



Earl Stonham Annual Parish Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall at 7pm on Monday
12th May 2025

PRESENT:

Cllr M Gillett – Chair

1 member of the public, Parish Council Representatives and Village Group Representatives

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs S Edgar (Clerk), County Cllr Hicks and District Cllr Hardingham

ES01/25/26 - CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair of Earl Stonham Parish Council, Cllr Mark Gillett, welcomed those present.

ES02/25/26 - APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Cllr Budd, Tony Turner (Village Hall), Simon Edgar (Cricket Club)

ES03/25/26 – REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH

Representatives of the following organisations were invited to speak, answer any questions and, where received, their reports would be attached to the Minutes.

- a) **Earl Stonham Parish Council** – *Cllr Mark Gillett*
(Full Report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Gillett's read through his report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the website.

Cllr Gillett also confirmed his attendance at the recent planning committee meeting for the consideration of the Low Carbon Solar proposal and confirmed a decision has been deferred to allow further investigation. Cllr Wilkinson expressed his concerns as to why other individuals appeared to know about the date of the meeting prior our notification from the Planning Committee. Cllr Gillett confirmed the agendas are only finalised one week before and we were notified at this point.

Cllr Gillett would like to note his thanks to the following individuals and companies for their donations to the Speeding Indicator Devices (SID's): Earl Stonham Village Hall, Earl Stonham Trust, Roger Gladwell, Barbara & Brian Heard, Karen Edwards, Deb & Tony Turner, Mark & Dawn Gillett, Cllr Hardingham, Cllr Hicks and Perfect Perennials.

b) **Suffolk County Council** – *Cllr Matthew Hicks*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Hicks briefly went through his report, which had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the website.

Cllr Hicks noted some improvements had been made on National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury proposals but still believes that a better solution is available and commented that if the first Decarbonisation deadline was extended from 2030 to 2035 it would then allow offshore options to be feasible.

Cllr Hicks circulated the Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk, Residents Summary (March 2025) brochure and stated a decision should be made on Devolution between September 2025 – January 2026. Cllr Turner confirmed she would attend the Devolution Briefing meeting on 10th June on behalf of the Parish Council.

Cllr Stanford asked Cllr Hicks if there was an update on the serious road defects on Fen Lane to which Cllr Hicks explained the regular maintenance schedules. Both Cllr Stanford and Cllr Gillett feel the issues need to be addressed sooner and Cllr Gillett agreed to email Josh at Suffolk Highways to arrange a site visit to discuss solutions.

d) **Village Hall Management Committee** – *Tony Turner*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Tony's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the website.

Cllr Turner went through the report in Tony's absence covering the main points.

Cllr Gillett expressed thanks for all Volunteers who contribute towards the running of the Village Hall.

e) **WI** – *Lindsey Stone*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Lindsey read through her report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the website.

Lindsey also confirmed she would like to discuss a donation to the SID's on behalf of the WI.

f) **Earl Stonham Trustees** – *Cllr Karl Wilkinson*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Wilkinson read through the report which would be published on the website.

Cllr Wilkinson communicated the Trusts' discussions with the Forge on the proposed redevelopment of the Old Chapel and how they had accommodated adaptations requested by the Trust. There was no longer any objection to the proposal.

- g) **Cricket Club – Simon Edgar**
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Simon's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the website.

The Clerk read through the main points of the report in Simon's absence.

Two improvement projects were mentioned in regard to an electronic scoreboard which would link to the Play Cricket site and allow people to view the live score feed and also improvements to the Pavillion to provide mobility access. Given the lack of funding from the ECB for smaller Club's both Cllr Stanford and Cllr Gillett suggested Simon contact Cllr Hicks and Cllr Hardingham for support with these projects.

- h) **Golden Circle Club – Joan Rice**
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Joan Rice's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the website.

Cllr Gillett read through the report.

- i) **Parochial Church Council – Cllr Henry Stanford**
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Stanford read through the main points of the report.

Cllr Stanford advised following Revd Payne's retirement in July 2024 there is now a third round of recruitment to find a replacement.

Cllr Stanford expressed his thanks to many individuals in the report and also anyone not mentioned who helps in any way.

ES04/25/26 – PUBLIC FORUM

Nothing was raised

ES05/25/26 - MINUTES 7th MAY 2024

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 7th May 2024, were approved, with the exception of an amendment to the Guest Speakers name from "John Hones" to "John Jones", as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

ES06/25/26 – REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH (CONTINUED)

- c) **Mid-Suffolk District Council – Cllr Nick Hardingham**
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Hardingham went through his report, which would be published on the website.

On Devolution Cllr Hardingham expressed his views on the plans and concerns over a potential tripling of workload under a single unitary system, which he believes would be unmanageable and would have a negative impact on recruiting councillors.

Cllr Hardingham mentioned "Pride in your Place" grants which Cllr Turner suggested we investigate towards the village sign.

Cllr Hardingham spoke about the Joint Local Plan being under review as a result of the increase in housebuilding targets by national government. A provisional allocation across the district suggests a target of 73 new houses in Earl Stonham over the next 20 years. Cllr Wilkinson asked if this would mean upgraded utilities as these are already under strain. Cllr Hardingham stated that this was not within their power to agree.

Cllr Hardingham spoke on the deferment of a decision on the Low Carbon Solar Farm suggesting there is a push for all access to be off the A1120, as currently there is only permission for access from this route for the build, not for maintenance/decommission. The question was raised regarding whether the proposal includes any community funding. Cllr Gillett confirmed a verbal indication of a fund that would be administered by the Parish Council of £80k or £4kpa.

