

## **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025, commencing at 7pm in the Village Hall.

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

### **Present:**

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Lizzie Falconer, Jane Ranzetta, Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Ten 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, Lamont, Mawford, Mitchell and Morrey were not present and had sent their apologies.

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

The Clerk informed Councillors that Cllr Robinson had declared an interest in a Planning Matter due to be discussed and that as the matter relates to one of his Disclosable Pecuniary Interests he will leave the room for that item. The Clerk invited Councillors to declare any further interests, none were declared.

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

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

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

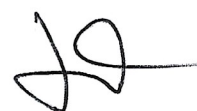
Cllr Robinson said that the draft minutes did not fully reflect his comments. The Chair asked Cllr Robinson to write to the Clerk explaining where he considered the minutes were incomplete.

Cllr Sherman expressed concern that the draft minutes did not include his conversation with the County Cllr concerning the recycling of plastic items. The Clerk responded that this was because the full answer of County Cllr Lindsay including the correction of some matters concerning recycling was on the Agenda for this meeting. Cllr Sherman repeated that he wanted the conversation minuted. The Clerk explained that he had taken the decision to exclude information from the minutes which appeared to be incorrect. The Chair asked all Councillors to agree with the Clerk any required changes prior to the next meeting. Approval of the minutes was deferred.

### **5. 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 session is for ten minutes and that it is at the discretion of the Chair whether further time is allowed or the session shortened.

A Member of the Public spoke in support of the proposed Christmas event. She said that the event would be something for everyone in the village to look forward to, an event by the village for the village. The Group organising the event is seeking donations from many sources and aims, in future, to fundraise throughout the year. The Group requests a loan which it hopes to pay back.



A Member of the Public asked why the Eezybikes had been placed in the Church St car park criticising the loss of two parking spaces. The Clerk explained that Babergh had internally made the decision to site them in the car park.

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

The Chair reported that the Parish Councils joint bid with Suffolk Highways for District CIL money of £67,000 for the Green Willows path will be presented to Babergh Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> September for decision.

She noted that Konectbuses (formerly Hedingham and Chambers) has made some timetable changes, including renumbering buses. She advised anyone making a journey to check the app or online. She thanked the Clerk for posting the new timetables on the Parish Council website.

The Chair informed Councillors that the previous day, together with the Clerk, she had met with Malcolm Payne from Hartog Hutton and representatives of the Lavenham Community Allotments Association. She reported that progress is being made and that both organisations are being very helpful. It is intended that draft agreements will be available to Council to consider at the October meeting prior to Council incurring any costs.

The Chair told Councillors that on Monday Council had received an invitation on to submit questions to a meeting of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting concerning car parking charges. Council will be submitting questions.

On August 13<sup>th</sup> 2025 a number of Councillors and the Clerk met with the Babergh Chief Executive Arthur Charvonia and Leader of the Council Councillor John Ward to hear more about Local Government Reorganisation. She described the meeting as having been informative and helpful. Councillors and the Clerk had taken the opportunity to explain to them both the Parish Council's opposition on financial, legal and moral grounds to Babergh's proposed cuts to the Street Cleaning delegation of responsibilities monies known as the 'Caretaker Fund'. Both had engaged with the Parish Council on the subject. The Parish Council has written to both and awaits a response.

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

The Clerk explained that County Cllr Lindsay was unable to attend. He delivered his report which was a response to a question from Parish Cllr Sherman at the previous meeting of Council. Cllr Lindsay told Councillors that there are different categories of plastic some can be recycled and others cannot be:

'Soft, flexible plastics, like plastic bags and the peelable covers of food packages are not recyclable but they will be from April 2027.

Stiffer plastics such as soft drink bottles, stiff plastic food packaging etc. should be put in the recycling bin and should continue to be after the changes.

"Hard" plastics such as Lego bricks, buckets, bins, drainage pipes have never been recycled in Suffolk and will continue not to be after the changes. Most authorities across the country have never recycled these items. Their chemistry means they can't be melted down and remoulded.'

