

### Agenda Item 74 Councillor Dispensation

If there is an item on this agenda for which you have a pecuniary interest, you will not be able to take part in any of the discussion or vote on a resolution. However, if you wish the council to consider your request for dispensation you need to write to the Clerk ahead of the meeting stating your reasons on why you should be given a dispensation.

### Agenda Item 78c Planning Status

Date	Application Reference	Address	Planning Details	LCPC Minute	Parish Council Comments	Babergh DC Comments
01/04/22	DC/22/01690	Village Hall, Spout Lane, Little Cornard, Suffolk CO10 0NX	Full Planning Application - Change of use from agricultural land to open green amenity space to be used by the Village Hall and Little Cornard Village community for social events.	22/045a	Supported	Granted 25.05.22
12/05/22	DC/22/01710	Mere House, Bures Road, Little Cornard, Suffolk CO10 0NN	Planning Application - Change of use of land to increase residential curtilage and erection of an outbuilding and swimming pool.	22/57a	Supported	Granted 24.06.22
18/05/22	DC/22/02571	Stakers Spout, Lane Little Cornard Sudbury Suffolk CO10 0NX	Erection of single storey extension (amended scheme and re -submission of DC/21/04647)	22/57b	Supported	Granted 07.07.22
18/05/22	DC/22/02572	Stakers Spout, Lane Little Cornard Sudbury Suffolk CO10 0NX	Application for Listed Building Consent - Erection of single storey extension including internal alterations.	22/57c	Supported	Granted 07.07.22
07/06/22	DC/22/02907	Yorley Farm, Upper Road	Full Planning Application - Change of use and conversion of part of storage barn to extend nursery school			

## Agenda Item 79a Chairman Training

	<b>2022 / 23</b>		
	<b>Budget</b>		
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Admin	1,660.00		Payroll £150 / WFHA £208 / Clerk Expenses £250 / Training £600 / VH Hire £400 / Online Mapping £50

## Chairperson/leadership training

The online chairperson/leadership training consists of four modules - £26 +VAT per module. Each module is 90-120 minutes.

Suitable for new councillors and experienced councillors for a refresher

### Module one

Introducing the role of the chairperson and how to conduct successful meetings

- Wednesday 2 November - 7 pm

### Module two

Learn ways to stimulate debate, manage conflict and the style of chairing required

- Wednesday 9 November - 7 pm

### Module three

Understanding key roles and the value of good working relationships

- Wednesday 16 November - 7 pm

### Module four

Focusing on knowing your community and how to engage with them

- Wednesday 23 November - 7 pm

## Agenda Item 79b Clerk Training

### Duration

You will have access to the course and learning platform for 12 months once you are registered

### Commitment

200 hours of work

This includes:

- Workplace activities
- Training sessions
- Writing time
- Mentor support

### CPD Points

Claim a total of **20 CPD** points for completing CiLCA

### Delivery/Format

Online, self-paced

### Price

£410 (non-vatable)

Please note that the cost for the qualification is separate from the CiLCA Portfolio training course. Students must register for the CiLCA Portfolio training separately.

[Click here to view the CiLCA additional costs.](#)

Are you an SLCC member or a clerk in Wales? You could be eligible for a bursary. [Click here to find out more.](#)

### Requirements

Minimum of 12 months in post as a local council officer with a good working knowledge and understanding of a clerk's role and work involved (can be gained by attending courses, in-house training, and practical experience).

Attendance on a CiLCA Portfolio training course.

### CiLCA Training course

Students must register for the CiLCA qualification separately. This is the cost of a training course; you will need to pay a separate fee for submitting your work for the qualification.

- Virtual courses: delivered over 6 webinar sessions, for 2 hours once a month throughout the year – £250 + VAT for SLCC members, £300 + VAT for non-members
- OR
- Face-to-Face courses: delivered over 4 days, each day of the course covers all the questions within the five sections of the portfolio – £340 + VAT for SLCC members, £390 + VAT for non-members

County Association training cost, please contact your Local Council Association for their costs

<https://www.slcc.co.uk/qualifications/gpc/>

**Agenda Item 79c Councillor Training**

## Councillor training

The online councillor training consists of six modules - £26 +VAT per module. Each module is 90-120 minutes.

