- ◆ Gipping Press Ltd: "Tostock Chronicle" (December/January) - £260.00;
- ◆ Clerk: salary (December) + homeworking allowance (£26.00) - £372.50;
- ◆ Clerk: salary (January) + homeworking allowance (£26.00) - £372.50;
- ◆ HMRC: PAYE (December) - £86.40;
- ◆ HMRC: PAYE (January) - £86.40; and
- ◆ Mr O Holland: litter-picking - £77.40;

Income received was duly noted as follows:

- ◆ NatWest: reserve (deposit) account interest - £67.44;
- ◆ NatWest: reserve (deposit) account interest - £74.50; and
- ◆ "Tostock Chronicle": advertising - £75.00.

07.3 Community Infrastructure Levy: The total fund was unchanged at £59,130.99. Cllr Storey agreed to check on the potential Suffolk Highways works to Church Road which were to be financed from this source.

07.4 Finance Working Group/Budget and Precept 2025-2026: The Working Group report was introduced, as Chair of the Group and Finance Councillor, by Cllr Kearsley who noted the much improved financial position achieved as a product of tough decisions taken last year and subsequent rigorous budget management which had, especially, seen the Council debt paid off and costs of the "Tostock Chronicle" reduced without detriment to its value to residents. Also, the lack of any reserves had been addressed consistent with recommended best practice for parish councils. As a consequence of the effective financial control, the Group proposed no rise in the precept such that the Council element of the council tax demand would be unchanged at £53.38 (based on Band D). Accordingly, the Council resolved to approve the Group recommendations as follows:

- that the precept for 2025-2026 be set at £12,463.00; and
- that the budget (as presented) be approved for 2025-2026.

07.5 Internal Audit: As recommended by the Finance Working Group, it was resolved that Heelis and Lodge be retained to conduct the internal audit of the Council for 2024-2025 at a cost of £170.00.

25.01.08 Environment and Biodiversity

Further to recent correspondence regarding village trees with the Arboricultural Officer at Mid Suffolk District Council it was agreed that the Council Tree Officers be asked if they would identify any trees in the village which might benefit from a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

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25.01.09 Ongoing Matters

09.1 Easement: This item was moved to the end of the meeting.

09.2 Land Registry Tribunal: There was no further news.

25.01.10 Planning

10.1 New Applications:

DC/25/00108 Cruachan, Norton Road - erection of a single storey rear extension (following removal of conservatory). The Council had NO OBJECTION.

10.2 Decisions:

None.

10.3 Applications Awaiting Decision:

None.

25.01.11 Matters for the Attention of the Council

The Council was pleased to send its congratulations, via Cllr Callow, to the Crochet Group on its truly excellent Christmas display on the Village Green.

25.01.12 Motion to Exclude the Press and Public

It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the final substantive agenda item on the grounds that, while any decision was of public interest and would need to be recorded formally, the discussion leading to that decision would be likely to involve personal and/or confidential data which it was not in the public interest to disclose and which needed to be properly safeguarded on behalf of all concerned.

25.01.13 Easement (Village Green)

The Council was briefed on the current position regarding a request for vehicular access across the Village Green. In particular, this centred on recent correspondence with the homeowners and with the Regional Valuer (District Valuer Services). It had already been confirmed that the Village Green was in the registered ownership of the Council and, thereby, protected in perpetuity for the enjoyment of local people. As a village green, it was also statutorily protected from any encroachment and development. After considered discussions, it was agreed that if the Council was to accede to the request then the only possible way forward was through an easement but that this would have to be achieved at no cost to the Council given that employing local authority money to the direct benefit of any individual or individuals would be an inappropriate use of public funds. Cllr Callow would look to progress matters on behalf of the Council but it was emphasised that all councillors would be kept properly informed.

25.01.14 Next Meeting

It was noted that the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council would be held on Tuesday 11 March at 7.30pm in Tostock Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45 pm.