

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL,
7.30pm 12th MAY 2025.**

PRESENT - Mr P. Mortimer, Mrs C Pryce, Mr B Lee-Harwood, Mr J Gadsdon, Mr P Smith

Clerk- Mrs L Duckett

No members of the public were present.

1.ELECTION OF CHAIR 2025/2026

Mr P Mortimer was nominated by Mrs C Pryce, seconded by Mr P Smith. The Parish Council were unanimous in electing Mr P Mortimer as Chair. Mr Mortimer informed the meeting that he would be standing down from the Parish Council at the next election. He also informed the meeting that the Clerk had handed in her resignation but would remain in post until a replacement was found.

2.APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr P. Schwier, Mr D Hall, Mrs D Fowler, Mr C Osborne, Cllr Lloyd (SCC), Cllr Hadingham (MSDC).

DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE/INTEREST

There were no changes to the declaration of acceptance/interest forms previously submitted.

ADOPTION OF REVISED STANDING ORDERS

The updated Standing Orders were circulated for review prior to the meeting. They were agreed and formally adopted. A full copy can be found under Governance on the village website.

3.APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

Vice Chair – Mr P Schwier (nominated by Mr P Mortimer, seconded by Mr B Lee-Harwood)

Responsible Officer – Mrs L Duckett

External auditor – Mrs W Abbott

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETINGS HELD 10th MARCH 2025.

The minutes were agreed and approved.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES –

The site operator for the illegal waste site at Withersdale Hall appeared in court on 30/4/25 and pleaded not guilty. The trial will take place March 2026. Until this time the site operator is under court bail conditions not to bring any waste onto the site. The EA have requested individuals contact the police immediately if they witness anything being brought onto the site. Breaching a court bail condition is an arrestable offence and repeated breaches of this condition may lead to the defendant being remanded in custody until their trial.

Negotiations continue with the road safety team as to the positioning of the posts for the SIDs. Once further information and photographs are provided it is hoped that the installation can move forward.

The Highways Community Liaison Engineer has been in contact with the Clerk. Some potholes have now been repaired but the Parish Council will continue to raise concern over any issues not being acknowledged. The Give Way post that has eroded and is lying on the grass will be raised again.

Funds have now been made available for the purchase of a new laptop via Cllr Lloyd's locality budget. The Parish Council thanked Cllr Lloyd and gave the Clerk permission to go ahead with the purchase.

6. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR HADINGHAM (as provided)

The MSDC monthly report was circulated prior to the meeting and can be found at the end of these minutes.

7. REPORT FROM SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL (as provided)

The SCC monthly report was circulated after the meeting and can be found at the end of these minutes.

8. MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Wareham family have contacted the Clerk requesting permission to site a remembrance bench for Brian and Sylvia Wareham somewhere within the village. The Parish Council were happy to support this.

It was agreed that the bench by the bus stop outside of the church and adjacent to their house would be the best position. The current bench will be moved to the children's play area. The Clerk will contact the family and request that it is constructed of recycled materials (similar to those in the cemetery) and of a similar size to the existing one.

9. FINANCE

i)Payments approved between meetings:

Suffolk Garden Services – Grass cutting £150 x 2 (No further approval required whilst within budget)

Metfield Village Hall Annual hire charges £46.00

Approved at Annual Parish Meeting held 15/4/25:

SALC annual subscription £233.12

Clerk Quarterly salary £384.55

HMRC Tax £87.20

ii)Payments approved at the meeting

Reimbursement to Clerk for gratuity for auditor £8.85

The Clerk had sought quotations for the annual insurance – so far two had been received –

Zurich (current provider) £632

CAS £563

Clear Councils -awaiting quotation

There is a significant increase on last year due to the increase in size of precept and additional assets (SIDs, benches, new play equipment etc). The Parish Council gave approval to go ahead with the cheapest quote.

iii)Sign off of the Accounting Statement for the year 2024/25.

No changes had occurred following the review of the accounts at the last meeting.

The accounts were approved. Full details of the accounts statement will be made available via the MetfieldSuffolk.com website under Parish Council/ Finance.

iv) Sign off of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25

The Annual Governance return has been completed and an external audit carried out by Mrs W Abbott. It was approved and signed and will be submitted according to requirements and made available to view via the MetfieldSuffolk.com website under Parish Council/ Finance. The public rights statement will also be posted in the same place and on the Parish Notice board.

Mrs Abbott did raise a query as to whether the lottery licence was required. The Clerk will check with the Village Hall to ensure there is no duplication.

