

# FINNINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

*Minutes for the ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on  
Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025 in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:30pm*

**Present:** Cllr Charter, Cllr Winter, Cllr Saunders, Cllr Davies

**In attendance:** Miss J. Challis (Clerk), Mr Aiken (Footpath Warden), Cllr Mellen, 7 members of the public

**25.98 To elect a Chair of the Parish Council 2025/26**

Cllr Kilbee advised that he did not wish to stand as Chair for 2025/26, and would be retiring from the council completely with immediate effect. Cllr Saunders nominated Cllr Charter who indicated that he was willing stand. Cllr Charter proposed by Cllr Saunders, seconded by Cllr Winter, and approved unanimously with 1 abstention (Cllr Charter). Declaration of Acceptance of Office signed and witnessed by the Clerk.

**25.99 To elect a Vice Chair of the Parish Council 2025/26**

Cllr Winter indicated that she did not wish to act as Vice Chair for 2025/26. Cllr Charter nominated Cllr Saunders who confirmed that he was willing stand. Cllr Saunders proposed by Cllr Charter, seconded by Cllr Winter, and approved unanimously with 1 abstention (Cllr Saunders). Declaration of Acceptance of Office signed and witnessed by the Clerk.

**25.100 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence**

Cllr Charter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from Cllr Trew were approved unanimously.

Councillors took this opportunity to thank Tony Kilbee, and recognise his many years of commitment and dedication to the parish, as both Chairman and a member of the council, which span in excess of 17 years. They wished him well for the future and hope that he enjoys his 'retirement'.

**25.101 Visiting speakers**

Cllr Mellen read through his District and County reports, which can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

**25.102 Contribution by Members of the Public**

No comments.

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

None.

**25.104 To consider requests for dispensations on agenda items**

None.

**25.105 To approve minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

Approval proposed by Cllr Davies, seconded by Cllr Winter and approved unanimously.

**25.106 Matters arising from the Parish Council meetings held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

All covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**25.107 Chairman's Report**

Report from outgoing Chair Tony Kilbee:

This report is really the domain of your new Chairman but I just want to reiterate my thanks to you all for your support over the past year.

We all know how frustrating this job of being a Councillor can be when we come across an unco-operative person or organisation who do all they can to frustrate our endeavours. Particularly when we are doing our best to work for the benefit of the village. Also, the difficulty in communication with the residents is a continual problem. "Oh, I didn't know about it" is an all too familiar response all of us has experienced.

So now it is time for me to take my place in the Public Gallery and repeat my wish that Finningham will go from strength to strength. Which I'm confident it will in your hands.

A.R. Kilbee

13<sup>th</sup> May 2025

#### **25.108 Clerk's Report**

- A design proof has been requested from Bierton & Woods for the new cemetery markers which were approved at the previous meeting.
- Mellis Parish Council organised a meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025, with Richard Rout Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform, and NSIPs, Phil Watson SCC Strategic Energy Projects Manager, and local parishes, to discuss NSIP EcoPower Suffolk and other energy projects coming through. The main feedback received is the importance of councils doing what they can to mitigate and influence the proposals, in their response submissions.
- Bron Curtis MSDC Principal Planning Officer has forwarded a copy of BMSDC's response to the EcoPower Suffolk non-statutory consultation, and a spreadsheet detailing all NSIPs and energy projects in progress within Suffolk. Both have been shared with councillors.
- Suffolk County Council have sent an invitation for two councillors to attend a briefing being held on the local government reorganisation (LGR), in Debenham on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025. This coincides with the next parish council meeting but there are further briefings being held in Eye and Woolpit, so a request will be made to see if it is possible to attend either of those instead.

#### **25.109 LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct**

Prepared by the Clerk and sent to councillors prior to the meeting. Readoption of the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct proposed by Cllr Charter, seconded by Cllr Davies, and approved unanimously.

