



# FRAMSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

**All Councillors are reminded of their obligations under the Code of Conduct Regulations.**

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at Framsdén Village Hall

Attendance	Dominic Vaughan (DV)	Ian Seager (IS)	Neil Mellor (NM)
	Claire Macaulay (CM)	Sarah Clare (Clerk)	Matthew Hicks (MHi) County Councillor

Public present at the meeting: 3

FPC 24-02-01 Appointment of Chair

CM was nominated as Chair by DV, NM seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**

The acceptance of office form was signed

FPC 24-02-02 Apologies for Absence

Glen Buckingham (GB) & Nicola Whitmore (NW) had both sent their apologies due to work commitments. The Council accepted.

Nick Hardingham (NH) District Councillor had also sent his apologies, due to family commitments.

FPC 24-01-03 Declaration of Interests

CM declared interest in FPC 24-02-10 j) as a director of Sustainable Framsdén.

CM, DV and IS declared interest in FPC 24-02-10 m) as a member of Framsdén Community Benefits Society (incorporating the Framsdén Pub Group), dispensations are granted to each of these members on the basis that: without the dispensation the number of persons unable to participate in the transaction of business would be so great as to impede the transaction of the business and that the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area. Dispensations were applied for and granted in May 2023 and are in force for four years or until the next election within the Parish.

FPC 24-02-04 Public Forum

None

FPC 24-02-05 To Receive District Councillor's Report – District Councillor Nick Hardingham (NH)

The most recent report from the District Councillor was presented to the Council and is now posted on the village website [www.framsdén.onesuffolk.net](http://www.framsdén.onesuffolk.net)

FPC 24-02-06 To Receive County Councillor's Report – County Councillor Matthew Hicks

The most recent report from the County Councillor had been received, circulated to the Council and posted on the village website [www.framsdén.onesuffolk.net](http://www.framsdén.onesuffolk.net)

MHi brought attention to the following:

A consultation is about to start relating to the "County Deal" that has been proposed for Suffolk as a way of devolving authority to the County Council from Central Government. The proposed deal potentially puts Suffolk on a very different level to the current status. Essentially it means that in 2025 the Leader of the County Council would be elected by the public, not by the County Councillors, with the public being asked to cast two votes – one for a County Councillor for their area and one for the Leader of the Council (in a similar way to the mayor, but without the extra tier of government that a mayoral office would necessitate). Taking this route

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means that Suffolk gets a better funding package, with medium term settlements offering better certainty, rather than the current one-year deal system. The Leader of the Council will not be able to impose top-down decisions, all Council decisions will still need to go through cabinet and full council, so the way in which the Council functions will not change, but Central Government will have one accountable person to communicate with instead. Currently Suffolk is in the same position as all the other unitary authorities in the country and fighting for funding settlements, having a directly elected leader would help to secure the financial future of the county for the benefit of all residents.

Suffolk Highways are struggling to cope with the worst damage to the network ever recorded. The scale of the damage incurred over the winter is unprecedented. During the 21/22 winter there were 3,097 pothole notifications, 22/23 winter had 5,800 potholes reported, so far winter 23/24 has seen over 11,000 potholes reported – an increase of 85%. Alongside this there has been a significant increase in flooding on the network, last year there were 1,700 reports of flooding, so far this year there have been 8,000. There has been a 64% increase in emergencies reported on the network in the five months of winter since last October. The increase in scale means that the resources and teams were just not in place at the beginning of the winter. Back in October there were 12 gangs employed on the highways, there are now 24 gangs, but despite this increase in workforce only 79% of repairs are being carried out within the expected timeframe. The public are still urged to report any issues as soon as possible though, using the online reporting tool at Suffolk County Council's website.

A new piece of equipment – the Dragon Patcher – has been brought in to speed up pothole repair work on Suffolk's roads, but at the moment the water table is so high it is impossible to carry out full repair works and so teams are having to complete temporary patches, which they frustratingly know will fail again in a few weeks and require a further repair, but until the water table drops the final repairs cannot be completed. Each week the backlog of works is gradually catching up, as the weather improves, but for many situations it will be the summer months before the work can be finalised.

MHi noted that one of the issues of managing repairs works is that the highways funding comes through from Central Government in November – last year £4 million was awarded to Suffolk – until this money is agreed it is difficult to plan ahead, for instance it took a couple of months to recruit the extra workforce needed to manage the increased workload experienced this winter.

