

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 5th February 2026, commencing at 7.10pm in the Village Hall.

All supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, February 2026.

Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Frank Domoney, Lizzie Falconer, Iain Lamont, Jack Norman, Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Nineteen members of the public.

1. Opening Statement by the Chair:

The Chair began by welcoming Cllr Norman to Council. Cllr Norman signed the Acceptance of Office. She welcomed everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of minute taking. 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.

2. Apologies and approval of Absences

The Clerk reported that Cllrs Mawford and Mitchell had sent their apologies and that Cllr Ranzetta had advised that a prior engagement may delay her attendance. Cllr Ranzetta did not attend.

3. Declarations of Interest and item 4 Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk reported that Cllr Norman had completed her Register of Interests form.

The Clerk reported that Cllr Robinson has declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Second Meadows and an Other Registrable Interest of being a Trustee in The Hub.

Cllr Robinson had requested the Clerk issue dispensations to speak and vote on Item 13 which relates to the Paddocks Allotments and Item 14 which relates to the Hub.

The Clerk had declined those requests for dispensations having taken advice from the Suffolk Association of Local Councils. Cllr Robinson had disagreed with those decisions emailing and telephoning the Clerk to express his disagreement. The Monitoring Officer at Babergh Council had telephoned the Clerk and confirmed that he is content with the Clerk's decisions. The Monitoring Officer had not advised, recommended or suggested in any way that the Clerk reconsider them.

The Clerk told Councillors that Cllr Domoney is the Chair of the Riverside Allotments Association which operates on Second Meadows. He explained that he therefore has what is legally called a 'Non Registrable Interest' in the Riverside Allotments Association. Cllr Domoney had asked the Clerk for a dispensation to speak and vote on Item 13 which relates to the Paddocks Allotments.

The Clerk told Councillors that he had declined that request having taken advice from the Suffolk Association of Local Councils. Identically to his decisions concerning Cllr Robinson, the Monitoring Officer had telephoned the Clerk and confirmed that he was content with that decision and had not advised him to, in any way, reconsider it.

The Clerk explained that the effects of these interests and his decisions supported by the Monitoring Officer at Babergh Council are that:

With respect to Item 13 The Allotments Cllr Robinson cannot remain in the room whenever the Allotments are mentioned including any mention in Public Time. Cllr Robinson may remain in the room should matters relating to the Hub arise in Public Participation time and may indeed speak from the Public area during Public Participation Time. He must leave the room when we get to Agenda Item 14.

Cllr Domoney may remain in the room should matters relating to the Allotments arise in Public Participation time and may indeed speak from the Public area during Public Participation Time. He must leave the room when we get to Agenda Item 13.



He asked Councillors whether they had any interests or updates to their interests that they wished to declare. No Cllr said that they had.

Cllr Robinson corrected the Clerk telling him that the Riverside Allotments site was Poultry Farm. The Clerk responded that he understood both Second Meadows and Poultry Farm to be Disclosable Pecuniary Interests of Cllr Robinson. Cllr Robinson agreed that this was the case.

5. Approval of Minutes

To approve as accurate minutes of the 8th January 2026 meeting of the Council.

Cllr Robinson said that he did not consider the minutes to be a true representation.

Motion to approve. Proposed: Cllr Falconer **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson voted against. Cllr Norman abstained. Cllr Norman had not been present at the meeting.

Cllr Domoney said that at the previous Meeting Cllr Mawford had made remarks which had concerned him. He requested Cllr Mawford to publicly withdraw or retract words which he considered to be erroneous and untrue. Mistakes, he said, can be made, adding that it is easy to insensitively wander into ethnic, religious and cultural minefields especially late at night. Cllr Mawford, he said, should extend his fulsome and gracious apology offered to the Masons to him saying that as a born Catholic he cannot be a Mason.

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

Cllr Robinson left the room saying that he considered that the reasons he had been asked to leave to be 'very sketchy' and put in doubt a lot of motions previously carried including Planning Applications and that Pecuniary Interests has not been lodged correctly.

A Member of the Public described the committee that had been formed to run the proposed allotments. A Member of the Public spoke in support of the Paddocks Allotments saying that it would allow her to introduce her small child to growing produce and caring for wildlife. She spoke of her desire to create an inclusive community open to those of limited financial capabilities. A Member of the Public said that he considered the allotments would contribute to the physical and mental health of the community. He said that he hoped to involve children from the local preschool and primary school in the Allotments. A member of the Public said that she hoped that Council would support this rare opportunity to create Public Allotments protected by Planning Permissions. She reminded the PC of its legal obligations to provide Public Allotments.

