

FINNINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

*DRAFT Minutes for the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on
Tuesday 10th December 2024 in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:30pm*

Present: Cllr Kilbee, Cllr Davies, Cllr Saunders, Cllr Charter, Cllr Black

In attendance: Miss J. Challis (Clerk), Cllr Mellen, one member of the public

24.206 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence

Cllr Kilbee welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Winter and Cllr Trew. Acceptance proposed by Cllr Davies, seconded by Cllr Saunders, and approved unanimously.

24.207 Visiting speakers

Cllr Mellen read through his reports which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. Cllr Mellen reported that the Government has announced devolution plans which will involve replacing the District and County Councils, with Unitary Councils and elected mayors. There will be more information on this in the coming weeks.

Cllr Mellen also reported that he has received a complaint from a resident regarding a sewage problem on Wickham Road. The issue has been reported to Anglian Water.

Cllr Kilbee thanked Cllr Mellen for his reports.

Mr Aiken's Footpath Warden's Report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

24.208 Contribution by Members of the Public

The member of the public present raised concern that a newly planted hedge on Gislingham Road does not comply with the Highways Act 1980, section 154, due to it obscuring the highway. Cllr Kilbee has raised the resident's concern with Suffolk Highways via their online reporting tool.

24.209 To receive any pecuniary or non-pecuniary declarations of interest from Members and any Gifts of Hospitality.

None.

24.210 To consider requests for dispensations on agenda items

None.

24.211 To approve minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12th November 2024

The Clerk reported an amendment under finance, to add the transfer of £7,000.00 from the current account to the savings account. Approval, taking into consideration the above amendment, proposed by Cllr Davies, seconded by Cllr Saunders and approved unanimously.

24.212 Matters arising from the Parish Council meetings held on 12th November 2024

All covered elsewhere on the agenda.

24.213 Chairman's Report

As it is near the end of the year this is our last meeting before then, I feel that it is a time for reflection on our successes and failures over the last twelve months.

I think that you will agree with me that we are still battling to get our message across to the residents of the village but hope that with the revision of our Facebook entry and update of the Website, we are on track to improve the situation.

It is a great pity that, in spite of the sterling work that Jane has done, we are no further forward with the resolution of the situation regarding the Churchyard maintenance. I can see this continuing well into next year.

Another sore subject is the time, money and effort that has been put into the Footpath project. I personally think that we have reached the end of the road (excuse the pun!) with this, as the costs vastly outweigh the benefits. Still, there are some possibilities.

On a more positive note, the Beacon Lighting to commemorate the D Day Landings was well attended and deemed a success.

The Churchyard footpath issue was unfortunate the way it ended but perhaps we could look at that as a project of our own.

As I pointed out earlier in the year, this is my last term as Chairman and Councillor and it is my intention to retire at the next Annual meeting. I hope that, by then someone will step forward to take up the reins.

My thanks go to our District and County Councillor, Andy Mellen for all his support and hard work on behalf of Finningham. We wish him luck in next year's elections where he will be standing again as our District Councillor. Unfortunately, due to boundary changes, he can no longer be our County Councillor.

Another special word of thanks goes to our Clerk Jane, who has been a fund of the necessary knowledge and procedures, keeping us on the right path.

Finally, I thank you all for your support over the year and am sure you will continue to do so for my successor.

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

24.214 Clerk's Report

- MSDC are encouraging applications for their 'Tree for Life Scheme' which is open until 10th January 2025: [Tree for life - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](https://www.babergh.gov.uk/midsuffolk.gov.uk). The details are also on the Parish Council Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556497889695>.
- Suffolk County Council are reminding residents that properties reported as internally flooded as a result of Storm Babet, are eligible to apply to the DEFRA £5,000.00 Property Flood Resilience grant fund. The deadline for applications is the end of April 2025: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/property-flood-resilience-grant-scheme>.
- MSDC have advised that an appeal, reference APP/W3520/W/24/3356135, has been made in relation to Land South of Patcham House, Station Road, Finningham, IP14 4TH.

24.215 Cemetery plot record update, and approval of expenditure for additional reserve markers and new row markers

Still waiting for the new marker quotations.

24.216 Finningham Green Footpath Update

Darren Smith, Suffolk Highways Design Engineer, has reported that Anglian Water has now reviewed the trial hole information. It appears that a diversion of the water main is required for an unknown extent. Additionally, as the water main was laid in the 1940s, and due to its material and state, it could be compromised if a kerb line were to be constructed near to it.

Due to the width of the available highway (carriageway width & verge width), the kerb line would have to sit above the water main for an unknown extent. Therefore, Darren thinks the Anglian Water costs for a design and diversion make this project unfeasible. He has considered other types of construction, such as wooden edging, however, believes this option is not feasible due to the likelihood of HGVs cutting into the verge. He thinks the only option could be to improve the verge without constructing a new footpath, for example, by cutting back the vegetation and relocating the signs to the rear of the verge.