Complaints have also been raised with Suffolk Highways about the lack of drainage works being carried out in Suffolk. MHi explained that there are 149,000 drains in Suffolk, 111,000 of these are cleaned annually, with the remainder being on alternative schedules, such as six monthly, or two yearly. Electronic checks are carried out to confirm what regularity each drain requires. However, the excessive rains have led to greater silting up of the drain networks due to the amount of water running off fields. Some drains have blocked up again only two weeks after being jetted and cleaned, simply due to the extreme rainfall. RG Flowline is continuing to carry out routine drain clearance works, alongside other teams that are carrying out emergency response drainage works, as the cyclical maintenance must be maintained to avoid these areas also ending up with flooding or road damage. The teams that are working on the emergency flooding are not the same as those carrying out routine maintenance. There have been some instances, however, where the contractors RG Flowline have found some drains that were not registered on the system, these drains have unfortunately been identified because of flooding problems, but going forward at least they can be included on the maintenance schedules.

Suffolk County Council is looking to set up a Business Board, with the deadline for applications being 22<sup>nd</sup> March. People from all types of business are being encouraged to get involved, including those that may have retired, but are looking for a way to help their community.

DV raised a query about the work to repair potholes and road damage, noting that there are some areas that have been cordoned off and traffic light controlled for some time, without any evidence of works taking place. one such area being Otley Bottom. MHi explained that this particular case involved land belonging to the Environment Agency and Suffolk County Council has been waiting for permissions and licences to be granted to be able to start the work, which will involve the installation of gabions to prevent a similar occurrence. MHi understands that the licences have now been granted and the work is scheduled to take place in August. Frustratingly, the original planned work had to be re-evaluated following the damage caused by Storm Babet, which is another reason for the long delays.

Another area that has had traffic restrictions for a long time is in Debenham, where the road is not safe for two vehicles to pass together, as the bank on one side is at risk of collapsing, but MHi noted that it is not always clear to the layperson why road closures are in place.

DV noted that the A1120 at Boundary Corner has had water constantly flowing over the road from a drain since the autumn storms and in freezing conditions this is a major hazard, with at least two accidents already having happened. MHi was unaware and asked that this is reported using the online reporting tool as soon as possible, so it can be added to the work schedules. MHi noted that across the county many roads have experienced flooding this winter that have never had it happen before, the water table is so high that water is flowing out of drains in unexpected ways and it is unlikely to be able to properly get on top of the problems until the water table reduces later in the year.

CM asked what long term plans are in place to address the flooding situation, as experts are stating that due to climate change this sort of weather is only going to become more frequent. MHi said that at present nothing on the network was designed to cope with a storm on the scale of Storm Babet, but the Section 19 Flood Investigations that are going to be taking place will be looking at what can be done to mitigate the risks.

DV expressed disappointment that there are still developments taking place where housing is being built on historic flood plains and asked when this is going to stop. MHi said that this is a District Council issue, as they are the ones who draw up where housing should be built and agreed that there are instances of historic flood maps predicting where flooding was likely to take place and in Debenham the predictions had been absolutely accurate. CM asked if the Devolution Deal for Suffolk could help stop the building of houses where flooding is predicted. MHi explained that the Devolution Deal would not affect the District tier of government and the District Council is duty bound to follow national policy framework, even though local areas vary significantly. Since 2015 though any new build developments have to demonstrate adequate flood mitigations, including the incorporation of attenuation ponds to slow down water flow.

A parishioner present expressed surprise at how a District Council could overrule a devolved County Council, but MHi explained that this is just how the deal has been set up by Central Government, some areas would be very much more under local control, such as skills and transport, but other areas would still remain separate.

A query was raised about whether there is any funding available to help with the proposed upgrade of the village hall. MHi noted that he still had some locality budget funding available, but the deadline for application is rapidly approaching at the end of March. The funding would only be for a maximum of 50% on any project.

IS raised concerns about the constant risk of flooding, citing the storms of 18<sup>th</sup> February, where a large percentage of The Street in Framsdén was again under water. IS wanted to know when the Section 19 work will take place. MHi explained that Framsdén was high on the list for the investigative works, which have already started in some villages, but due to the sheer amount of work required in the wake of Storm Babet it could take up to 18 months or more to finish the work in the county. In the meantime, MHi urged anyone affected by flooding to take advantage of the grants available for flood mitigation works, which could include such things as non-return valves on sewer systems and flood gates to protect properties. These grants are designed for homeowners to use to help protect their property and not the wider work of land drainage. CM said that she had heard of one resident who had considered installing floodgates, but had been warned that if the water was then displaced and caused flooding to neighbouring properties they could potentially be held liable for the damage caused. MHi had not heard of this before.

