

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 14th May 2026, commencing at 7.pm in the Village Hall.

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

Present:

Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Frank Domoney, Iain Lamont, Roy Mawford, Irene Mitchell, Janice Muckian, Jack Norman, Jane Ranzetta, Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Ten members of the public.

Opening Statement by the Chair:

Cllr Muckian welcomed everyone explaining that she was chairing the start of the meeting with the election of a new Chair, as always, the first item on the Agenda at this Annual Meeting of the PC. She told 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.

1. Election of a Chair

Cllr Muckian proposed Cllr Norman. Cllr Ranzetta seconded. **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

2. Election of a Vice-Chair

Cllr Sherman proposed Cllr Ranzetta. Cllr Bourne seconded. **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

3. Apologies and approval of Absences

The Clerk reported that Cllr Falconer had sent her apologies. No absences required approval.

4. Declarations of Interest and item 5 Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk said that Cllr Sherman had informed him that he no longer has any interest in land on Second Meadows and that he had received no updates from Cllrs concerning their Register of Interests or any further requests for dispensations. He reminded Cllrs that they have 28 days to lodge any changes.

He asked Cllrs whether any wished to declare any interests concerning tonight's agenda of which he was not aware and secondly, whether Cllrs had any updates to their previously declared interests. No Cllr said that they did.

The Monitoring Officer at Babergh Council has updated the Clerk concerning his progress.

The Monitoring Officer has instructed two Councillors to give apologies at this meeting and a Councillor will shortly meet with the Suffolk Joint Standards Board. He has dismissed a number of complaints regarding Cllrs participating in discussions and voting concerning various matters.

He has asked the Clerk to convey the following Guidance to Councillors:

'I am concerned that Councillors are not giving due consideration to public perception and potential bias in their declarations of interest. I would encourage you to gently remind all members to thoroughly consider any potential interests they may have and to apply the test at law for apparent bias which is 'would a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts, conclude that there was a real possibility of bias' [due to my position as/relationship with/links to] etc'.

With respect to Planning Matters the Monitoring Office has further explained that:

'Since the Parish Council acts as a consultee body on planning applications and not as the final decision maker, I have determined that this interest is not detrimental to the decision taken and that, as such, this interest does not prohibit Councillor x from participating in this item / matter and that they were entitled to remain in the room. However, I have determined that in the interest of transparency that this conflict of interest should have been declared for the record as part of proceedings'.

6. Approval of Minutes

To approve as accurate minutes of the 2nd April 2026 meeting of the Council.

Motion to approve. Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Muckian **Decision:** Approved. Cllrs Domoney, Ranzetta and Robinson abstained.

7. Chair's Announcements

The Chair (Cllr Norman) told Cllrs that she wished to apologise for a comment which she had made at a previous meeting. On reflection and on advice of the Monitoring Officer she regretted her comment and wished to apologise to Ms Mullan and the Parish Council for any offence caused.

Cllr Domoney apologised for the disruptive nature of his behaviour at a previous Council Meeting. He explained that whilst medication changes had contributed to his behaviour he took full responsibility for his actions. He also apologised to the Lavenham Community Allotments Association for an inappropriate comment he had made on Facebook.

8. Public Participation Session

The Chair reminded Members of the Public of the protocol for this session.

A Member of the Public asked whether there was any point in the motion on the Agenda to exclude the public from one item as Council publishes recordings of its meetings. The Clerk explained that should that motion be passed recording would cease and that section of the Meeting would not be minuted in a detailed way.

A Member of the Public said that she considered her application concerning Second Meadows on the Agenda to be a purely technical application regarding the footpath concerning which she has worked with Suffolk Public Rights of Way Officers. She said that she had informed the Monitoring Officer of her concerns with respect to apparent bias and predetermination of some Cllrs and that she had written to the Babergh Planning Officer explaining that she considered parts of the Working Paper written by the Parish Councils Planning Group to be inaccurate. She was particularly concerned by the videos. She asked Cllrs to consider these concerns.

Cllr Domoney explained that the Riverside Allotments Association was planting the vacant beds with vegetables in response to the food production and food cost issues consequent of the war in the Middle East. It was anticipated that produce will be made available to Food Banks and other community groups. A BBQ will be held to celebrate the progress of the Allotments.

Cllr Robinson began to speak advocating for the Planning Application concerning his Disclosable Pecuniary interest. The Clerk advised that this was very clearly contrary to the Code of Conduct and displayed the Quick Guide issued by SALC. Cllr Robinson stopped speaking and returned to the Council table.

9. Local Authority Councillors' Reports

The Clerk presented County Cllr Lindsay's report.

County Cllr Lindsay has advised that he was pleased and relieved to have been re-elected as County Councillor for the remaining two years of the County Council's existence.