10.PLANNING – TO REVIEW ANY CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

DC/24/03486 Householder Application - Erection of two storey side extension (following demolition of existing side extension). - Hattens Farm Fressingfield Road Metfield Harleston Suffolk IP20 0LL

This application has been approved.

DC/24/00579 - Retention of change of use of 2no existing farm buildings to a commercial use under Class B8 of the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended) Location: Vale Farm, The Common, Metfield, IP20 0LP

This application has now gone to the appeals office. There was no decision at the date of the meeting.

DC/25/00579 - Tree works in a conservation area, Ivy House, The Street, Metfield, Harleston Suffolk IP20 0LB

This application has been approved

DC/25/01425 - Construction of 5No solar panels to the south facing roofslope. The Dairy Lodge Fressingfield Road Metfield Harleston Suffolk IP20 0LL

This application was reviewed between meetings. No objections were raised. There was no decision at the date of the meeting.

The Clerk had noted that there was an application online indicating that a 12m pole would be erected on St Johns Meadow and that planning permission was not required. Following further investigation and dialogue with the planning office (further information was not available online), it was found that this would be some form of ariel for smart meter connectivity. As a result of the Parish Council queries this application will now require formal planning permission so that there is some input into its location. There is a small sign on the grassed area on Fressingfield Road opposite the Gables which suggests that is where it will be located, but the installer has pre-empted the need for planning permission, so this may not be the final position.

11. REPORT ON SEMINAR REGARDING TRANSFER TO A .gov.uk DOMAIN

The Clerk had attended an online seminar regarding the current government preference for all Parish Councils to move to a .gov.uk domain, and for all Parish Councillors to have specific .gov.uk email address. This would also mean the Parish Council would need to update to its own website. The Clerk found the seminar both informative and helpful with all other attendees representing small Parish Councils. The advantages of moving to the new domain would be that all councils are in line with government and all associated accessibility and security requirements. It was recognised that this would be an additional financial burden on the Parish Council as, as well as setup costs, there would be an annual maintenance cost. This could be anything between £35-100 per annum at current prices. Although it was confirmed there is no legal requirement for the transfer it is strongly recommended. There was much debate as to whether the Parish Council should go down this route, but it was agreed that the Clerk would ask Cllr Hadingham if there were funds available in her locality budget to assist with setup and investigate quotes for approved providers before any decision was made.

12. GRASS CUTTING

The Grass cutter responsible for cutting St John's Meadow has given the Clerk notice, although she thinks he will be willing to continue until a replacement is found. The Chair raised concern over escalating costs of grass cutting in general. A potential replacement has been identified, and discussions are currently ongoing. It was agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding would be required as a minimum with any new provider, whether volunteer or paid.

13. MILLENIUM WOOD

Mr Twiss had raised concern at the Annual Parish Meeting regarding the cutting of the hedge around the Millenium Wood as he is unable to complete the work himself. The hedge has now been cut, and he extended his thanks to Hugo and Cecilia Pryce. He is happy to continue cutting the grass. David Hall has offered hedge cutting services if required in the future, but it was thought that the issue had arisen due to a different contractor working for the Godbold family this season, who was unaware that the hedge should be cut.

14. MATTERS RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

None

15. CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence has been covered within the items above

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING Monday 14th July 2025

MSDC Report – as provided.



Local Government Reorganisation – latest

We are still awaiting the Government's promised feedback on our interim plan for local government reorganisation, submitted in March, but in the meantime we continue to work with the other district and borough councils to progress proposals for either two or three unitary councils to meet the differing needs of our county's diverse communities.

An important part of this process will be seeking the views of our town and parish councils, and the residents, businesses, organisations and communities across our districts.

We will be in touch over coming weeks with further information and would be grateful for your help to spread the message locally. Please look out for more details soon.

New regional mayor can bring benefits – but local views must be heard, councils say

The Government's proposed new Mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk can bring benefits to the region, but local communities must be fairly represented.

New-look grant sees more than £580k given to community projects

From filmmaking workshops to mental health support for young people, dozens of community projects across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received a share of more than £580,000 as part of a new grant from the district councils.

HOWZAT! A net result for new sports facilities in Stowmarket

Members of Stowmarket Cricket Club joined councillors from Mid Suffolk District Council this week to celebrate their new cricket nets – part of the council's investment in a range of improved sport and wellbeing facilities for the town.

Free leisure centre memberships for those living with Parkinson's

Leisure centres in Mid Suffolk are offering free memberships to people living with Parkinson's.

New grant offers significant funding for sporting opportunities across Mid Suffolk

Sporting infrastructure in Mid Suffolk is set for an overhaul thanks to a new grant offering significant investment in major projects.

