

## **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025, commencing at 7pm in the Village Hall.

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

### **Present:**

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Iain Lamont, Jane Ranzetta and Michael Sherman. Three 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 Cllrs Domoney, Falconer, Mawford, Mitchell and Robinson were not present and had sent their apologies.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

The Clerk informed Councillors that Cllr Ranzetta has declared that she considers that she has an interest with respect to the Planning Application concerning Frogs Hall and despite this not being her Disclosable Pecuniary Interest she had informed the Clerk that she will leave the room for this item.

The Clerk invited Councillors to declare any interests, none were declared.

### **3. Requests for Dispensations**

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

### **4. Tribute to Cllr Mary Morrey by the Chair**

The Chair paid tribute to Mary describing her as a respected and steadfast member of this Council. She said that she will miss her wise and considered words, her support as Vice Chair as well as her great sense of humour. Mary, she said, was highly regarded and popular throughout the village, having seemingly boundless energy which led to her being involved with a range of organisations.

The Parish Council paused for a few moments of silence and reflection.

### **5. Approval of Minutes**

#### **To approve as accurate minutes of the August 7<sup>th</sup> 2025 meeting of the Council**

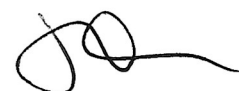
**Proposed:** Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

#### **To approve as accurate minutes of the September 4<sup>th</sup> 2025 meeting of the Council**

**Proposed:** Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously. Cllr Lamont abstained not having been present at the meeting.

### **6. Public Participation Session**

No Member of the Public wished to speak.



## **6. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair informed Councillors:

### Progress report concerning Green Willows Footpath:

Suffolk Highways is waiting for a response from one of the utility companies regarding their timescale. The Parish Council (PC) will continue to chase this.

### Eezybikes:

The Sustainable Travel Manager at Babergh Council has asked us to pass on any feedback about the scheme or its location noting that the pod is fully moveable and so if time proves that this location isn't quite right or not working well, there is scope to relocate it. She reminded Councillors that the PC has previously advised Babergh Council that it considers the Market Place to be an unsuitable location.

### Buses:

The PC was informed this week that Go East Anglia has been purchased by the Transport Made Simple Group. Services will continue to run as usual. In January 2026 they intend to make a series of changes to integrate services from all of their operators and in the run up to Easter 2026 will be refining this network based on extensive consultation with passengers, including key community anchors such as schools. They are willing to come and talk to residents at an arranged event and can be emailed with any hopes/concerns.

### Neighbourhood Watch:

The PC has been contacted by Stuart Finch who is the joint co-ordinator of Long Melford Neighbourhood Watch. They have a Facebook group of nearly 1,000 members posting updates about crime prevention and suspicious or criminal activity. They also receive regular updates from and have meetings with the Community Police team at Sudbury. He would like to start a Neighbourhood Watch group in the village, and is looking for support for this. Stuart has asked if anyone wishes to discuss this, or get involved, to respond to his Facebook post or contact the Clerk.

### Joint Local Plan:

The PC has been advised of the timetable for the preparation of a review of the Babergh Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (JLP). This will take place between 2025 and 2029.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have published the Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as evidence to support the review of the JLP. This Assessment identifies potential sites for housing development which have been submitted to Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils for consideration following the call for sites for potential housing development in January 2024.

Following request from the Chair, Cllr Lamont displayed a map of the sites submitted in response to the 2024 call. Cllrs expressed concern at the size of sites offered saying that these appeared sufficiently large to contain hundreds of houses. Cllr Lamont explained that these sites do not have Planning Permission but have not been immediately rejected by Babergh. Cllr Sherman commented that some of these sites, whilst very close, adjacent to Lavenham, are actually in Acton Parish.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have advised that they will be undertaking a further Call for Sites exercise between mid-October 2025 and January 2026. The Chair commented that it is unknown whether Local Government Reorganisation will affect timescales for the new JLP or what development will be targeted for Lavenham.

### Churchyard wall:

It has been drawn to our attention that the wall surrounding the churchyard is in need of some repair; this is the responsibility of the PC. Arrangements to make the necessary repairs are being kindly coordinated by Reverend Simon Pitcher.





## **8. Local Authority Councillors' Reports**

The Clerk reported that County Cllr Lindsay was unable to be present. He presented his report.