Cllr Stanford raised an issue with an abandoned vehicle under the A14 bridge as it crosses Fen Lane. The vehicle has an "authorities aware" notice on it, but has been there for some time and degrading by the day. Cllr Hardingham agreed to follow this up.

Refreshments

ES07/25/26 – Guest Speaker – Cllr Karl Wilkinson – The Kafuta Tumbung School Trust – Education in the Gambia

Following Cllr Wilkinson's presentation, a request was made for an article to be composed for the next addition of the Recorder.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Chair Date

Earl Stonham Parish Council – Chair’s Report 2024/2025

Introduction

I am pleased to present my annual report for 2024/25. We presently have 8 Councillors – this means that we have a vacancy for a Parish Councillor. We would like to hear from Residents who wish to apply to become a Parish Councillor – if you wish to know more please speak to one of the existing Councillors or contact the Parish Clerk by email parishclerk@earlstonham.org.uk.

At the beginning of this year our previous Parish Clerk, Jennie Blackburn, left after 8 years’ service with the Council and I wish to record our thanks for her support and work over that time. We are now able to welcome our new Parish Clerk, Susan Edgar, to the role which she started on 1st April. Susan lives in the Parish, and I am sure will be a valuable asset to the Council and the Parish in the coming years.

Highlights

- In the year since May 2024, the Parish Council has:
 - Held 8 meetings, including planning meetings and 1 Public Meeting about the proposed Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Route.
 - Considered 7 Planning Applications and submitted views to Mid Suffolk District Council as part of the planning process.
 - We are no longer able to access Google Analytics data about our website since the update, as it seems to have broken all the links that were previously in place, and we have been unable to repair them.
 - Speeding continues to be a significant concern to residents. During 2024/25 the Speed Watch Team undertook 27 sessions and reported 403 speeding motorists to the Police. The average speed of those reported was 38.4mph. The Safety Camera Team were also present on several occasions – their presence increases in response to the number of sessions we carry out and the speed of vehicles.
 - Cllr Deb Turner has been leading a project group to raise funds for the purchase of two Speed Indicator devices to be site on the A1120.
 - Low Carbon’s application for a Solar Farm Development on land adjacent to Blacksmiths Lane will be considered at Mid Suffolk District Council Planning Committee on Wednesday 7th May. I will be attending to speak to our opposition to the proposal although the Officer Recommendation is for the application to be approved.
- In June we celebrated the 80th Anniversary of D-Day starting with the lighting of the beacon on 6 June, followed by a WW2 themed supper on the Saturday and a Fun Day at the Village Hall on the Sunday.
- Earl Stonham Theatre Group entertained us with another successful pantomime, Cinderella, in January.

Financial Report

The Parish Council is funded by a Precept levied on the Council Tax. In 2024/25 the total precept was £7,675, equating to £28.99 per household for a Band D Property. At the year end the Parish Council held £9,942 including fixed reserves and donations received for the purchase of the two Speed Indicator Devices. The Precept for 2025/26 is £8,586 equating to £31.89 per household for a Band D Property. This reflects the increased day to day costs faced by the Parish Council. The Parish Council funds a number of activities, of which the key items of expenditure are: the Parish

Clerk, insurance, subscriptions, grass cutting, street lighting, grants & donations, a contribution to the village hall and dog bin emptying.

The Parish Council has successfully completed its Internal Audit which was undertaken by Suffolk Association of Local Councils. The Audit Report will be presented to the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 12 May.

Community Engagement

- A Public meeting was held to discuss the proposed Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Route in July 2024 and to inform a further Parish Council response to the National Grid 'Consultation'.
- We try to keep everyone informed through the Recorder, which is published 3 times each year, via the website and through emails to the village mailing list.
- We rely heavily on volunteer effort, without which we would not be able to run many of the events or activities that we do. If you do have a little time to spare, please consider helping and supporting one of our projects.

Future Plans

- VE Day Celebrations take place on 8th May with the lighting of the Beacon followed by refreshments. There will be a supper evening on Saturday 10th May.
- Plans to site two Speed Indicator Devices on the A1120 are progressing well with Highways granting permission for the locations, one at either end of the 30mph limit. We hope these will be in place before the Summer. We are still seeking donations to cover the costs of the devices so if you could help with this please contact the Parish Clerk.
- The website will be refreshed during the coming months. This will link to the Parish Council's move to a '.gov.uk' website domain and associated email addresses. This is a recommendation identified in our recent audit and is being encouraged by National Government.

Acknowledgements

- I should like to express my gratitude
 - to my fellow parish councillors, volunteers and community groups for their contributions and support
 - to our District Councillor, Cllr Nick Hardingham and our County Councillor, Cllr Matthew Hicks for their continued support
 - to those organisations and individuals who have made donations to the funding of our Speed Indicator Devices – Earl Stonham Village Hall, Earl Stonham Trust, RG Landscapes, Brian & Barbara Heard, Karen Edwards, Deb & Tony Turner, Mark & Dawn Gillett, Cllr Hardingham, Cllr Hicks