Suitable for new councillors and experienced councillors for a refresher

### Module one

Introducing councillors to their roles and responsibilities within the council

- Thursday 1 December - 7 pm

### Module two

Introducing the powers and duties a local council has and the councillors role in financial matters

- Thursday 8 December - 7 pm

### Module three

Providing an understanding of procedural rules and how to ensure the council has effective meetings

- Monday 31 October - 7 pm
- Thursday 15 December - 7 pm

### Module four

Introducing the Suffolk Code of conduct

- Monday 7 November - 7 pm
- Thursday 5 January - 7 pm

### Module five

Providing a basic introduction to the planning system

- Thursday 12 January - 7 pm

### Module six

Introducing the importance of community engagement and the importance of adopting relevant policies

- Monday 21 November - 7 pm
- Thursday 19 January - 7 pm

## **Agenda Item 80     Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020**

Available from LGA website (printed copies will be available at the meeting).

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct-2020>

## **Agenda Item 81     Vexatious Complaints Policy**

### **Purpose of this policy**

This policy sets out the Council's stance on vexatious or abusive complaints (whether directed at a member of the Council, any third parties or organisations), demands and/or repeated requests for information including Freedom of information requests and how they will be dealt with.

This policy applies to all media and correspondence including, but not limited to; email, letter, social media (including public posts and direct messages), telephone (including text messages) and in person.

### Vexatious or Abusive Complaints/Freedom of information Requests

Most complainants or people making Freedom of Information Requests behave in legitimate ways. A very small minority make complaints/requests that are vexatious, in that they persist unreasonably with their complaints/requests or make complaints/requests in order to make life difficult for the Parish Council or to subvert the legitimate business of the Council.

It is acknowledged that complainants will often be frustrated and aggrieved and it is, therefore, important to consider the merits of each case rather than the way in which they are expressed.

It is not necessary to meet a person's unreasonable demands, or to answer every single point in an unreasonable letter. Judgement will be required to separate a person's legitimate queries from those that are unreasonable, often with the same complaint.

Skill will be required to respond tactfully and sympathetically. If the person's persistence adversely affects the Council's ability to do its work, the Parish Council needs to address such behaviour.

Where the Clerk is of the view that complaints, requests or persons could be identified as vexatious (in accordance with the criteria set out in Appendix 1), the Clerk will refer the matter to the Parish Council for a decision and their determination of what action to take. The Clerk will implement such action and will notify the complainant that their complaint/request is considered as vexatious and what action will be taken. The notification will be copied to all Councillors and a record kept of the reasons why a complaint/request has been classified as vexatious.

Vexatious complaints/requests may be dealt with in one or more of the following ways:

- In a letter, setting out a code of commitments and responsibilities for the parties involved if the Parish Council is to continue processing the complaint/request. If these terms are contravened, consideration will then be given to implementing other action as indicated below.
- Decline contact with the complainant, either in person, by telephone, email or any combination of these, provided that one form of contact is maintained which will usually be by conventional post i.e. letter.

- Notify the complainant/requestor in writing that the Council has responded to the points raised and tried to resolve the complaint/request but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. The complainant/requestor will also be notified that the correspondence is at an end and the Council does not intend to engage in further correspondence dealing with the complaint/request.
- Inform the complainant/requestor that the Council intends to seek legal advice on unreasonable or vexatious complaints/requests and behaviour
- Temporarily suspend all contact with the complainant/requestor in connection with the issues relating to the complaint/request being considered.

#### Restricting Contact

Any restrictions will be appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the person's contacts with the Council at the time such as:

- Placing time limits on telephone conversations and personal contact.
- Limiting the person to one form of contact.
- Requiring the person to communicate only with one named employee/member.
- If a complaint is currently going through the Council's complaints procedure, asking the complainant to enter into a written agreement about their future conduct if the complaint is to be progressed.

Closing the investigation into a complaint:

- Refusing to register and process further complaints/requests providing the person with acknowledgements only.
- Banning a person from the Council's premises.
- Involving the police where the person has committed, or threatened to commit a criminal offence (harassment, assault or criminal damage), or if the complainant/requestor refuses to leave the Council's premises.

The Clerk will inform the complainant/requestor in writing why a decision has been made to restrict or stop future contact, the contact arrangements, and the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.

There should never be a blanket ban for unspecified period unless the Council is legally required to do so following a Police investigation. The council should always try to maintain one form of contact which will normally be by way of conventional post. In extreme situations the Council will tell the complainant in writing that they must restrict contact to communication through a nominated advocate known and declared to be acting on their behalf.

In deciding which restrictions are appropriate, careful consideration will be given to balancing the rights of the individual with the need to ensure other residents, Council employees, Councillors and co-opted Councillors do not suffer any disadvantage or undue stress and the resources of the Council are used as effectively as possible.

#### Threatening and Abusive People and Harassment

The Council will not tolerate any behaviour directed to or about its Councillors, Council employees and Co-opted Councillors/Members which causes or may cause undue stress. The Council believes that any harassment, however delivered i.e. in person, on Social Media (including direct messages or public posts) or by any other form of communication is totally unacceptable. The Council will work to prevent any form of harassment from happening in the first instance and where it has already occurred, will work to prevent it from happening again.

Harassment is a term that is generally used to define unwelcome and unwarranted behaviour that affects the dignity of an individual or group of individuals. Harassment may also include actions characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or humiliating that attempts to undermine or injure an individual or group of individuals.

Where there is abusive or aggressive behaviour which produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or emotionally, on the staff or Councillors/Members which includes, but not exclusively, verbal abuse, bullying, shouting or swearing or threat of any of these behaviours the staff or Councillors/Members affected should step away from the situation and the person asked to leave the premises where appropriate.

This can mean terminating a conversation whether it is face to face or by telephone advising that the conversation is being terminated, and in the case of such behaviour in face to face contact in the office or public meeting the person should be asked to leave the premises.

All such incidents must be documented with the Clerk.

Following the termination of a face to face conversation, further correspondence will only be continued by written communication, either by post or email.

Any complainant/requestor who threatens or uses physical violence towards staff or Councillors/Members will receive written confirmation that they are being treated as a vexatious complainant/requestor and informed of the action that will be taken.

#### Legal References

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Section 14(10), public authorities do not have to comply with vexatious requests. The Council also has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees and Councillors/Members.

Appendix 1

Definition of a Vexatious Complainant/Requestor

This definition applies equally to someone making a complaint and to someone making a request for information.

Complainants/Requestors (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed to be vexatious where contact with them shows that they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint/request where the Council's Complaints Procedure or the Freedom of Information procedure has been fully implemented and exhausted.
- Persistently change the substance of a complaint/request or continually raise new issues or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further concerns or questions upon receipt of a response.
- Are repeatedly unwilling to accept evidence given as factual or deny receipt of an adequate response despite correspondence specifically answering their questions or do not accept that facts can sometimes be difficult to verify when a long period of time has elapsed.
- Repeatedly do not clearly identify the precise issues which they wish to raise despite reasonable efforts of the Council to address their concerns, and/or where the concerns identified are not within the remit of the Council.
- If the complaint/request is about essentially the same matter that has already been considered with only very minor differences and does not contain any new information. The most difficult vexatious complaints to deal with are often complaints that are slightly different from the original complaint, but about the same broad area of activity.
- Regularly focus on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance. It is recognised that determining what a trivial matter is can be subjective and careful judgement must be used in identifying frivolous complaints.
- Have threatened or used physical violence towards staff or Councillors/Members at any time.
- Have had an excessive number of contacts with the Council – placing unreasonable demands of staff or Councillors/Members. Discretion will be used in determining the previous number of excessive contact applicable under this section, using judgement based on the specific circumstances of each individual case.
- Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive towards staff or Councillors/Members dealing with the complaint/request. The Council recognise, however, that complainants may sometimes act out of character in times of stress, anxiety or distress and should make reasonable allowances for this. All instances of harassment, abusive or verbally aggressive behaviour will be documented.
- Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive towards any Councillors/Members of the Council, or co-opted Councillors/Members whether this has been on a face-to-face contact or at public meetings.
- Are known to have recorded meetings or conversation without the prior consent of other parties involved.
- Seeking to coerce, intimidate or threaten staff/Councillors/Members of the Council or other people involved, whether by use of language, tone of voice or behaviour including body language.
- Repeatedly raise grievances which are already proven to be without substance or foundation.