County Cllr Lindsay is pleased that that the PC joint bid with Suffolk Highways for funding for the Green Willows footpath from the District's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) pot, has been approved. He comments that this is the first funding for a pavement Babergh have ever approved from its CIL pot and so is something of a precedent for Babergh and County Highways working together. He advised the PC that now Highways has the funding it is up to Highways to deliver it saying that he knows that this can be a very lengthy process. He commented that since both the County Council and Babergh Council will dissolve in 2028 it is important that both he and the PC keep on at Highways and their contractor to complete the pavement before then.

He is working with Highways and the resident who has been afflicted by a lime tree shedding branches on to their gate and pavement on the High Street. Their gate has been damaged several times over the past few months. Highways is still insisting this not an emergency but have said they are scheduled to prune it in October.

He informed Cllrs that the horse and donkey charity French's Care Haven, which rescues unwanted animals and also offers mental health therapy for humans, is about to be evicted from the land it rents near Groton. It is seeking to purchase 20 acres of grazing land within a ten mile radius of Hadleigh.

He advised Cllrs that the Government is expected to make a decision on LGR around March but that this could slip. In the recent Government Ministerial reshuffle Mr Starmer had sacked the minister, Jim McMahon, in charge of the process.

He told Cllrs that Chief Executives of all Local Authorities had received a letter which says "We would like to also take this opportunity to remind you of your responsibilities under the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authority Publicity. Please do take care in having regard to ... the principles of objectivity and even-handedness and particularly paragraph 16 which states that local authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy."

He advised Cllrs that County Council and Mayoral Elections will likely be held in May 2026 despite the County Council Elections being for a body that lasts for two years before being dissolved.

District Cllr Maybury paid a tribute to Cllr Mary Morrey.

She informed Cllrs that should sites adjacent to Lavenham but actually in Acton Parish be selected for development then both Acton and Lavenham Parish Councils would be consulted.

She advised Cllrs that she had visited the Angel Hotel site with an Officer from the Babergh Economic Development Unit who will contact the selling agent and report on issues of repair and security.

She advised Cllrs that tenants at Tenterpiece are replying to the consultation on removing the sheltered part of their housing agreement.

She referred to her report which includes details of grants available to local businesses and the collection, from April 2026, of glass bottles and food waste. Cllr Sherman asked why more bins were being provided when the aim was to reduce the use of plastics. District Cllr Maybury replied that the new bins are made of recycled plastic.

She told Cllrs that her and District Cllr Clover are both very aware of the impact of the implementation of car parking charges has had on the parish as well as the changes to the community caretaker scheme and the loss of donations to the Parish Council for car parking. Cllr Clover continues to intercede on the effect of car parking charges within the village as well as in Sudbury.

She informed Cllrs that residents have voiced their concern over the speed of traffic on the bridge end of the village at the junction of Preston Road and the box hedging, brambles and holly bushes within the churchyard which are impeding passage along the pathways.

She urged all who are eligible for the annual flu and covid boosters to apply for this winter help.



### **9. Babergh District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report**

The Clerk reported that the meeting had been described by Babergh as being an update with a fuller review taking place in February 2026.

The Clerk explained that the PC had submitted three questions to the meeting. These questions sought details of the Monthly Revenue from Car Park Charges, the Monthly Costs of imposing Car Park Charges and the Capital Costs of introducing Car Park Charges.

The Clerk told Cllrs that he was extremely disappointed that only the last question was answered with the reply being that the Capital Costs were £15,056 in Church St and £6,445 in Prentice St.

Babergh has subsequently informed the Clerk that the other questions will be answered in October.

The Clerk told Cllrs that his impression is that, in general, Babergh Officers and Cabinet consider that the introduction of Parking Charges has gone well and has made improvements to the Babergh finances. They consider that they have heard little from Parishes. The unanswered email from the Chair of this Council was not acknowledged.

The Clerk informed Cllrs that there was much discussion concerning the footfall data presented to the Committee which is derived from mobile phone data. Babergh consider that this data shows little change in Lavenham footfall however this is inconsistent with the footfall reports provided by Babergh Officers to the PC. The Clerk has raised concerns that the reporting may be inaccurate and a response is expected shortly.