**ACTION – Clerk to update and publish.**

#### **25.110 Devolution and local government reorganisation**

As reported within the Clerk's report, Suffolk County Council have arranged briefings on the local government reorganisation. The Clerk will request alternative dates as above, and forward the response to councillors.

**ACTION – Clerk as above.**

#### **25.111 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) White Elm Solar Farm – proposal for a new solar PV and battery energy storage system (BESS)**

<https://www.whiteelmsolarfarm.com/>

A non-statutory consultation for this proposal starts on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, and runs until the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025. The council has been included as a consultee due to the proximity of the proposal, which is due to be sited on land to the north of Mendlesham. After discussing, councillors agreed to defer a response to the consultation until the June council meeting, to allow them more time to consider the details.

**ACTION – Councillors as above.**

#### **25.112 To consider a Neighbourhood Plan**

Following the previous meeting when councillors discussed the 'briefing pack' prepared by BMSDC in response to the Government's new housing targets, councillors considered whether to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan, in order to influence and mitigate the impact of future developments. The Clerk shared information from MSDC regarding available funding options and the process involved, with councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Mellen suggested the parish could look at a joint plan with a neighbouring parish. It was noted that despite being absent from the meeting, Cllr Trew has indicated he is happy to take the lead on this, should the council decide to pursue it.

After discussing, Cllr Davies proposed the council pursues a NP, and looks at the initial steps required, and the merits of a joint Plan, possibly with Westhorpe, for further consideration at the next meeting. Seconded by Cllr Winter, and approved unanimously.

**ACTION – Clerk as above.**

**25.113 Speeding issues on the B1113 and consideration of expenditure for Suffolk Highways to commission a speed survey**

Deferred to next meeting.

**25.114 Churchyard Maintenance responsibility update**

No further update at present.

**25.115 Cemetery fees**

The cemetery fees were last reviewed on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022. After discussing, Cllr Davies proposed that, taking into account the purchased of new stone markers for the cemetery, the fee to reserve a plot be increased from £75.00 to £100.00. This was seconded by Cllr Saunders and approved unanimously. The remaining fees will be reviewed at the next meeting.

**ACTION – Clerk to update reserve fee as above.**

**25.116 Village green improvements quotations**

Following the previous meeting, a further quotation has been received from Wicksteed to replace the metal slide with a non-metal alternative to remove the issue of it becoming too hot in the sun. There was a discussion on whether the slide needs to be reorientated, with birds perching in the tree directly overhead also being an issue, as the slide frequently needs to be cleaned before it can be used. Cllr Winter said that it is important to take this opportunity to future proof the equipment, and that it would be prudent to speak with the homeowners on the green directly behind the play area, before any work is commenced.

Comparable quotations are still being sought, and funding options investigated with MSDC.

**ACTION – Clerk as above.**

**25.117 Correspondence**

Tony Kilbee has received an email from Elancity regarding the new VAS purchase which he will forward to the Clerk.

8:18pm Cllr Mellen left the meeting.

**25.118 Finance**

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

The signatories on the Barclays bank account need to be updated following Tony Kilbee's retirement. Signatories who also have access to online services are Cllr Winter, Cllr Trew, Cllr Davies and Tony Kilbee. Cllr Black is a signatory but does not have access to online services. Cllr Davies will call Barclays to make arrangements to update the mandate, and provide Cllr Black access to online services.

**Balances as of 29<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

**Community Bank Account: £104.38**

**Deposit Account: £10,458.00**

**b. Requests for payment**

Clerk admin payment May	£430.85
Clerk April expenses mileage (April PC meeting)	£10.71
HMRC PAYE/NIC May	£107.71

Cllr Charter proposed authorisation of the above payments, seconded by Cllr Davies and approved unanimously.

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

**25.119 Planning**

To consider applications:

- DC/25/00949 Householder Application – Conversion of the existing garage roof space to ancillary accommodation serving the host dwelling. Construction of external staircase and insertion of roof lights and fenestration. 4 Highbank Meadow, Finningham, IP14 4TY.