The Cosford division had become larger, containing 3 additional villages, taking the total to 21. He explained that given the large number of Parish Councils, attendance at every one of them will be impossible, especially as many of the meetings occur at the same time. He will focus on the new villages to start with so that he can get to know the Parish Councillors adding that he believes that the Lavenham PC knows that he can always be emailed or messaged and will always respond as best he can.

Councillor Lindsay reported that the elections had cut the Conservative Councillor numbers down from 55 to 9 with Reform winning 41 out of 70 seats, enough to form an administration on their own. The Greens had increased seats from 9 to 13 – making them the official opposition - whilst LibDem and Labour seat numbers were roughly halved.

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In his opinion, at this stage, it is not clear what Reform's policies are on County Council matters.

The current leader of Suffolk's Reform group had indicated before the elections that he does not support the decision to create three unitary councils and has suggested they may seek a judicial review.

If the Government does stick to its plan, in a year's time, in May 2027, there will be elections of "shadow" unitary Councillors – in our area for the new unitary of West Suffolk. Those elected will not actually be representing residents until the unitaries are legally created with full staff in May 2028.

Alongside this, the Government is creating the office of a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor, elected by all the voters in the two counties. That election is scheduled to happen in May 2028 and the Mayor will take office straight away.

District Cllr Clover reported that he continued to chase Suffolk County Council concerning the required repairs to the Lavenham Butchers culvert. Unfortunately, no update has been provided yet as to whether repairs will be funded.

Reports of a rat infestation on the Harwood Estate have been reported to the Babergh Tenancy Management team. Following a report of WW2 ordnance being found at Harwood Place and evacuation of 20 properties he was able to report that the devices had been confirmed as non explosive.

Babergh Council had announced that with respect to the new Joint Local Plan the scoping consultation will take place for at least six weeks in June/July 2026. This will be followed by a Consultation on Content and Evidence in Jan/Feb 2027. Finally, the Consultation on the proposed Local Plan will take place in Feb/March 2028 with the plan looking to be adopted in April 2029.

Small electrical appliances can continue to be disposed of at the Sudbury and Hadleigh recycling centres, the Lavenham bin had had to be withdrawn. These devices must not be disposed of in general rubbish as they can lead to fires in the bin lorries. Batteries can be taken to local supermarkets.

10. Clerks Report

The Clerk told Cllrs that this being the Meeting where the Accounts for the last financial year have to be approved there is a substantial financial update.

There are no material changes to the financial position of this Council compared to what Councillors have previously been advised.

- 1) The Parish Council made a deficit last year of approximately £4,000. This was a considerable improvement on the reforecast deficit of £16,000 and indeed was £6,000 better than the budgeted deficit of some £10,000. The reasons are fully documented in the working papers.
- 2) The cash reserves of this Council were 8.6 months at 31st March which is within the target range of 6 to 9 months and would have been some 7.8 months or so without the unexpected positive financial news of the latter part of the last financial year.
- 3) The Internal Audit has been completed. Not only has Council passed this audit no concerns or suggestions have been made. A past concern has been that Council has amounts with Barclays significantly above the Financial Services Compensation Scheme limit of £120,000. This risk was significantly reduced by paying for the Street Lights and will now be further reduced by opening a Deposit Account with HSBC. This Deposit Account opening is half complete.
- 4) The Neighbourhood CIL claim is for the entire costs incurred in 2025/26 for the LNP3 which are approx' £6,000 and the cost of the Green Willows path streetlight of approx' £4,500.
- 5) Council has approximately £52,000 of Neighbourhood CIL remaining of which £27,000 has been allocated to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Motion to approve Accounts for month ending 31st March 2026 including Neighbourhood CIL claim for 2025/26 of £10,456.66.

Motion to approve Receipts and Payments for month ending 31st March 2026

Motions to approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Returns and Internal Auditors Reports

Proposed: Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decisions:** Approved unanimously

11a. Planning Register

The Clerk displayed the Planning register explaining that he had no further updates not contained in the Working Papers.

11b. Planning Applications

Application DC/26/01594: Angel Hotel, Market Place. Listed building consent for renovation works.

Motion: Recommend Approval

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

Application DC/26/1566: Woolstaplers, Prentice St. Application for works to trees in a Conservation Area - T1 Goat Willow to fell to ground level. T2 Alder to fell to ground level. Both trees are the wrong type for where they are and are now too close to the buildings.

Motion: Recommend Approval

Proposed: Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Sherman abstained.

Applications DC/26/1057 and 1060: 40 Prentice St. Demolition of existing garage, Excavation of garden area to form parking spaces, construction of brick retaining walls and existing brick wall to be angled back.

Motion: Recommend Refusal

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved. Cllrs Robinson and Domoney abstained.

Application DC/25/4172: 41 Water St Erection of two-storey and single storey rear extension.

Cllrs Mawford and Mitchell left the room.

Motion: Recommend Approval

Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Robinson **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Ranzetta abstained.

Cllrs Mawford and Mitchell returned to the room.

