

**PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026, commencing at 7.pm in the Village Hall.

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

**Present:**

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Frank Domoney, Lizzie Falconer, Iain Lamont, Roy Mawford, Irene Mitchell, Jack Norman, Jane Ranzetta and Michael Sherman. Twelve members of the public.

**1. Opening Statement by the Chair:**

The Chair welcomed everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded. 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 no Councillor had informed him that they were unable to attend the meeting. Cllr Domoney reported that Cllr Robinson had informed him that he was not going to attend. Cllr Domoney apologised that he had not passed on this information more quickly.

**3. Declarations of Interest and item 4 Requests for Dispensations**

Four Councillors had updated their Registers of Interests:

- a) Cllr Muckian had updated her Register of Interests to include that she has been nominated by the Parish Council to be the PC representative on the Lavenham Guildhall Local Committee and is an ordinary Member of the National Trust.
- b) Cllr Sherman had updated his Register of Interests to include that he rents, for no consideration, a 20 feet container for storage of his personal effects on 2nd Meadow.
- c) Cllr Domoney had updated his Register of Interests to include that he rents allotment beds and space for an apiary on Poultry Farm and Second Meadow and has various local responsibilities. He is Leader of the War Planning Group, Chair of the Lavenham Waterside Allotments Group, Leader of the Lavenham Beekeepers and Hornet Warden for Lavenham and area. He is also an unpaid Director and the CEO of Anglia Maghreb Quantum Cities.
- d) Cllr Robinson had updated his Register of Interest concerning his business interests. Cllr Robinson has declared that he is connected with Greenwich Park Management Limited and that he and his Partner together have 29 income generating properties. He has also updated his Register to include that he is a member of the PC's Planning Working Group.

The Clerk said that he anticipated that various Councillors will need to leave the room for Items 13 (Allotments) and 17 (First Meadow Boundary).

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

The Clerk told Councillors that a significant volume of correspondence has been received by the Monitoring Officer at Babergh Council detailing concerns with respect to alleged incomplete registration of interests by Parish Councillors and a number of other alleged behaviours by Parish Councillors. The Monitoring Officer has, in summary, received considerable correspondence alleging that Councillors have breached the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer had asked the Clerk to inform Councillors that his Office is still considering these complaints. The Monitoring Officer has assessed that it is likely that some of these complaints will be dismissed, some may be relevant for informal resolution but is confident that he will determine that some of these complaints will require more formal action. To that end he is actively considering which of the complaints will be referred to the Suffolk Joint Standards Board for their formal consideration. This Board will be comprised of elected Councillors from Mid Suffolk District Council.



When a Joint Standards Board Hearing is required, the complaint subject will be informed of the hearing date and the appropriate arrangements. This meeting will be held in private, as it relates to an individual, but the Board's decisions will be published publicly and reported at a Parish Council meeting.

The Monitoring Officer had advised the Clerk that the most common actions that may be taken by the Board should the Board uphold the Complaint are:

- a) To recommend that the subject member be formally censured.
- b) To recommend that the subject member be removed from all committees, working groups etc of the council;
- c) To recommend that the subject member should not be appointed and/or removed from all outside bodies to which they have been appointed to by the Council;
- d) To instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange appropriate training.

The Clerk reported that, as referred to earlier, Cllr Robinson had updated his Register of Interests to include membership of this Councils Planning Working Group.

Cllr Robinson had written to the Clerk '*Andrew — to enable me to participate fully and vote on all planning matters (excluding, of course, any items where I hold a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest), I would be grateful if you could issue a blanket dispensation covering my involvement in planning discussions and voting*'.

The Clerk explained that it is his opinion that membership of the Parish Councils Planning Group does not lead in and of itself to Conflicts of Interest at a Council Meeting. He considers that Conflicts of Interest must be considered on a case by case basis. He had therefore declined the request for such a blanket dispensation. The Monitoring Officer had informed the Clerk that he agrees with his interpretation and has advised him that being on a working group of the Parish Council does not create a conflict type scenario in terms of interests.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

To approve as accurate minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026 meeting of the Council.

**Motion to approve. Proposed:** Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Falconer **Decision:** Approved. Cllrs Mawford and Ranzetta abstained. Neither had been present at the meeting.