After discussing, councillors agreed a neutral response to this application.

**ACTION – Clerk to add comment to MSDC Planning Portal as above.**

Decisions and to consider planning matters coming forth:

- **DC/25/00881 Re-consultation** - Full Planning Application - Construct new access entrance on land adjoining Green Lane Farm including gate. Land Adjacent Green Lane Farm, Green Lane, Finningham, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 4TJ. **Reason(s) for re-consultation: Amended red lined Site Location Plan and Block Plan – AWAITING DECISION.**
- **DC/25/00081** Householder Application - Erection of two storey rear and single storey side extension including double garage (following demolition of conservatory and existing garage). Wychwood, Gislingham Road, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4HY – **GRANTED.**
- **DC/24/05458** Householder application – Replacement of existing static unit for continued use as annex to Green Lane Farm, Green Lane Farm, Green Lane, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4TJ – **GRANTED.**

**25.120 To discuss date of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025, at 7:30pm in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham.

**25.121 Questions to Chairman**

No questions from councillors.

Mr Aiken said the bin on the green has fallen over, but he is unsure whether it is MSDC's responsibility to reinstate. The Clerk will check.

Mr Kilbee said it has been reported to him that there is a tomb in the churchyard which is unstable and in need of urgent repair. The Clerk will report it to the Churchwarden, and request it is cordoned off to ensure public safety in the meantime.

**25.122 Items to be discussed at the next meeting and included in the June agenda.**

As per agenda.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:30pm.

Devolution Update in council meeting	At last month's extraordinary council meeting, we discussed the council's response to the government consultation on the proposed new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk. The response, which included both positive and some negative comments, was approved. The next steps in the process are for the government to respond to the consultation, we then expect the two county councils to give the go ahead and the election of the new mayor will happen in May 2026.
Local government reorganisation	The government sent a letter at the end of April to all Suffolk's council leaders, setting out the next steps in the process. They have asked for more detailed information and this is being prepared and has to be agreed and submitted by the 26 <sup>th</sup> September. A survey will shortly be launched to take in the views of residents about the shape of future local government in Suffolk.
New grant offers for Mid Suffolk sports facilities	Over £750,000 of the Community Sports Infrastructure Grant has been set aside for new sporting facilities across Mid Suffolk, including either building new or upgrading existing infrastructure. More information can be found on Mid Suffolk's website: <a href="https://babergh.gov.uk/midsuffolk.gov.uk">New grant offers significant funding for sporting opportunities across Mid Suffolk - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk</a>
£100k for new Mid Suffolk culture fund	A funding grant of over £100k has been approved to promote Mid Suffolk's culture, including support for children in arts and theatre. This also includes support for both the Food Museum and the John Peel Centre in Stowmarket, which are closely linked with the council.
Free compost event	Mid Suffolk District Council are giving away free compost during International Compost Awareness Week (4-10 <sup>th</sup> May) to raise public awareness about the benefits of composting. The most local collection event is at Needham Lake, Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> May from 8am. Attendees are only allowed a maximum of 2 bags each on a first-come, first-served basis.
Locality budget 2025/26	The next round of locality funding is now available, so I am able to consider applications for grants to community organisations. The total amount per councillor has increased to £10,000. Full details available <a href="https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/locality-awards">https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/locality-awards</a>
Councillor drop-in sessions	I am available to meet residents and discuss any issues of concern – either at parish council meetings, the Cotton community café and Wyverstone village café and other community events – or give me a call or an e-mail: contact details below.