Additionally, reservations have also been expressed concerning whether this mobile phone derived data would ever clearly provide insight concerning the number of visits to Lavenham shops and facilities and the effects (significant or not) of the introduction of car parking charges.

District Councillors at the Meeting and the Chair and the Clerk (in other contacts with Babergh) have pushed Babergh to survey businesses, it is unclear exactly how or indeed whether Babergh will act on these requests.

Cllr Bourne said that she continues to hear concerns about car parking. The Chair said that the issue was the lack of hard data from Businesses suggesting that only the Babergh had the resources to conduct such a survey.

### **10. Planning Register**

The Clerk informed Cllrs that on Tuesday Council had been informed that the Applicant seeking permission to build a Wellness Centre on Second Meadow has appealed to the Planning Inspectorate.

### **11. Planning Applications**

**DC/25/3999** 1 Byes Barn, Reduction of trees.

Cllr Lamont explained that the trees, adjacent to Lingmell, are lopsided and have been poorly maintained and that the view of the Planning Group was that reduction and maintenance was required.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/3999.

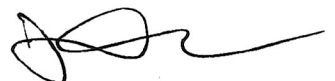
**Proposed:** Cllr Ranzetta **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Sherman voted against,

**DC/25/3972** Patch Cottage, 84 High St, Fell a holly tree and a yew tree.

Cllr Lamont explained that these are small trees located in a crowded garden and that the view of the Planning Group was to recommend approval. Cllr Sherman commented that Lavenham has the lowest tree coverage in Babergh and deplored the number of recent applications to cut down poorly maintained trees.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/3972.

**Proposed:** Cllr Bourne **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved unanimously. Cllr Sherman abstained.





**DC/25/3096** Pedlars Way, Bears Lane. Fell an Ash Tree.

Cllr Lamont explained that this application had been received too late to be considered by the Planning Group and an extension of time to respond to the next PC meeting was not possible. He informed Cllrs that the justification provided was 'concerns with adjacent wall cracking' but that no evidence had been supplied concerning this cracking. He noted that the tree has been extensively pollarded in 2024 and was now recovering and that an adjacent tree had recently been felled in this garden. Cllr Ranzetta noted that the tree was adjacent to the wall but not touching it.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends refusal of application DC/25/3096.

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

**DC/25/3778** Frogs Hall, Frogs Hall Rd. Repairs to Roof. Cllr Ranzetta left the room for this item.

Cllr Lamont explained that this application is for essential repairs and maintenance using like for like materials. Water ingress has caused damage with damp patches appearing in ceilings and external walls. He noted that the unknown extent of hidden damage means that it is not possible to completely detail the repairs until the work is under way.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/3778.

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

## **12. Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan 3: Report and Approval of Questionnaire**

Cllr Sherman introduced the report of the Working Group,

The Chair noted that the Minutes of the September meeting of the LNP Working Group reported that a 'representative of the business community' had attended the meeting. She asked why this person was anonymous and how this person was chosen. Cllr Sherman said this person had asked to remain anonymous and had been invited to the meeting to understand their views. The Chair asked if the person represented 'Love Lavenham' and would report to that Business Group. Cllr Sherman said that this person had asked to attend the meeting and that hearing from the business community was very important.

Cllr Lamont asked how members of the business community could attend the meetings. Cllr Sherman said that any member of the business community could approach him and request to attend, the Working Group was interested in hearing from all. Cllr Lamont said that this possibility of attendance should be better advertised.

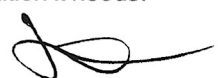
Cllr Sherman said that he would in future no longer report the minutes, the Clerk replied that the Terms of Reference require that minutes of the formal meetings of the Working Group be reported to Council. The Chair asked that the Secretary of the Working Group correct the minutes amending the words 'representative of the business community' to 'member of the business community'.

The Chair asked if the Questionnaire could include, in a number of places, as a possible response, 'don't know'. She said that the addition of such a possible response would improve the quality of responses and the accuracy of any subsequent statistics. Cllr Sherman replied that the Questionnaire had been written by a Professor and reviewed by a Planning Expert. Cllr Ranzetta said that the Questionnaire needed to be easy to complete and suggested that people could ignore the questions that they did not know the answers.