Cllr Domoney asked Cllr Mawford whether he wished to withdraw comments made at a previous meeting or apologise. Cllr Mawford replied that if anybody, including Cllr Domoney, thinks that he has breached the Code of Conduct, then it is open to them to refer him to the Monitoring Officer.

#### **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 expressed her concern about sites adjacent to the Melford Rd offered by local landowners for development which are not actually in Lavenham Parish, they are within Acton Parish. The Chair of the LNP Group and the Member of the Public agreed to continue to correspond with the Member of the Public and Acton Parish Council. The LNP Group is very aware of residents' concerns about these sites which are within Acton but are adjacent to Lavenham and will respond in due course.

A Member of the Public expressed his concerns that the sites offered adjacent to Melford Rd were prone to flooding, might increase the local risk of flooding and that development of these sites would increase the burden on Lavenham services. He requested a data set of the sites offered. The Chair of the LNP asked the Member of the Public to contact him. He reminded the Member of the Public that this is just a 'Call for Sites' to which local landowners have responded. He added that the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire will very shortly be distributed to all residents seeking residents views on the future development of the village.



A Member of the Public asked whether the Parish Council would welcome the establishment of a taxi office in Lavenham. The Chair replied that she had never previously heard of such a proposal saying that she recognised that many might welcome this.

A Member of the Public updated the Parish Council concerning the reopening of The Angel. He told Councillors that the new owners are working with Babergh Council to properly carry out the works required to reopen.

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

The Chair reported that the new footpath adjacent to Melford Road appears to be complete. Confirmation that the works are complete has not yet been received.

The Chair had represented the Council, for the first time, at a Lavenham Guildhall Local Committee meeting. She reminded all that for residents of Lavenham, entry to the Guildhall is free.

The PC has been advised that Babergh are looking to grant a license to allow a mobile veterinary service to park at the Cock Inn car park for two days each week. This will occupy either a coach space or four car spaces. Busy summer weekends will be avoided.

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

The Clerk presented County Cllr Lindsay's report.

County Cllr Lindsay had advised that he is still waiting to hear from the County's Public Rights of Way Officer, who was apparently on leave last week, about the status of access across the Railway Walk. He has pursued this again.

The County Cllr had advised that after District Cllr Clover raised the issue of part of Clay Lane being made impassable, apparently by construction vehicles, the Rights of Way Officer had told him that Highways are investigating the causes and potential enforcement.

Brent Eleigh Parish Council has expressed a desire for funding to improve the surface of Clay Lane. He has passed this request on to Babergh CIL team, who have received it favourably and have added the Lane to their LCWIP list (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan). A bid for CIL funding for improving the surface of the Lane from Brent Eleigh PC is expected shortly.

He advised that County Council elections are back on following a legal challenge which the Government found it could not defend against, although before its lawyers saw the challenge the Government had been adamant that it had legal precedents on its side.

Suffolk Highways has announced that they will trial towing away vehicles that have not been removed between March and June this year for about 19 specific planned resurfacing works. The Council will, a fortnight before, place cards placed under windscreens and through residents' doors. Two days before the works are due to begin, cones will be put out along with signage warning that it will become a towing zone on the day. If there are cars parked on the road on the day, officers will knock on doors to try and find the owner and as a last resort, vehicles will be moved. There is a £70 fine to get it back. Essex County Council has been doing this for about a decade and found that it has worked to cut costs of road works.

District Cllr Clover reported that the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process has been further complicated by the Leader of Norfolk County Council announcing that they intend to withdraw from the LGR process. Norfolk was partnering up with Suffolk under one Mayor with an equal number of Unitary Authorities in each County. It is certain that the Mayoral elections will go forward. It is within the Governments gift to cancel Unitary Authority elections and impose whatever system they decide although this would require an Act of Parliament.

He noted the recent publication of the latest Call for Sites map and that a number of residents have expressed concern over the latest potential developments.

He reminded Cllrs that there have been two Babergh Calls for Sites. One at the beginning of 2024 where just over 580 were put forward, their Assessment is to be found in the SHLAA section on the Babergh website.



The second Call for Sites occurred between October 2025 and January 2026. A map of the 500 additional sites put forward is also on the Babergh website.

Babergh has decided to deploy a uniform methodology to assess the suitability of these sites, both the original 580 and the most recent 500 sites, so as to ensure fairness.

