

FINNINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

*DRAFT Minutes for the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on
Monday 13th October 2025 in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:30pm*

Present: Cllr Charter, Cllr Saunders, Cllr Winter, Cllr Trew

In attendance: Miss J. Challis (Clerk), Cllr Mellen, Cllr Stringer, Mary Webb – Chair of Friends of Finningham, 4 members of the public

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

Cllr Charter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from Cllr Black and Cllr Davies were approved unanimously.

25.198 District and County Councillor Reports

Cllr Mellen's District and County reports can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

25.199 Footpath Warden's Report

Mr Aiken gave his apologies in advance of the meeting. His report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

25.200 Public Participation Session

Two members of the public were present to raise their grievances regarding planning applications which have been refused by MSDC.

7:49pm Cllr Stringer arrived.

Cllr Stringer had been invited to the meeting by Cllr Mellen, in his capacity as Mid Suffolk Cabinet Member for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure, in relation to agenda item 10, and to answer any potential questions from members of the public, following concerns raised at the August meeting.

7:51pm Cllr Mellen arrived.

Both members of the public outlined their grievances regarding the refusal of their individual planning applications, which they felt was unfounded. Cllr Stringer noted their concerns, and provided an outline of the framework within Babergh and Mid Suffolk's new joint Local Plan, which will guide development until 2037:

[New Joint Local Plan - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](https://www.babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk)

Cllr Charter thanked Cllr Stringer for taking the time to attend the meeting, and suggested the two members of the public speak to MSDC further outside of the meeting.

8:03pm Cllr Stringer left the meeting.

Mary Webb said a member of the public has offered to remove the fallen limb from the tree in the churchyard for free, if they can keep the wood. She also asked if the council can speak to SCC Highways again regarding the recently planted laurel hedge on Gislingham Road.

Cllr Charter proposed returning to agenda item 2. Approved unanimously.

(25.198 District and County Councillor Reports)

Cllr Mellen read through his reports, highlighting the Mid Suffolk Magazine:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/mid-suffolk-magazine>

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

Cllr Trew declared a pecuniary interest against agenda item 24; Planning DC/25/03856.

25.202 To consider requests for dispensations on agenda items

It was agreed unanimously, with one abstention (Cllr Trew), for Cllr Trew to partake in the discussion against the above item, but to refrain from voting.

25.203 To approve minutes of the Parish Council meetings held on 11th August and 14th July 2025

Cllr Saunders proposed approval of the minutes of the Parish Council meetings held of 11th August and 14th July 2025. Seconded by Cllr Charter and approved unanimously.

25.204 Chairman's Report

As we didn't hold a meeting last month due to the holiday period, there isn't a great deal to report this time. However, I'd like to thank councillors and residents for their patience and for continuing to keep things ticking along during the break.

Routine matters have continued as normal, and I'd like to note my appreciation to the Clerk for handling any correspondence and ongoing issues in the meantime.

Looking ahead, we can now focus on the upcoming autumn/winter projects / events / maintenance and budget planning. It would be good to ensure any outstanding actions from earlier in the summer are brought back onto our agenda so we can move forward before year end.

Thank you all for your continued support and commitment to the parish.

25.205 Clerk's Report

- National Grid have submitted their Norwich to Tilbury Development Consent Order, which has been accepted for inspection by the Planning Inspectorate. Interested parties can register a submission by 27th November. This will be an agenda item for the next meeting.
- Suffolk County Council have sent an invitation for a further online briefing on their local government reorganisation proposals, being held 3rd November 2025 7-8pm. Details sent to councillors should they wish to attend.
- Ed King from the River Waveney Trust is holding a public information event on flood management and building resilient communities in Mellis Memorial Hall on 23rd October 4-8pm. Further to this the Clerk suggested the council consider a Biodiversity Action Plan, and will prepare a draft for a future meeting.
- MSDC have advised that a Parish CIL payment of £1,617.71 is due to be paid to the parish council.
- The cut off date for inclusion in the next Friends of Finningham newsletter is 20th November 2025. Councillors need to forward anything they would like included to the Clerk a week prior to that date.
- Friends of Finningham are holding a Christmas Concert on 30th November in the church. Kristina Bee who sang at the VE day celebrations will be performing. They have also arranged for the Village Christmas lunch to be held on 6th December at Stoke Ash White Horse.

