

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 3rd April 2025, commencing at 7.30 pm. in the Village Hall.

Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, April 2025 Meeting Pack.

Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Frank Domoney, Lizzie Falconer, Iain Lamont, Roy Mawford, Irene Mitchell, Mary Morrey, Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Eight members of the public.

Opening Statement by the Chair:

The Chair began by welcoming everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of minute taking only and that after the minutes have been approved this recording will be destroyed. The Chair reminded all that this is not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Council held in public. Members of the Public were respectfully asked to maintain silence during the Council's deliberations and not to approach the Councillors. Councillors were requested not to engage with Members of the Public when Council is in session. All were asked to ensure that their mobile phone was on silent and were reminded to treat all present with respect.

1. Apologies and approval of Absences

The Clerk reported that Cllr Ranzetta was not present and had sent her apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Clerk reported that no Councillor had declared an interest in anything on the agenda.

3. Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk reported that he had received no further requests for dispensations.

4. To approve as accurate minutes of the 6th March 2025 meeting of the Council

Cllr Sherman commented that these minutes did not report that he had left the room during the discussion on Planning item DC/25/00457 'Land Off Norman Way' having declared an interest in the matter. The Clerk agreed to amend the minutes to correct this omission.

Proposed: Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman. **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

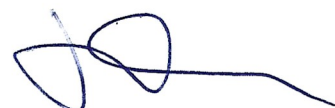
5. To approve as accurate minutes of the 13th March 2025 meeting of the Council

Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Domoney

Decision: Approved unanimously. Cllr Robinson abstained having not been at the meeting.

6. Public Participation Session

The Chair reminded Members of the Public of the protocol for this session. Those who wish to ask a question or make a statement have three minutes. Matters raised must concern business on the agenda or local matters. If a question cannot be answered tonight Members of the Public should contact the Clerk with their name and contact details and will receive a written response within 28 days. She explained that the Standing Orders of the Council are clear that this public participation session is for ten minutes and that it is at the discretion of the Chair whether further time is allowed or the session shortened. No Member of the Public wished to speak.



7. Chairman's Announcements

The Chair explained that consequent of the size of the Agenda for this meeting that she was keeping her announcements very brief.

She reminded Councillors that Council will be considering the implementation of the 20mph scheme that has been proposed by Suffolk County Council at the Council meeting to be held on Thursday 1st May commenting that details of this scheme are available on the Parish Council website and that the Clerk will advertise this upcoming discussion on Facebook and on the village noticeboards.

She told Councillors that Cllr Morrey had been in contact with the British Legion to understand their plans to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of VE Day. Cllr Morrey reported that the Legion are going to hold a barbecue and would be very grateful for a contribution from the Parish Council of £350. Cllr Morrey explained that unfortunately this information had not been available in time to include on this month's agenda but that she would bring forward a motion at the May 1st meeting. Councillors indicated that they would support this idea at the May 1st Meeting with the funds coming from the Street Fair Fund.

The Chair informed Councillors that it is proposed the Annual Parish Meeting will take place on Thursday May 15th with the Reverend Simon Pitcher attending to explain the T500 celebrations.

The Chair concluded by thanking Cllr Domoney for making her aware that both the Co-Op and the Butchers have joined the 'too good to go scheme'. The Clerk will advertise this scheme on the Parish Councils website. The scheme aims to reduce food wastage by making discounted food available to buy.

8. Local Authority Councillors' Reports

Cllr Maybury began by informing Councillors of events subsequent to the writing of the District Councillors report.

Following complaints about fouling by dogs Babergh Council are going to put up additional signs on Bears Lane. Babergh has received an additional £2.9 million of Central Government funding for improvements to the social housing stock to help reduce the energy bills paid by Babergh tenants to heat their properties. She has received correspondence concerning speeding on Bridge St Rd and how close on Bridge St Road the National Speed Limit sign is to the settlement boundary.

Cllr Clover reported that Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have agreed that two or three unitary authorities would best represent the local interests of Suffolk. This decision has been submitted to the Government. This is not the view of Suffolk County Council which has voted to have a sole unitary authority covering the whole of Suffolk.

Cllr Clover reported that consequent of the Governments housing target of 1.5 million homes to be built in the next five years Babergh DC has no option but to review the Joint Local Plan. He explained that this four year process will include strategic development, two public consultation stages, evidence gathering, examination and modification. He explained that the initial calculations show that the Indicative Interim Housing Requirement for Lavenham will be a figure of 400 new dwellings over the next 20 year period. Following deductions for residual dwellings on commenced sites (31) and sites not started (2) this gives a net figure of 367 new dwellings. He emphasised that these figures, although indicative only, should be factored in when developing any Neighbourhood Plan. Grant funding of up to £10,000 is available from Babergh Council to support the development of Neighbourhood Plans.