Babergh hope to publish the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) around May, this will assign each site an overall Red/Amber/Green rating.

Following this, further assessment work will be carried out working with experts from Heritage, Highways and Sustainability to select a list of preferred sites which will then be published for public consultation. Objections from Lavenham and Acton residents have already been received, however no decisions have yet been made as to which sites will be allocated for development. He emphasised that not all sites will be allocated for development.

He reminded Cllrs that Babergh is the licensing authority for taxi services and thanked County Cllr Lindsay for his attention to the issues of Clay Lane. He told Cllrs that he is continuing to work with the Suffolk County Cllr Cabinet Member for Highways and Flooding to press for works to resolve flooding issues adjacent to Lavenham Butchers.

## **8. Clerks Report**

The Clerk explained that there were a number of required annual reviews of Council documents in his report but that he would begin with Public Realm.

### **Public Realm**

The Clerk apologised to Cllrs that neither he nor the tree surgeon contacted Babergh concerning the First Meadow Tree Maintenance. First Meadow is within the Conservation Area.

The Babergh Tree Protection Officer has confirmed that no contact had been required concerning the most significant work i.e. the felling of the Silver Birch as it was dead but that contact should have been made regarding the trimming, for safety reasons, of branches of the trees overhanging the Play Area. Unfortunately, neither the PC nor the Contractor had done this, this requirement to contact Babergh had fallen through the cracks.

Both the PC and its contracted tree surgeon have apologised to the Tree Protection Officer who has confirmed that, had he been contacted, he would certainly have given permission and that he will take no action whatsoever concerning this error. The Clerk described this as a lesson learned and an error which will not be repeated.

The tree survey has been received and sent to the Council's contracted tree Surgeon requesting the development of a prioritised action plan. Additionally, UK Power Networks have visited First Meadows and identified which trees they will be trimming back to establish the correct distances between the overhead electricity lines and the trees. The cost of this work will be borne by UKPN. Should this work be carried out in the Spring or Summer they will check for nesting birds. The Clerk has put them in touch with Babergh Council who have approved their work.

Enabling works have this week been completed in the Water St Car Park for the installation of replacement EV chargers. It is anticipated that the new and improved Chargers will be shortly operational.

The Speed Indicator Device Battery is recharging as the days get longer. It may be that we have to purchase replacement batteries. The situation is being monitored.

It's been a bad week for toilet doors, the locks have failed on three of the six doors this week, two in Church St and one in Prentice St, all have been repaired. It is not likely that these breakages are due to vandalism, more likely it is excessive force being applied to the handles by someone outside when someone is inside. A second toilet roll dispenser has been installed and stocked with paper in each of the toilets. Complaints have been received this month concerning the doors (people had extreme difficulty getting out) and the lack of toilet paper.



**Accounts:**

The Clerk explained that the January Accounts contain two significant variances:

- a) £2,000 or so because the election was uncontested. This will be a saving as compared to our last forecast.
- b) £5,800 or so because the remaining part of the emergency tree work and the tree survey were done in February. This is timing only.

The draft February Accounts, he told Cllrs will tell a very different story, explaining that it is appropriate to focus more on these draft accounts and as they contain a number of unexpected savings realised in February.

The February Accounts will show a deficit for the eleven months of some £7,000, a reduction of approximately £10,000 on the deficit of £17,000 for the eleven months included in the forecast and all of this is real gains not timing. There have been a number of unanticipated windfalls contributing to this £10,000 improvement.

- a) £2,000 or so saving because the election was uncontested.
- b) £1,701 saving as the Annual Street Light Maintenance and Electricity bill has been received, that saving is of course electricity.
- c) £1,500 saving as the grant to the Christmas Event Group has been repaid in full.
- d) £1,250 more Burial income than anticipated. The last three deaths have all been burials rather than cremations.
- e) £1,233 of Locality Grants have been received to help with the costs of tree maintenance.
- f) £764 saving on toilet cleaning consequent of the reduction in cleaning frequency.
- g) £434 saving on Winter Electricity costs for the Parish Office and Toilets.

These savings, he said, will be somewhat balanced out somewhat by the upcoming legal costs concerning Allotments and repair costs to the Hub Building but certainly they do make the financial position a little easier.

Cllr Lamont asked if the loan from the Public Works Loan Board could be paid off. The Clerk explained that it could be but it would weaken the Councils cash position too much.

