

EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Monday 23rd June 2025, commencing at 7pm in the Village Hall.

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

Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne (from 7.06 pm), Frank Domoney, Iain Lamont, Roy Mawford, Irene Mitchell, Mary Morrey (from 7.20 pm), Jane Ranzetta (from 7.01pm), Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Eleven members of the public.

Opening Statement by the Chair:

The Chair began by welcoming everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of minute taking only and that after the minutes have been approved this recording will be destroyed. The Chair reminded all that this is not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Council held in public. Members of the Public were respectfully asked to maintain silence during the Council's deliberations and not to approach the Councillors. Councillors were requested not to engage with Members of the Public when Council is in session. All were asked to ensure that their mobile phone was on silent and were reminded to treat all present with respect.

1. Apologies and approval of Absences

The Clerk reported that Cllr Falconer was not present and had sent her apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Clerk reported that the Cllr Robinson had updated his Declaration of Interest to include his recent purchase of Poultry Farm on the Brent Eleigh Rd.

3. Requests for Dispensations

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

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

No Member of the Public wished to speak.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded everyone of the Parish Poll to be held the next day and the celebration service to be held in the Church on the following Sunday.

The Chair explained to Councillors that the Meeting had been called to discuss one item only being the appointment of a specialist planning consultant to work on the Neighbourhood Plan telling Councillors that they were not here to discuss future financing of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6. Motion concerning the Appointment of a Planning Professional to assist the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Cllr Sherman said that subsequent to the last meeting the LNP Group had obtained a list of the advisors who Babergh Council are prepared to work with telling Councillors that the advisor who worked on the first and second Neighbourhood Plan did not revert and has subsequently said that she was not prepared to work again for the Parish Council and so there were few choices.



He spoke of the quote recently received from a Member of the Public who had attended the last meeting of Council describing that quote as 'so ridiculously cheap to be unbelievable' and being from someone who had no skills or track record in writing a Neighbourhood Plan. The only reasonable quote, he said, was from Places for People (Ian Poole) with all the reasons as previously supplied as to why they were the only possible choice.

Cllr Muckian asked Cllr Sherman whether the LNP Group had the Babergh document before the June 5th meeting of the Parish Council.

Cllr Sherman replied that the Group did have the document before that meeting but had not anticipated that Council would require to see it.

Cllr Muckian commented that had the document been shared at the last meeting then the matter might have been able to be decided at that earlier meeting. She said it would be helpful for Council to have access to all relevant documents in the future when being asked to make decisions concerning the LNP.

Cllr Sherman apologised for the omission telling Councillors that the Clerk had not suggested including the document. The Clerk intervened and corrected Cllr Sherman telling him that he had first seen the document on 7th June two days after the last meeting.

Cllr Lamont asked why the most expensive quote was preferred. Cllr Sherman replied that Suppliers A and B are not taking on any more work at this time and that Supplier C was insufficiently qualified.

Cllr Mawford asked about the quote from consultants A&B (Andrea Long & Rachel Leggett). He referred to the Agenda Item 11b Report to Council on 5th June where it is stated that these consultants are 'unable to meet timeframe'. He asked for clarification and, if they are unable to satisfy what the LNP Group needs them to do, whether we can class this as a quote?

The Clerk replied that in his opinion three quotes had been obtained, two of the three quotes having reasons for not being preferred.

Cllr Bourne asked Cllr Mawford for the names of the people who had quoted for LNP2.

Cllr Mawford replied that would be a question for a previous Chair of the Parish Council explaining that he had not been involved in the Council at that time.

The Clerk said that his understanding was that only one person had been asked to quote for the role in LNP2, the person who worked on LNP1.

Cllr Bourne criticised the demand for three quotes saying that 'it had been much easier last time'.

The Chair responded that Council was trying to do things correctly and learn from the past reminding Councillors that Council had, some months ago, received a Freedom of Information Act request concerning the lack of governance around the appointment of the professional advisor for LNP2 with the Requestor having chosen, so far, not to publish Council's reply. The Chair explained that she did not want to expose Council or the LNP Group to criticism.

Cllr Bourne described some Councillors approach this time as 'nitpicking'.

The Clerk took Councillors through the Babergh List having asked Cllr Sherman to intervene should any comment he make be incorrect or benefit from further explanation.

Suppliers A and B (Andrea Long and Rachel Leggett who work jointly together) charge £380 to £450 per day but do not have the capacity to take on new work.

Supplier C is not on the Babergh List and does not have the required experience.

Chris Bowden is no longer providing an NP service. Rachel Hogger has not replied and Cllr Sherman has advised that she does not wish to work for Lavenham PC or anyone else. Louise Cornell et al have no local experience and little experience in general, leaving Supplier D (Ian Poole) who has both experience and capacity at a charge of £490 per day.



Cllr Ranzetta and Cllr Lamont asked whether Ian Poole had confirmed that he was interested and had capacity. Cllr Sherman confirmed that he had said he was interested and had capacity.

Cllr Mitchell described the Babergh approved list as 'extremely thin'.

The Clerk reminded all of the words at the top of the Babergh list: 'It is down to individual parish councils to decide whether or not they should employ/use the services of a Planning Consultant to help them prepare their neighbourhood plan. Some parishes have prepared their own plans with limited or no third party consultancy support. Through our work, we in regular contact with a number of consultants. We list them below, together with the names of the plans they have been involved with. This is not a definitive list and other consultants / consultancy services may also work in this space' adding that it was not correct to describe this as the 'approved list' or similar.

Cllr Lamont asked why the names of the suppliers had been disclosed. The Clerk replied that anonymisation was best practice but that the identities had previously been disclosed to Council.

Cllr Domoney described the rates as reasonable describing the rates as similar to his own day rates.

Cllr Mitchell asked if the RFO had been involved in obtaining the three quotes, the Clerk replied that he had for a long time been clear with the LNP Group that they would need to obtain three quotes.

Motion: Having considered the three quotes detailed above Council approves the appointment of Advisor D with the total spend on Professional Fees not to exceed the £8,000 approved in the Interim Budget approved at the June 5th Meeting of Council

Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Domoney

Decision: Approved unanimously. Cllr Mawford abstained.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 3rd July 2025 7pm in the Village Hall. Meeting closed at 7.30pm.

james mackin
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