25.206 Planning Process and new housing requirements

As above.

25.207 Consideration of Finningham White Horse public house as a community asset

This was included as an agenda item to discuss support of the White Horse remaining open as a public house, and the parish council's authority within this context, but deferred to a future date.

25.208 Westhorpe Road Safety Concern

A resident has raised concern regarding the safety of children playing on Westhorpe Road during the evening, due to the speed of traffic and lack of street lighting.

After discussing, councillors agreed unanimously that the road is not a suitable location for children to play, and therefore it is not the council's responsibility. There is already a VAS site on Westhorpe road, and concerns can be raised directly with Suffolk Highways via their online reporting tool: <https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

ACTION – Clerk to advise resident

25.209 Consideration of Friends of Finningham's request to use Parish Council's strimmer

Friends of Finningham have requested to use the strimmer to cut the grass triangles in the village, so that they can plant bulbs. After discussing, permission was agreed unanimously, based on a relevant volunteer risk assessment form being completed to satisfy insurance requirements.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange for risk assessment to be completed, as above.

- 25.210 Consideration of Friends of Finningham's request to use Parish Council's electricity connection for village Christmas tree lights**
Permission agreed unanimously.
ACTION – Clerk to advise Friends of Finningham as above.
- 25.211 Churchyard Maintenance responsibility update**
Ongoing; no further update at present.
- 25.212 Consideration of quotations for tree work and cemetery hedge**
A quotation has been sought from the grass cutting contractor to remove the fallen limb in the churchyard, and cut the cemetery hedge back to a manageable level. In addition, the contractor has also provided a quotation for work to trees on the green which they feel are necessary, due to the public safety risk they pose.
After discussing, Cllr Charter proposed providing permission for the member of the public to remove the fallen tree limb in the churchyard. They may take the wood in exchange for doing the work free of charge. Seconded by Cllr Trew and approved unanimously.
Cllr Trew proposed proceeding with the quotation to cut back the cemetery hedge. Seconded by Cllr Charter and approved unanimously.
It was agreed to look at the trees on the green to ascertain exactly what work is required, before considering the quotation for this work at the next meeting.
ACTION – Clerk to advise member of the public, and contractor, as above.
- 25.213 Hedge on Station Road obscuring VAS device**
The Clerk has attempted to make contact with the owner of the hedge, without success. After discussing, and taking into account that there may be a valid reason for the owner being uncontactable at the moment, it was agreed to monitor the situation, and take action if the hedge starts to obscure the VAS device completely.
- 25.214 Pride in Your Place application for village improvements**
Deferred to next meeting.
- 25.215 To consider donation request from Bacton Primary School**
After discussing, it was agreed unanimously that the council is unable to support the request, due to the additional information requested not being provided.
ACTION – Clerk to advise Bacton Primary School as above
- 25.216 Correspondence received**
None.
- 25.217 Parish Council Insurance renewal**
Due to the September meeting being cancelled, and a renewal date of 1st of October 2025, the quotations were sent to councillors for approval by email.
The current provider is Aviva, arranged through Clear Councils insurance brokers. Last year the renewal was agreed at £560.18 annually, based on a 3-year LTU (long term undertaking). However, Clear Councils are no longer working with Aviva, and have therefore provided a renewal quotation of £667.00 with Ecclesiastical, which can be agreed on a 3-year fixed rate basis.
An additional quotation of £507.00 has been provided by Zurich. CAS (Community Action Suffolk) were also approached, but declined to quote due to the company they deem most suitable being associated with Clear Councils.
It was agreed by email to renew with Aviva through Clear Councils, but for one year only, rather than on a 3-year fixed basis.
Cllr Charter proposed retrospective confirmation of approval to renew with Aviva through clear Councils. Seconded by Cllr Saunders and approved unanimously.
- 25.218 Electricity supply renewal**
Deferred.
- 25.219 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 October	£588.60
Clerk expenses (data for homeworking)	£15.00
HMRC PAYE/NIC October	£147.15
Top Garden, inv. 3112, grass cutting September	£151.20
Clear Councils annual PC insurance renewal	£667.00
Clerk expenses – remembrance wreath	£25.00
Elancity – 2 x new VAS device	£5,614.78
Defibrillator battery	£330.00