**Motions:** To approve Accounts and Receipts and Payments for month ending 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026

**Proposed:** Cllr Bourne **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decisions:** Approved unanimously.

The Clerk explained that concerning its **Standing Orders** Council had, at its meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025 Council, adopted the insignificant technical changes required by NALC consequent of the revised NALC Model Standing Orders issued March 2025. Therefore, no changes are proposed, except (consequent of Council decision of 5th February 2026) deleting that recordings of Council Meetings will be erased.

The Clerk explained that in March 2025 NALC had issued revised **Standing Financial Regulations** which, whilst making no substantial changes, included a new section called 'Risk Management and Financial Control' and contained amended clauses in Bold Type which it is compulsory to adopt.

He explained that it compulsory to adopt these new regulations advising Councillors that they make no changes to the Councils Internal Controls which remain:

- a) Over £30,000 spend: Tenders
- b) Spend £3,000 to £30,000: 3 quotations
- c) Spend £1,000 to £3,000: strive to obtain 3 estimates
- d) Spend less than £1,000 shall seek to achieve value for money.
- e) RFO authority to spend up to £1,500 per month for proper functioning of Council or safety of the Public.
- f) Two people required to make any payment.

He explained that concerning the **Scheme of Delegation** a change is proposed to improve the example given of a matter which needs to be resolved between Council Meetings. It makes it clearer the circumstances when the Clerk must consult with Councillors. No significant changes are proposed to the **Authority to Commit Resources**.



Cllr Mawford asked if Register of Interest rules apply to Working Groups. The Clerk replied that they do. Cllr Sherman agreed to remind all members of the Neighbourhood Planning Group of their need to disclose their interests.

**Motion:** Council has reviewed its Standing Orders, Standing Financial Regulations (including system of internal controls), Scheme of Delegation and Authority to Commit Resources. It considers these documents including the system of internal controls to be appropriate.

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

The Clerk explained that concerning the **Risk Register** he had adopted Cllr Mawford's suggestion from the 2025 review that the register include both the likelihood of an event happening and the effect. The Register has been thoroughly reviewed considering events during this Clerks three years employment.

Risks concerning Physical Equipment are now the first category on the register. This area is considered to contain significant risks.

Assets such as streetlights and benches are distributed throughout the village and contain no moving parts but the Toilets (electrical, plumbing and ironmongery failures) and the Playground Equipment present risks to users.

No incidents have been reported concerning streetlights and benches etc other than lights not working and very occasional reports of dirty benches.

Minor repairs have been required on the play equipment and the play equipment has been subject to low level vandalism but there have been no reports of injuries.

The toilets though have developed leaks, failures to flush, sewerage spills and locks have failed making it difficult for users to exit. He told Cllrs that these facilities are difficult for Council to manage. Council has no out of hours maintenance service for these facilities.

Financial Risks including Fraud remain present but are more easily controlled. The appropriate controls are in place and no issues have arisen. Unlike the management of Physical Assets, the small size of the Parish Council assists very good risk management of Financial Risk. The financial risk which is most difficult to manage is poor management of high value Capital projects.

Management Risks are now split out from Financial Risks. Council has reviewed and expanded its policies and procedures to reduce these risks. Inappropriate behaviour by Members and Employees including full declaration of Members Interests require ongoing monitoring.

Cllr Mawford and other Cllrs suggested that the Business Continuity Impact risk should be amended from Low to Medium. The Clerk agreed to amend this rating.

In response to a question from Cllr Lamont the Clerk confirmed that he had checked the Gasworks for leaks and deterioration.

Cllr Lamont asked about deterioration of gravestones. The Clerk replied that the gravestones do deteriorate but he was not aware of any posing risks to cemetery visitors. He said that none had required repair since he had become Clerk. Cllrs Norman and Ranzetta said that in the past the PC had had to repair gravestones.

**Motion:** The risk register is approved.

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

**Motion:** to approve Appointment of Heelis and Lodge as Internal Auditors for the year ended 31 March 2026 at a cost of not more than £500 plus VAT

**Proposed:** Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Falconer **Decision:** Approved unanimously. Cllr Bourne was absent from the room for this vote.