Mark Gillett
Chair, Earl Stonham Parish Council

Cllr Matthew Hicks 2025 Annual Report for the Thredling Division

Suffolk County Council confirms 2025/26 budget

SCC has confirmed how it will spend its money in the forthcoming financial year - an £803.7 million plan focused on protecting essential services and supporting the county's most vulnerable residents. The council's budget for 2025/26 was approved with an emphasis on meeting rising demand for children's and adult care services. For every £1 the council spends in the next financial year, 77 pence will go directly toward services that support the health and wellbeing of people in Suffolk. The remaining 23 pence will fund other critical areas such as fire and rescue, highway maintenance, climate initiatives, waste management and bus services, as well as the infrastructure, staff, and technology required to keep services running efficiently. This is another budget set in challenging times. Economic growth remains sluggish, public finances are under pressure from rising demand and global uncertainty continues to create financial instability. But it is precisely in times like these that we must stay focused on our responsibility to the people of Suffolk. We are committed to delivering high-quality public services that make a real and lasting difference in people's lives. We will continue to prioritise those who need our support the most, including vulnerable children and adults who require assistance to live independently. The council's budget will increase by 6.7%, from £752.9 million in 2024/25 to £803.7 million in 2025/26. Despite a slight uplift in Government funding for local authorities, rising costs and growing demand have required the council to set significant savings targets to balance the books. The council has approved £10.9 million in new savings, which will focus on restructuring and transforming how services are delivered. This follows £17.5 million in savings approved in the previous year, bringing total savings for the 2025/26 financial year to £28.4 million. Suffolk County Council's share of Council Tax will rise by 4.99% next year, which includes a 2.99% general increase and a further 2% dedicated wholly to helping meet the rising costs of social care. We know that many of our residents are feeling the pressures of rising costs. That's why it's our duty to ensure that every pound of public money is spent wisely and delivers the best possible value for our residents.

One new council is the best option for Suffolk

SCC has approved an interim plan for local government reorganisation in Suffolk which with a full business case submitted in September 2025, following extensive engagement with residents, town and parish councils, businesses and local organisations. The key benefits of one council are:

- Simpler for residents – one council would make it easier to understand
- Clearer accountability – there would be less confusion over who is responsible for what
- Better use of funding – a more coherent, strategic, financially sustainable, county-wide approach to budgeting
- Safer services - less risk of breaking up critical services like social care and better alignment with other agencies like health and the police
- Better alignment of services – since everything is under one roof, services can be more easily coordinated, creating opportunities to improve services for residents
- More efficient decision-making – with just one council, decisions can be made more quickly
- Connected to and empowering residents - providing both the most straightforward and accountable democratic leadership with enhanced neighbourhood and community engagement
- Stronger leadership – a single, visible and accountable body providing a clear strategic voice for Suffolk.

When people visit Suffolk, it's hard not to fall in love with it. Indeed, if you're lucky enough to live and work here, that love grows strong, anchoring people, families and businesses for generations.

Whether you're looking for a place for your children to go to school, a forever home or a location from which to do business, Suffolk gives you options. Sea views, rolling fields, big skies, quiet villages, market towns and bustling urban centres. Although different from each other, our areas exist as part of a coherent and historic geographical area. We are proud of Ipswich, our county town. But so are we of the many other places, large and small, that make Suffolk the cohesive place it is. There is, without doubt, a spirit or force that's hard to describe that connects and unites our great and special county. Analysis carried out nationally by the County Council Network has demonstrated that a single unitary council for Suffolk would

have a recurring financial benefit of almost £26 million a year – with the net benefit after 5 years being over £103 million. All the evidence shows that one council for Suffolk is the only viable option to deliver significant savings that can be reinvested into frontline services, financial sustainability and maximum clarity and accountability. This is clearly demonstrated in our interim plan and will be expanded upon in the final business case in September. The latest independent analysis makes it clear that having a single council for Suffolk will save the most money which can be reinvested into frontline public services that benefit residents, while having three councils would cost the taxpayer more than the current 50-year-old system. The funding could be reinvested in services like pothole repairs, waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, leisure, school placements and travel and street cleaning. There's been talk of creating three unitary councils for Suffolk, including a Greater Ipswich. But that model is without credibility and is financially ruinous. We want to deliver the best possible opportunity to Ipswich and all our market towns and rural communities. The only way to do that is as one Suffolk. A Greater Ipswich would be in financial peril from day one, threatening the very services we want to protect. But this isn't just about money, it's about people too. A single council will absolutely be able to reflect and serve the whole of Suffolk, and our plans will clearly show how local priorities and residents' voices can and will be central to decision making. If we're going to create a truly sustainable and effective council structure for Suffolk, then one new council is not just the only viable option, but also the best one.

200 new specialist SEND places for Suffolk

The creation of 200 new specialist places across the county for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was approved by SCC's cabinet. An extra 100 places could open this year, and another 100 new places by September 2026, with future plans being drawn up. These places will be spread across Suffolk and tailored to meet need and demand. The plan presented to cabinet outlines how £18.6million could best be spent to support the growing population of SEND children and young people who need specialist education. Over the last five years, Suffolk pupils accessing special schools and units attached to mainstream schools has increased by over 40%. The proposal includes £3million to be spent on small groups and units in mainstream schools from September 2025 and £12million to be spent on developing satellite units linked to existing special schools across Suffolk from September 2026. The remaining £3.6million is earmarked for further SEND provision. In the past five years, 1,025 new specialist SEND places across Suffolk have been agreed. We know the importance of making sure that children are in the right provision for their needs at the right time.

Council continues to oppose pylons in final round of consultations

SCC maintains that more can, and should, be done to improve National Grid's plans for their Norwich to Tilbury pylon project. A final round of consultation for the project in Suffolk has now been completed ahead of an expected Development Consent Order application later this year. SCC has welcomed a series of changes to the latest set of plans, evidence that National Grid has listened to some of the council's concerns and those of local communities. However fundamental differences remain, with the council remains clear that offshore and undergrounding solutions should be priorities for the scheme. We are bitterly disappointed that pylons are still the go-to solution for this project, and particularly those destined to cut across the Waveney Valley's valued landscape, rather than going underground, or ideally offshore. We still firmly contend that less damaging alternatives to the project have not been properly considered. Despite making clear our overall opposition to the scheme, we have influenced some alterations proposed by National Grid, such as the undergrounding of smaller pylons, owned by UK Power Networks in some places. At the next stage of the process, when the Planning Inspectorate is presented with the plans, we will continue to pursue our preferences for no pylons at all, to make the scheme better and safer for our communities. SCCs response to the latest, and previous, consultations can be found on our website.

