

EARL STONHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at the Village Hall on **Monday 21st September 2026**

Present:

Councillors:	M Gillett (Chair) D Turner S Budd J Barnet-Lamb M Mann H Stanford 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

ES42/26/27 – TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE
None

ES43/26/27 – TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Cllr Stanford declared an interest in item 9d) on the agenda regarding the donation to Earl Stonham Cricket club. Cllr Budd declared an interest in item 9i) regarding the allotment rent review and also item 10a) in relation to a planning application at Leylands Farm.

ES44/26/27 – TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION
None had been received.

ES45/26/27 – TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20th JULY 2026
It was AGREED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2026 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

ES46/26/27 – TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HARDINGHAM
Cllr Hardingham had provided a report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and published on the village website.

Cllr Hardingham talked through the main points being:
Local Government Re-organisation – A lot of work has been carried out to date and this is now 'up in the air' due to the Secretary of State decision to be put on indefinite hold, pending further review. It is looking likely that District Elections will now go ahead in May 2027.
Local Housing – MSDC agreed to introduce a Parish Connection priority for affordable and social rented properties secured via S106 agreements
Financial Assistance for Heat Pumps – Grants of up to £9k available to convert oil/gas systems to heat pumps. Full details available https://switchtogether.co.uk/heat-pumps
Locality Budget – Cllr Hardingham still has funding available and can accept applications up to £3k.

ES47/26/27 – CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLOR
The Clerk had received and circulated one application received for the current vacancy from Sarah Saunders. **IT WAS AGREED:** to co-opt Sarah Saunders to fill the current vacancy.

ES48/26/27 - TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) TO REVIEW THE ACTION TRACKER

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

Website: The .gov.uk domain has been set up and individual emails have been created for Councillors. Cllr Gillett and the Clerk had provided a rough structure to Pear Space to set up and now need to decide on what to transfer. Cllr Stanford agreed to look at the content for the Church pages

Footpath Signs: Cllr Stanford confirmed repair of the two near Chapel Farm prior to the meeting but unsure about the Red House Farm one.

SID post Location on A140: The proposed site has now been agreed. Clerk to email resident that originally raised the request, as they are now able to commence fundraising.

Tree Works: The chosen contractor had been contacted and was due to revert with dates for the work.

Litter: The Clerk had confirmed with Public Realm that they would provide equipment for ad-hoc litter picks. Cllr Hardingham suggested a nominated day works well. Cllr Cawston believes more frequency is required and easy access to equipment. It was agreed to request 6 sets of equipment. **Clerk to action**

Annual Parish Meeting: Cllr Turner had checked hall availability and proposed 24th May 2027 which was agreed by all Councillors.

b) CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk had received a request from TSB in regard to 'Know your Business' requirements. All information received from Councillors has been submitted to TSB to complete the request.

A resident had contacted Cllr Gillett regarding water hydrants in the Parish questioning who was responsible for maintaining. The Clerk had investigated and although they will not divulge the locations, Suffolk Fire and Rescue confirmed there are 32 in our Parish, which were last checked in 2021, so overdue their 3-4 year inspection. These had been added to the list to inspect and Cllr Gillett confirmed he had seen this being carried out. Any works from the inspections are forwarded to Anglian Water to resolve.

A report of Fly tipping on a field along Mill Lane had been received which has since been cleared.

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 31st August 2026 was £10,668.79. General Reserves had dropped below our £4k minimum target at £2,634.47 and the Clerk advised a plan would be needed as part of the next budget process to address this.

