**Mulbarton Parish Council – 18th March 2024**

**District Councillor Report**

**Grants**

Members ward grants will open again in April 24. Contact your District Councillors for further information.

**Leader of South Norfolk Council**

Following his elevation to the peerage, John Fuller (now Baron Fuller of Gorleston-on-Sea) has announced that he will be standing down as Leader of South Norfolk Council.At the SNC Cabinet meeting on 18th March 2024, Lord Fuller announced that the Conservative councillor group will elect a new leader at a meeting on 25th March.

**Hethel Planning Applications**

**The major expansion of Lotus Cars' technology park could now be slowed down by planning issues.** The development has hit a potential snag after Norfolk County Council's flooding and historic environment teams lodged issues with the proposals.

The flooding department has called for an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment Drainage Strategy, alongside further information from Lotus on how it plans to ensure the expansion would not "adversely impact flood risk".

This comes amid a series of concerns raised about drainage issues in and around Hethel - including the impact of a 23-home development in Bracon Ash. The council's historic environment team also wants to investigate the land proposed for the site. A letter sent to South Norfolk Council's planning committee read: "There is potential for previously unidentified heritage assets with archaeological interest (buried archaeological remains) to be present within the current application site and that their significance would be affected by the proposed development.

**Hethersett Academy /Inspiration Trust**

Inspiration Trust has published the results of its consultation on admission arrangements. There will be no change to the admission arrangements for Hethersett Academy, which means that the new Cringleford Prep will become an additional feeder school. This will put even more pressure on school places in future years, potentially restricting opportunities for children from Mulbarton and neighbouring villages. The consultation received 247 responses.

**Flooding on B1113**

District Councillors are still active in attempting to resolve this, but to date we have still had no response from either County Councillor Daniel Elmer or Graham Plant, cabinet lead for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport. We are hoping we might achieve some sort of resolution in the near future however following an article published in the EDP on Friday 8th March following an interview with Ian Spratt, which highlighted your District Councillors concerns about the lack of response or action received so far. Speaking to other parish councils also concerned with this it has been suggested that a more coordinated approach should be considered by all parishes affected.

**Council Tax Increases**

South Norfolk voted to increase Council Tax by £5 for a Band D property (3%) at SNC Council on Wednesday 21st Feb. Budgets for 24/25 were signed off on the same day. Higher interest rates and VAT changes have created a surplus for 23/24. All political parties agreed late amendments to allocate the surplus to service improvements including £350,000 to the Household Support, strengthening planning enforcement and additional resources to work with landowners on flood prevention.

**Cllr. Stephen Ridley**

We note the unfortunate death of South Norfolk Councillor Stephen Ridley, who had represented Bunwell since 2019. This will trigger a by-election in due course.

**‘Norwich to Tilbury’ received 12th March.**

The ESO Network Study has just been published.

Pylons East Anglia have slammed the review of options for the grid saying:

*“The voluntary nature of the Government’s offshore coordination scheme (OCSS) resulted in a far too narrow review. For anyone in East Anglia seeking a fully offshore grid it is a whitewash. We see none of the cost or environmental benefits of integration that we would see from a fully coordinated offshore system, which would reduce the amount of infrastructure needed.  In fact, the OCSS leads to even more infrastructure on land, with potential for****additional pylons****between Friston, in Suffolk, and Tilbury, in Essex.”*

None the less, the review highlighted the potential economic, environmental and community benefits from using HVDC underground cabling. This has the highest economic benefits (even better than current pylon proposals) if delivery of both options were to be deferred until 2034. The Pylons East Anglia team say, “we will be studying this option very carefully”.

For the latest information visit <https://pylonseastanglia.co.uk>

**Bob McClenning, Ian Spratt & Jim Webber**

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|  | **Councillor Contact Details** |  |
| Cllr. Jim Webber | [jim.webber@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:jim.webber@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk) | 07394 323215 |
| Cllr. Ian Spratt | [ian.spratt@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:ian.spratt@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk) | 07554 668337 |
| Cllr. Bob McClenning | [bob.mcclenning@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:bob.mcclenning@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk) | 07769 030926 |