### 9a. Planning Register

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



**9b. Planning Applications**

**DC/26/00299** First Floor 6 Market Place. Change of first floor from tea room back to residential use.

Cllr Lamont explained that the applicant wishes to re-occupy the upstairs part of the property as upstairs has not proved economically viable as an extended tearoom. No structural changes are proposed and the proposed change of this first floor space is not contrary to the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan.

**Motion:** The Application is supported subject to a condition that the first floor space is occupied for residential purposes only for and by the owner of the business.

**Proposed:** Cllr Ranzetta **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Sherman voted against. Cllr Mitchell abstained.

**DC/26/00604** 13-14 Market Place. Fell a cedar tree in a Conservation Area

Cllr Lamont explained that this tree is not a native species and it is quite large for its location. Additionally, heavy pruning is not appropriate for most conifers.

**Motion:** Recommend Approval

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

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

The Chair of the Group presented his report. He commented that the Group had received a further letter from a Member of the Public concerning the Questionnaire. He considered that he had already replied to this person's questions and would not reply further.

**11. Report concerning charging for the use of the Public Toilets**

The Clerk explained that its Meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025 he had been instructed to conduct a rapid investigation of options to reduce costs of providing public washrooms for decision by March 2026. He reminded Cllrs that the Council has budgeted Donation Income of £2,300 for 2026/27 and estimated costs of approximately £19,000.

He told Cllrs that online research had indicated that the cost of introducing a charging system was £3,000 to £4,500 per toilet door. The suppliers he approached quoted similar amounts. A cashless system would likely cost approaching £24,000 fully installed and a cash and card system £30,000.

He said that the project costs were so high because neither facility has a lobby creating a single access point. He outlined other difficulties such as the ongoing monthly costs for card devices on each door, the need to enter into maintenance contracts and that a leading supplier of charging mechanisms advises that a usage reduction of 50% should be expected when charges are introduced. He suggested that reduced usage will be a particular problem in Lavenham, both facilities being adjacent to Pubs.

Consensus emerged not to take charging ideas forward but that this annual deficit would require future consideration by Council particularly the ongoing provision of the Prentice St facilities where the level of donations is particularly low. Cllr Norman suggested approaching selling the roof space for the generation of solar electricity. The Clerk agreed to investigate this with Babergh Council.

**12. Report concerning the assignment of the lease for 2 Lady St.**

The Clerk told Cllrs that at the meeting of Council held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026 he had been instructed to obtain legal advice concerning the legal position of the Council following the request of the Hub.

That advice was that the PC is not required to assign the lease. Additionally, any assignment would not require, as advised by a Trustee of the Hub, only a Deed of Assignment but also a Licence to Assign. Changes to the term of the lease would require a new lease. Changes to clauses in the lease such as the repair obligations or rent payable can be done via a deed of variation signed at the same time as the Licence to Assign and Deed of Assignment. It was unclear whether the addition of break clauses would require a new lease.

In answer to a question from Cllr Sherman the Clerk replied that the costs of assignment would likely be hundreds of pounds.

### **13. Report of progress concerning (The Paddocks) Allotments**

Cllr Domoney began to speak, from his seat, concerning progress of another Allotments site in the Village: the Riverside Allotments.

The Clerk reminded Cllr Domoney that he had an interest in this agenda matter and as had been the case at the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026 Meeting needed to leave the room. Cllr Domoney responded by requesting the Chair to 'throw out as well' a Member of the Public, an Officer of the Paddocks Allotments Group, sitting in the Public Participation area.

He was advised that the rules for councillors are different to those for other people sitting in the public area, and that the Member of the Public could stay. The Member of the Public remained in the room.

On 5<sup>th</sup> February Cllr Domoney had moved to the public area and had spoken from there about allotments in public participation time. The Clerk thought that Cllr Domoney could again move there and speak. But the Chair pointed out that Cllr Domoney could not do so, because public participation time had passed, being earlier on the agenda. The Clerk then corrected himself and agreed with the Chair that Cllr Domoney needed to leave the room. The Clerk apologised to Cllr Domoney for his incorrect initial advice.

Cllr Domoney began to speak again about the Riverside allotments and was stopped from speaking by the Chair who asked him to take time to reflect and compose himself. Cllr Domoney was guided by the Clerk to leave the room. Councillor Domoney addressed the Chair asking 'are you threatening me?'

