



EARL STONHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Parish Council meeting held at the Village Hall at 7:00pm on Monday 20th July 2026.

Present:

Councillors: M Gillett (Chair)
M Mann
S Budd
H Stanford
J Barnett-Lamb
D Cawston
D Brenig-Jones

In Attendance

Mrs S Edgar – Clerk
Cllr M Hicks – County Council
Cllr N Hardingham – District Council
6 Members of the public

ES26/26/27 – TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Turner due to illness and approved by Councillors.

ES27/26/27 – TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None had been received.

ES28/26/27 – TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

None had been received.

ES29/26/27 – TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18th MAY 2026

It was AGREED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th May 2026 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

ES30/26/27 – PUBLIC FORUM

A resident asked for details of the proposed bypass. Cllr Hardingham confirmed there was no proposal yet, just funding agreed to create the business case, for which £1.35m had been allocated and a current traffic survey being conducted. SCC will decide the plan for submission.

A resident asked for an update on the proposed SID for the A140 and it was confirmed we have been in discussions with the property owner for the proposed site and are awaiting confirmation on the best location on their property. Once we have this, we can submit to highways to assess. The resident was pushing for timescales however it was confirmed these are out of our hands. Cllr Gillett confirmed again that speeding on A140 is a policing matter rather than a parish one however there have been several police vans posted along this stretch in recent weeks.

ES31/26/27 – TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HARDINGHAM

Cllr Hardingham was present and had provided a report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and published on the village website.

Cllr Hardingham read through the main points being:

Waste Collections: MSDC has now completed 6 weeks of the new collection scheme and it looks to be averaging around 160 tonnes of food waste per week, which generates some revenue for MSDC, although the figures were still being calculated based on how the tonnage collected converts.

Housing: A scoping consultation is open until 31st July to help shape the new Joint Local Plan. The JLP1 was already under revision due to increase in housing targets.

Locality Funding: Cllr Hardingham confirmed he currently has £6k remaining for the 2026/27 year and welcomed applications for this.

Cllr Gillett asked for an update on the enforcement case on Wicks Lane, of which there was none. A request was made for Cllr Hardingham to chase progress on this.

ES32/26/27 – TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR’S REPORT – CLLR HICKS

Cllr Hicks was present and had provided a report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and published on the village website.

Cllr Hicks started by providing an update on the issues along Blacksmiths Lane resulting from the closure of Saxham Street. Highways had placed appropriate signage to deter usage of the route and anything above and beyond this is relying on goodwill.

Cllr Hicks confirmed the change to our Highways contact: Josh White has now been replaced by Sophie Farrington following some area changes. Sophie has been fully briefed on the Debenham Road campaign and we are currently awaiting the independent report for this. Cllr Hicks has agreed a contribution of £1000 towards the speed limit reduction should it progress down this route.

Cllr Hicks ran through the main points of his report being:

A140/A1120: £1m has been budgeted to create a business case for the solution to the junction with circa £6m to follow. Timeline wise any solution is likely to be built by 2029. Regarding current speeding he urged residents to keep pushing policing as there is an appropriate speed limit in place which should be enforced. A resident raised the point that a lot of incidents relate to nighttime speeding when enforcement vans are not in situ. Cllr Hicks advised they write to Tim Passmore regarding enforcement.

EcoPower Suffolk Solar Farm: Cllr Hicks has raised several significant concerns over the proposal and suggested it is one to monitor to see if it is still pushed through despite the numerous issues.

Adult Social Care: The Care Quality Commission have award SCC Adult Social Care a rating of “Good” following reforms to strengthen and future proof services.

LGR: SCC have set aside £500k for a judicial review on the decision to move to a three unitary system

Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan: Cllr Hicks confirmed the plan is currently being updated and potential sites submitted. He advised following the process and checking what local sites have been submitted as there were a lot of objections to some local sites submitted when the current plan was created.

ES33/26/27 – TO RECEIVE THE CLERK’S REPORT AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) ACTION TRACKER

The Clerk provided an update on any significant progress on ongoing items not listed elsewhere on the agenda being:

Website: Suffolk Cloud/Pear Space now have new website templates available and have an introductory offer of £100 for the transfer compared to the usual £300. Comparing our existing costs to the proposed charges for the transfer to a .gov.uk domain it would increase from £186.50 to £250pa. The new site would be fully accessible on handover. One Suffolk had been investigated for a comparison however their annual charges would be 50% more per annum.