IS returned to the query about the locality budget funding, explaining that the scheme for improvement is quite substantial. MHi noted that he has only £6K in funding to be spread across 24 villages, so it would be better to speak to the District Council and see if they could offer help from their Communities Fund. IS asked whether there was any chance of a locality budget grant towards infrared heaters at the hall, MHi said this was more the scale of the grants he could look at, but urged Councillors to consider the matter carefully, as some other halls in the county have regretted switching to infrared heaters.

#### FPC 24-02-07 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 as a true and accurate record, were proposed by DV, seconded by IS and **WERE SO RESOLVED**. The Minutes were signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

#### FPC 24-02-08 Matters Arising and Action Points from January minutes

1. Consider what amendments may be necessary for the Framsdén Footpath map and send this information direct to GB. ONGOING
2. Obtain quote for reprinting of the Framsdén Footpath map once necessary amendments have been made, ready for consideration at the next meeting. ONGOING

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3. Look again at the Climate & Ecology Bill, so that it can be reconsidered at a future meeting. To be discussed later in meeting.
4. Submit responses to planning department at District Council as agreed. DISCHARGED
5. Confirm booking of scrap metal skip with Sackers and send reminder email out to the village closer to the time of the litter pick on 24<sup>th</sup> March. DISCHARGED
6. Confirm acceptance of the amended proposal from Plug-In Suffolk for EV Charging Points at the Village Hall. DISCHARGED – waiting for Plug-In Suffolk to take the next steps.
7. Make contact with UK Power Networks to arrange to upgrade the electricity supply at the Village Hall to cope with the planned extra load from the EV Charging Points. ONGOING
8. Consider ways to commence consultation/surveying/grant funding process in relation to the Village Hall upgrades. To be discussed later in meeting.
9. Contact Diocese and explain that the evaluation process for upgrading the Village Hall will be taking place in the coming months. ONGOING
10. Circulate flood evidence template to the village via the Parish Council email system and ask Framsdon Fundraisers to do the same, collating any returned information in preparation for Section 19 investigations. DISCHARGED
11. Send email out to residents detailing information about the Call for Land for Nature Recovery. DISCHARGED
12. Publish meeting dates for 2024-2025. DISCHARGED – Annual Parish Meeting to be moved to Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April instead of 11<sup>th</sup> April.
13. Publish re-adopted policies on the website as agreed. DISCHARGED
14. Advise SALC that the NJC pay settlement has been accepted. DISCHARGED
15. Circulate email about charitable donations to the village. DISCHARGED
16. Publish budget as approved at the meeting on the village website. DISCHARGED
17. Submit precept request for 2024-2025. DISCHARGED
18. To distribute payments as approved at the meeting. DISCHARGED
19. Return signed mandate form to the bank for actioning. DISCHARGED
20. IS raised a concern about how the Parish Council could help people to report flooding. The Clerk explained that links to online reporting tools are available directly from the village website and this was the best way to access help from the agencies involved in dealing with a large variety of situations.

FPC 24-02-09 Planning

- a) To consider planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting:
- i. DC/23/05531 – Householder Application – Construction of extension – Dove Barn, Otley Road, IP14 6HU

Councillors had all studied the application in advance of the meeting. After discussion it was decided to submit an **OBJECTION** to the application.

- Concerns about over development of the environs of a listed building. The original application was for a smaller residence, the new proposals would be doubling the size and potentially doubling the number of vehicles.

CM proposed, DV seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**

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- b) To consider any planning applications which have been submitted since agenda published: None
- c) Updates and outcomes on previous planning applications: None