After further exchanges, including the Chair saying that she was considering pausing the Meeting, Cllr Domoney responded 'don't ever threaten me' and left the room.

Councillor Mitchell asked the Chair why the Council was receiving a report about the Riverside allotments as she believed this site to be a commercial enterprise. The Chair replied that she also considered that the Riverside allotments are a commercial enterprise and Council did not hear a report for that reason. Councillor Mitchell pursued this by noting that Councillor Domoney's attempt to speak was stopped not because of the subject he attempted to speak about but was because the Clerk had ruled at a previous meeting that he had a conflict of interest in the subject matter of allotments. The Chair agreed that was correct. Councillor Mitchell then queried whether the Council should ever be hearing from commercial enterprises and the Chair confirmed the Council does not.

(Clerks Note: All local residents including Cllrs may speak on local matters including commercial businesses, from the Public Participation area in Public Participation time unless the matter relates to their Disclosable Pecuniary Interest)

Councillor Falconer said that she considered that Councillor Domoney standing behind the Chair should be recorded as intimidating and the Chair agreed.

The Clerk explained that on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026 Council had passed the following 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'.

Suffolk Public Rights of Way had been contacted and the historic transfer of title documents which detail a right over the Railway Path had been shared with them.

They had advised on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026 that: 'Following initial contact and subsequent information received I can confirm that the matter regarding potential access across Lavenham Footpath 26 over Suffolk County Council owned land is with our property team and appropriate stakeholders including ourselves for review. Can I ask that no forward action or further correspondence is made until such a time that you receive a formal response on the matter?'.

The Clerk advised Cllrs that consequent of the motion passed contact has not yet been made with lawyers. Cllr Domoney returned to the room.



#### **14. Motion concerning replacement Church Street light**

The Clerk explained on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025 the owner of a Church St property wrote concerning a street light:

'The above light is fixed to our house and is has partly come out of the wall to which it is fixed.

I am in the process of having re-pointing done as the upper front bedroom has been getting damp in that corner, the area is currently scaffolded.

The builder I am using who is very knowledgeable about houses of this era states that the soft red bricks can no longer support the weight and windage of the streetlight and that water is getting in through the large bolt holes. The white brick is now cracked and loose because of the leverage of the bracket.

Given that the builder is already part through the works I need the light to be urgently removed. I am happy to ask our professional electrician to disconnect the light and the builder and I will take it down so that the repairs can be undertaken in timely manner.

This is the second time this has pulled out the previous time was in 2022 and it is clear that the new lights are way too heavy and large given a strong westerly wind that funnels down Church Street.

May I suggest that our light is discontinued as there is ample light from the Cock Horse that is on all night every night illuminating the whole area'.

Subsequently the light was disconnected and the fittings are being stored by the property owner.

Complaints have recently been received concerning the poor lighting in the area particularly where a tree makes the footpath narrow and uneven.

Suffolk Highways were asked whether anything could be done to make the pavement less uneven. They have said that the pavement does not meet their criteria for intervention.

Suffolk Streetlighting have suggested three possible locations for replacement light:

- a) At the side of No 2 Church Rooms at the narrow pinch point within the footpath beneath the tree.
- b) Outside (Front Of Path) No 74 Church St.
- c) Replacement of existing signpost outside the PC Office (Junction to the Cock Inn Car Park )

The Clerk explained that costs vary a little due to the differences in site locations but are all approximately £2,400.

The Clerk suggested that Councillors will need to determine:

- a) Whether there is a need for a replacement light.
- b) Whether Option c) (i.e. by the Parish Office) which does not require an increase to the number of items of street furniture will illuminate the area sufficiently.
- c) And should they decide that there is a need for a streetlight but that option c) (i.e. by the Parish Office) will not illuminate the area sufficiently which of options a) and b) they prefer.

Cllrs expressed a preference for the replacement light to be placed on the side of the road where the previous light had been. Cllr Mawford suggested a door knock of the affected properties. Cllr Bourne agreed to speak with the effected properties, The drafted motion was not proposed.

#### **15. Report concerning Tree Survey**

The Clerk informed Cllrs that the Tree Survey had been received on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026. It is some 163 pages long and contains 29 recommendations concerning 27 trees. The Survey has been forwarded to Suffolk Tree Services for review requesting submission of a costed action plan.