Application DC/26/1475: Pegtile Court, 3 Church St, Application for Listed Building Consent Installation of an Air Source Heat Pump

Motion: Recommend Approval

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

Applications DC/26/1738 and 1739: Barn Cottage, Barn St, Retrospective works to refurbish parts of the house and for works within the domestic garden.

Motion: Recommend Approval

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

Application DC/26/1076: 23 Prentice St. Listed Building Consent for repairs to render and damaged laths.

Motion: Recommend Approval

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

Cllrs Robinson and Domoney left the room. Cllr Sherman explained that having until recently had a relevant Disclosable Pecuniary interest, he would remain in the room but not speak and not vote.

Application DC/26/1302: Second Meadow Stables, Brent Eleigh Rd Application for Outline Planning Permission (All Matters Reserved) - Erection of a Wellness Centre (Sui Generis Use) and removal of existing structures.

Cllr Lamont explained that this was a full replacement application, with amendments, to that previously refused by the Planning Inspector. The Planning Working Group had reviewed the revised plans, the comments of the Planning Inspector and the previous comments of the Parish Council.

The Planning Group thoughts were:

Council disagrees with the Planning Inspectors view that 'the proposal would provide for an unmet community need. Council considers this conclusion is based on evidence gathered in LNP1 which was derived from data gathered in 2013. The questionnaire, issued to all households in 2013 to inform the LNP, did not seek opinion about a Wellness Centre.

The application is not clear about the precise pedestrian route being proposed. There has been no application for creating an improved footpath on First Meadow to always enable all users' access. This land is grassland and is not suitable for cycles, mobility aids or pushchairs in wet weather, during the hours of darkness or months of winter.

Footpath 001 runs alongside the River Brett. The application is not proposing any lighting of Footpath 001. This path runs alongside the River Brett, which is by eye, assessed to be around 10 feet deep. Widths of this footpath vary along its course. There are no widths to the path explained.

The application does not address the requirements of NPPF(2024) para 102, in particular, ensuring the safety of children and other vulnerable users in proximity to open water.

The suitability of the final proposal for pedestrian access to this development will be the decision of the Local Authority and the PROW team, but the Parish Council cannot conclude that this route is suitable due to the lack of details provided and that a primary pedestrian route would require lighting and safety measures because of the proximity of open water.

Council considers that it has insufficient technical expertise to make any comments with respect to flood risk, by observation, the area of the application site and surrounding land is subject to periodic flooding.

Motion: Recommend Refusal

Proposed: Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Muckian **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Sherman abstained.

Cllrs Robinson and Domoney returned to the room.

Cllrs Bourne, Norman and Ranzetta left the room. Cllr Mitchell suggested Cllr Muckian Chair the next item.

Motion: Cllr Muckian to chair the next item

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson voted against, Cllr Domoney abstained.

Application No: DC/26/1509: De Vere House, Water St. Application for Listed Building Consent – Replacement render and insulation.

Motion: Recommend Approval

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Domoney abstained.

Cllrs Bourne, Norman and Ranzetta returned to the room. Cllr Norman took over as Chair.

Motion: to defer items 14,15 and 16 to the next Agenda

Proposed: Cllr Ranzetta **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Mawford abstained.

12. Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Group: Report by the Chair and Motion concerning applying for a BMSDC grant.

Cllr Sherman told Cllrs that 620 Questionnaires had been returned of which 143 were online. No household had returned more than 2 Questionnaires. The information was now being collated. Tracey Brinkley and Danielle Twitchen had informed the Group that they were now Trustees of the Hub.

The Clerk displayed the claim form required to be submitted to apply for a Babergh Grant to assist with the preparation of the new Neighbourhood Plan.

Motion: The Clerk is instructed to submit the Claim Form as drafted by the Neighbourhood Plan Group.

Proposed: Cllr Ranzetta **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Mawford voted against. Cllr Domoney abstained.

13. Clay Lane to Whelp Street – Restricted Byway Surface Improvement Scheme.

Cllr Robinson left the room.

The Clerk told Cllrs that Suffolk Public Rights of Way Office had sought Parish Council support for an application to be made by Brent Eleigh Parish Council for District Community Infrastructure Levy Funds to improve this byway.

Motion: The Clerk is instructed to lodge a note of support using the wording suggested by Suffolk PROW.

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

Cllr Robinson returned to the room.

17. Motion to consider excluding the press and the public for item 18 because of the confidential nature of the matter to be discussed.

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

Cllrs Domoney, Robinson and Sherman left the room at 9.14pm.

18. Report and Motion concerning Land Boundary

Councillors voted to extend the Meeting until 9.45pm

The Clerk was instructed to obtain further information and to obtain legal advice.

Meeting ended 9.45pm.

Date of next meeting – Annual Parish Meeting Thursday 21st May 2026 7pm, Next Meeting of Council Thursday 4th June 2026 7pm.

*Domoney
4.6.26*