**Mulbarton Parish Council – 15th January 2024**

**District Councillor Report**

**Grants**

Members ward grants close on 1st March. Requests are needed ASAP.

**Hethersett Academy /Inspiration Trust**  
The Inspiration Trust has been consulting on changes to admission arrangements to Hethersett and Hewett Academies. The changes proposed would make Mulbarton Primary School the only feeder school to Hewett and would add an extra primary school to the feeders for Hethersett. The changes seem to further disadvantage children living in Mulbarton who wish to attend Hethersett Academy. Your Councillors are concerned at this discrimination by Inspiration Trust and are responding to the Consultation.

**Leisure Centre Update**  
The new E-gym equipment has been installed at Long Stratton Leisure Centre, providing state of the art training programmes for all ages and levels of fitness. This is some of the most up to date gym equipment in the Country.  
New discounted membership schemes will be available from April. Students and apprentices will receive a 40% discount on the full membership fee (£23 per month rather than £38), the concessionary discount will be 30% and over 65s who do not qualify for the concessionary rate can join a daytime/weekend scheme with a 25% discount.

**Hethel Planning Applications**

We understand that the Hethel Engineering Centre Phase 4 will not go to the January Development Management Committee as previously expected. Norfolk County Council continue to regard the flood risk assessment as inadequate.

The Environment Agency continues to object to the Hethel Hybrid application due to foul water drainage issues and concerns over groundwater protection.

**National Grid – Proposed Norwich Main Substation Extension**

Your councillors attended the initial consultation meetings at Swardeston and Stole Holy Cross at the end of November. Little information was available at this stage and this can be found on the [National Grid website](https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects/norwich-main-substation-extension#:~:text=Our%20public%20consultation%20closed%20on,have%20more%20information%20to%20share.). A planning application is planned for 2024 and construction would take around 2 years starting in 2025. The development will link power from the 3 offshore wind farms to the National Grid. The online consultation closed on 8th December 2023.

**Greater Norwich Plan – Village Clusters**

SNC is re-consulting on the village clusters housing allocations for 8 weeks starting December 11. There are no new sites proposed for Mulbarton.

**A140 North of Long Stratton Workshop**

Jim Webber attended an online workshop organised by the County Council in late November. Most contributors were from Parish Council’s bordering the A140. Congestion, economic growth and business needs, housing delivery and connectivity including sustainable transport were discussed. A report will be available in the new year.

**Flooding on B1113**

District Councillors are still active in attempting to resolve this. We understand that a new drain is being planned to better manage run off from the site into the river. A new temporary attenuation pond is being dug to improve on site water storage while the new drainage system is being installed. As this appears to be primarily the responsibility of Highways, your County Councillor was emailed 8th November. To date we have received no response. We have also tried to contact County Councillor Graham Plant, the cabinet lead for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport. After 2 emails, we have received an acknowledgement.

**Council Tax Increases**

The Government is consulting on its proposals for the Loval Government Finance Settlement. It is proposing that Council Tax referendum levels are set at 3% for district councils and 5% for county councils (reflecting county council responsibilities for social care). It is expected that Council Tax increases will be close to the maximum levels allowed without a referendum.

**‘Norwich to Tilbury’ Update**

In the November Autumn Statement, the Government announced the new 'Critical National Priority' (CNP) infrastructure policy and stated that communities near new pylons are likely to be offered discounts on their bills. CNP is a kind of fast-track planning category for wind farms and associated infrastructure but it’s not completely clear whether this will include the Norwich to Tilbury project.

On the 5 December, the Government published a statement confirming further funding for the investigation of offshore co-ordination between the North Falls and Five Estuaries offshore wind farms and National Grid, potentially avoiding the need for underground cabling or pylons across Essex. This could force a rethink of the Norwich Tilbury proposal. An initial report is expected in March next year.

A recent email from the Pylons East Anglia pressure group is copied below.

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

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**Extracts from Email From Pylons East Anglia pressure group** (<https://pylonseastanglia.co.uk> )

***Lack of transparency in consultation responses****. The non-disclosure of the relevant consultation responses undermines the legitimacy of the CNP policy. It ignores widespread regional opposition, including comprehensive feedback from our campaign, from residents, community representatives, academics, and council officers, and raises serious legal concerns relating to the Gunning Principles. This opacity suggests a disregard for community voices and a potential breach of legal protocol.*

***Flawed CNP approach****. The CNP simply magnifies and exacerbates the current fragmented, costly approach to grid development, potentially leading to an unnecessary £6 billion expense. Conversely, an integrated offshore grid solution enjoys widespread public support, as evidenced by a 27,000-signature petition, and statements from regional MPs, councils, and other statutory bodies.*

*Moreover, the CNP's approach significantly harms environmental habitats, including the proposed UNESCO East Atlantic Flyway Natural World Heritage Site and many priority habitats.  This contradicts the Environmental Principles National Policy Statement which requires policy makers to avoid harm.*

*The CNP ignores a number of studies, not least the National Grid ESO’s own report which set out the harms of the piecemeal approach and, significantly, the many benefits of an integrated approach.*

***Community Benefits – a misguided approach****. The community benefits under the current proposal are wholly inadequate and trivialise the substantial losses faced by homeowners and businesses. These benefits cannot and will not substitute for true comprehensive compensation and are perceived as a nothing more than a “Band-Aid” to cover-up deeper infrastructural and environmental issues.*

***The alternative. An Integrated offshore grid – faster, better, and cheaper.*** *We propose an integrated offshore grid as a superior alternative. This approach aligns with the government's environmental commitments, saves £6 billion nationally, and enjoys broad public and political support. It represents a sustainable, economically sound, and environmentally responsible path forward. We urge you to pivot towards this internationally recognised (and implemented), solution in the Autumn Statement. Choosing the integrated offshore grid will signal the UK's commitment to responsible energy infrastructure development, attracting wind farm developers and benefiting the environment, local communities, and the taxpayer.*