Website Accessibility: As advised under our annual audit the accessibility statement on our current website is out of date. Prior to completing a new statement, we would need to have an audit to confirm what standard it complies with. The cost for this would be £70 for the audit and then around £50-100 to fix errors, assuming they are simple ones, which is more expensive than transferring to the new templates.

IT WAS AGREED: To use Pear Space to transfer to a .gov.uk domain and update the website to the new templates. **Clerk to instruct Pear Space.**

Footpaths: After involving Cllr Hicks, we had received confirmation that one (Red House Farm) of the three signs had been replaced and the other two should be done imminently. Cllr Stanford stated this is not the case and all three are still outstanding. **Clerk to investigate**

Tree Works: The Clerk drew attention to the lengthy email sent 3rd July outlining the three quotes received for works and the prioritisation of these. The Clerk advised only one of the three quotes would allow us to carry out the works within the suggested timescales based on the finances available. This option would mean works of £1750 carried out within this financial year with £1,050 scheduled for the 2027/28 year. The Clerk proposed the £1750 be funded as follows - £500 tree budget for 2026/27, £300 surplus SID's reserve, following cancellation of post costs and £950 from CiL reserves. This would still leave £630 in the SID's reserve to cover the cost of a pole on the A140 should we have a suitable site agreed. Cllr Stanford proposed £1250 being funded from the CiL reserve to leave a larger contribution towards the A140 SID.

IT WAS AGREED: To proceed with the tree works funding £500 from the 2026/27 tree budget and the remaining £1250 from CiL reserves. **Clerk to instruct**

b) **CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk reported that following audit, all the necessary financial information has now been uploaded to the website and the Public Rights Notice has been advertised which runs until 28th July 2026.

The Clerk reported two complaints received from residents along Blacksmiths Lane during the closure of Saxham Street. One whose posts had been flattened by a tractor and another regarding a tree knocked down as two lorries tried to pass each other. Cllr Hicks had been made aware of the complaints.

A further complaint had been received from a resident along Chapel Lane about an individual parking in the area and then dumping rubbish on the verge when leaving. The Clerk had reported this to MSDC, who are able to issue fixed penalty notices with a witness statement and photographic evidence.

On a positive note, two individuals had made enquiries on the vacant allotments. The Clerk advised the rent review, which is done every three years, is due in October so it would be helpful to agree this prior to new tenants. Currently the rate is £15.32 for the allotment plots, with those in the local area being around £20-45. **Cllr Budd offered to supply the standard rates to assist.**

The Clerk confirmed attendance of the Highways Self Help Forum which offers funding, for equipment purchase/hire, if we have works we would like to do with volunteers, that would previously have been Highways responsibility e.g. path clearing, cutting verges etc. **Clerk to circulate the details.**

c) **TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Clerk reported on the Council's current financial position and movements since the last meeting. It was reported that the balance in the accounts on 30th June 2026 was £13,131.34 which included the 2025/26 VAT reclaim of £1,733 which was higher than usual due to the SID's purchase.

d) **TO AUTHORISE PAYMENTS AND NOTE RECEIPTS**

The Clerk reported the following payments be authorised:-

Vertas Group Ltd	Grass Cutting (Apr-Jun)	£509.69
B Heard	Village Walk Refreshments	£9.30
Susan Edgar	Clerk Salary (May)	£432.12
Susan Edgar	Clerk Expenses (May)	£26.00
ESVH	Transfer of Recycling Credit 2026-28	£1,232.00
Lindsey Stone	APM Refreshments	£25.00
BT Group	Village Hall Broadband	£35.94
ESVH	Hall Hire 18.05.26	£24.00
Susan Edgar	Clerk Salary (Jun)	£432.12
Susan Edgar	Clerk Expenses (Jun)	£26.00
Suffolk Cloud	Website Hosting 2026/27	£120.00
BT Group	Village Hall Broadband	£35.94

It was AGREED: That payments totaling £2,908.11 be approved.

The following receipts were also noted:

HMRC	VAT Reclaim 2025/26	£1,733.43
SCC	Locality Funding - Debenham Road Campaign	£378.35
J Hackett	Recorder Advert - Suffolk Gardening Thyme	£30.00
N Lodge	Recorder Advert - Joe Felton Chimney Sweep	£30.00
A.W Service Centre Ltd	Recorder Advert - AW Service Centre	£20.00

e) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

Cllr Mann confirmed that he had checked the relevant documents in relation to the bank reconciliation dated 30th June 2026.