### Agenda Item 83    Emails circulated

If there is an email that I have circulated which is not included on the agenda and you consider it should be discussed, please raise the item at this point.

### Agenda Item 84    Clerks Report

<u>Tasks Complete</u>	
Minute Ref	
22/52	Minutes placed on website.
22/54	Confirmed V Shennan as internal auditor for 2022/23
22/57 a-c	Planning comments sent to Babergh.
22/59	Email circulated re Neighbourhood Plan Referendum & Website re
22/61	emailed SWT re meeting & Moving of footpath signs
22/61	emailed D Gotts re footpath cutting widths
22/62b	instructed wardens re Quiet lanes signage
22/64	contacted CIL team re funding
22/67	AGAR 22/23 sent to PKF for external audit
22/68	letter & follow up call with Parishoner re hedge

<u>Tasks Outstanding</u>
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<u>Highway Issues</u>	
SCC ref	
293897	Wyatts Lane - Reflective markers for steep bend missing on unlit bend of
294050	Missing barrier at the pond in Upper Road / Chapel Lane.

<u>Clerk Overtime Hours</u>
nil

<u>Clerk's Delegated Powers</u>
n/a

## Agenda Item 87a RFO Report

### Receipts & Payments

Date	Details	File Ref	Cheque Ref	Power	Receipts	Payments
01/04/22	Balance Brought Forward				13,350.08	0.00
11/04/22	BDC Precept	R01			3,970.00	0.00
06/05/22	HMRC VAT return 21/22				630.14	0.00
04/05/21	SALC - Annual Subscription	P01	591	LA 2011 ss 1 to 8	0.00	191.00
22/06/22	SCC Grant re Village Gateway Sign	R02			329.00	0.00
28/06/22	Clerk - WFHA Q1		633	LA 2011 ss 1 to 8	0.00	52.00
28/06/22	Clerk - Salary Q1		632	LA 2011 ss 1 to 8	0.00	552.95
29/06/22	HMRC - PAYE Q1		631	LA 2011 ss 1 to 8	0.00	138.00
					0.00	0.00

	Statement Date	Statement Balance	Actual Balance	Unpresented Cheques	Credits not shown	Difference
Treasurers Account	30/06/22	£19,307.77	£17,345.27	£1,962.50	£0.00	£0.00
Cash	n/a	£0.00	£0.00			£0.00
		£19,307.77	£17,345.27	£1,962.50	£0.00	

### Unpresented Cheque(s):

629 Groundwork UK NP Grant Repayment £ 1,962.50

## Agenda Item 87b Clerk's Expenditure

### To Follow

## Agenda Item 88d Footway Cutting email from Highways

**From:** Highways Investment Fund <[HIF@suffolkhighways.org](mailto:HIF@suffolkhighways.org)>

**Sent:** 22 June 2022 09:58

**To:** All Councillors (SCC) <[AllCouncillors@dist.suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:AllCouncillors@dist.suffolk.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Highways Investment Fund - Footway Skirting and Vegetation Clearance

**Importance:** High

Good morning,

I hope this email finds you well.

As you may recall, back in 2020 Suffolk County Council announced a £500k cash boost, described as the Highways Investment Fund (HIF) which would be used to improve the condition of signs and road markings outside of the county's schools, and re-line a number of high-use cycle lanes in key towns. This project has now been completed, and it has been decided that the remaining budget will be utilised to skirt back and clear vegetation from busy footways, ensuring they continue to provide a safe route for members of the travelling public.

I am writing to you today, to provide you with an opportunity to highlight any potential locations that you or your constituents deem high-risk, so that I can put together a priority-based list of future maintenance sites. Once I've gathered enough information, a final programme of work will be developed and I will update those of you who have raised issues accordingly. Please be aware that not all suggestions may be dealt with, however I will do my best to accommodate as many as possible.

If you could send details of problem areas to this inbox by the end of July, it would be greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Community Works Project Lead

Prepared by Martin Quinton