Arts organisations and museums across Suffolk get £500,000 funding boost

Thirty-three arts organisations and museums from across Suffolk have been awarded funding from Suffolk County Council's £500,000 Culture Project Fund. The successful projects range in size and scope, and support an array of different people across Suffolk. Examples include promoting performing arts in Sudbury with the Quay Theatre, environmental events at Dunwich Museum, and an education and arts project to

address racial inequalities in Ipswich. The successful bids range from £1,000 to £27,000. The new fund, which was launched last year to boost cultural activity across the county, attracted 131 applications, requesting a total of £2 million in funding. The quality of applications was exceptionally high, and more than 60 projects scored 'excellent' or 'outstanding' against the assessment criteria. Following a rigorous selection process, a panel of experts from across the arts, heritage, and community sectors reviewed 62 shortlisted applications. This resulted in 33 successful bids. As well as some higher-profile organisations, it's wonderful that lots of smaller projects, which often get overlooked for funding, will also benefit.

All 45 libraries back under SCC care and control.

The decision, made at the Cabinet meeting, will ensure continued access to high-quality, community-focused library services across the county. As part of this move, the council plans to:

- Keep all 45 libraries open
- Maintain opening hours
- Create job security for all frontline staff
- Secure a sustainable future for Suffolk's library services

In addition to continuing its core library services, the council is investing £200,000 in mobile libraries, with a further £157,000 for new books and to replace public computers in libraries across Suffolk. Libraries have long been at the heart of Suffolk's communities. They are essential spaces for learning, connection, and support, and the council is committed to ensuring they remain hubs that bring people together. Looking to the future, SCC envisions libraries becoming even more integrated into the wider community, serving as convenient access points for a range of essential council services. This includes providing information and support around Adult Social Care, offering health and social care services, facilitating Family Hub activities, and promoting digital inclusion. The aim is to make it easier for residents to access vital services and support, all within the welcoming, familiar setting of their local library. SCC would like to express its sincere gratitude to Suffolk Libraries, who have run the library contract for the past 12 years. Their passion and hard work have been integral to the success of library services in the county, and the council appreciates all they have done to support local communities. We look forward to welcoming library staff back into the county council and continuing to support them in delivering outstanding services to the public. We would also like to thank the 1,250 volunteers whose commitment has been essential in delivering high-quality services to residents across Suffolk. As we transition the library service back under council control, we remain fully committed to working with our volunteers. Their invaluable contributions will continue to play a central role in the future of our libraries, and we are excited to explore new opportunities to expand volunteer involvement. The library service will officially return to Suffolk County Council control on 1 June 2025.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

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Earl Stonham Village Hall Annual Report – 2024-25

Another busy, successful year at the hall. Bookings are at a good level and the overflow car park has meant that we can better accommodate meetings in both halls simultaneously as well as continuing to rent the hall when there are cricket matches. Attendance at quiz evenings dropped off at the end of 2024 but have now picked up again with a record attendance in February. Supper evenings continue to be well supported and we have now set a cap of 30 people for all but special events like VE Day. The profit from the supper evenings for the last year has been used to improve facilities in the kitchen – more details on this below.

The hall organised the village celebrations for the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings last year with a very well attended beacon lighting, a supper evening with entertainment for 60 people on the Saturday and a fun day on the Sunday. A very exhausting time, only made possible by the huge amount of volunteer help. We are now in final planning for the VE Day 80th celebrations which will consist of a beacon lighting on Thursday 8th and a themed supper evening on 10th.

A raised flower bed has been added to the entrance to the car park. This has been done to remove the risk of commercial vehicles cutting the corner and damaging the lamp post. So far this seems to have been successful and it looked very jolly planted with daffodils this year. Darren at Perfect Perennials will kindly be donating plants for a more permanent planting scheme later in the year. The new signs by the entrance and a campaign of phoning commercial companies who use the car park without permission, has resulted in a significant drop in the number of large commercial vehicles and this in turn has greatly reduced the wear and tear on the car park surface which is very welcome.

Unfortunately we have still not got a solution to the EV Charger and it remains out of use. Suffolk County Council are putting together a new scheme for the EV chargers which we may choose to partake in but at present there are some issues with the proposed scheme which we need to address, so it is just watch this space for the moment.

As mentioned above, the overflow car park on the former bowls green has been very a very useful addition and we have added another street light at the entrance to it to make it safer. The section we reserved as a wildflower meadow looks like it will be far more successful this year. Unfortunately we have still not found a long term use for the buildings but we have had a few bookings for the former club house this year so hopefully this might grow. In the short term, we will just keep the buildings on care and maintenance and as part of this will complete the timber cladding of the club house this year, as that will ensure it is fully watertight and will not suffer further deterioration.

The gents toilets have had a major upgrade with the replacement of the old stainless steel urinal trough with new ceramic ones and tiled walls. This should be more hygienic and better for users.