Cllr Mawford asked Cllr Clover whether the issue date of the revised JLP was likely to coincide with the date by which the Government aims to have achieved its 1.5m housing target. Cllr Clover agreed that the dates so align pointing out that the Indicative Housing Requirements cover a twenty year period not a five year period.

Cllr Cover concluded by telling Councillors that under Awaab's Law that it is now a requirement that any reports of damp or mould or any other health and safety issues in a customer's home are actioned the same working day. The contact number for Babergh Please Customer Services is 0300 123 4000.

County Cllr Lindsay thanked Cllr Clover for his summary of the situation in respect of the number of unitary authorities and explained that the likely timetable for elections is:

May 2026: The postponed Suffolk County Council elections are theoretically timetabled for May 2026 however it is widely considered that the government will postpone these for a further 12 months and so it is unlikely there will ever be another Suffolk County Council election.

May 2026: Election for Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk.

May 2027: Elections for Parish Councils and for "shadow" Unitary Councillors.

May 2028: Suffolk CC and all the District Councils will dissolve, new Unitary Council(s) will commence.

The Suffolk CC Monitoring Officer has refused a request by all non-Conservative Councillors that the Cabinet decision to take the libraries in house be 'called in' – a process by which an issue can be tabled at a meeting of the Council's Scrutiny Committee to be looked at more closely. The Monitoring Officer considered that the Cabinet had received sufficient information before making its decision.

He concluded by reporting that a speed survey conducted by Highways in Bildeston a year after the 30mph limit was replaced by a 20mph limit showed that average speeds on the High Street have dropped by 24% north-bound and 10% in the south-bound direction. He asked Cllr Maybury to forward him the correspondence concerning the speed of vehicles and speed limit on Bridge St Road.

9. Planning Applications for Consideration

The Clerk reported that two further decisions had been received since the Working Papers were written for the meeting.

Rowan Cottage: Discharge of Conditions accepted. Toll Cottage: Change of Use refused.

The Chair reminded Councillors that any decision they make must be based upon their evaluation of all the documents available to them, including all other Material Considerations including public comments and economic and social consequences. Documents prepared by the planning group, she said, summarise that groups deliberations but do not replace Councillors own due diligence. She reminded Councillors that Council recommendations to Babergh only express the opinion of this Council in the same way others are able to express their opinions; the granting of any planning permission is made by the professional planners employed by Babergh District Council.

DC/25/00788 Little Brook, Lower Rd, Erection of a single storey store building.

Cllr Lamont explained that the application is for construction of a store building adjacent to the property. No dimensions of the building have been given. The purpose of the proposed storage is not stated and so it is unclear whether this is for residential or business use. The building is proposed to have a slate roof with painted Weather Boarding (colour not specified) which is appropriate for the location.

Cllr Lamont detailed the concerns of the Planning Group:

- a) The position of the proposed building is almost completely in front of the building line defined by other properties along Lower Road and will be obtrusive looking down Lower Road. This is affecting the streetscape and so does not align with LNP2016 Policy H1.
- b) The applicant has indicated on the application form that no hedgerows or trees are affected by this application. However, photographs taken by the Parish Council show that the site has been recently cleared in anticipation of this application, so they were quite clearly affected. This does not meet LNP 2016 Policy D1 All development proposals will be expected to retain and enhance vegetated boundaries as much as possible, particularly those of intact hedgerows and trees.
- c) The development site is not included in the Title Deeds for Little Brook. The applicant has not declared on the application form a Certificate Of Ownership.
- d) No Biodiversity net Gain measures as required by Babergh DC policy have been supplied.
- e) The site includes a stream and no Ecology report has been submitted.

Motion: that the Parish Council recommends refusal of Application DC/25/00788.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Morrey **Decision:** Approved unanimously

DC/25/01116 Glenholm, Brent Eleigh Road, Structural modifications to the roof, walls and floor, removal of a chimney and alterations to fenestration.

Cllr Lamont explained that this is a retrospective planning application.

He reported that the Applicant has written that: 'the initial plans for the house fell within permitted development rights. However, once work began, the structure was found to be in worse condition than expected. As a result, revisions were made that exceeded the scope of permitted development. These changes include structural modifications to the roofs, the removal of a chimney, and alterations to the fenestration positions. As a result of this, a retrospective planning application has been made'. He noted that the Applicant had followed the advice of the Planning Enforcement Officer concerning the proposed changes.

