

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 2nd April 2026, commencing at 7.pm in the Village Hall.

All supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, April 2026.

Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Iain Lamont, Roy Mawford, Irene Mitchell, Jack Norman, Chris Robinson and Michael Sherman. Eight members of the public.

Opening Statement by the Chair:

The Chair welcomed everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded. 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 Cllrs Domoney, Falconer and Ranzetta had sent their apologies. No absences required approval.

2. Declarations of Interest and item 3 Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk said that he had received no updates to Interests or Requests for Dispensations. He asked whether Councillors had any further interests or updates to their interests that they wished to declare. No Councillor said that they did. He reminded Cllrs that they have 28 days from any change to update Babergh District Council.

The Clerk told Councillors that the Monitoring Officer at Babergh Council had that day updated him with respect to his progress.

He will shortly be convening meetings of the Suffolk Joint Standards Board. That Board will likely receive reports concerning the behaviours of two Lavenham Parish Councillors. As previously advised it is likely that this Board will be comprised of elected Councillors from Mid Suffolk District Council.

The Monitoring Officer also advised that:

- a) He has been in dialogue with the Police.
- b) There are a variety of other complaints, largely related to interests, that his Office is still working through.
- c) He is confident that your Clerk has a solid understanding of the issues related to interests.
- d) He understands that SALC are drafting guidance notes for Parish Councils and an upcoming one relates to interests. He will ensure that this guidance is shared with the Clerk so that it can be shared with Councillors in due course.

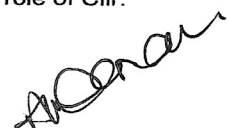
The Chair explained to Cllrs that she was amending the order of items on the Agenda and that the next item would be Chairs Announcements.

6. Chair's Announcements

The Chair told Cllrs that she considered that during the meeting of 5th March we witnessed behaviour from a Cllr that she considered to be disorderly and disruptive. She said that she understood that complaints from Cllrs and Members of the Public have been submitted to the authorities.

The Chair explained that Cllrs must be held accountable and adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role saying that our conduct as individual councillors affects the reputation of all councillors and the Council itself.

She reminded Cllrs that they are expected to act with integrity and honesty, act lawfully, treat all fairly and with respect, lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of Cllr.



She reminded Cllrs that they are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct which was developed by the Local Government Association and had been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

She reminded Cllrs that:

Regarding Respect, Cllrs undertake to treat other Cllrs and Members of the Public with respect. This includes other local authority employees and their representatives.

Regarding Disrepute, Cllrs undertake to not bring their role or Council into disrepute. Their actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary Members of the Public, and may adversely impact on themselves, other Cllrs or the Council as a whole.

Regarding Bullying and Harassment, the Code of Conduct is clear that Cllrs undertake to not bully or harass any person and are expected to promote equalities and not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The PC, she said, does not tolerate bullying or harassment although it needs to be noted that Council itself has no powers of sanction regarding the behaviour of Cllrs or Members of the Public.

She reminded Cllrs that should a Cllr not comply with the Code of Conduct they are answerable to Babergh Council Monitoring Officer or the Police if it is considered that their behaviour may be unlawful.

She concluded her Chairs Announcements saying that the position of Chair does not give her any additional general authority over her fellow Cllrs however, whilst facilitating healthy debate, that she is required to ensure meetings are conducted properly. Should improper or disorderly conduct occur in meetings the following course of action will be followed:

If a person or persons disregard the request of the Chair of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the Chair of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or be excluded from the meeting.

This motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion. If this vote is ignored, the Chair of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or indeed closing the meeting.

4. Approval of Minutes

To approve as accurate minutes of the 5th March 2026 meeting of the Council.

Motion to approve. Proposed: Cllr Sherman **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson abstained.

Cllr Mitchell apologised for having used the word 'commercial' in relation to item 13 when she should have used the word 'private'.

5. Public Participation Session

The Chair reminded Members of the Public of the protocol for this session.