Finally, you may have noticed some changes in the kitchen. The microwave failed its testing this year and has been replaced with a commercial model that is easier to use and clean. The success of Supper Evenings has put rather a strain on the existing domestic cookers and so a commercial table top oven has been installed to help with this. We also had a scheduled Hygiene inspection so in preparation for this, we put more robust processes in place for food preparation and Barbara and Tony both completed Level 2 hygiene course and allergy awareness training. The end result was we achieved the highest level of 5 stars from the inspection.

Tony Turner

Chairman - Earl Stonham Village Hall Management Committee

Earl Stonham WI Report for Parish Council AGM 2025

Earl Stonham WI currently has 28 members which includes those from Stonham Parva, Brockford, Stowupland, Needham Market and Creting St Peter as well as our village. Our past year has consisted of 9 meetings in the Village Hall Clubroom, 1 Zoom meeting, a summer outing to the Sutton Hoo Boat rebuild at Woodbridge and a Christmas meal at Thornham Four Horseshoes. We also hired the Kurling equipment from our Head Office in October and had a great morning with some very competitive games between us! Speakers have included Witches and Witch hunting, The Making of Dad's Army, the Sutton Hoo Boat Rebuild (which we opened up to husbands), our own Annette talking on her time in the Metropolitan Police and the return of Mary Newton, former Forensic Scientist with more tales from her career. We were also visited by a Ukulele band from Felixstowe which we opened up to visitors. Our Zoom meeting in January consisted of some wonderful slides entitled Magic Moments which were of birds from around the world. We also heard from a former Firefighter who turned to writing after his wife died from cancer and last month we had a talk called Soil Cinderellas : Honouring the Women's Land Army. Future speakers this year include our own Anne talking on Beekeeping, a flower arranger who was once a Policelady and Music Hall Memories with Songs and Monologues. We are also hoping to visit the Green Island Gardens in July. Our May meeting will be to discuss the Resolution going forward to the National AGM and is entitled "Bystanders can be Lifesavers" – to help us we have someone coming along from the Air Ambulance to teach us CPR and also how to use a Defibrillator.

Our two Group meetings during the last year were from three ladies who had climbed Kilimanjaro and also Lynne Mortimer talking on her year as Mayor of Ipswich. Six members attended the Suffolk East Federation Annual Meeting at Trinity Park in March where the main speaker was Ali Norman, the first lady to serve on the Aldeburgh Lifeboat.

Our head office in Ipswich organise many days of learning and craft activity which we have been able to participate in – these include Lino Cutting, a Literary lunch with two local authors and a ladies lunch with a Christmas Craft theme. Also the ever popular Kurling which is held in our own Village Hall – this year 5 of our members took part, 3 of which were in the winning team. Two of our members enrolled on a Creative Stitch class culminating in a show at Needham Market and we were delighted to hear that Jan had been named as student of the year! We also entered a team into the annual SEFWI Quiz at Needham Market and once again came third. We are now entering a team in the monthly Village Quiz evening too so may attain a higher position this year!

However we are probably still best known for our catering skills. We served our usual refreshments after the Carols on the Green in December and raised over £200 for the Charity Little Lifts who provide gift boxes to every breast cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Our speciality is still our funeral tea catering though and last year we catered for three of these including our own Jane Porch.

Our Mahjong group meets monthly and we have around 12 attending each month including 4 ladies who are not WI members (one travels from Felixstowe).

We decided to keep our membership at £48 for the year in 2025 which covers 11 meetings, a monthly magazine from our Federation office and 8 magazines from our National Office. The National WI now runs it's own Lottery too and some members belong to this (but no wins so far).

For any more details please contact Lindsey on 07929869925 or 01449 711602 or email on lindseystone55@yahoo.co.uk.

The Earl Stonham Trust Annual Report

12th May 2025

The Earl Stonham Trust continues to manage the assets owned by the Trust;

1 Guildhall Cottages

The recreation ground

And support those within the parish with educational opportunities through funding and also where necessary supporting others with grants which meet the requirements of the Trust charter.

The Trust had an income of in the last financial year 23/24 of approximately £6700. This was from return on long term investments and rent from 1 Guildhall Cottage.

The expenditure within the last financial year was as follows;

Grants and awards for member of the parish during 23/24 £1380

The payment of outstanding water bills from the old bowls club, who left without disconnecting the services, or returning the site to the Trust inline with the lease agreements, £1134

Insurance costs for the year 23/24 amounted to £800

We continue to build reserves for the ongoing maintenance of the assets, and future expected costs in relation to these assets, particularly given that 1 Guildhall Cottages is Grade 2 listed.

We continue to seek volunteers to help with the ongoing maintenance of the playground equipment on the recreation ground which needs to be rubbed down, primed and repainted before the summer school holidays.

ESCC Report May 25

In 2024 we celebrated our 35th anniversary since the club was reformed and at our annual awards dinner, we were lucky enough to have a number of the founding committee members in attendance. John Player, the original Secretary, spoke to the assembled guests of how it all came about and it would seem most of which was done over a pint in the now closed Shepherd & Dog pub. Four village residents seized the opportunity to reform the club following Stowmarket Cricket clubs decision to vacate the ground. With a lot of local support we were able to get the club back up and running again as the original club folded in the early 60's due to dwindling numbers.

So we now enter our 36th season and despite only having played 5 games so far we have managed to win 3 of them. There is a long season ahead especially for the Saturday team who will now play every weekend till mid September. A very long season in my view and very challenging for smaller clubs like ourselves to make sure we have strong player availability throughout that period. Playing numbers are pretty strong at the moment for both our Saturdays and Sundays but we are always on the look out for more especially youngsters.

The clubs financial position is what I would call stable but it is a challenge every year to balance the books. With costs continually on the rise it makes it much harder to save the money for new equipment and improvements to the pavilion we wish to make. We get great support from a number of locals who support us financially each year as VP's but the numbers have dropped off over the years, with people moving away or finding it hard to donate due to their own household budgets being stretched.

We have two improvement plans at the moment, firstly we are keen to purchase an electronic scoreboard, that not only keeps the score updated ball by ball, but also connects to the play-cricket website where supporters can follow our progress on their phones on a Saturday afternoon. We are currently about £1.5k away from our £4k target. Our second project is to improve the entrance to the pavilion. Currently it has some rather steep steps which is just not suitable for anyone with mobility issues so some form of ramp is desperately needed to aid them entering the pavilion with ease. In addition we also want to add a small decking area to the side of the entrance to make a an excellent viewing platform. We believe an investment of around £7k would be needed to make those improvements. We will be trying for local grants where we can to assist us. The ECB (Cricket governing body) offer very little support to small grass root clubs like us, but that will not deter us in trying to improve our facilities, as clubs who don't invest quite often fail and disband as Needham Market CC did last year.

Every season we get a lot of positive feedback of how the ground looks and plays and my thanks goes to all those who assist me in getting the ground ready for games each week. It does take a lot of hours to keep it looking good and it also benefits the local residents who use it outside of cricket games. Last season we came joint top of ground reports with Woolpit, who have a full-time grounds person looking after their pitch, so we were really pleased to get that accolade from the league members.

I now hope for a successful season both on and off the pitch and this is not something I would normally say at this time of year but I hope it rains soon !

Simon Edgar – ESCC Vice Chairman.

EARL STONHAM GOLDEN CIRCLE CLUB.

May 2025.

The Golden Circle Club has 33 members.

We started our year off with the Harvest Festival with Mrs Stannard telling us about the "Moses Project". Members brought Baby items for Mrs Stannard to take back to be distributed among mothers with new born babies that cannot afford all the items a baby needs. Other speakers included "Blood Sweat & Fears" by Mrs Newton, "On the trail of St Edmund" by Mr Parfit, "Minsmere 75" by Mr Everett and by the time you have this meeting we will have had Mr Parsons on "Bury St Edmunds Tower".

We had our Christmas meal at Thornham Four Horseshoes and hope to have our Birthday Party at Stowmarket Golf Club in July. In August we are having a Barbecue.

In June we will be going to Blickling Hall in Norfolk for the day. If anyone would like to come with us we still have spaces.

If you are over 60, we would love to have you join with us. We meet in the Village Hall on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm unless we have an outing. Our subscription is only £10.00. We would love to get some new members and you would be made so welcome.

If you need to know more, please get in touch with Joan on 711294.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva

Parochial Church Council

Annual General Report
2024



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ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the above presents the Annual Report for the year 2024. The report has been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act of 1993.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

St Mary's Church, Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva.

Correspondence address: The Rural Dean, The Rev'd Dan Harrison,

The Rectory, Willisham, Ipswich IP8 4SP

email address: ddh25@btinternet.com

The PCC is a charity exempt from registration with the Charity Commission.

THE PARISH TEAM

Priest in Charge: Revd Philip Payne (retired July 2024)

Reader: Henry Stanford

Churchwarden: Mr Mark Parry

The Sunday School Trust administers funds originating from the sale of the village school, which are used for Christian Education within the parish of Earl Stonham. It is separate from the PCC with the Rector and the Churchwardens as trustees.

Bank: Santander UK plc.

Independent Examiner:

Mike Cherry

Address:

Weylands Farmhouse, Forward Green, Stowmarket, IP14 5EW

PCC OFFICERS AND MEMBERS AS OF APRIL 2024

Revd Philip Payne

(Rector)* Mr Henry

Stanford Reader)*

Mrs Jane Porch (Elder and

Churchwarden)*

Mr Mark Parry (Churchwarden)*

Mrs Maggie Podd (Deanery Synod

rep)*

Mr John Jones (Treasurer)

Mrs Caroline Shield (Secretary)

Mr Mike Dawe

Mrs Anne Stanford

**ex officio*

COMMITTEES

The PCC had the following sub-committees:

Fabric Committee: John Jones, Mike Dawe, Mark Parry

Standing Committee: Revd Philip Payne, Jane Porch, Mark Parry, John Jones, Caroline Shield

Social Committee: Frankie Wicks, Caroline Shield

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The PCC had 9 members (ex officio and elected) and the electoral roll had 38 names on it as at 2024.

The PCC held 5 meetings during the year, in addition to the Annual Vestry Meeting and the Annual Parochial Meeting, which was held on Wednesday 17th April 2024.

Discussions at PCC Meetings included: Incumbent replacement, service schedule, safeguarding, coffee and cake.

SAFEGUARDING

In the second half of 2024, Frankie Wicks stepped down from the PCC and from her role as safeguarding officer on moving to Bristol in the autumn.

Safeguarding continues to be paramount within St Mary's and is always discussed at every PCC meeting. Throughout the year reminders have been given to those whose safeguarding training has expired and the majority of the PCC members have ensured that their training is completed to the required level for their responsibilities.

All PCC members are required to complete the Basic awareness and the Foundation training. These can be accessed online and are straightforward and informative. Those who are either Lay elders, Lay readers and the Safeguarding officer are in addition required to complete, the Leadership training which takes place across two sessions, either in person or via Zoom over a period of two weeks. Following the submission of reflections on what could be implemented in one's benefice, the Leadership level of safeguarding is awarded. All members of the PCC have been recommended to complete the online Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse course.

A record is kept of the training levels, which those on the PCC and appropriate members of the Bell ringing group have completed.

Updated Safeguarding posters have been made available within the church and Parish room, including displaying them on the back of loo doors. Posters made available include those which detail local and national abuse support networks as well as Local and National Support Networks.

Anne Stanford
Safeguarding Officer

THE CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

During 2024, the general pattern of Sunday services in Earl Stonham Church on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month continued, including a well-attended service on Remembrance Sunday, together with a monthly mid-week communion service in the parish room.

In addition, the church hosted a World Day of Prayer service on 1st March, as well as Good Friday and Easter Services, a Service of Light to remember people who had died, a Christingle Service, the ever-popular Carol Service with the Benefice choir, and a Christmas Day communion service.

Four services took place in Stonham Parva Church: a Rogation Service in May, a benefice Holy Communion in June, a choral evensong in July and a carol service in December.

Four funeral services took place in Earl Stonham Church in 2024, with two additional burials and the ashes of five more people interred in the churchyard. There was one baptism.

On five evenings in January and February, *Hymns We Love*, preceded by supper, in Earl Stonham Village Hall attracted more than 20 people from across the benefice. *Our Radiant Redeemer*, a series of devotions by Tim Chester, was studied during Lent and, later in the year, a group studied Paul's letter to the Romans, using Andrew Ollerton's *The Romans Course*. During Advent, *Let Earth Receive Her King* was read.

Monthly ecumenical prayer meetings took place in the parish room. Towards the end of the year, an Open the Book team resumed enacting Bible stories in Creeting St Mary School.

The church hosted monthly 'Coffee and cake' mornings in the village hall and, in December, carols were sung on the village green, followed by refreshments provided by the WI.

The Rev'd Philip Payne retired in August from his role as Rector of the North Bosmere Benefice, after ten years as our incumbent, following a packed benefice farewell service in Stonham Aspal Church at the end of July. We wish him and Mary, who had been a very supportive lay elder and administrator, a happy retirement in Soham.

We also bade farewell in October to Frankie Wicks, former churchwarden and lay pastor, who moved to be closer to family in Bristol. And Jane Porch, churchwarden and lay elder, died in November. Frankie and Jane, having both spent most of their lives in the parish in faithful service, are much missed.

Earlier in the year, in July, Mark Parry was commissioned as a lay elder, alongside Hazel Chittock and Steve Cole from Gosbeck. We are also grateful to the other members of the Benefice Ministry team, the Rev'd Helen Norris, the Rev'd Adrian Watkins, the Rev'd Bill Rootes, Judy Hailes, Liz Ince and David Tydeman, for all that they do.

Thanks too are due to Mark for all that he does as churchwarden, to those who served on our PCC during the year, to Diane Hurt and Ian Galbraith for their organ playing, to Margaret Cherry and our team of bellringers, to all who act as sidespeople and provide coffee after our services, for those who clean the church and provide flowers, to John Bull for his sterling work in the churchyard, to all who help with coffee and cake in the village hall, to all who lead intercessions and read, to Eileen and those who unlock and lock up the church each day, and to all who help in other ways. We are very grateful.

Henry Stanford
Reader

ST MARY'S BELLS REPORT

Bell ringing at St Mary's Church continues with ringing for Sunday Service on the fourth Sunday of the month, with the help of other ringers in the district.

We were able to ring for the Harvest Festival, Remembrance Service and the Christmas Eve Carol Service in 2024.

Practice afternoons take place throughout the year. Debenham ringers continue to ring a quarter peal on a monthly basis. No wedding ringing took place during 2024 but we look forward to ringing for a wedding on August 2nd at Earl Stonham.

The new muffles purchased last year proved to be a great improvement on the old ones and we were able to fix them to the bells more easily.

Margaret Cherry

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

We continued to be represented by Maggie Podd and Rev Philip Payne (until his retirement). John Jones was serving as Deanery Organiser for the northern (Bosmere) part of the Deanery. The Deanery Synod met three times during 2024 at Earl Stonham Village Hall. Each meeting started with a discussion on a key topic.

On 14th March this involved small group discussions on how to be welcoming churches.

At the meeting on 26th June, the main item was a discussion led by the Rural Dean, Dan Harrison on "Going to Church and what happens next: private faith, public faith and mission".

On 22nd October the main subject of the meeting was a talk by Matthew Vernon, leader of the Diocesan deliverance ministry team on Deliverance Ministry.

Other items discussed at the meetings included future Deanery wide events, the Deanery Plan, clergy vacancies, Safeguarding, reports from the Treasurer and updates from individual Parishes/Benefices.

As Deanery Organiser for Bosmere, John continued to report on Parish Share issues.

There were updates from the Diocesan and General Synods.

Maggie Podd

TREASURER'S REPORT

Our unrestricted income in 2024 increased by almost £1,700, but this was accounted for by a rise of £1,900 in the fees received for weddings, funerals and burials. There have been small fluctuations in other categories of income but our largest source, planned giving, rose by nearly £1,200 to £16,811. This is nearly all received monthly, via the Planned Giving Scheme or by bank standing order, and we are very grateful to all the individuals who are so generous in their support.

Expenditure, though, continues to rise inexorably and as a result we have incurred a deficit of £1,651 in the year. Parish Share, our largest item, has increased by £650 to £22,916. Energy costs, especially electricity, continue to rise inexorably.

Whilst unrestricted funds at the year end were a fairly healthy £15,000, we have now incurred a deficit for two years in succession and clearly this cannot be allowed to continue.

We should take pride in the fact that our church is largely funded by the donations of a very generous congregation, without having to resort to fetes or similar fund-raising events. However, donations have not kept up with inflation and we shall be asking our members to prayerfully review their giving, to ensure that our work in this parish is adequately funded.