Cllr Lamont told Councillors that a concern of the Planning Group was that despite the site being in a Zone 3 Flood Risk Area no Flood Risk Assessment had been carried out.

Motion: that the Parish Council recommends refusal of Application DC/25/01116 because a Flood Risk Assessment has not been completed.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decision:** Approved unanimously. Cllr Robinson abstained.

DC/25/01319 79 High St, Internal alterations to a Listed Building.

Cllr Lamont explained that the proposed alterations are to remove a modern steel staircase which the Planning Group considers to be completely out of place in a listed Victorian building and replace that staircase with a modern wooden one in a different location. He told Councillors that a modern studded wall is to be removed and that there are proposed changes to the floor joists which the metal joist hangers clearly show to be modern. The Planning Group considers that the heritage aspects of this building are not affected and recommends that the Local Planning Authority approve this application.

Motion: that the Parish Council recommends consent to Application DC/25/01319.

Proposed: Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Domoney **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

DC/25/00447 and 00448: Pegtile Court, 3 Church St. Planning Application and Listed Building Consent to rebuild entrance walls.

Cllr Lamont explained that the Babergh Heritage Officer has approved the works using salvaged bricks and the addition of a buttress to strengthen the wall.

Motion: that the Parish Council recommends consent to Applications DC/25/000447 and 00448.

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Domoney **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Cllr Lamont explained that Babergh Council was considering, for developments of fewer than ten houses, no longer delivering notices concerning Planning Applications to nearby residents. The aim was to save Babergh DC £63,000 per annum. Agreement of response deferred.

10. Motion to seek interest for the Allotment Site adjacent to the Railway Walk.

The Chair explained that a condition of the Planning Permission for the Paddocks Development was that the Developer had to make the site available for allotments.

The Chair told Councillors that the Lavenham Allotments Association had previously explained that the site on offer was unsuitable. Cllr Domoney drew Councillors attention to the electricity pylon on the site.

The Chair informed Councillors that recently other residents had come forward either expressing interest in having an Allotment or taking a role in a new, yet to be established, Allotments Association.

The Clerk reminded Councillors that Council is under a legal obligation to provide allotments should a) there be sufficient demand and b) land available at a reasonable cost taking into account the interests of the community as a whole. This is generally taken to exclude from consideration land designated for residential or other development.



The Clerk reminded Councillors that the Parish Council policy has long been that it would only accept the site if an Allotments Association considered the site acceptable and was prepared to manage the site. The Parish Council has long considered that it does not have the skills or resources to manage an Allotments site on a day to day basis.

The Clerk informed Councillors that the Lavenham Woodland Project has explained that should it not be possible to find an Allotment Association it would be prepared to take on the site as a community amenity space.

Cllr Lamont asked who would own the site. The Clerk responded that an Allotments Association would need to take on the title. Cllr Mitchell explained that the land was on a 999 year lease and said that there was an expectation that Parish Council would initially take the land. The Chair replied that it was first necessary to ascertain the level of firm interest in having an allotment and participating in managing the site.

Cllr Domoney said that the Lavenham Allotments Association is dormant because insufficient volunteers could be found to establish a leadership group. Additionally, he said, the Parish Council had refused funding to investigate a possible Badger Sett on an alternative identified site and that he had concluded, at that time, that the Council was not really interested in allotments. He repeated his view that the Railway Walk site is unsuitable because of the electricity pylon. He said that he and Cllr Robinson are together investigating a further possible site and will discuss this with Council in due course. The Chair said that there had been no refusal to fund, the decision was deferred pending further information and that information has not been provided.

Motion: The Clerk is instructed to advertise on Social Media etc that the site will shortly become available and invite Members of the Public to come forward as a resilient community-based Allotment Society to take on the site. Should such offers not be forthcoming Council will work with the Lavenham Woodland Project and the other relevant parties.

Proposed: Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved. Cllrs Robinson and Sherman abstained. Cllr Domoney voted against.

11. Motion to approve a Grant of £375 to the Hub.

The Clerk reminded Councillors of the key points in Supporting Paper 11, the lease implied that the replacement of the Security System was not the responsibility of the Parish Council but Council recognised the valuable services provided by the Hub.

Motion: The Parish Council, recognising the important services provided by The Hub to the Community makes a Grant to the Hub of £375 to enable the Hub to replace the obsolete Redcare system using its power to make Grants under S137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Falconer **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

12. Motion to approve Heads of Terms for leases of Parish Office and Church St Toilets.

The Clerk highlighted the key terms to Councillors, explaining that effectively the PC is 'squatting'.

Office: Lease Period and type: 10 years from date lease signed. Internal repairing.

Rent: £500pa in years 1 and 2, £1,000pa in years 3,4 and 5. Thereafter RPI increases.

Break Clause: After 5 years, thereafter 6 months' notice, both sides have right to break. Must also break toilet lease at same time.

Toilet: Lease Period and type: 10 years from date lease signed. Internal repairing. Rent: Peppercorn.

Break Clause: After 5 years, thereafter 6 months' notice, both sides have right to break. Must also break office lease at same time.

He explained to Councillors that the proposed leases give certainty for the next five years and commit the Parish Council only to internal repair liabilities. Additionally in the context of the Parish Councils reduced Donations Income the Parish Council could terminate the toilet lease in five years at which time the toilet fittings will be approaching ten years old. No rent is payable until the leases are signed. Two leases should allow the Parish Council to cease paying Business Rates on the toilets.

Cllr Lamont asked if the doors would be the maintenance responsibility of the Council or Babergh. The Clerk replied Babergh. Cllr Mitchell asked if the internal repairing clause required the Parish Council to keep the toilet fixtures and fittings operational or maintain them in a more significant way. The Clerk replied that the obligation was to keep them operational.

Motion: Parish Council authorises the Clerk to invite Babergh DC to draft leases for signature by the Parish Council and Babergh District Council on the above terms. Should the draft leases be on the above terms then Councillors and the Clerk are authorised to sign the leases. Power to acquire land by agreement, to appropriate land and to dispose of land. LGA 1972, subsections 124, 126 and 127.

Proposed: Cllr Lamont **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decision:** Approved unanimously

13. Motion to repair drain in the Prentice St Car Park.

The Clerk explained that the drain has blocked at least six times in the last twelve months and that on occasion Anglia Water has been persuaded to remove the blockages but three times they have not. He told Councillors that Anglia Water now completely refuse to visit the site as it is not a shared drain and that each visit by a private contractor costs nearly £300.

He informed Councillors that every drainage engineer has commented that there is a 'belly' and displaced joints within the pipe which together with a shallow gradient led to blockages.

An unsolicited quote to clear the blockages for £1,160 and to remove and replace the defective pipework has been received from the Contractor used.

Cllr Mitchell asked if the proposed work would definitely solve the problems. The Clerk replied that he was uncertain but that any reduction in blockages would be most welcome.

Cllr Mitchell asked if the Clerk had been in contact with Babergh Council as it is their car park. The Clerk replied it was clear from his discussions on the toilet and office leases that the District Council position is that Babergh has permitted the Parish Council to site its toilets there and build the drain using CIL without charging rent and will therefore not contribute to any repair costs for the drain.

Cllr Sherman asked if it would be helpful if he could get a free, independent, additional inspection before the work was done. Councillors welcomed this and thanked Cllr Sherman. It was agreed that this would be done before Drain Doctor was contracted to do the repairs.

Motion: The Parish Council instructs Drainage Doctor to carry out the above quoted work for £1,160.50 plus VAT using its powers under Public Health Act 1936, section 87 to provide Public Conveniences.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved unanimously

14. Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan 3: Report.

Cllr Sherman reported that the Steering Group comprises; Michael Sherman (Chair), Alison Bourne (Vice Chair), Danielle Twitchen (Treasurer) and Carroll Reeve (Secretary) and Charles Posner. A number of other people have expressed an interest in joining the Steering Group and further expressions of interest are welcomed.

A meeting has been held with Babergh Officers to discuss housing issues and a village-wide questionnaire and the Secretary has contacted the consultants used in the preparation of NP2.

Pilot meetings will be held and conversations had across the village to help formulate a village wide questionnaire, the timing of which may be dictated by other matters.

The Secretary attended a District-wide Meeting organised by Babergh and James Cartledge MP. A paper was presented at the meeting and circulated to Parish Councils. This shares the raw data BMSDC is currently working on. The Strategic Housing Land Assessment is an allied document providing a further strategic overview due in July. A key question is phasing and its interpretation by any Examiner. A further development is the need for Neighbourhood plans to nominate sites for development. Cllr Sherman agreed to circulate the paper to all Parish Councillors.



15. Clerk and RFO Report

The Clerk informed Councillors that he will give a detailed update of Council's financial position at the May Meeting with full and final end of year numbers and explanations.