A Member of the Public described the proposal as incomplete, lacking essential supporting information including a feasibility study. He described it as raising significant concerns about safety, feasibility and the responsible use of parish funds. He criticised a lack of description of the methodology used to assess site suitability saying no evidence had been provided to demonstrate demand, community need or likely uptake. No PERT, Gantt chart or cashflow forecast had been supplied. He told Cllrs that the risk analysis omits the presence of electrical infrastructure and a large mature tree. Public Health issues such as manure storage, composting arrangements, toilet facilities and proximity to the watercourse had been insignificantly considered. He had concerns about sufficient access rights over the Public Right of Way, the site had been assessed and rejected several years ago and the PC informed.

Cllr Robinson returned to the room.

A Member of the Public explained why the Hub was considering changing its status to a charity. She told Cllrs that this change would reduce the Hub's regulatory costs and open up new sources of funds. She appealed to the PC to support these changes to allow the Post Office to continue operating as lifeline for many. The Hub, she told Councillors, serves over 500 customers per month and had plans for the future.



A Member of the Public said that in his opinion the Babergh and Mid-Suffolk push for a 40% – 65% housing increase, would fundamentally transform one of England's most important medieval villages. He told Cllrs that such an increase would increase traffic far beyond what our medieval streets can safely handle, intensify parking pressure and congestion and, most importantly, dilute the very character which draws visitors. He said that Lavenham's heritage, compact medieval form and limited walkable access to services mean that edge-of-village development is unsustainable, car-dependent, and harmful to the village's historic character. He urged the PC to draw on the many available resources to overturn the Babergh and Mid-Suffolk proposals.

A Member of the Public deplored the PC's failure to ensure that Lower Rd was cleared of mud following the recent floods. The Chair replied that anyone can report Highways issues to Suffolk County Council.

7. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that work on the new footpath adjacent to Melford Road has finally started recognising that the works were disrupting traffic.

8. Local Authority Councillors' Reports

County Cllr Lindsay reminded Cllrs that £27million of bus funding is available for parishes to bid for over next three years.

He told Cllrs that following a request from Conservative controlled Suffolk County Council the 2026 County Council elections had been scrapped. The Government has indicated that there will be no future County Council elections because there will be elections for shadow unitary Councillors in May 2027 and the unitary council(s) will start in May 2028.

Suffolk County Council had decided to raise Council Tax by the maximum amount permitted of 5%. The recommended minimum level of reserves is 5% of the council's total £850million annual spend. In order to keep reserves just within that level (£42.5million), the council's pension fund committee had agreed to give SCC a one-year-only £10million reduction in pension contributions for the coming financial year.

He told Cllrs that one of the biggest cost pressures is SEND. The Government, aware that it is not providing enough money, has been making councils borrow to fund this with the promise that it will take on responsibility for SEND funding by April 2028. However, a promised white paper has yet to materialise. The Council is in the meantime having to pay interest on the debt. This will be £5million in the year about to end, rising to £8.9million in the 2026/27 year and then a forecast £11million plus in the year thereafter.

The Government has rated Suffolk's road maintenance as Red, the worst category. Suffolk County Council's administration, however, has denied that the rating is accurate, saying that overall the condition of Suffolk's roads is Amber, with the Red rating being arrived at because the Department for Transport did not include in its assessment £10million of highways funding that it brought forward from the 2025-26 financial year and invested early in a resurfacing programme in 2024-25. The Council has met with the Department for Transport to press for the Suffolk rating to be raised to Amber.

Suffolk County Council rules concerning 20mph schemes have changed but the repeater signage requirements remain as does the lack of any enforcement by the Police.

Cllr Robinson raised concerns about road closure signs being put up too far away from the actual road closure. County Cllr Lindsay agreed that this was an ongoing source of complaints.

District Cllr Clover reported that Babergh had lost out consequent of changes by Central Government to local government funding with funding being shifted in favour of more urban areas.

Residents should soon start receiving 'pre-information literature' concerning changes to recycling followed by delivery of the new bins prior to the scheme launching in June.

He had written to the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member of Highways and Flooding regarding his concerns about flooding adjacent to the Lavenham Butchers and is working with Public Rights of Way and Highways to improve the maintenance of Clay Lane. Cllr Falconer asked who is responsible for the culvert under Water St. Cllr Clover said that he would contact Cllr West.



9. Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Group: Report by The Chair of the Group

The Chair of the LNP Group explained that the Terms of Reference of the Group require that the Group be made up of a cross-section of volunteers from the community, including Parish Councillors, up to a maximum of 15 members all of whom must be on the electoral roll in Lavenham and include at least 2 and a maximum of 2 Parish Councillors.

He told Cllrs that subsequent of the election of Cllr Norman to the Parish Council on 22nd January 2026 there are now 3 Parish Councillors on the Group. The Group, whilst very mindful of the need to ensure that the Group remains made-up of a cross section of volunteers from across the Community, wished to retain the skills and knowledge of Ms Norman and the other Councillor members.

Motion: that the Parish Council agrees that Cllr Norman be allowed to remain a member of the LNP Group as well as Cllrs Sherman and Bourne. Should any of Cllrs Bourne, Norman or Sherman leave the Group then the Group will revert to its previously agreed (March 2025) Terms of Reference.

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

The Chair of the LNP Group told Cllrs that as agreed at the 8th January 2026 Meeting of Council the draft Questionnaire was sent the next day to all Councillors requesting their early attention and communication of any concerns to the Chair of the LNP Group.

A number of Councillors had written to the Chair of the LNP Group. The LNP Group has considered these comments and made changes where it considers appropriate.

Replies had been received from Cllrs Lamont, Mitchell and Muckian saying that they considered their queries resolved and thanking the Group for their work. Cllr Robinson had raised queries some of which the Group had accepted and some of which they had not.

Cllr Lamont asked how the LNP Group will ensure that multiple Questionnaires are not submitted online by the same person. The Chair of the LNP Group replied that he would find out and write to Cllr Lamont.

A local printer has quoted approximately £1,300 to print the draft Newsletter and Questionnaire.

The Chair of the LNP Group thanked the Councillors who wrote concerning the Questionnaire and the Clerk for his help preparing all the documents asking that these thanks be recorded in the minutes.

Motion: that the Parish Council thanks the LNP Group for all its hard work and asks the LNP Group to print and distribute the Newsletter and Questionnaire as drafted at a cost of less than £1,500. As previously determined by Council the cost will be charged to Neighbourhood CIL

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

10. Planning Register The Clerk presented the Planning Register commenting that all Babergh decisions are in line with Councillor recommendations.

11. Planning Applications

DC/25/05163 Pegtile Court, Installation of an air source heat pump.

Cllr Lamont explained that because the outbuilding is in the curtilage of a listed building Listed Building Consent was also required. He told Cllrs that without the associated Listed Building application the PC cannot fully comment on the impact to the Heritage assets.

Motion: before making a recommendation PC needs to see the Listed Building Consent Application.

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

No Councillor wished to propose a motion concerning DC/25/05426 Application for Approval of Reserved Matters relating to 269 dwellings in the Chilton Woods Mixed Development.



12. Motions to approve policies relating to Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding, Health and Safety, the Environment and Grants.

The Clerk explained that District Cllrs Clover and Maybury had kindly offered part of their locality budgets to the Parish Council to support the Parish Councils work maintaining the trees it is responsible for. £1,233.50 will shortly be received.

He told Cllrs that Babergh requires that recipients of Locality Funding have Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and Health and Safety Policies. Council should for reasons of best practice adopt such policies. In addition, the Environmental and Grants Policies are up for review.

He explained to Cllrs the key parts and sources of each policy. Cllr Sherman commented that, reflecting on his Health and Safety experience, he considered the Health and Safety policy to be appropriate.

Motions: that the policies relating to Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding, Health and Safety, the Environment and Grants are approved.

Proposed: Cllr Falconer **Seconded:** Cllr Norman **Decisions:** Approved unanimously.

13. Motions concerning Allotments.

Cllrs Robinson and Domoney left the room.

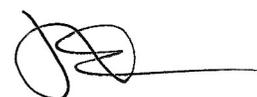
The Clerk explained that the minutes of the 1st May 2025 Meeting of Council record that 'The Clerk is asked to discuss with representatives of the emerging Allotments Association and Hartog Hutton possible arrangements for the Association to manage the site adjacent to the Railway Walk as Allotments. If the proposed arrangements can be agreed then they should be brought back to the Parish Council for approval'.