A Member of the Public expressed his concern about the overgrown vegetation on Lower Rd. The Chair urged the Member of the Public to report his concerns to Suffolk Highways saying that the more people report their concerns the higher priority the matter will be given by Suffolk Highways. The Clerk said that he would do the same. Cllr Norman agreed expressing concern about the potholes on Lower Rd. The Clerk replied that the local Highways Inspector was aware of them and that they were being monitored against the repair criteria.

A Member of the Public expressed his concern about Item 11 on the Agenda asking whether other Parish Councils have similar policies. He asked whether should the policy be implemented Cllrs should not have the dispensations they currently have. The Chair replied that dispensations are carefully worded to ensure that Cllrs are perceived to be 'doing the right thing' and that she would try and ensure that the question of whether other Parish Councils have similar policies was discussed during Item 11.

7. Local Authority Councillors' Reports

The Clerk presented County Cllr Lindsay's report.

County Cllr Lindsay had advised that the Government has chosen the three unitaries option for Suffolk as advocated by the leaders of the all five District Councils, rather than one single unitary authority, promoted by Suffolk Conservatives.

Lavenham will be in Western Suffolk Council, which will stretch from just west of Hadleigh all the way to Newmarket and Brandon. He predicts that there will be a lot of noise about how much money the change will cost adding that both options are expensive and both predicted a four or five year timescale before those costs are clawed back in savings.

He considers the three councils option to be the smallest councils the Government would permit and gives the opportunity for an effective administration more responsive to people than Suffolk ever was. There will be fewer Councillors than before, but not as few as contained in the one unitary proposal.

The other two areas are Ipswich & Southern Suffolk (including Hadleigh and Felixstowe) and Central and Eastern Suffolk (including Stowmarket).

From June to November Bildeston High Street will be closed whilst Anglian Water replace a water main.

Suffolk has been allocated £1.7m by the Government in emergency funding for people unable to afford heating oil due to 'Trump's war on Iran'. The County Council will administer this through its existing Local Welfare Assistance Scheme which already provides funding for residents experiencing a "financial shock or crisis" – including spiking heating oil prices.

A new bus service between Hadleigh and Stowmarket is due to start on April 13th. This five day a week, six services a day route has received funding from Government Bus Service Improvement Fund.

He is pleased that it appears a reasonable agreement has been reached between the County and the Allotments Group and the PC for access for vehicles over the Railway Walk to the planned allotments.

District Cllr Clover noted that the new Councils will come into operation in April 2028 with elections next year for the new Cllr positions who will work with existing Cllrs to oversee the transition period.

He told Cllrs that at a recent meeting Babergh had briefed Parish Councils on the process to be expected under the new Call for Sites. Following evaluation, the first list of accepted sites is expected to be published in May 2026. This list will then be refined to sites that are suitable for development alongside the content of adopted and emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP's).

He informed Cllrs that funding of up to £20,000 funding is available in 2026-27 to support NDP's. When considering the merits or otherwise of a particular site Parish Councils will need to do this with reference to the overall new housing target set for the parish. Indicative housing requirements for NDP's will continue to evolve in 2026. It will probably be 2029-30 before the final list of sites is agreed.

Better Recycling Bins will begin to be delivered in late April/May. Excluding the brown garden waste bin, in a standard household, alongside the existing black and blue 240 litre bins there will be a black green lidded bin. Bins will be emptied on a three week rotational basis. The Black bin will be for general waste but not food. The Blue bin will take clean, dry glass bottles, jars, tetrapak cartons, plastics of all types and aluminium products including foil. The Green lidded bin will take paper and card. Additionally, residents will receive two food caddies, one small one for kitchen surface and one larger external one for emptying on a weekly basis.

Should additional storage of bins be a problem, the Council will evaluate properties to determine their suitability for the Standard Waste Collection Service based on criteria including the lack of a garden front and back.

If a property is deemed unsuitable for the Standard Waste Collection Service, residents will be contacted and informed about the wheeled bins or containers they will receive as part of the Non-Standard Collection Service. The Council's assessment decision is final.

Where refuse collections are made using authorised single use sacks for refuse, the Council will supply and deliver these upon request (maximum of once a year). Where collections for recycling cannot be achieved using wheeled bins, the Council will make provision by supplying sacks or smaller containers for the relevant waste stream. Recycling materials will still be required to be separated as per the Standard Waste Collection Service requirements.