He told Councillors that a summary of the position is that a surplus of approximately £2,000 was achieved in each of February and March. These surpluses were due to the receipt of over £1,000 of Burial Income, Grant expenditure being £2,500 less than budgeted (the Clerk has received a very nice thankyou note from the Kernos Centre) and the Suffolk Street lighting maintenance and energy bill coming in at £4,000 which is very similar to the previous year bill and substantially less than the £6,000 anticipated. Essentially the feared increases in electricity charges had not occurred. The surplus for the year is therefore likely to be approximately £28,000 and the cash reserves some 11.5 months. The reserves had previously been forecast to be 10.4 months. The extra month of reserves held is a consequence of the surpluses made in recent months.

The Clerk is aware of the dreadful state of the bin outside the Co-op and has for some months been trying to organise a second weekly empty of the more heavily used bins. This is anticipated to begin very shortly.

The Clerk is also aware that two bins near the Co-Op need replacing. These bins are very solidly attached to the ground, he is trying to ascertain how they can be removed and whether Babergh will take away and install new bins.

The Clerk is aware that one of the SIDs on the Melford Rd has stopped working. It is the aim to investigate this next week.

The Clerk explained that the Community Council has informed him that this meeting could take place at 7pm each month, Councillors welcomed this and the meetings will start at 7pm beginning with the June meeting. Cllr Mitchell suggested the Clerk consult with the District and County Councillors.

In answer to a question from Cllr Sherman the Clerk confirmed that the sinking fund is £46,000 and is increasing by £1,000 per month.

Motion: to approve the Accounts for the month ended 28 February 2025.

Proposed: Cllr Morrey **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Motion: to approve Receipts and Payments for month ending 28 February 2025

Proposed: Cllr Bourne **Seconded:** Cllr Falconer **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

The Clerk outlined the proposed changes to the Standing Financial Orders required by NALC.

Motion: to approve the proposed changes to the Standing Financial Orders

Proposed: Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Morrey **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

16. Motion to establish a Footpath Working Group.

Cllr Robinson outlined his proposal explaining that he intended the Group to also cover pavements with the aim to keep the village tidy and functional. He highlighted the poor state of the path across First Meadow.

The Chair asked Cllr Robinson if he might have a conflict of interest with respect to the Second Meadows footpath. Cllr Robinson said that his interest was in the maintenance of all footpaths.

Cllr Robinson emphasised that it was the Riparian responsibility of landowners to keep footpaths in good repair. The Clerk agreed commenting that Suffolk County Council has the responsibility of ensuring that landowners maintain the paths. The Chair added that frequently the Parish Council does not know who the landowners are.

The Chair queried why the proposed Terms of Reference, considering the responsibilities of Suffolk County Council, included 'Liaising with landowners to negotiate how to facilitate any improvements, agreeing plans of actions and monitoring compliance.



Cllr Bourne asked Cllr Robinson if he still had his group of volunteers. Cllr Robinson said that he did and could not do all the work by himself.

Cllr Falconer questioned, in light of recent events, how many local residents would volunteer to help. The Chair brought that line of questioning to an end.

Cllr Mitchell asked if Council had received much correspondence concerning the Public Rights of Way. The Clerk replied that he received little correspondence on this subject. Cllr Morrey recollected a small amount of correspondence concerning the Railway Walk. Cllr Mitchell suggested Council needed to prioritise its half-completed tasks such as reviewing the external report submitted to the Traffic Working Party.

Cllr Mawford suggested that the Council was currently overwhelmed by a number of things such as the Subject Access Requests and that now was the wrong time to bring forward this proposal.

Motion: to establish a Footpath Working Group

Proposed: Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Domoney **Decision:** Cllr Sherman abstained. Rejected all other Councillors voted against it..

17. Motion to welcome the possible introduction of an Eezybike pod in Lavenham

The Clerk explained that was currently just a vague enquiry from Babergh.

Cllr Mitchell expressed concern that the bikes might be ridden on pavements. Cllr Domoney expressed concern about the fire risk. A number of Councillors expressed various other concerns.


Motion: The Clerk is instructed to inform Babergh District Council that the Council is interested in an Eezybike Pod being sited in Lavenham. Any agreement to this to depend upon the final proposal.

Proposed: Cllr Lamont **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Mawford voted against. Cllr Sherman abstained.

18. Motion to commend the Clerk for managing the bidding process for the Green Maintenance and Street Cleaning contract.

The Clerk received a round of applause.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 1st May 2025 7.30 pm in the Village Hall. Meeting closed at 9.54pm.

jamie muckie

1/5/25