The Clerk told Cllrs that:

- a) The emerging Allotments Association has evolved into an unincorporated association, the 'Lavenham Community Allotment Association' with a written constitution and a Bank Account. The Association has received a £2,500 grant from Hidden Gardens. As explained in the paper written by the Association it is legally unable to take a legal interest in the site but is willing to undertake the day to day running and management of the site.
- b) Heads of Terms concerning the Lease have been obtained from the Leaseholder.
- c) The Allotments Association has prepared a draft devolved Management Agreement between it and the PC.
- d) The Association has prepared a comprehensive suite of policies to govern its affairs and the management of the allotments.
- e) The Association has requested that the PC:
 - 1) Approve, in principle, the Heads of Terms, of the lease
 - 2) Approve, in principle, the devolved Management Agreement
 - 3) Approve in principle that the PC establish a metered connection to the water supply
 - 4) Approve in principle a grant of £2,500 to the Association.

The Clerk explained that:

- a) Councillors might have been preferred that the lease had been directly between the Allotments Association and the Leaseholder but this is not possible.
- b) The lease between the PC and the Leaseholder is for the unexpired period of approximately 995 years with no rent payable except a contribution towards to the maintenance of the car park which the PC may charge to the Allotments Association.
- c) The Management Agreement is for an initial five year term with subsequently each party having the right to terminate giving twelve months' notice.
- d) Appendix B makes it clear that the Allotments Association will make best endeavours to apply with all relevant laws, bye laws and regulations
- e) Appendix B makes it clear that the Allotments Association will manage allotment holders including inspecting sites and resolving, as much as it can, complaints.



- f) The Association should be commended for its comprehensive range of policies.
- g) Should the Allotments Association cease to exist or either the PC or Allotments Association terminate the agreement then the PC could seek to identify an alternative Allotments Association or discuss with the Lavenham Woodlands Association the use of the site as a community open space.

The Clerk displayed the Schedule of proposed Responsibilities.

Cllr Falconer described the proposal as 'a wonderful thing' reminding Cllrs that these votes are 'votes in principle'. Finer details, she said, can be resolved later. She described the proposal as possible permanent enhancement to the village.

The Chair explained that Cllrs could defer consideration of the motion concerning Grants whilst the Association applied for Grants from other bodies and its likely costs became more certain.

Cllr Sherman queried the Allotments Association plan to spend £3,000 on sheds. Cllr Norman replied that the Association wished to provide sheds to allotment holders to reduce risks of financial exclusion and to make sure the site 'looks nice' and is not 'ramshackle'.

Cllr Lamont said that he supported the provision of sheds to reduce the risk of financial exclusion.

Cllr Lamont proposed an amendment to the Motion 'The Clerk is instructed to work with the relevant parties and obtain legal advice to finalise the agreements, up to a maximum cost of £1,500 and to return to Council with final draft documents for Council to consider' so that it reads:

'The Clerk is instructed to work with the relevant parties and obtain legal advice to finalise the agreements, up to a maximum cost of £1,500 and to return to Council with final draft documents for Council to consider. Additionally, before formally instructing the Solicitor, the Clerk will contact PROW (Suffolk County Council Public Rights of Way) to explain that the PC is proceeding with the legal handover of the allotments and follow up on their 2018 letter to clarify their requirements, if any, concerning legal documentation'.

Cllr Lamont and the Clerk explained that this was to ensure that the complex Public Rights of Way issues were resolved as soon as possible.

Motions

Council approves, in principle, the Heads of Terms of the lease.

Council approves, in principle, the Devolved Management Agreement.

Council agrees, in principle, to pay for the establishment of a metered connection to the water supply.

Proposed: Cllr Falconer **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman **Decisions:** Approved unanimously.

Motion: Council approves, in principle, a grant of £2,500 to the Association.

Cllr Bourne expressed concerns regarding the Grant at a time of rising Council Tax bills and the increased Cost of Living. Cllr Lamont pointed out the PC had a statutory obligation to provide Allotments and that unusually, when compared to other Parish Councils, the PC had been provided the land for free. The Grant should be viewed in this context.

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

Vote to amend Motion as proposed by Cllr Lamont.

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

Motion

The Clerk is instructed to work with the relevant parties and obtain legal advice to finalise the agreements, up to a maximum cost of £1,500 and to return to Council with final draft documents for Council to consider. Additionally, before formally instructing the Solicitor, the Clerk will contact PROW (Suffolk County Council Public Rights of Way) to explain that the PC is proceeding with the legal handover of the allotments and follow up on their 2018 letter to clarify their requirements, if any, concerning legal documentation'.