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

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

September 2025 payments

Due to the September meeting being cancelled, the following payments were agreed by quorate email, and paid online (dual authorisation) on 9th September 2025:

- 1) Top Garden Services, grass cutting April (3 cuts), inv 3038, £226.80
- 2) Top Garden Services, grass cutting May (2 cuts), inv 3039, £151.20
- 3) Top Garden Services, grass cutting June (2 cuts), inv 3040, £151.20
- 4) Top Garden Services, grass cutting July (2 cuts), inv 3041, £151.20
- 5) Top Garden Services, grass cutting August (2 cuts), inv 3042, £151.20
- 6) J. Challis expenses, mileage August meeting, £10.71
- 7) J. Challis admin, September, £470.88
- 8) HMRC, September PAYE, £117.72

25.220

Planning

To consider applications: None.

- DC/25/04398 - Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Remove to ground level one very unbalanced oak. Martins, Church Lane, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4JB.
- DC/25/04288 - Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Walnut (T1) trim and reshape; Walnut (T2) trim and reshape by 3 metre. Orchard House, Gislingham Road, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4HT.
- DC/25/04121 - Householder application - Replacement windows, replacement / refurbishment of fascias and soffits, re-cladding of dormer window. Lautrec, Gislingham Road, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4HY.
- DC/25/03856 - Householder Application - Erection of a detached double garage. Riverside, Gislingham Road, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4HY.

After discussing councillors agreed they have no objection to the above planning applications. Agreed unanimously with one abstention against DC/25/03856 (Cllr Trew having previously declared a pecuniary interest).

ACTION – Clerk to add comments to MSDC planning portal as above.

Decisions and to consider planning matters coming forth:

- **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.**
- DC/25/03900 - Notification of works to trees in a Conservation Area - The oak tree (T1) 1. Remove dead wood, including a large hung-up limb which is currently detached from the tree but not in danger of falling (in the tree surgeon's opinion). 2. Raise the canopy by removing some of the lower branches that are hanging onto adjacent shrubs and garden outbuildings. The Paddocks, Walsham Road, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4JE – **APPROVED.**

- DC/25/03652 - Application for Listed Building Consent - Restore lath lime plaster panel. Drivers Farm, Gislingham Road, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4JA – **GRANTED.**
- DC/25/03843 - Application for works to trees in a conservation area - T1 Ash tree close to the boundary - remove 25 to 30% of tree height. Reduce overhanging limbs to a suitable growth point. Remove left hand limb back to the branch collar. As per advice from Lee Garwood, tree surgeon. Fairstead House, Church Green, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4HU – **APPROVED.**

25.221 New Parish Councillor co-option

A member of the public was present having indicated their interest in joining the council. They completed a co-option application form prior to the meeting, which was shared with councillors in advance. The member of the public introduced themselves, and reiterated their interest in becoming a parish councillor.

Approval proposed by Cllr Saunders, seconded by Cllr Charter, and approved unanimously. Cllr Charter welcomed Cllr Pope to the council, and the Clerk arranged for a declaration of acceptance of office, and register of interests to be completed.

25.222 To discuss date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday 10th November 2025, at 7:30pm in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham.

25.223 Items to be discussed at the next meeting and included in the November agenda.

As per agenda.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:45pm.

