

FINNINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

*Minutes for the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on
Monday 11th August 2025 in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:30pm*

Present: Cllr Charter, Cllr Davies, Cllr Trew

In attendance: Miss J. Challis (Clerk), Cllr Mellen, Mary Webb – Chair of Friends of Finningham, 1 member of the public

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

Cllr Charter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from Cllr Winter and Cllr Saunders were approved unanimously. Cllr Trew gave his apologies for the meeting held on 14th July 2025, which were approved unanimously with one abstention (Cllr Trew).

25.173 Visiting speakers

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

Cllr Charter raised concern regarding the extent to which the Parish Council's comments against planning applications received via the TCPA route, are taken into consideration. And what the Council can do, ensuring it is acting within its authority, to support favourable applications.

Mary Webb commented that the drains are starting to flood, and asked Cllr Mellen whether they are due to be looked at. Cllr Trew said he has already been in contact with the water company, who have no plans to carry out any work at this present time.

Mr Aiken sent his apologies in advance of the meeting. His Footpath Warden's report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

25.174 Contribution by Members of the Public

A member of the public was present as the applicant of DC/24/03098; Appeal Dismissed - Land South of White Horse Public House, Station Road, Finningham - APP/W3520/W/25/3360020, to express their grievance at the reasons given for the appeal dismissal. After discussing, Cllr Mellen said he will speak to the Planning Inspector to ask for clarification on the mention of the Conservation area in the appeal Inspector's report, as the land in question is not actually sited within it.

7:52pm the member of the public thanked Cllr Mellen and the Parish Council, and left the meeting.

Mary Webb asked if the cemetery hedge can be cut back. The Clerk will ask the grass cutting contractor for a quotation.

8:53pm Cllr Mellen left the meeting.

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

None.

25.176 To consider requests for dispensations on agenda items

None.

25.177 To approve minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 14th July 2025

Deferred to next meeting as not all councillors had had sight of the minutes.

25.178 Chairman's Report

Good evening and thank you all for your continued support and for being here tonight.

I'd like to start by mentioning the recent *Friends of Finningham* meeting I attended. It was useful to hear different perspectives, and it reminded me that we all share the same goal — to do the best for our village. I believe the Parish Council should always have a presence at *Friends of*

Finningham meetings, and likewise, I believe they should always be represented here at our meetings too — thank you to Mary for this.

I also want to reflect on feedback from a previous Parish Council meeting. It was brought to my attention that someone who attended did not feel as welcome as they might have hoped, and felt unsure whether they would have had the opportunity to speak. That's something I take seriously, because it's important that everyone feels comfortable and able to contribute. I'm keen that we all work together to make sure our meetings are always open, respectful, and inclusive for everyone who takes the time to come along. After discussing this with Jane, I will make a point in future to highlight item 3 on our agenda — currently *Contribution by Members of the Public* — and I'm considering changing this to *Members of the Community* to make it feel warmer and more inviting. On planning matters, I think it's important to remember that we have a requirement to accommodate a certain number of homes over a given period. Rather than automatically opposing every proposal, I believe we should look to engage with those bringing forward ideas, to see whether we can help shape developments in ways that are better for the village and in keeping with its character. Constructive dialogue can sometimes achieve far more for the community than outright resistance.

Finally, I want to extend a big thank you to Perry and Paul for taking it upon themselves to highlight and address the potential problem of unwelcomed guests on the village green. Their swift action in securing the access gates is a great example of community spirit in action. Thank you once again to all councillors, volunteers, and residents for your ongoing commitment to Finningham.

25.179 Clerk's Report

- NALC have partnered with Action with Communities in Rural England to launch a new survey designed to help parish and town councils enhance their flood resilience. Cllr Trew offered to complete the survey on behalf of the PC.
- The hedge on Station Road is obscuring the VAS device and needs cutting back. An email has been sent to the owner of the hedge asking if they can kindly cut it back, or the council will arrange to do so due to the public safety issue it is causing.
- The local Highways Officer has advised that Suffolk County Council run a Community Self Help Scheme, which is designed to enable parishes to carry out minor Highways maintenance works. This will be a future agenda item for consideration.
- Cllr Winter has reported that the defibrillator has been used, and subsequently checked, to ensure it is in full working order.
- A member of the public has reported a tree in the churchyard with a fallen branch. The Churchwarden has been advised, and immediately arranged for it to be cordoned off. Responsibility for churchyard maintenance needs to be clarified, but the Clerk has asked Top Garden to provide a quotation to remove the fallen branch, to ensure no risk to members of the public.
- SALC have advised that the LGA (Local Government Association) pay award 2025/26 has been agreed at a 3.2% increase.
- MSDC have advised that Government funding towards the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan has been withdrawn. MSDC are looking at alternative funding sources, and will update in due course.
- The Lloyds Tour of Britain Men race will take place on Wednesday 3rd of September, passing through Finningham.
- MSDC's Free Trees, Hedging and Wildflower Scheme remains open to applications from landowners: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/trees-and-wildflowers-scheme>.
- Cllr Mellen has provided an update on the B1113 ditch clearance; Highways contractors have cleared the ditch on Church Green in error, and will be returning to clear the (correct) roadside ditch. This should be completed by mid September.

25.180 Friends of Finningham August meeting update – Cllr Charter

Further to his Chairman's Report, Cllr Charter reminded councillors that the 20th of August is the cut off date for inclusion in the next FOF newsletter. The Clerk agreed to write a draft report on behalf of the Parish Council, which will be circulated to councillors for their approval, prior to the 20th August cut-off date. Any inclusions need to be forwarded to the Clerk as soon as possible.

ACTION – Clerk/councillors as above.

8:08pm Cllr Black arrived.

25.181 Items for inclusion in Friends of Finningham newsletter

As above.

25.182 Devolution and local government reorganisation update.

Update from BMSDC, as reported within Cllr Mellen's report:
'Cllr Richard Winch submitted a motion to full council regarding MSDC's desire unitary authorities to move forward with a proposal for 3 unitary authorities, as part of local government re-organisation across Suffolk. The 5 district councils across Suffolk, including Mid Suffolk, have long been supporters of having multiple unitary authorities across Suffolk, in opposition to the county council's support of a single unitary covering all of Suffolk. The full business case will now be developed before being discussed at council in September and submitted to government if approved by councillors'.

25.183 Speeding issues on the B1113 and consideration of expenditure for speed survey

After discussing, it was agreed to arrange a meeting with the local Highways Officer to discuss the council's concerns.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange meeting as above.

8:16pm the member of the public left the meeting.

25.184 Churchyard Maintenance responsibility update

Ongoing; no further update at present.

25.185 Village green improvements quotations

Ongoing.

25.186 To consider VAS device solar retrofit expenditure

Following approval at the previous meeting to purchase a solar panel for the oldest VAS device, the supplier, ElanCity, has said it will be necessary to arrange collection of the device to retrofit the panel; it is not something that can be fitted by the council. They have provided a minimum estimate of £907.99 plus VAT for the process and associated costs.

After discussing it was agreed to move this device to the Gislingham Road location where it is mostly shaded, and not proceed with the solar panel retrofit. Proposed by Cllr Charter, seconded by Cllr Trew, and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to advise ElanCity as above.

25.187 To consider VAS device extended warranty expenditure

ElanCity have sent a warranty extension invitation for the VAS device purchased in 2022. The cost is £199.00 plus VAT per year, for a fixed 3-year contract.

After discussing, Cllr Charter proposed the Council does not proceed with the warranty extension. Seconded by Cllr Davies and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to advise ElanCity as above.

25.188 To consider donation request from Bacton Primary School

Deferred as the information requested at the previous meeting has still not been received.

25.189 To discuss security of the Green and approval of expenditure for gate lock

Cllr Saunders raised concern at the end of the previous meeting regarding security of the entrance to the Green, following recent illegal encampments on similar green spaces in mid Suffolk and South Norfolk. These concerns have also been previously raised by Cllr Winter. Due to the high-risk concerns, Cllr Saunders has already purchased and fitted two heavy duty padlocks totalling £55.00. Cllr Trew has also purchased two hasps and staples totalling £8.90. Expenses claims for reimbursement have been submitted

Approval of the security measures undertaken and associated expenditure, proposed by Cllr Charter, seconded by Cllr Davies, and approved unanimously with one abstention against Cllr Trew's expenses (Cllr Trew).

25.190 To consider VE Day 80 beacon plaque

The Clerk has obtained a quotation from Anglia Sign Casting, to commission a new plaque, in the same style as the ones they have supplied previously, to commemorate the lighting of the beacon for VE Day 80 on 8th May 2025. The quotation totals £77.38 plus £12.00 postage.

After discussing, Cllr Davies proposed proceeding with the plaque, as above. Seconded by Cllr Black and approved unanimously.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange order of plaque.

25.191 Correspondence received

None.

25.192 Parish Council Insurance renewal

Deferred to next meeting to allow comparable quotations to be sought (renewal due 1st of October 2025).

25.193 Finance**a. RFO's report (bank balance, receipts, and payments)****Balances as of 29th July 2025**

Community Bank Account: £2,344.83

Deposit Account: £10,492.74

b. Requests for payment

Clerk admin payment August (including LGA pay award back dated to 1 st April 2025).	£489.81
Clerk Aug expenses (mileage & further sight test for VDU)	£32.59
HMRC PAYE/NIC August11	£122.45
P. Saunders expenses – 2 x heavy duty padlocks	£55.00
MSDC – annual bin emptying	£705.10
M. Webb expenses – mower fuel	£24.28
P. Trew expenses – 2 x hasps & staples	£8.90

Cllr Davies proposed authorisation of the above payments, seconded by Cllr Black and approved unanimously, with one abstention against P. Trew expenses (Cllr Trew).

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

25.194 Planning

To consider applications: None.

Decisions and to consider planning matters coming forth:

- **DC/25/02814** - Notification of works to trees in a Conservation Area - T1 Oak tree, reduce the canopy of the tree to previous pruning point by approx. 1.5-2m, remove low branch on west side of stem that is encroaching onto the main road to maintain size and shape of tree next to remove encroachment onto the carriage way. Martins, Church Lane, Finningham, IP14 4JB – **GRANTED**.
- **DC/25/02877** - Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - T1 ash-pollard due to suspected poor health to prevent branches dropping on power lines. The Old Bakery, Gislingham Road, Finningham, IP14 4HZ – **GRANTED**.
- **DC/25/02974** - Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses (C3) and for building operations reasonably necessary for conversion. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q - Change of use of 3 no. agricultural buildings and land within their curtilage to 3 no. dwellinghouses, together with the building operations reasonably necessary to convert the buildings to dwellinghouses. Chapel Farm, Walsham Road, Finningham, IP14 4JG – **AWAITING DECISION**.
- **DC/25/02190** - Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for an Existing Use or Operation or Activity including those in breach of a Planning Condition. Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) – For existing use of static caravan come lodge annex as this has been used since the 1990s to date as you will see from past planning records and addresses to an old council tax record. Caravan at Green Lane Farm, green Lane, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4TJ – **WAS LAWFUL**.

25.195 To discuss date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday 8th September 2025, at 7:30pm in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham.

25.196 Items to be discussed at the next meeting and included in the August agenda.

As per agenda.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:34pm.