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



14. Motions concerning lease of 2 Lady St

Cllr Domoney returned to the room.

The Clerk explained that the Parish Council leases 2 Lady St to the Hub. The lease is for twenty years beginning 24th May 2019. The annual rent is a peppercorn. The PC is responsible for External Repairs but not internal repairs. The tenant has the opportunity to break on 24th May 2024 and every fifth year thereafter. The PC has no break options.

The Parish Council paid £40,000 for the Building of which £30,000 was funded by District Cil. Should the Parish Council sell the Building to anyone other than a similar organisation to the Hub 50% of the profit is payable to Babergh Council.

The Clerk told Cllrs that on 20th January 2026 he had been advised by the Chair of the Hub that:

'We are writing to update you on an important development regarding the future structure of the Lavenham Community Hub Community Land Trust Ltd . After reviewing the long-term needs of the Hub and the wider community, the trustees are proposing to convert the Land Trust into a registered charity, with a proposed name of The Lavenham Community Hub Charitable Trust (LCHCT)'.

On 21st January 2026 the Clerk had received a letter from a Trustee of the Hub (Cllr Robinson) which said that in the view of the Hub the Parish Council had three choices:

- a) **A deed of assignment to reflect the change of name and structure.**
- b) **A new lease in the charity's name. Should the Parish Council choose this route, the trustees would expect all associated costs to be met by the Parish Council, as this would be an unnecessary and unreasonable alternative to a simple assignment.**
- c) **Non-cooperation by the Parish Council, resulting in no variation or new lease being provided. In that scenario, the Parish Council would need to implement the relevant clauses of the existing lease, which would ultimately lead to the closure of the Hub with a significant and avoidable impact on the community'.**

A draft deed of assignment, prepared by the Hub, had been enclosed.

The Clerk told Cllrs that it was unclear from the lease whether the PC had the discretion not to permit assignment. He advised Cllrs that it was likely that the PC had such discretion.

Cllr Sherman said that the PC should take legal advice and do everything properly. Cllr Falconer said that she admired the valuable work of the Hub but the PC did need to consider what the need for its services might be in ten years' time. She deplored a recent Facebook post on this topic which she described as intimidation. Repeating her support for the Hub she said the PC should obtain legal advice.

Motion: The Clerk is instructed to obtain legal advice to a maximum cost of £600 concerning the legal position of the Council following the request of the Hub and to report that advice to Council.

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

Cllr Robinson returned to the room

15. Clerks Report**Public Realm:**

The urgent safety work on the trees approved last month has been ordered and has been completed this week. The tree survey will take place next week.

The Clerk is aware that the Speed Indicator Device on Sudbury Rd has stopped working. He is hopeful that as soon as we get a nice day the battery will recharge but will investigate it should it not start working again.

No complaints have been received at all this year concerning the toilets, before or after we reduced the frequency of cleaning. Extra Toilet Roll dispenser have been ordered. The Clerk has made enquiries concerning the costs of introducing charges to the toilets and will report the results of these next month.



Accounts:

The December Accounts contain two significant variances.

£2,000 or so because the election was uncontested. This will be a saving as compared to our last forecast. £2,800 or so because the remaining part of the emergency tree work is now February. This is timing only.

The draft January Accounts tell the same big picture story i.e. £2,000 or so because the election was uncontested. This will be a saving as compared to our last forecast. £5,800 or so because the remaining part of the emergency tree work and the tree survey is now February. This is timing only.

Motions: To approve Accounts and Receipts and Payments for month ending 31st December 2025
Proposed: Cllr Lamont **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman **Decisions:** Approved unanimously.

Cllr Falconer left the Meeting.

16. Motion to approve payment to Suffolk County Council for LED streetlights

The Clerk explained that the lights with the exception of 1 unit in Spring St were replaced in 2020.

All lights are currently working.

The quoted cost excluding the Pump Ct Alley Light (project cancelled) and the Spring St unit not installed was £122,624.90.

The final quoted cost excluding the Pump Ct Alley Light (project cancelled) and the Spring St unit not installed was £130,236.88 an increase of £7,611.98, this increase consists of eight matters, six of which were not initially completely accepted.

At the time (October 2020) this revised quote was described by the then Chair of the Parish Council Cllr Reeve as *'Thanks Iain, it looks like a question of swings and roundabouts - the net position is thus acceptable. As you say the overall result is OK, and I will leave it with you to handle the list below. I will revert to Agy to confirm so far acceptable subject to your list. regards Carroll'*

This was in response to an email from Cllr Lamont *'I have analysed the Latest Invoice. There are higher than expected costs, which we can challenge. However, there are a number of units where more work was done than was quoted for – e.g. new posts fitted. And there are no extra charges for Spring St (although this has not yet been done) I will query the items below, but I think the result overall is OK'*

A response dealing with most of the queries was received in October 2020 but we have never been formally invoiced except for £1,773.99 relating to the Meadow Close to Sudbury Rd bollard style light.

The Clerk told Cllrs that the PC has earned five years interest on the money and should now settle the amounts due. Payment would reduce the PC's exposure to the financial stability of Banks and resolve the matter whilst Suffolk County Council still exists.

He told Cllrs that Suffolk Streetlights had inspected the Spring St lamppost in January 2026 and advised that the old lamppost is safe and should next be inspected in three years' time. Replacement of that streetlight would require digging up the driveway of a property and the owner of the property refuses to give permission for this without a commitment to full replacement of the driveway.

Cllr Lamont agreed that the Spring St work had been very challenging and explained that payment had been withheld to retain leverage to persuade SCC to finish the project including Spring St. He told Cllrs that SCC had previously attempted to uprate the costs for inflation but the PC had been able to convince them to not to do this. He said that he supported payment now to lock in that agreement.

Cllr Robinson suggested that PC continue to delay and stall on payment until Suffolk County Council insist on payment and the Spring St work is done.

Cllr Sherman said that the PC should delay part of the payment as the Spring St work had not been done and the PC would have to pay for its replacement at some point.

Cllr Sherman suggesting reducing the payment by £5,000. The Clerk replied that the proposed payment contained no payment for Spring St and that to deduct money from the payment for the Spring St works would be impossibly difficult to explain to Suffolk County Council.

Cllr Sherman proposed an amendment to the proposed Motion so that it reads: 'The Parish Council requests an invoice from Suffolk County Council for £123,462.89 being the amount outstanding net of the cancelled Spring St costs of £1,137.41 and an amount of £5,000 and instructs the Clerk to ensure that the Spring St Light is reinspected within three years'.

Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Robinson **Decision:** Rejected. Only Cllrs Sherman and Robinson voted in favour.

Motion: The Parish Council requests an invoice from Suffolk County Council for £128,462.89 being the amount outstanding net of the cancelled Spring St costs of £1,137.41 and instructs the Clerk to ensure that the Spring St Light is reinspected within three years.

Proposed: Cllr Norman **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** **Approved** Only Cllrs Sherman and Robinson voted against.

17. Motion to approve Box Bush Maintenance Work

The Clerk explained that the retained Contractor had quoted £4,815 for this year's work as compared to £4,015 the previous year. The Contractor has not increased the job costs but has added an extra soil treatment and an extra spray informing the PC that:

'Due to environmental factors, hotter dryer summers mean caterpillar populations have been increasing so we have added an extra spray. Two drenches (soil treatments) will help maintain the health of the trees if they become waterlogged/drought stressed'.

The Clerk reminded Cllrs of the improved state of the bushes following the engagement of this Contractor. Cllr Norman commented that these bushes are historically important.

Motion: to ask the Contractor to carry out the proposed work at a cost of £4,815.

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

18. Motion to publish recordings of Parish Council Meetings

Cllr Robinson told Cllrs that he considered that the Published Minutes do not appropriately reflect PC meetings especially the tone of those Meetings and that the minutes published in Lavenham are in a small font and hard to read. Publishing audio recordings would enable visually impaired parishioners to access council proceedings.

The Chair said that she had been discussing this idea with the Clerk for some months. Cllr Domoney highlighted the risk that some may selectively edit the recording for their own ends.

Motion: That the Clerk is instructed to publish on the Parish Council website a recording of the Council Meeting within five working days of the draft minutes having been produced.

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

19. Motion to approve policies relating to Freedom of Information

The Clerk explained that the Information Commissioners Office has made it clear that Section 19 of the FOIA requires every public authority to adopt their Publication Scheme and then produce a Guide to information which specifies the particular information it publishes, how it will be published and what charge, if any, is to be made.

Motion: that the Council adopts the Model Publication Scheme and that the Council adopts the Freedom of Information Policy and Guide

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

Meeting ended 9.30pm Date of next meeting – Thursday 5th March 2026 7pm

J. Muckian
5/3/26