A Budget Monitoring report had been circulated prior to the meeting, which was noted and it was added that we have since received the second instalment of £4,726.50 for the precept.

d) TO AUTHORISE PAYMENTS AND NOTE RECEIPTS

The Clerk reported the following payments be authorised: -

SALC	Internal Audit 2025/26	£284.40
Susan Edgar	Clerk Salary July	£432.12
Susan Edgar	Clerk Expenses July	£26.00
BT Group Plc	Broadband for Village Hall	£35.94
Seale Print	Summer Recorder Printing	£190.00

MSDC	Bin Emptying 2026/27	£432.60
Vertas Group Ltd	Grass Cutting 01.07.26-30.09.26	£509.69
Susan Edgar	Clerk Salary August	£432.12
Susan Edgar	Clerk Expenses August	£26.00
ESVH	Hall Hire 20.07.26	£12.00
Suffolk Cloud	Domain Registration & Mailbox .gov.uk	£130.00

It was AGREED: That payments totaling £2,510.87 be approved.

The following receipts were noted:

The Crown, Stowupland	Recorder Advert Delivery	£20.00
ESPC	Savings Interest	£14.28
ESPC	Savings Interest	£14.04

The Clerk had received the annual invoice from Earl Stonham Cricket Club of £450 for grass cutting. This amount had been included and agreed under "Donations" in the budget. Cllr Stanford declared an interest in the item.
IT WAS AGREED: To pay an amount of £450 to Earl Stonham Cricket Club – **Clerk to action**

e) BANK RECONCILIATION

Cllr Mann confirmed that he had checked the relevant documents in relation to the bank reconciliation.

It was AGREED: That the Bank Reconciliation be approved.

f) CLERK'S SALARY – ANNUAL INCREASE

It was AGREED: That the Annual Increase in Clerk's Salary of 3.3% be approved with a backdate to 1st April 2026 - **Clerk to action**

g) INSURANCE RENEWAL

The Clerk reported the insurance renewal was due by 1st October and the renewal had been received from Zurich for £327.00, which was the same price as last year. The cover levels had been checked and are still sufficient. The Clerk previously tried to obtain a quote from CAS for comparison the prior year and had received a response stating they would be unable to quote, as our premium was competitive and they would be unable to match this.

Cllr Gillett asked if the Multicourt was included on the insurance. The Clerk confirmed it had previously been agreed and minuted not to include this. In any case, we still do not currently have a valid lease as the previous one expired some time ago.

It was AGREED: That the insurance be renewed with Zurich – **Clerk to action**

h) PRIDE IN PLACE OFFER

The Clerk confirmed we had been successful in our application for funding to replace the Haggar bench situated on the village green.

It was AGREED: To accept the offer of funding from MSDC **- Clerk to action**

i) ALLOTMENT RENT REVIEW

The Clerk had circulated a spreadsheet prior to the meeting. This detailed existing rents for each plot, ranges for comparative local rents and also a proposed increase based on CPI increases since the last rent review in October 2021.

Cllr Budd had provided a figure for rates per acre, but confirmed there are vast variances within these. The Clerk highlighted that currently, other than the garden allotments, there was no set rate per acre applied across the plots.

It was AGREED: To increase allotment rents in line with CPI and include an annual CPI increase going forward**. Clerk to action**

The Clerk also noted the annual inspections were due which was open to all. Cllr Gillett offered to carry these out with the Clerk with a date TBC.

j) DATA PROTECTION POLICY – COMPLAINTS

The Clerk had drafted and circulated an amendment to the Data Protection Policy to include a section on handling complaints in line with recent changes in guidance.

It was AGREED: To adopt the amended policy as drafted

ES49/26/27 – PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Clerk advised that since the publication of the agenda, a further Planning Application had been received as follows:

Planning Application - DC/26/02846 - Leylands Farm, Middlewood Green, Earl Stonham, IP14 5EY Change of use and associated alterations to an agricultural storage building for use for the production of cosmetics (In association with the existing use of the adjoining Pightle Barn by Batched Ltd).
It was AGREED: There were no objections to the proposal – **Clerk to send response**

ES50/26/27 - PLANNING DECISIONS

The following planning decisions were noted:

Application for Listed Building Consent – DC/26/02445 - Water Run Farm, Blacksmiths Lane, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 5ET Removal of existing modern floor pamment tiles and lay new flagstone style floor tiles **– Granted**