### **16. Motion concerning Second Weekly Street Bin Emptying**

The Clerk informed Cllrs that in 2025 Council had purchased an extra emptying of 12 street bins each Friday, throughout the summer months, in addition to the regular bin emptying each Tuesday. The 2025/26 rate was £83 per bin per year and so 8 months of extra bin emptying (early April 2025 to late November 2025) was purchased at a cost of £55.28 per bin for 12 bins at a total cost of £663.36.

He said that the number of overflowing bins had been very significantly reduced.

He told Cllrs that the Babergh bin emptying cost has increased from £83 per bin per year to £108 per bin per year and so the cost of the same extra empties is £864 for 2026/27.

Should Council decide to do this the Clerk would aim for the first extra empty to be Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March (School term ends 20<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> March) and the last extra empty on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November which would be two weeks after the Autumn term half term break.

**Motion:** To purchase a second weekly emptying of street litter bins, by Babergh Council, during the summer months at a cost of £864 per annum.

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

### **17. Motion concerning First Meadow Boundary**

Cllrs Domoney and Sherman left the room.

The Clerk explained that on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 a local property owner advised that the boundary fence which is:

*'meant to create the boundary between our property and it (First Meadows) is clearly on our side of our dropped kerb at the entrance of the site'.*

*This creep into our land is confirmed on the land registry plan and also the vendor advised that the fence had been put up on the Poultry Farm land rather than the parish's'.*

The Clerk told Cllrs that the property owner has removed the part of the fence which overlapped the drop kerb. The piece of fence removed was approximately 6 feet long.

The Clerk had obtained from Solicitors the title deeds of First Meadow, this had taken many weeks. These deeds from September 1940 do not clearly show where the boundary should be.

This information was supplied to the local property owner together with the comment that it was the Clerks understanding, from research, that *'my understanding has long been that title plans just show general boundaries and are indicative only'.*

The Clerk displayed further correspondence from the local property owner submitted in support of their position. The Clerk also displayed various maps and aerial photographs, telling Cllrs that it is perhaps not clear where the Boundary line should be. But the Clerk noted that Cllrs may still determine that the local property owner has made a sufficiently strong case in uncertain circumstances, or that the local property owner's position is simply correct.

Council should consider whether that case is either a) strong, b) correct or incorrect, c) somewhat unclear but that it is in the interests of Council to have certainty where the boundary is, Council wishes to be a good neighbour and Council does not wish to incur unnecessary cost. He explained that Boundary Disputes are very difficult to resolve other than by agreement.

Council could offer to make a boundary agreement with the local property owner with the costs of this shared as Council determines.

Boundary Agreements, he explained, can be done informally or by a surveyor and a solicitor and fully documented.

Cllr Bourne asked what the chances would be of getting an informal agreement. Cllr Falconer interjected 'zero'. The Clerk said that the local property owner would prefer an informal agreement because it would be cheaper.

Cllr Ranzetta said that she favoured an informal agreement. Cllr Bourne concurred. Cllr Mawford said that an informal agreement would be helpful but that the agreement would require legal input considering the nature of the person the PC is dealing with. Cllr Norman said that she feared creep without legal involvement, Cllrs Mitchell and Ranzetta concurred.

The Clerk told Cllrs that an informal agreement would be a signed document but without the involvement of lawyers. A second option would be to involve lawyers in the whole process.

Cllr Ranzetta said that the document needs to be registered with the Land Registry.

Cllr Mitchell said that, considering the nature of who we are dealing with, the matter needs 'buttoning down'. She said that there probably has been creep over the years. Cllr Lamont said that a formal agreement would be to the benefit of all parties.

Cllr Norman expressed concern that should the maintenance of the fence be the responsibility of the Poultry Farm that the boundary would creep.

Cllr Lamont suggested an amendment to the motion so that it reads 'The Clerk is instructed to offer to share the costs of drawing up a formal Boundary agreement with the local property owner registered with the Land Registry. The Boundary Agreement to be brought back to Council for formal approval. In exchange for the Parish Councils co-operation concerning this matter the local property owner recognises that the maintenance of the fence between First Meadow and their property is the responsibility of the owner of Poultry Farm'.


**Motion:** to amend Motion so that it reads as above

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

**Motion:** to pass the motion as amended

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

**Meeting ended 9.28pm Date of next meeting – Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 7pm**

  
j muckian  
2/4/26.