Cash injection for communities in Babergh and Mid Suffolk

Town and parish councils in Babergh and Mid Suffolk are set to receive more than £813,000 in developer contributions to help community infrastructure keep pace with housing growth.

£100k awarded as culture prioritised in Mid Suffolk

Preserving East Anglian traditions, supporting dance-based dementia sessions and

getting children involved with theatre and the arts are among the ways Mid Suffolk District Council is investing in the district's culture.

Solar partnership brings boost for businesses

A new pilot partnership is set to turn solar energy into savings for businesses in Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Free compost for Babergh and Mid Suffolk residents

Green-fingered residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk can collect free compost in May as part of a drive to get people growing.

Free access to leisure facilities for community champions

Unsung community heroes across Mid Suffolk are being urged to step forward for a groundbreaking new scheme offering free access to local leisure facilities.

SCC Report - as provided.

Proposal to create one new council for Suffolk reaches latest milestone

Work will continue on proposals to scrap Suffolk's six councils and replace them with a new, single, fit for purpose, authority delivering all public services - after the Government encouraged further work on the plan.

The proposal, which independent analysis by accounting firm PwC shows would save over £104 million in just five years and £26 million a year thereafter, has been reviewed by the Government. The money saved could be reinvested in vital public services. Ministers have urged the proposal to be developed further ahead of the final plan being signed off in September 2025.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPS, said:

"The Government is encouraging all councils in Suffolk to continue to develop proposals for reorganisation. It's clear from their interim feedback that our single unitary council for Suffolk proposal best meets the criteria, and any alternatives will have to work hard to justify the risks of breaking up critical services like social care, creating new council boundaries and smaller population sizes.

"This is all quite apart from the significant extra cost of having more than one council. All the evidence shows that one council for Suffolk is the only viable option to deliver significant savings that can be reinvested into frontline services. In the first five years, early independent figures suggest a single council will save £104 million, while breaking Suffolk into three, as the districts and borough suggest, will cost taxpayers an additional £52 million. To be clear - their proposal would cost more than the current 50-year-old system!

"The savings from creating a single unitary council can be reinvested into frontline public services that benefit residents and ensure their council tax is as low as possible. The funding could be reinvested in services like pothole repairs, waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, parks and leisure, supporting town centres, school placements and travel and street cleaning.

"But this isn't just about money, it's about people too. A single council will absolutely be able to reflect and serve the whole of Suffolk, rural and urban, and our plans will clearly show how local priorities and residents' voices can and will be central to decision making.

"If we're going to create a truly sustainable and effective council structure for Suffolk, then one new council is not just the only viable option, but also the best one."

More than one council would cost more

Creating two or even three councils for Suffolk, including a Greater Ipswich, has also been proposed by the five district and borough councils in Suffolk. If three were created, it would mean expanding Ipswich's current boundaries to include areas like Felixstowe, Woodbridge and possibly even Needham Market – as well as the villages in between. But having multiple councils would actually cost money, not save it, and the costs will take years to get back. A key part of this calculation is the cost of breaking up critical public services such as social care. The national report by PwC has shown that the financial cost of breaking up services into three councils would be over £150 million, not to mention the risk to vulnerable people caused by the upheaval.

	1 council	2 councils	3 councils
break up costs over 5 years	£0	£92m	£155m
annual savings after 5 years	£26m	£9m	-£3m
savings in first 5 years	£104m	£12m	-£52m
one off set up costs	£19m	£26m	£32m

Figures from PwC

Flood schemes cash from government welcomed by council

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Operational Highways and Flooding, has welcomed confirmation by the Environment Agency of funding for flood relief schemes in Suffolk.

The agency has announced that it will be spending £68 million on projects across East Anglia, of which flood schemes in Suffolk have been allocated more than £14 million.

Flood relief schemes across Suffolk will receive a share of the money from the Environment Agency.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

"This is very good news as it means Suffolk County Council can continue to develop and deliver these important flood relief schemes.

"We have seen the devastating impact flooding can have on our communities and we know that we have to take measures to protect against it in the future, so I am very happy to see our schemes are being supported financially by the Environment Agency."

Suffolk County Council projects to receive funding are the Sudbury Surface Water Flood Alleviation Scheme, which receives £300,000, while Leiston Surface Flood Water receives £202,000.

The Sudbury scheme will add another flood storage basin to one SCC constructed in 2022 which will reduce the flood risk for more than 20 homes.

The Leiston scheme will provide property level flood protection to a total of 40 households in the town and some surrounding villages that have either experienced internal flooding, or are at high risk of flooding. Homeowners have already received an initial survey and installation is expected to commence in the summer. Suffolk County Council is contributing £58,000 of project management support to deliver this work.

We have also completed a SuDs in Schools project, working in partnership with Anglian Water and Department for Education at three schools, including the High School in Leiston. The project has resulted in flood attenuation measures such as flood storage basins, rain gardens, and planters that store water from downpipes. It has also provided educational resources so pupils can use the features to study the curriculum. The overall project will cost £190,000, with £180,000 of this secured from external partners.

The Benacre and Kessingland flood risk management scheme receives £10,105,000 of funding from the Environment Agency.

This is a £64m project that will ensure the A12 is protected from coastal flooding, it is being implemented by Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board but Suffolk County Council has provided £2 million and agreed to underwrite a further £2.7m to enable it to proceed.

Flood resilience schemes in Needham Market and Debenham as a result of Storm Babet also get funding - £560,000 in Needham Market and £81,000.

These projects, led by the Environment Agency, will fund flood doors and other measures to prevent flood water entering individual properties.

Suffolk County Council supported the EA to identify affected homes and promote the availability of this funding.

The council's Flood Investigations and Grants Team also administers a separate grant fund specifically to support those properties flooded during Storm Babet. This grant closes for new applications in May.

Suffolk Highways launches weeds and grass management programme for 2025

Spring has sprung and Suffolk Highways has commenced its summer maintenance works, which will see teams cut thousands of miles of grass verges and treat 2,300 miles of weeds.

Grass cutting is scheduled to start in May, with the grass verges alongside A and B roads across Suffolk being cut first and receiving two cuts each summer.

Verges alongside smaller roads, such as the county's C and U class roads, will be cut once during the summer season.

Cutting is typically undertaken by tractors with a flail as this is the most efficient and effective way to undertake the vegetation works and dry weather is required as, similarly to household mowers, wet grass can clog the machinery.

These cuts are solely for safety purposes and district and borough councils will usually supplement these with amenity cuts throughout the year.

Suffolk Highways does not cut village greens, parks and open spaces, or rural verges that are not adjacent to the road.

Weed treatments have already commenced across the county.

Two treatments are applied to weeds in urban areas across Suffolk annually if it is deemed that the weeds may pose a safety risk due to obscuring visibility for road users or causing damage to pavements, kerbs, or surrounding walls.

Weeds in rural areas are not included in the annual weed treatment programme but will be treated on a site-specific basis if they are identified as being harmful or noxious.

All weed treatments are weather dependent and cannot be applied in high winds or if rain is forecast due to this reducing the effectiveness of the treatment.

Glyphosate is currently used for the treatment as this is not harmful to people or pets and has proved to be more effective than alternatives previously trialled in Suffolk.

However, a substitute for this is still being sought to support Suffolk County Council's continued ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

"Summer maintenance, such as weed treatments and grass cutting, forms a significant part of Suffolk Highways' workload, with us spending £1.9m on these soft estate activities each year, which is around 12% of our annual revenue budget."

"As part of our ongoing commitment to providing value for money for Suffolk residents, careful consideration has been given to where we cut and treat. We would also ask that landowners play their part by ensuring that any vegetation on their property does not spread on to the highway or obstruct visibility."

"Last year, we cut more than 7,000 miles of grass, which is the equivalent distance of London to Singapore, and applied more than 34,000 weed treatments across the county, both of which are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our summer maintenance teams."

Further information on the [grass cutting programme](#) and [weed treatment programme](#), including the planned dates for this to take place in local areas, can be viewed on the council's website.

6,000 on-street and community EV chargepoints for Suffolk

Suffolk County Council, in partnership with operator Believ, will deliver around 6,000 new public electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints across the county.

Beginning in Summer 2025, thousands will be installed on residential streets, with many locations suggested by local residents following a survey last year.

The county council has also worked closely with district and borough councils and communities to identify further suitable sites.

The majority will be bollard-style units at the kerbside, suitable for long-stay or overnight charging. Drivers will be able to benefit from an overnight off-peak tariff, and a dedicated resident's tariff which features discounted charging at all times.

Public car parks will also see a number of rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoint installations, allowing for quicker charging.

The county council has made this project possible with a successful £5.3 million bid to the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. This roll-out will use a proportion of this funding with a further £16 million of funding provided by operator, *Believ*.

Councillor Philip Fairclough-Mutton, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality said:

"25% of Suffolk households don't have a driveway, and park on their street. This is a significant barrier for people who would like an EV, as they have no convenient way to charge.

"We are providing a solution by installing chargepoints on their street, or very nearby. Our ambition is to provide them with a public chargepoint within a 5-10 minute walk or wheel.

*"There are around 1.5 million EVs on the country's roads and we need thousands of new public chargepoints in Suffolk, and we need them quickly - around 5,400 by 2030, and 12,000 by 2040. Working with *Believ*, our new installations will bring a significant reduction to those numbers.*

"The benefits of EV ownership go beyond helping residents and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and their impact on climate change. It means together we can contribute to Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, improving Suffolk's air quality and enabling us to live healthier lives."

Suffolk County Council is the first local authority in England to both award their LEVI main funding tender, and subsequently sign a contract with an operator, meaning the installation of chargers can begin at pace.

Following a competitive procurement exercise, *Believ* will install, operate and maintain the chargepoints, which deliver 100% renewable energy.

They will also support the installation of rapid charging infrastructure at key community locations, building on the county council's successful 'Plug In Suffolk' project which launched in 2018.

In advance of all on-street chargepoint installations, local residents will receive letters with details of the work due to take place, including details on timescales.

Nature recovery plan aims to revive Suffolk's wildlife

A new strategy has been drafted to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and a consultation has been launched (Wednesday 16 April) for you to share your views.

Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help it recover.

Together these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Suffolk County Council has been leading on a strategy for the county, working closely with other local authorities, nature experts, and a wide range of interested organisations.

This has been coordination with Norfolk, through the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#). The two counties are working together to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and connect across the landscape.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:

"Last summer, over 1,500 Suffolk residents shared their thoughts on how we can all help Suffolk's nature recover, to help us put together this draft strategy for Suffolk.

"Having now drafted that strategy, we're keen to involve our residents and communities across Suffolk by receiving their own insights, so that we can amend as necessary and approve a final strategy later this year.

"Suffolk has pockets of diverse nature and unique landscapes, and this strategy will help link together those isolated areas that need improving and restoring. It will support landowners, land managers and farmers to work together for the benefit of the county's natural environment.

"It is a project which will not only benefit flora and fauna, but us as Suffolk residents - we can mitigate the risks to homes and businesses against inland flooding, create new green spaces to improve our health and wellbeing, and support farmers to bring new funding into the rural economy and generate employment and training opportunities."

The consultation on the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open to everyone in Suffolk - residents, landowners, land managers, farmers, businesses and the wider community.

There is also the opportunity to view and respond to maps of local areas, where specific measures to help nature could be taken.

Both opportunities to provide feedback will close on 11 June 2025, and can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations.

Infrastructure reform could silence Suffolk's communities in 'energy onslaught'

Suffolk County Council has serious concerns about proposed reforms to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, as announced by government (Wednesday 23 April).

It is part of plans to cut by a year, the delivery of clean energy projects, public transport links, and other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

This has potential for a significant impact on Suffolk's communities who are at the forefront of many NSIPs including solar farms, offshore energy and nuclear.

One of the proposals is to remove the duty on project promoters to consult and engage with communities before a project is presented to the Planning Inspectorate. Further, the duty to have regard to any comments on voluntary consultations undertaken by a promoter is also proposed to be removed.

Instead, there will be statutory guidance for developers with an expectation that consultation and engagement will still take place, prior to submitting an application.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

"These proposals to remove the duty on energy developers to consult with councils and local communities, are staggeringly tone deaf.

"Our communities need more and better consultation - not less. If the Secretary of State wants more opposition from local people to his decarbonisation targets, this is precisely the way to do it.

"For countless NSIPs past and present in Suffolk, local communities are rarely given the consideration and respect they deserve. These proposed changes claim to recognise community voices, but I fail to see how removing consultation can help make residents feel more involved.

"The minister may claim that these reforms will stop communities 'feeling fatigued and confused' with technical documents. However, I suspect these feelings are likely to be replaced with ones of anger and being ignored.

"Project proposers for large scale solar farms and the like, will be rubbing their hands together knowing that they can bypass community engagement completely and go straight to submitting their application. Engagement and consultation takes time and costs money, and given the amateurish approach we are already seeing from solar developers in the county it is highly unlikely that they will be willing to do this.

"Staggeringly, even if a developer chooses to undertake a voluntary consultation, the government is also proposing removing the duty to listen to what has been said.

"To publish such a radical amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill just 24 hours before oral evidence was to be heard, has given no time for proper public scrutiny. It is an act of cowardice and only serves to further undermine public faith in the planning process.

"Our county is facing an energy project onslaught. I have previously described Suffolk's NSIP landscape as the Wild West – these proposed reforms sadly just reinforce my view."

Suffolk County Council will be submitting written evidence to the Bill Committee outlining its concerns and opposition to the proposed changes.