Cllr Lamont highlighted as an example the question concerning the adequacy of the provision of toddler groups saying that he had no thoughts concerning this and yet the proposed Questionnaire did not offer him the opportunity of saying 'Don't Know'. Cllr Bourne said that people could ignore the questions that they were unable to answer. Cllr Ranzetta said that 'Not Applicable' might be a suitable option.

Cllr Lamont said that the Questionnaire lacked questions on Heritage Assets and Defined Views. Cllr Sherman said that the Government was going to continue to demand sites for development.

The Chair said that she wanted the Questionnaire to give the Working Group all the information it needs.



Cllr Sherman said that he did not want to delay the Questionnaire any further, the Chair queried the need for urgency considering that the Joint Local Plan (JLP) will not be ready until 2029.

Cllr Lamont displayed to all the communication from Babergh setting out the JLP timetable. Reminding Cllrs that the last Neighbourhood Plan had to be amended to be in line with the then emerging previous JLP he asked what the impact of this extended timetable for the new JLP will be on the timetable for our Neighbourhood Plan. He urged Cllr Sherman and the Working Group to consider the timetable in the light of the information that the new JLP will not be ready until at least 2029 asking whether the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan needs co-ordinating with the new JLP which will likely demand a greater amount of housebuilding than has been previously considered.

The Chair asked Councillors to write to the Working Group with their queries concerning the Questionnaire. The Clerk told Councillors he will include the item on the November Agenda.

### **13. Water St EV Chargers Report:**

The Clerk explained that the Water St EV chargers were not operational because of delays, not of this Councils making, in signing all the necessary legal agreements. He expressed his frustrations.

### **14. Clerk/RFO report**

The Clerk told Cllrs that the External Auditors report had been received, the report was unqualified i.e. it contained no matters of concern.

The Clerk spoke next of Mary Morrey saying that on a personal and professional level he shall very much miss Mary. He had informed Babergh Council of her death a couple of days after Mary passed. Babergh Council had informed him that, out of respect, they do not advertise such vacancies until after the funeral. The vacancy notice will be displayed on October 28<sup>th</sup> immediately after the funeral and it will explain that if ten electors, within three weeks or so, call for an election, then there will be an election otherwise Council will be free to co-opt at its December meeting. Should an election be called the election will be held in early 2026 and the cost to the PC would be approximately £2,000. The Clerk anticipates that at the December meeting Councillors will also elect a Vice Chair and determine who will take Mary's place on the Bank Mandate and the Guildhall committee.

In response to a question from Cllr Lamont the Clerk explained that should an election not be called but more than one person puts themselves forward as a candidate for co-option then the whole Council will select who is co-opted.

The Clerk explained that together with the Chair he had met with Mark Emms (Director of Operations) of Babergh Council and in addition to the conversation concerning Parking Charges and Footfall data (covered in a separate report) the Clerk and the Chair had protested about the proposed cut to the Cleaning Grant. Mr Emms has agreed, in the light of the three year contract entered into by the PC with our Contractor to reconsider the matter. The Clerk has spoken with the clerks at East Bergholt and Long Melford (the other significant Parish Councils also effected by the cut) who have told him that cognisant of the financial position of Babergh Council neither Council has taken up and does not intend to take up the matter with Babergh.

The Clerk informed Cllrs that Malcolm Payne of Hartog Hutton has sent a first draft of the Heads Of Terms for a 994 year lease of the Paddocks Allotment site. A further draft together with a site plan is expected shortly.

The Clerk continues to chase Babergh Council for separate leases for the Church St Toilets and Parish Office which will enable the PC to stop paying Business Rates on the Toilets. Despite Babergh Legal Services organising a survey of the premises in May the draft leases have still not been received.

The Clerk advised Cllrs that it is becoming clear from meetings and also a course he has been on that a consequence of the creation of unitary authorities will be the need to document all the informal understandings with the Babergh Council and Suffolk County Council whilst those bodies still exist. Additionally, when support for Parish Councils and very local matters begins to compete for funding with Adult Social Care, Children and Young People and Highways and Council spending on non-statutory support for Parish Councils and very local matters will come under further pressure.





The Tree survey was done this week and the quote will shortly be received from the Councils contractor. We covered First Meadow, the Playing Fields and the Cemetery. It is anticipated that at least two trees will need to be urgently felled and a number of trees quickly pruned for safety reasons in addition to other routine maintenance tasks. The survey of the Churchyard remains outstanding. The costs of any tree work required in the Playing Fields will be the responsibility of the Community Council but the costs of works in First Meadow, the Cemetery and the Churchyard will fall to the Parish Council.