District Cllr Maybury presented her report adding that District Cllrs were very firmly in support of the Green Willows Footpath CIL application. She reported that she been able to get Babergh to remove the low-level growth obstructing the Sudbury Rd pavement. She had also with the help of Cllr Mawford swept moss from the Water St pavement into the highway which was then been swept by the Babergh mechanical Highway sweeper. She remains unconvinced by the Babergh decision to install the Eezybikes and their siting. She advised Cllrs that the Electrical Safety Fund is open for applications from groups ready to test and repair electrical products, deliver safer electrical installations in homes and communities or run awareness and education workshops about electrical safety.

District Cllr Clover spoke of the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation process and told Councillors that Parish Councils can borrow thermal imaging cameras to make assessments, from the roadside, of the thermal characteristics of properties. Both Councillors spoke of their concerns of the effects of the imposition by Babergh of car parking charges on local businesses.





The Chair asked when the usage etc. of the Eezybike scheme will be assessed, Cllr Clover replied that he did not know.

Cllr Robinson asked District Cllrs where the information concerning grants to help small rural businesses for capital items is. Cllr Clover said he would investigate and report back.

## **8. Planning Register**

The Clerk reported that with one exception the matters listed as outstanding remain so. He told Councillors that in the last few days Babergh has declined the applications for the work adjacent to the front door on the Old Rectory with the reasons given for the declines very similar to the reasons given by the Parish Council for recommending refusal.

## **9. Planning Applications**

The Chair reminded Councillors that any decision they make must be based upon their evaluation of all the documents available to them, including other Material Considerations including public comments, economic and social consequences. She said that documents prepared by the planning group summarise their deliberations but do not replace Councillors own due diligence. It is up to individual Councillors to make up their own minds based upon the facts available to them. We are only expressing 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/25/3575** Graylings 5 Prentice St. Listed Building Consent to replace 5 rear first floor windows with identically framed double glazed windows.

The Clerk explained that the windows that are proposed for replacement are not original, but are wooden framed, with thin glazing bars.

He told Councillors that hardwood frames in the same design as the current windows have been proposed but no details of the windows design have been provided so it is not possible to determine if the proposed hardwood windows will use slimline double glazing with similar slim glazing bars.

He informed Councillors that the opinion of the Planning Group is to recommend approval with a condition that details of the windows design are provided prior to commencement of works to ensure slimline panel and thin glazing bars are present.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/3575 with a condition.

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

**DC/25/3378** Finches, Bridge St Rd. Fell a Maple Tree covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

The Clerk explained that the application form states "T1; small dual stemmed field maple. One stem is dead, and the other is declining. It's within range of the road. Fell to ground level."

He told Councillors that the opinion of the Planning Group is that this is reasonable, given the condition of the tree. However, the application form does not state details of a replacement tree as is required for trees covered by a TPO and that without this we cannot recommended approval. The motion is therefore to recommend refusal pending details of a replacement tree.

Cllr Robinson said that he would prefer the motion to be approval subject to the provision of details of a replacement tree. Cllr Ranzetta expressed concern about the recent felling of trees in this area. The Clerk explained that unfortunately an amendment cannot negate the motion.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends refusal of Application DC/25/3378 pending details of a replacement tree.

**Proposed:** Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved. Cllrs Muckian, Ranzetta and Sherman voted in favour, Cllrs Falconer and Robinson voted against. Cllr Bourne abstained.

The Clerk explained that Council is aware of two Applications for Discharge of Conditions concerning which it has not been consulted. He told Councillors that on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025 Council had passed a resolution that Council will discuss Discharges of Conditions only when a member of the Planning Group wishes to. No Member of the Planning Group wished to discuss the Discharges of Conditions.



Cllr Robinson left the room because Application DC/25/3618 relates to one of his Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

**DC/25/3618** The Poultry Farm, Brent Eleigh Rd, Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed change of use from Agricultural Building to Class E Commercial/Business/Service.

The Clerk explained that the application is for the conversion of an existing poultry shed to a flexible space for meetings, therapy sessions and office use.

He told Councillors that this is not a request for planning permission but for change of use from an agricultural building to a different usage class with the proposed new car parking area, solar panels and access road not part of this application.

He informed Councillors that the Planning Group considers that the Parish Council does not have the necessary expertise to comment on whether this application is a valid permitted development given its proposed use and the location in a High-Risk Flood Zone 3 next to the River Brett.

He told Councillors that this was a legally complicated matter and so the recommendation of the Planning Group is that Council does not comment.

Cllr Falconer asked if the building contained WW2 USAF paintings. Cllr Sherman said he had been inside the building but had not noticed any paintings. The Chair said that she agreed this very technical matter should be left to Babergh and that the matter of any paintings was not the question Council was being asked.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council passes no comment on application DC/25/3618

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

Cllr Robinson rejoined the meeting. The Clerk explained to Cllr Robinson the motion passed by Council.

#### **10. Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan 3**

Cllr Sherman reported that

- A) More sample questionnaires have been sent out and most have been returned to the Group. This has resulted in several changes needing to be made, these are at the moment with Planning professional Ian Poole. It is the firm intention of the Group to have the questionnaire ready for review at the October meeting of Council.
- B) The Group is arranging a letter drop to all residents explaining progress so far and plans are afoot to hold drop ins at the Guildhall. These will be on a Sunday afternoon and again in the evening.
- C) A good selection of steering group members will be fully conversant with progress up to the date of the drop ins and once the questionnaire is passed by Council it will be again delivered to all by hand thus saving costs.

#### **11. Clerk/RFO report**

The Clerk explained that the questions Council would ask the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be about the Babergh Revenues and Costs from Car Parking charges i.e. whether the Profit was substantial or not.

#### **Public Realm:**

The Clerk informed Councillors that we have now ascertained that there was a wire not properly attached in the factory connecting the solar panel to the battery on one of the Melford Road Speed Indicator Devices. We have attached it and are hoping that the Sid will now be reliable.

The ivy has been cut on the roof of the bus stop opposite The Swan and it has been a month of toilet repairs. A broken tap has been replaced at Prentice St, two door locks have been replaced in the Church St toilets and we have begun to replace all the soap dispensers with higher quality units. Attempts to repair the soap dispensers to keep them reliably operational have failed. No further floods in the Prentice St Car Park. This is the longest run for some time.





Donations in the car parks remain about £250 per month with no substantial uptick as the summer season developed.

Suffolk Tree Services have been asked to the survey of all Council owned trees since one of the Scots Pines was within the group tree preservation order quote for the grinding of the stump and replanting a new Scots Pine.

Work on the Box Bushes is due in September, feeding, pest control and pruning.

The Contractor continues to provide weekly reports detailing the cleaning and grounds maintenance work done, the work is being done when scheduled.

Cllr Sherman asked for the Costs of Democracy and the costs of the LNP be split out, the Clerk agreed. He also asked why EV costs are still being incurred, the Clerk explained that the Water St Chargers will be transferred over very shortly.

#### July 2025 Accounts:

The Clerk reported that at the last meeting he had said that the July Accounts will likely show a reduced deficit with the deficit for the four months ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 likely to be about £6,300. This had been because the actual invoice had been received for the Parish Poll (the Poll cost £1,200 not the £2,000 estimated by Babergh as worst case) and additionally £725 of Burial Income had been received in July. This estimate, he said, was accurate, the actual deficit is £6,263.

The budgeted deficit, he said, was £2,917 and so we are £3,300 worse than where we hoped we would be. The key reasons are:

- a) Unbudgeted legal expenses this year of £6,800
- b) Unbudgeted Parish Poll costs of £1,200
- c) Unbudgeted Drain Repair costs of £1,000
- d) Interest Received £1,000 higher than budgeted as Interest Rates have remained high
- e) Grant Expenditure being nearly £3,000 less than budgeted.

He explained to Councillors that more important than repeated explanations from him describing the reasons for the shortfall to date or the likely August financial result was where Council is likely to be for the year and where Council is likely to be next 31<sup>st</sup> March.

He told Councillors that Council Financial Regulations require Council to consider this now and that there is no point in constantly referring back to a budget written last November.

Displaying the Working Papers, he explained that really there are two, very standard, ways of doing a revised forecast for this Financial Year. The first is a 'top down' approach of quickly adding the known substantial changes and the second way is a more 'detailed approach' where everything is reviewed. He had done it both ways.

Taking the 'top down' approach our deficit for the year will be £33,000, £23,000 worse than Planned.

Taking the more detailed approach, he suspected that there will be extra Tree Maintenance costs when the survey is done and suggested that Council needs to have a big think about Grants. Additionally, there may be extra legal costs incurred either from complainants or concerning the legal arrangements concerning the Paddocks Allotments. He hoped that the contingency contained in the forecast of £1,300 will be sufficient. He was not certain that it was sufficient.

He had prepared the more detailed forecast assuming that Grant Expenditure is £2,725 for the year not the £6,000 planned. That would lead to a deficit for the year of £29,392 and Council having 7 months reserves at the end of the year. The preferred range is 6 to 9 months. The Council Tax Increase next year might then 10% to 12%.

The Clerk explained that these forecasts are subject to other decisions Council makes, including whether to use Neighbourhood CIL to fund the Neighbourhood Plan, the size of the whole multi-year budget for the Neighbourhood Plan (which will be presented in November) and the outcome of the conversations concerning the Babergh Street Cleaning Grant. There are a lot of uncertainties around that very preliminary estimate of next year's Council Tax, the increase could be higher or lower.



He concluded by saying that Council will shortly discuss Grants or rather the provision of a possibly non-recoverable loan for a Christmas event and so when that decision is made Council can then approve this reforecast it or amend it. He wanted to share with Councillors the whole financial position before that item is discussed and so the next motions are only to approve the July Accounts and Receipts and Payments. A motion concerning the reforecast will follow later.

He will shortly be inviting Councillors to suggest and comment on the priority items for Neighbourhood Cil funds.

Cllr Sherman asked if the Grants for VJ Day etc were from the Social Fund, the Clerk confirmed that they were but that they still represented a reduction in Council Funds and so go through the Income and Expenditure Account.

Cllr Falconer asked if further legal expenditure was likely, the Clerk replied that he did not know, it depended on what correspondence he received. He had heard nothing from the correspondents for some weeks.

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

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

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

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

## **12. Christmas Event**

The Clerk presented the Working Paper detailing the planned event. Since the last Council Meeting the Chair and the Clerk had met with the Member of the Public who had sent two proposals.

The Group's preferred proposal was that the Parish Council make available a loan to cover Gifts from Santa - £300, a Magician - £400, Advertising - £200 and a Chestnut Roaster - £525.

All funds left over at the end of the evening, net of costs incurred, will be remitted to the Parish Council.

Should the funds remitted be greater than the loan advanced then the funds should be held by the Parish Council to fund the 2026 event.

Cllr Ranzetta described the proposal as 'a genius idea'. Cllr Falconer asked how much is in the event fund. The Clerk replied approximately £5,000. Cllr Falconer offered her help. Cllr Robinson spoke in support of the motion.

**Motion:** The Parish Council makes a £1,500 loan to the event organisers recognising that it may not recover all of the loan and that should the funds received exceed the loan advanced that the Parish Council will hold the surplus funds which will be put to a future similar event.

Power to make such a loan: LGA 1972, section 137

**Proposed:** Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously,

## **13. Reforecast for the Year**

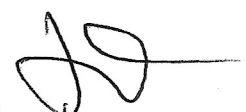
The Clerk explained that this reforecast was for a loss of £29,392 for the year with no further grants made and the £15,000 which Council had voted to spend on the Neighbourhood Plan this year not being paid via Neighbourhood Cil. In answer to a question from Cllr Robinson the Clerk agreed that Council could revisit those decisions.

**Motion:** To approve the reforecast for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, a deficit of £29,392.

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

Meeting ended 8.16pm

Date of next meeting – Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025 7pm

  
Jamie Muckie  
2/10/25