Cllr Andrew Mellen  
[Andrew.Mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk)  
 07790 992619

**Cllr Andy Mellen, Thedwastre North**  
**20 South View, Wyverstone, Suffolk, IP14 4SP**  
**07790 992619 - [andy.mellen@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:andy.mellen@suffolk.gov.uk)**

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### **Increasing School Places for SEND Students**

On Tuesday 1 April, Cabinet voted to increase the number of school places in the county for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), using £18.6m of available capital funding. The plans agreed include opening specialist units within existing mainstream schools, which would create around 100 new places for SEND students for the academic year beginning in September 2025. The second proposal agreed was to allocate up to £12m to create satellite provisions of the existing special schools in Suffolk, with a view that these would open in September 2026 and create another 100 places. The possibility of the council opening its own independent school was also discussed, and may be explored in the future. Since the Cabinet report was tabled, the government has announced that Suffolk will receive an extra £9,441,348 from the Department for Education to invest in new SEND school places. Plans will now be drawn up by the Local Area SEND Partnership on how to spend the money.

### **Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Action Plan**

Cabinet on 1 April also discussed the proposed action plan to improve the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, following the Home Office's recent publication of their inspection report which found several areas for action, including improvement to the leadership and culture of the service, and ensuring members of staff felt confident about raising concerns. Cabinet agreed to approve to £1.6m to fund the necessary improvements, and reversed planned IT savings of £0.106m this year to fund the IT improvements needed. Progress on the action plan will be monitored by the Fire Service Steering Group, which is chaired by the Cabinet Member, Steve Wiles. The Action Plan will also be examined by the council's Scrutiny Committee. The next inspection of the fire service is due in 2027.

### **New Government Funding for Adult Learning**

The Department for Education has allocated Suffolk County Council up to £4m to be spent delivering free skills training to an extra 1,345 adults across Norfolk and Suffolk this year. The money will be used to support the council's 'Skills Bootcamps', which help residents gain the specific skills they need to gain well-paid jobs with local employers. Courses last up to 16 weeks and offer a combination of online and in-person learning to suit a variety of schedules, this flexibility makes them ideal for people looking to upskill, change their careers or return to work. The funding also enables local businesses to train new staff or upskill existing employees, with many of the training costs covered. Employers can work directly with training providers to create courses that align with their needs. Those interested in taking part in the Skills Bootcamps can find more information here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/supporting-employers-training-your-workforce/skills-bootcamps>

### **6,000 Public EV Chargepoints Planned**

Suffolk County Council will be installing around 6,000 new public electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints across the county. From the summer, thousands of charging points will be installed on residential streets, with many locations suggested by local residents following the survey which was undertaken last

year, or by liaison with communities and district/borough councils. The majority of installations will be bollard-style units at the kerbside, suitable for long-stay or overnight charging, when drivers will be able to benefit from an overnight off-peak tariff, and there will also be a dedicated resident's tariff which features discounted charging at all times. Public car parks will also see a number of rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoint installations, for quicker charging. This project has been made possible due to a successful £5.3 million bid by SCC to the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. This summer's roll-out will use a proportion of this funding, with a further £16 million of funding provided by the chargepoint operator, *Believe*.

## **Suffolk Councils Supporting Sustainability in Schools**

32 Suffolk schools recently attended a conference to help them write their climate action plans and deliver sustainability initiatives. The Suffolk Sustainability in Education conference, held at St Joseph's College in Ipswich, is the first of three events in the East of England to support schools to deliver on the objectives set out in the Department of Education's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy. The government has said that all schools should have a Sustainability Lead and Climate Action Plan in place by the end of this academic year. The event was co-organised by the Suffolk Sustainable Schools Network, an initiative funded by Suffolk's public sector organisations and delivered by Suffolk County Council, to support the delivery of Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan.

## **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Suffolk County Council has drafted a new strategy to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and has launched a consultation so residents can share their views. The county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help nature and biodiversity to recover. The plan is for the 48 strategies to create a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of new habitats, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

The consultation on the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open to everyone in Suffolk - residents, landowners, land managers, farmers, businesses and the wider community. There is also the opportunity to view and respond to maps of local areas, where specific measures to help nature could be taken. Both opportunities to provide feedback will close on 11 June 2025, and can be found at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations)

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**Instagram** – [https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli\\_group/](https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/)

**Facebook** - [Suffolk GLI - Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent Group | Facebook](#)

**Website** - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6> Benefits

advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>