Full Planning Application – DC/25/04793 - Erection of livestock (Pig Rearing) building and associated works including extended concrete pad/walls - Rookery Farm, Fen Lane, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 5EF **– Granted**

ES51/26/27 – REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

Cllr Stanford confirmed the date of the service as 8th November 2026. Cllr Gillett offered to read the Role of Honour and it was agreed to order a wreath to be laid at the same time. Cllr Stanford asked if we could check if Stonham Parva would be sending anyone. **Clerk to action.**

ES52/26/27 - CAROLS ON THE GREEN AND CHRISTMAS TREE

Cllr Gillett stated that he and Tony Turner would arrange the Tree this year. Cllr Gillett is away between 28th November and 5th December so it would need to be coordinated outside of this. Cllr Budd confirmed the Porch trailer would be available to use for collection.

Members briefly discussed the date for Carols on the Green, with a proposed date suggested of Tuesday 22nd December at 6:30pm. Cllr Stanford agreed to contact David Tydeman to see if he was available to play the accordion and Cllr Budd will confirm the WI are available for refreshments.

ES53/26/27 – PUBLIC FORUM

Several residents were in attendance regarding the speed report drafted by Highways for the proposal to reduce speed limits along both Debenham Road and Blacksmiths Lane. Cllr Gillett stated the drafted report was not looking favorable, as most accidents included were deemed down to driver error and only 1 of 14 criteria was confirmed as being met. A resident responded that the group were dismayed with the response given the evidenced case they had prepared. Cllr Hicks believes there is still a case to be made and urged the group to prepare a short and concise summary of their facts to add to the parish council comments when these are drafted. Cllr Hicks will also be offering to meet on site with the Councillor whom the case will be presented to.

ES54/26/27TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HICKS
Cllr Hicks' report had been circulated prior to the meeting and published on the village website.

Cllr Hicks talked through the main points being:

- **Local Government reorganisation** – SCC had campaigned for one governing authority but were of the view once the decision was made for 3 that it just needed to be put into action swiftly. Progress has now been halted as the decision is under review, due to the threat of a judicial review as the decision went against the recommendation of 1 unitary council. All this really gives is more uncertainty and delay to any changes in structure.
- **Energy Efficiency Loans** – Available to Suffolk residents wanting to improve the energy performance of their homes. Funding is available between £2-15k, at a fixed rate of 2.2% over a maximum of 7 years.

Cllr Gillett asked if there was any update on the A1120/A140 junction. Cllr Hicks confirmed the case should be ready by the end of 2026 and likely to involve a new road as the budget would not support the compulsory purchase needed to amend the existing junction.

ES55/26/27 – UPDATES
a) Speeding – Two items had been discussed earlier in the agenda being the SID post location approval for the A140 and the Debenham Road Speed Report
b) Footpaths – Following an approach from a Green Access Officer at SCC it had been highlighted that some of the advertised walks in the Parish required updating for safety reasons. This would also mean updating the leaflets. Cllr Turner volunteered to meet with SCC along with resident Tony Stevens to discuss the next steps.
c) Village Hall – Cllr Turner confirmed new carpet had been fitted in the Clubroom and flooring in the Kitchen and thanked all those that had assisted.

ES56/26/27 - MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL
Cllr Brenig-Jones believes the second Oak planted is unlikely to have survived the recent weather. She will check and report back.

Cllr Stanford believes the War memorial is in need of a clean. **Clerk to investigate funding options for works.**

Cllr Cawston reported an issue with the open drains near Ichiban which he was struggling to report. The Clerk confirmed this can be done online by any individual using the SCC Report It site.

Cllr Gillett commented on some recent verge cutting opposite the Village Hall on the A1120 and thanked the Cricket Club for carrying this out. He also suggested we look at alternatives for cutting the Village Green due to the escalating costs under the current contractor.

ES57/26/27 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 16th November 2026 at 7:00pm

The meeting finished at 8:20pm.

Chair: …… Dated: ……