John Jones

Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Annual Report (2024/25)

Earl Stonham May 2025

- **New devolution and local government reform affecting Mid Suffolk**

Following on from the election of the new Labour government in July 2024, the new government has proposed widescale changes across the UK regarding devolution and council re-organisation. This includes two proposals affecting Suffolk as a whole, including Mid Suffolk District Council, which may lead to its eventual abolition.

The first proposal is a strategic authority covering both Norfolk and Suffolk, which is likely to have a directly elected Mayor for both counties, and an increase in local powers for Suffolk. The election for this Mayor is currently scheduled to take place in May 2026.

The second is the re-organisation of the current two-tier system within Suffolk into either a single or multiple Unitary Authorities, where all of the council's general services are run by one coherent entity. Should this proposal go ahead, it will likely result in the abolition of MSDC in the late 2020s. Suffolk has applied to be on the fast-track for this scheme, which has resulted in the postponement of the Suffolk CC elections that were due to take place in May 2025. The election for any new authorities is currently unclear, but is likely to be held after the Mayor election, in May 2027. Talks for both are currently an ongoing matter, although new information will likely be updated frequently throughout the year.

- **Budget**

For 2024/25, net expenditure on services is budgeted at £18.5 million with a 2% increase in council tax. Council home rents increased by 7% and sheltered housing service charges also increased. This has been done to ensure the Council can afford the repairs and maintenance that are needed. All these increases are due to inflation, costs of energy and other cost increases.

The Council has reserves of over £28 million as at the end of the financial year plus an expected dividend from the Gateway 14 business park. Plans for this are on a variety of work including new foot/cycle paths, land for biodiversity and green spaces, regeneration of Stowmarket town centre, improved sports provision in the district and enabling community-led housing.

Approval was also given to increasing council tax on empty homes in 2024/25 and implementing increased council tax on second homes in 2025/26.

For the 2025/26 budget, recently agreed in the February council meeting, the administration committed to a capital programme of £36m for the district, which is partially funded by the council's reserves. This includes investment in health facilities, primarily including the ongoing SHELF project, investment into new skills and innovation within the district, and an increase in funding for the communities across Mid Suffolk's smaller towns and villages. In addition to these spending plans, there was also no planned increase in council tax, which was frozen at its current rate of £175.03 for a Band D property. Finally, the council is additionally estimated to have a surplus of £2.4m at the end of the financial year.

- **Thriving towns and villages**

As part of Mid Suffolk's Rural Transport Grant Scheme, two new community transport routes were launched, utilising the council's new Taxi Bus scheme, connecting Stowmarket with the surrounding villages and communities across Mid Suffolk. Initially, there were the two routes looping around villages of Mid Suffolk, beginning in Stowmarket, the first of these goes via Thurston, the second via Bacton, with further communities eventually being added, including Eye and Debenham. These have allowed for further connectivity between the villages across Mid Suffolk and Stowmarket in the heart of the District.

- **Environmental sustainability**

Mid Suffolk District Council previously launched their Cosy Homes scheme for Winter 2024, which included plans to improve insulation and energy efficiency within private homes across Mid Suffolk. This is a readily available scheme for residents, and has made great progress in improving energy efficiency and sustainability across homes.

- **Planning and Housing**

Over the last year, Part 1 of Mid Suffolk and Babergh's Joint Local Plan (JLP), which was first created back in November 2023, had its first year of full operation. The purpose of the plan was to provide essential clarity for communities about how the district was to develop until 2037, and assisted in allowing for a structured response to housing and planning targets, of which Mid Suffolk had always excelled at, and delivered Mid Suffolk's aim of 535 new houses annually. In January 2025, the plan has since come under review, as a result of new housing targets set out by national government. Whilst MSDC have previously exceeded with housebuilding targets, there is a possibility that the new national housebuilding guidelines take priority over the JLP if the council cannot prove there is a 5-year land supply for housing.

- **Supporting the community**

We support local events and community groups where we can and particularly link local groups with external fundraising via the Mid Suffolk community team. Almost £550,000 was allocated by Mid Suffolk District Council Direct to communities across the district from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone **0300 123 4000**

Earl Stonham – Parish Report - May 2025

Devolution – Mayoral Combined Authority	At last month’s extraordinary council meeting, the response to the consultation for the council on the Norfolk and Suffolk devolved authority from Mid Suffolk Council was discussed. The response, which included some positive aspects and some negative comments, was unanimously approved.
Local Government Reorganisation	An early example of problems caused by the uncertainty is cancellation of a project to create a combined new depot for waste services, housing and other activities. The location and scope now need to align with the changed geography of the county which is yet to be settled. Meanwhile Mid Suffolk and Babergh have each committed £250,000 to refurbish existing depots such as at Creeting Road, Stowmarket.
River Ratt Catchment – Flood alleviation & nature recovery	An initial ‘leaky dam’ has been agreed, and local landowners will be invited to join the ‘Upper Gipping Farm Cluster’ which was established last year, led by Green councillors, and supported by a part-time worker from Suffolk Wildlife Trust, funded by MSDC.
Land for wildlife and public access	Cabinet has agreed another purchase of land which is suitable for public access as well as nature enhancement. Location confidential at present.
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 in Mid Suffolk’s article: New grant offers significant funding for sporting opportunities across Mid Suffolk - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk
£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.
Locality budget 2025/26	The next round of locality funding is now live so I am able to accept applications for grants. The total amount per councillor has increased to £10,000. Full details available https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/locality-awards