Councillors were disappointed with the update, and questioned whether the payment made to Suffolk County Council for design costs is recoverable, as it appears that the project cannot now be progressed. The Clerk will look into this. Cllr Mellen said that MSDC Infrastructure Team have suggested an online meeting to discuss the update and implications on the District CIL funding. He will arrange for the meeting to be set up, and share the details with councillors and the Clerk.

ACTION – Clerk/Cllr Mellen as above.

24.217 Churchyard Maintenance responsibility update

No further update; awaiting response from Community Action Suffolk regarding whether they can assist with pro bono legal advice.

24.218 Annual Village Maintenance and village green improvements

Clerk arranging site meetings with play equipment suppliers in order for quotations to be provided.

24.219 Village Flooding

Councillors reported that Eastlands bridge is currently working as it should with no issues. The River Dove group has been carrying out work to keep the river clear, for which the Parish Council would like to express its thanks and appreciation.

24.220 To consider and approve quotations for purchase of new Parish Council laptop

The Clerk shared quotations received from 121 Computers in Diss, for comparable laptops, including anti-virus and Microsoft Office software. After discussing, it was agreed to proceed with the purchase of an Acer Aspire3 A315-510P, at a total cost of £457.49 plus VAT. Proposed by Cllr Davies, seconded by Cllr Saunders and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to request pro forma invoice from 121 Computers.

24.221 To consider quotations for lawn mower servicing
Deferred.

24.222 To consider permanent vehicle activated sign on B1113 near Church Lane, and quotations received for a new device.

After discussing, councillors decided they would like to look at installing permanent VAS devices on all roads into the village. This item was therefore deferred to the next meeting to allow all the locations to be included on the agenda for consideration.

8:35pm Cllr Black arrived.

24.223 To consider and approve Precept 2025/26

After discussing, and taking into account the Budget 2025/26 approved at the previous meeting, it was agreed to request a precept amount of £10,845.00 for 2025/26. This is an increase of £820.00 on the precept request for 2024/25, and will result in a shortfall of £530.00 against the Budget 2025/26. The council will cover the shortfall amount from its reserves. An increase of 4.4% will be shown on resident's council tax bills for a Band D property.

Proposed by Cllr Davies, seconded by Cllr Charter and approved unanimously.

Cllr Kilbee and the Clerk signed the completed precept request form which needs to be submitted to MSDC by 31st January 2025.

ACTION – Clerk to submit precept request form to MSDC as above.

8:44 Cllr Mellen left the meeting.

24.224 Correspondence

None received. The Clerk reported no response to the email sent to the resident on Station Road regarding their hedge which is obscuring the VAS device. The Clerk will send a follow up email asking for agreement to cut the hedge if the resident is unable to.

24.225 Finance

a. RFO's report (bank balance, receipts, and payments)

Balances as of 29th October 2024

Community Bank Account: £13,790.74

Deposit Account: £3,377.64

b. Requests for payment

Clerk admin payment December	£430.85
Clerk expenses – mileage (Nov PC meeting & Dec agenda meeting).	£20.61
HMRC December 2024 PAYE/NIC	£107.71
CAS – annual hosting	£60.00
CAS – mailboxes	£192.00
MSDC – play inspection inv 2009013	£63.78
MSDC – bin emptying inv 2013425	£806.90

Cllr Kilbee proposed authorisation of the above payments, seconded by Cllr Davies and approved unanimously. There was a discussion on adding a signatory to the account; this will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

ACTION – Cllr Kilbee and either Cllr Winter or Cllr Trew to pay approved payments above, online, (dual authorisation).

24.226 Policies for review

- **Risk Assessment & Management Policy**
- **Travel & Expenses Policy**
- **Internet Banking Policy**

Cllr Davies suggested amending wording within the Internet Banking Policy to '3 working days' rather than '3 days', and referencing FR 5.5 in full.

The above policies were approved unanimously, to include the amendment from Cllr Davies. The Risk Assessment & Management Policy will continue to be reviewed annually. The Travel & Expenses Policy, and Internet Banking Policy will be reviewed biennially.

ACTION – Clerk to update policies as above.

24.227 Planning

- a. To consider applications – none.

- b. Decisions and to consider planning matters coming forth:
- DC/24/04443 - Application for listed building consent – internal works to re-instate pre-existing internal doorway between The Old House and The Cottage as detailed within the Heritage Design and Access Statement. The Old House and The Cottage, Church Path, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4JD – **AWAITING DECISION**

24.228 To discuss date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 14th January 2025, at 7:30pm in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham.

24.229 Questions to Chairman

None.

24.230 Items to be discussed at the next meeting and included in the January agenda.

No new items.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9:08pm.