He noted that despite escalating fuel prices, the Government has so far refused to delay the forthcoming tax hike in fuel duty in direct contrast to other European countries. He noted that it may also be possible to apply for a grant from the Suffolk Local Welfare Assistance Scheme. Further advice can be sought from Sudbury Citizens Advice on 01787 321400.

He reported that the owner of Clay Hill Lane undertook to commence repairs by the end of March. A site visit on April 1st showed that wood chips had been deployed in order to firm up the ground underfoot. This is unlikely to be sufficient and therefore the matter has been reported to SCC.

He continues to chase County Cabinet Member Paul West's Office for progress concerning the Lavenham Butchers culvert.

8. Clerks Report

The Clerk told Cllrs that following Cllrs decision to publish and retain the recordings of Council Meetings and most importantly the successful implementation of that decision that there is no need for the minutes to be as lengthy as they previously have been as the comments of Cllrs are now captured on the recordings.

Future minutes will include the announcements made, the contributions of Members of the Public and the actual decisions made.

This will bring this Council completely in line with best practice which is that Parishioners should not be named, comments made by Parishioners should be recorded very generally and Minutes should be a record of decisions made and little else.

He quoted from the Guidance: ' Minutes should never be a verbatim record of what individual Cllrs have said, and rarely is it necessary to record details of debate. Examples of when it would be material to do so would be in evidencing that appropriate advice had been considered, or risks assessed in relation to decisions'.

Public Realm:

The tree survey has been received and sent to the Council's retained Tree Surgeon requesting the development of a prioritised action plan. This has been chased and is expected shortly. The replacement EV chargers have been installed in Water St and it is expected that the new owners will switch these on very shortly. The Clerk has chased them for a date. The Speed Indicator Device on Bury Rd is now operating properly.

Daily cleaning of the toilets and twice weekly emptying of a number of litter bins has restarted with the incidents of there being no toilet paper in a loo much reduced. No minor repairs have been required in the last few weeks,

The Chair of the Hub has advised the Clerk that they expect to hear in several months' time whether their application to become a charity has been approved. Should it be approved then Council will need to decide what to do concerning the lease.

Cllr Bourne has been in contact with the residents of Church St concerning the replacement streetlight. Placing the light on a wall has been suggested.

Accounts:

He reminded Cllrs that last month he had advised them that the February Accounts will show a deficit for the eleven months of some £7,000, a reduction of approximately £10,000 compared to the forecast deficit of £17,000. That update had been accurate. The actual deficit for the eleven months to 28 February is £6,668. The expected deficit for the whole year is about £5,000 which will be £11,500 less than the Forecast.

The further improvement of £1,500 is because £1,000 of burial income was received in March which is an abnormally high amount and the legal costs concerning the Subject Access Requests have finally been received and paid. The lawyers were encouraged to double check that all their recorded time was chargeable and in the end their costs were £7,360, a £640 reduction on the £8,000 previously accrued.

The Streetlights have been paid for and the VAT Reclaimed. Consequentially at the end of March Councils cash was £239,000 of which £123,000 is held on behalf of Others e.g. (Neighbourhood Cll) or is the Sinking Fund. Councils own cash is therefore £116,000 which represents about 8.5 months reserves. This would have been 7.5 months without the unanticipated savings previously discussed.

It is planned to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on May 21st.

Motions: To approve Accounts and Receipts and Payments for month ending 28th February 2026

Proposed: Cllr Bourne **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decisions:** Approved unanimously.

9a. Planning Register

The Clerk reported that he had one update to the Planning Register. The application to revert the space above the tea room at 6 Market Place to residential use had been approved without any condition being added. Councillors had suggested adding a condition that the residential use must be by and for the business owner.

9b. Planning Applications

Application DC/26/01173: 30 High St. Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Raise the lower crown of 1 No. Ash (T1) by 2m, remove the lower epicormic growth and branches at ground level and slightly reduce the overhang to the Car Parking Area by approximately 1m.