The box bush pruning and soil improvement was scheduled for this week but is now next week. The pest visit has been done.

Three incidences of vandalism or poor behaviour with respect to the Play Equipment in the last couple of weeks.

The August Accounts:

The Clerk reminded Cllrs that at its last meeting Council signed off on a reforecast loss for the year of £29,392. The key assumptions within this were:

- 1) LNP spend for the year of £15,000 charged to Income and Expenditure and not to Neighbourhood Cil
- 2) No further Grant Expenditure beyond the loan given to the Christmas Event which is assumed (prudently) to be entirely non-recoverable
- 3) Tree Maintenance costs following the tree survey would be covered by the contingency of £1,333. This appears now to be unlikely.

The Clerk explained that all financial commentary and comparisons to the reforecast and not to the budget. He would therefore not be continuing to refer to legal costs and the other reasons why the financial position was worse than budgeted.

Cllr Bourne asked if an apology had been made to the people who later made the Subject Access Requests, as suggested by the Monitoring Officer, whether the later legal costs would have then been incurred. The Clerk replied that the Monitoring Officer had at one point suggested that the Chair make an apology. He knew that the Chair considered the suggestion of an apology misguided. It was his opinion that if such an apology had been made, that whilst he could not speak for those who had raised the Subject Access Requests, the requests would still have been made to seek various pieces of information. He said that relationships might have been improved had an apology been given but that the legal costs would still have been incurred. The Chair told Cllrs that she had subsequently spoken with the Monitoring Officer supplying further information and that the Monitoring Officer had verbally advised her that had she known the full facts she would not have suggested the apology.

The forecast loss for the month of August was £736. The actual result for August was a surplus of £41, driven largely by Burial Income being £775 greater than forecast.

The likely result for September is a loss for that month alone of approximately £3,000. September will be so much worse than August because the September Accounts will contain some £3,200 of box bush maintenance costs, largely the annual pruning. The September loss will though be £1,000 less than forecast as the LNP costs are coming in more slowly than anticipated. The cumulative loss to end September is likely to be £9,000.

No advice has been received from the LNP Group that they will not need the £15,000 requested and agreed for this Financial Year. Indeed, that advice has not been requested because an estimate of total LNP costs to completion will be provided by the Group to Council at the November meeting.

As previously advised the Clerk will shortly be inviting Councillors to suggest and comment on the priority items Neighbourhood Cil funds.

There will be a new question in next year's Governance Return which the auditors will need to consider whether this Council has passed or failed. The new Assertion 10 means that Councillors cannot (as opposed to best practice) use email addresses for Council business other than either the Lavenham PC ones or something like 'cllrbobsmith@gmail.com'



**Motion:** To approve Accounts for month ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025

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

**Motion:** To approve Receipts and Payments for month ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025

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

**15. Parish Newsletter and Lavenham Life**

The Chair referred Cllrs to the Working Paper seeking their approval for Council to work, as it had done in previous years, with the publishers of Lavenham Life to ensure that every household in Lavenham receives a free copy of Lavenham Life together with a Parish Council newsletter at a maximum cost to the PC of £1,500.

Cllr Bourne said that in her opinion, from delivering the items in previous years, that most people in the village did not value these items. Cllr Sherman echoed these concerns. Cllr Ranzetta suggested that the Parish Council just subsidise the regular print run or that the Council just publish the Newsletter. The Chair suggested that organising the distribution of just a Newsletter would not be easy.

**Motion:** That Council works with the publishers of Lavenham Life to ensure that every household in Lavenham receives a free copy of Lavenham Life together with a Parish Council newsletter at a maximum cost of £1,500.

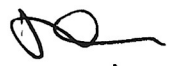
No Councillor proposed the Motion.

**16. Christmas Event Report**

The Chair explained the progress and efforts of the Organising Group. The event will not be published on social media to make the event an event for local people. She told Cllrs that the Organising Group had asked her to mention that the Group still seeks donations/sponsorship and help.

Meeting ended 9.24pm

Date of next meeting – Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025 7pm

J. Muckian  
  
4/12/25