FPC 24-02-10 Parish Council Activities & Projects

- a) To consider co-option to Council - Nobody came forward for co-option. The Clerk confirmed that the vacancy is published on the village website.
- b) VHMC Report to include:
  - i. Update on VH Development Plans – NM explained that the VHMC have agreed to set up an Open Day on 21<sup>st</sup> April offering a three-hour drop-in session to get people to come in and comment on the plans. The funding element will only be progressed once a better idea of what the preferred plan is and what money is therefore required. A volunteer has come forward to help with funding applications. CM noted that one of the issues of applying for funding is that three quotes are needed for any work before the funding bodies will consider the application, which can be very time consuming to obtain. A query was raised about where the church would be involved with the upgrade plans. NM explained that once the village consultation has taken place and it is clear which is the preferred option, the diocese would then need to be involved for permissions and consent to be granted, as the landlords of the village hall. IS noted that when the existing lease was drawn up it included a clause for potential improvement works to the village hall, especially with regard to accessibility. NM will draft an email for circulation to the village about the consultation session.
  - ii. Cleaning Contractor – The current cleaner has resigned from the post. Thanks were expressed from the Council for all the work done. NM agreed to send out a request via the email system and the village WhatsApp group to see if there is anyone willing to take on the role in the same format as the previous cleaner, operating as an outside contractor.
  - iii. Village Hall Role in Primary School Emergency Plan – The hall booking clerk had been alerted that the Primary School has included use of the Village Hall as their evacuation centre. The school have done an informal test recently. It was noted that the school need to be aware of the keycode to access the hall and they must be updated when the code is changed. NM will advise all regular users of new key code.
  - iv. Infrared Panel Heaters – Following comments by MHi about other venues experiencing problems with this sort of heater, Councillors agreed to explore the matter further before committing the changing the heating system. NM suggested that the VHMC speak to local contractors who have experience in installing the panels for advice.
  - v. VHMC – IS thanked the new member of the team who has joined the committee to help run the hall and also expressed thanks to NM for organising the minute taking and for drawing up agendas. IS also noted that a couple of other volunteers have come forward on an ad-hoc basis to help him with maintenance in the Village Hall Garden, which has taken about 30 hours of work in the last couple of months, including GB providing a trailer for removal of garden waste from the site.
- c) Consideration of Annual Play Area Inspection Report and any necessary remedial works – The Clerk had circulated the report for Councillors to consider. After discussion CM summarised that there were only a few very low risks noted. One of the main concerns was that the wooden benches had suffered rotting and the simplest solution would be for these to be removed. The other issues raised were mainly around the two older pieces of equipment that needed some repainting works. The Clerk will seek recommendations from the Play Area Inspection team for any contractors who may be able to carry out the required works.
- d) Car Parking for Play Area – There are some outstanding grant monies in Council reserves relating to the Play Area refurbishment, that could be spent on improving car parking facilities at the Play Area. CM apologised that she had not had a chance to look into what could be done and asked that this matter be deferred to the next meeting.
- e) Next steps to consider to set up a Community Speedwatch Group – As NW was not present and had offered to be the group co-ordinator, it was agreed to defer this matter to the next meeting.

- f) Consideration of adoption of Suffolk's 20's Plenty campaign – DV and IS both thought that local residents should be consulted before anything is imposed on the village, but it was noted that the current request is just asking whether the Parish Council supports the principle. If a speed limit change was likely to happen it would involve a full Traffic Regulation Order from Suffolk Highways, which would automatically involve a public consultation.

CM proposed agreeing to the principle, DV seconded, one voted in favour, one abstained and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED** to agree to the 20's Plenty for Suffolk motion which states: "Framsden Parish Council supports the 20's Plenty for Suffolk Campaign aims for 20mph and a change to Suffolk's speed limit policy and calls on Suffolk County Council to implement 20 mph in our village where appropriate."

The Clerk will advise the 20's Plenty for Suffolk Campaign of the Parish Council's support.

- g) To discuss and consider potential long-term village plans for Tollgate Corner – CM updated the Council on the current information from the District Council, explaining that there is potential for a long lease to be granted to the Parish Council when the current lease with the Helmingham Estate ends later in the year. The Estate are happy not to renew the lease if the wider village wants to take on the land, but this means that the village will need to come up with ideas. Proposals in the past have included a community orchard, village green or just open access space, such as a wildflower meadow. CM understands that the District Council is only looking at leasing the land as they want to keep their options open for potential future housing needs. IS raised concerns about the ongoing costs of looking after the land, depending on the use proposed, but noted that wildflower meadow is currently regarded as an endangered habitat, so this would be a good option and relatively low cost. CM said that she would prepare a questionnaire to go out to the village to seek opinions, but wanted it to be very much specific options, not open ended for ideas. Any use needs to include open access as much as possible for the widest benefit of the village, so even a wildflower meadow would need to be open for families and children to visit and enjoy.
- h) To review and re-adopt Standing Orders in light of Procurement Threshold changes - Upon review the Council agreed that there are no amendments to be made beyond the uplift of the statutory procurement threshold figures. CM proposed adoption for the coming year, DV seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish the agreed Standing Orders on the village website.
- i) Consideration of Parish Council response to Suffolk County Council's Local Transport Plan Consultation – The consultation had been circulated to the village for wider public engagement. After discussion it was agreed that the Parish Council would not give a formal response, instead leaving individuals to comment as they see fit.
- j) Sustainable Framsden CIC Community Event on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024 & the use of the Parish Council maintained email address list for circulation of information relevant to village groups – The Parish Council had previously agreed to support Sustainable Framsden CIC in their stated aims of improving the green credentials of the village and a request had been received for information about their events to be circulated using the Parish Council managed email list. It was noted that this email list is used at the Clerk's discretion to circulate information to residents from a wide number of groups and organisations, with the criteria being whether it was likely to be of interest and use to the residents, therefore there was no restriction on circulating information for Framsden CIC as and when required.
- k) Scrap Metal Skip & Village Litter Pick Preparations – CM has produced posters which will be going up around the village to publicise the event. Transport is available on request for anyone who needs help getting their scrap to the skip. The Risk Assessment for the Village Litter Pick has been completed and it is understood that GB has paint ready to refurbish the village sign - weather permitting.
- l) Plans to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day – CM had circulated a brief proposal to the Council for consideration. All present agreed to the plans as proposed. There is a possibility of a vintage WW2 vehicle that can visit the village and an offer of memorabilia that could be put on display. CM will produce a flyer to send out to the village, asking if there are any D-Day veterans in the village, or whether anyone has a family member who was involved in the landings, with an invitation to display photos of these individuals if people are happy to share. A Fish & Chip supper is being arranged, but will need to be booked in advance and the Village Hall is booked. CM asked the Clerk to email the church to see if bells are likely to be rung on the evening as part of the commemorations.
- m) Update on Doberman Inn – As GB was not present this matter was deferred to the next meeting.

- n) Review of consideration of pledging support to the Climate & Ecology Bill – Following review of the matter CM proposed pledging support, NM seconded all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. In essence the bill is designed to hold the Government to account to fulfil on their pledges. The Clerk will inform Zero Hour – the group campaigning for support to the bill – of Framdsen’s pledge.
- o) Consideration of rejoining Suffolk Wildlife Trust – The membership of the Parish Council to this organisation had inadvertently lapsed. In light of recent discussions about whether the Parish Council should be making charitable donations, it was agreed not to renew the membership as there is no tangible benefit to the village for the Parish Council to hold a membership and it was up to individual residents to become members if they wished to. It was agreed that should the Council draw upon the Trust for advice at help at any time in the future, that would be the appropriate time to make a one-off donation.
- p) Consideration of response to the Otley Neighbourhood Plan – The Clerk had circulated the plan for Councillors to consider. After discussion it was agreed to thank Otley for the opportunity to review the plan, but no formal comments would be made.

FPC 24-02-11 Finance

- a) To review the Financial Statement for the month, as supplied by the Clerk - The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Statement for March. There were no queries. NM proposed acceptance, CM seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Chair signed the corresponding Bank Statements to confirm the figures.
- b) To review and re-adopt Financial Regulations in light of Procurement Threshold changes – Upon review the Council agreed that there are no amendments to be made beyond the uplift of the statutory procurement threshold figures. DV proposed adoption for the coming year, CM seconded, all voted in favour and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will publish the adopted regulations on the village website.
- c) Consideration of whether to continue with petty cash float – During the Financial Regulation review it had become clear that the Parish Council should not be operating a petty cash system. In addition, the Booking Clerk for the Village Hall, who has been maintaining the petty cash float had expressed a liking to cease using the system. Hall hire payments can be made via online payment or by posting a cheque to the Clerk if required. Reimbursement for minor expenses can be made to Councillors at full Parish Council meetings upon presentation of a receipt, thus increasing the robustness of the financial reporting for the Council. CM proposed stopping the use of the petty cash system, DV seconded, one voted in favour, one objected and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will arrange for the return of the remaining petty cash to the Parish Council bank account.
- d) To agree payments as detailed on Payment Schedule - CM proposed authorisation, DV seconded and **IT WAS SO RESOLVED**. The Clerk will set up payments accordingly.

FPC 24-02-12 Matters of urgency to be brought to the attention of the Council

- a) Items for next agenda:
  - Review of Statement of Internal Control & Risk Assessment
  - Play Area Maintenance
  - Play Area Car Parking Area
  - Next Steps for Community Speedwatch Group
  - Update on Doberman Inn

FPC 24-02-13 Confidential Matters

None

Items for the May Agenda – please notify the Clerk of any further items for the agenda as soon as possible and by Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at the latest, with any accompanying paperwork ready to be circulated with the agenda upon publication.

There being no further business requiring the attention of the Parish Council, the meeting was closed at 9.21pm. The next Parish Council meeting is set for **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024** at 7.30pm, in Framdsen Village Hall

Signed ..... (Chair of meeting authorising minutes)      Signed ..... (Clerk)