Motion: Recommend Approval

Proposed: Cllr Lamont **Seconded:** Cllr Mitchell **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Applications DC/26/00941 and 2: 1 Bakers Mill, Prentice St. Installation of an electric vehicle charging point on the internal wall of the garage.

Motion: Recommend Approvals

Proposed: Cllr Norman **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved unanimously

Application DC/26/00924: 24 The Paddocks Erection of home gym/music room. To vary Condition 2 (Approved Plans and documents) As per plans/documents submitted.

Motion: Recommend Approval

Proposed: Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Mitchell **Decision:** Approved unanimously

Application DC/26/00674: Land north east of Briarside, Bridge St Rd. Erection of a single storey dwelling and garage using existing vehicular access.

Motion: Recommend Approval

Proposed: Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved unanimously

Applications DC/26/01137 and 8: Blaize Barn, 5 Bears Lane. Creation of off street parking space and erection of new boundary screen walls.

Motion: Recommend Approvals

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman **Decision:** Approved unanimously

10. Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Group: Report by The Chair of the Group

The Chair of the Group presented his report and explained that the Group was considering applying for Grant Funding from Babergh Council. He reported that over 120 people had attended the drop in sessions and that 300 completed Questionnaires had already been completed. Concern was expressed that people outside Lavenham may complete the Questionnaire online.

11. Motion concerning Councillor volunteering and non-endorsement of Private Businesses

Cllr Mitchell presented her motion commenting that such policies exist in other Parish Councils and that Cllrs can volunteer but not from the Council Table.

Motion: Amendment to change Motion to read 'Council adopts the Councillor Volunteering and Non Endorsement of Private Businesses policy'

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson abstained.

Motion: Council adopts the Councillor Volunteering and Non-Endorsement of Private Businesses policy'

Proposed: Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson abstained.

12-14. Motions to approve revised Communications, Expenses and Privacy policies.

The Clerk presented his paper outlining the history of these policies explaining that regular review is appropriate and that no significant changes were proposed.

All three motions **Proposed:** Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

15. Motion concerning Bus Improvements

Cllr Mawford presented his report.

Motion: The Clerk is instructed to advertise an invitation to people living in or near to Lavenham to send him – by letter or email no later than 30th April 2026 – their ideas for improving local bus services. Those responding to this invitation are asked to say whether they live or work in Lavenham parish – and, if not, the area where they live.

Proposed: Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Sherman **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

16. Report concerning possible move of First Meadow Gate

The Clerk explained that in late 2025 a number of Cllrs ranked moving the pedestrian gate on First Meadow as a priority. The existing gate on the corner of First Meadow and Water St is in a dangerous position for users of First Meadow being on a three way corner and purports to be the start of a Public Right of Way but that Public Right of Way actually begins 55 metres further down Brent Eleigh Rd.

The Clerk has been in contact with Suffolk Public Rights of Way (PROW) and Suffolk Highways. Suffolk PROW will shortly reply concerning the chicane or similar arrangement which will need to be built to enable safe use of the new entry point as a gate is unacceptable. Suffolk Highways have been asked what will need to be constructed to enable safe access to the proposed new entrance from the pavement on the other side of Brent Eleigh Rd.

Cllr Robinson advised that works take care to avoid the internet cable which may not be deeply buried.

17. Report concerning First Meadow Boundary

Councillors Robinson and Sherman left the room.

The Clerk presented his report explaining that the landowner had rejected the offer made by Council consequent of its last meeting. The Boundary Dispute is therefore unresolved. The Clerk agreed to organise a meeting of the Finance and Strategy Working Group to further discuss the matter.

Cllr Sherman returned to the room

18. Report concerning The Paddocks Allotments

The Clerk shared with Cllrs the letter from Suffolk Public Rights of Way concerning vehicular access to The Paddocks Allotments telling Cllrs that he will now approach solicitors to move the legal agreements forward. Cllr Mawford suggested that the Allotments Association may need to contribute to maintenance costs of the Railway Path.

Cllr Robinson returned to the Room. Meeting ended 9.30pm.

Date of next meeting – Thursday 14th May 2026 7pm