It was AGREED: That the Bank Reconciliation be approved.

f) **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

It was AGREED: That the Budget Monitoring report be noted.

g) **GENERAL RESERVE POLICY**

The Clerk had produced a draft General Reserves Policy, as advised by the last audit, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Stanford asked what value our General Reserve target of 3-12mths of Net Revenue Expenditure would equate to. The Clerk confirmed this as £4-16k based on the 2026/27 budget and as at 30th June 2026 this stood at circa £5k.

IT WAS AGREED: To adopt the policy as drafted

h) **INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT**

The Clerk had produced a draft Internal Control statement, as advised by the last audit, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Stanford believed the external audit section to be unclear as it states something we do not do. The Clerk confirmed this had been left in as if we did tip the threshold for external audit this would then apply.

IT WAS AGREED: To adopt the policy with amended wording that this would not usually apply as we are normally exempt from external audit. **Clerk to amend this section for Chair to sign.**

ES34/26/27 – PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The following planning applications had been received and processed since the last meeting:

Application for prior approval – Agricultural to dwelling - DC/26/02088

Proposal: Change of Use of Buildings on Agricultural Units and former Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses

Location: Building East of Haggars Mead, Forward Green, Earl Stonham, IP14 5JA

The Clerk confirmed that following collation of responses from Councillors a 'No Objection' response had been submitted whilst asking for consideration of comments submitted by nearby residents

Application for listed building consent - DC/26/02445

Proposal: Removal of existing modern floor pavement tiles and lay new flagstone style floor tiles

Location: Water Run Farm, Blacksmiths Lane, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 5ET

The clerk confirmed no objections had been raised by Councillors

ES35/26/27 - PLANNING DECISIONS

There had been no planning decisions received since the last meeting.

ES36/26/27 – PRIDE IN PLACE GRANT

The Clerk confirmed Cllr Budd had been in contact with the Haggar family who approved of our proposal to replace the existing bench to include the transfer of the commemorative plaque. A draft application for the grant together with a comparison of four suppliers had been circulated. The Clerk confirmed Tony Turner had volunteered to remove the existing bench and install the new one on arrival. The Clerk confirmed the bench currently on the recreation ground was supplied by Earth Anchors who were our second cheapest option but only because TDP offered free delivery. Clerk to see if we can have the delivery charge removed with Earth Anchors as we have seen their product firsthand.

IT WAS AGREED: To use the quote for the cheapest supplier for the product and submit the PIP application to cover the cost

ES37/26/27 – LITTERING PLAN

Cllr Cawston confirmed he does not feel a mass litter pick is the correct solution due to the frequency with which litter is dropped. He confirmed he and his wife had adopted the stretch between Beechwood Farm to Church Lane and feels this would be the best approach if we are able to source willing volunteers. This agreement had been made directly with the council who were supplying additional refuse bags for this. **Clerk to investigate whether we are able to source equipment for volunteers under this structure.**

ES38/26/27 – UPDATES

- a) **Speeding** – Cllr Gillett iterated we had already discussed the A140 SID under the Public Forum and Cllr Hicks had provided an update on the Debenham Road campaign
- b) **Footpaths** – None
- c) **Village Hall** – None

ES39/26/27 - MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr Stanford highlighted the War Memorial may need a clean and will arrange to check this.

Cllr Brenig-Jones confirmed the replacement Oak was in situ as believed, albeit unsure how it will survive in the current dry spell.

Cllr Gillett confirmed he had attended a forum for the National Grid Community Fund and would circulate the slides for this. The key points being:

- Fund is £30m divided up as £200k/km of route
- Will be a grant application process with no need to match funding

- All community groups can apply

Cllr Gillett confirmed the trust are looking into suppliers to redo the play area and volunteers had been sought in the last recorder, but none had come forward to date. The Clerk suggested mounting signs at the play area during the summer holidays to target individuals using the area.

Regarding the play area Cllr Brenig-Jones and Budd both feel that the current car park signs are not particularly welcoming and may be excluding families from surrounding areas visiting.

ES40/26/27/27 – DATE OF ANNUAL PARISH AND ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

As Cllr Turner was not present at the meeting it was agreed the Clerk will liaise with her regarding hall availability.

ES41/26/27 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday, 21st September 2026 at 7:00pm

The meeting finished at 20:28pm.

Chair: Dated: