

GREAT BLAKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL - MINUTES

Minutes of Gt Blakenham Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 9th January 2024 at Parish Rooms.
Present: Chair Cllr Nick Leonard, Vice Chair Cllr Debbie Kemp, Cllr Will Durrant, Karen Grimwood (Parish Clerk), SCC Cllr Chris Chambers, Chinwags representative & 3 GBVH representatives.

1. To receive and approve any apologies for absence. **Cllr Marriott**

2. Declaration of any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests
 - a. Councillor's declaration of interest appropriate to any item on the agenda. -**Cllr Leonard 8b Headway**
 - b. To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interest (if any)
 - c. To grant any requests for dispensations as appropriate.
 - d. Co-option of parish councillor(s) / to sign declaration of acceptance.

3. Public Forum
 - a. To receive the report from the County Councillor –
Cllr Chambers provided an update regarding the Devolution White Paper concerning Town and Parish Councils in Suffolk. He participated in a meeting on January 9, 2025, where a vote was held to determine Suffolk County Council's interest in joining the Devolution Priority Programme. This initiative involves a commitment to implement reorganisation and devolution within a specified timeline, as well as a proposal to delay the May 2025 County Council elections.9 Cllr Chambers is uncomfortable with the lack of elections). The outcome of the meeting was to seek priority consideration from ministers. The subsequent step involves cabinet ministers deciding which councils will be included on the priority list. Should Suffolk be selected for the Devolution Priority Programme, a government-led consultation is anticipated in early 2025.

What is devolution? This briefing outlines two significant aspects of central government policy concerning local governance in Suffolk: devolution and local government reorganisation. Should the government's policy be implemented, it would represent the most substantial alteration to local government structures in Suffolk in over half a century. Devolution would establish a Mayoral Strategic Authority, likely encompassing both Norfolk and Suffolk, with an elected mayor in May 2026 who would oversee devolved funding and authority in key strategic areas such as transportation infrastructure, health enhancement, and emergency services. Local government reorganisation would involve the dissolution of the county, district, and borough councils, replacing them with one or more unitary councils, while the existing town and parish council frameworks would remain unchanged in Suffolk.
 - b. To receive the report from the District Councillor – **See attached report**
 - c. To receive questions from members of the public – **None received**

4. To approve the Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 21st November 2024 – **Approved & Signed**

5. **To note the Clerk's update from previous Meetings.**
 - a. The Parish Rooms & Church thanks for continues support in 2024 – **Noted**
 - b. Thank you from Gipping River Trust for donation – **Noted**

6. **Planning**
 - a. To consider the following planning applications. – *None received*
 - b. To note any planning determinations. – *None received*

7. **Growth, Highways, and Infrastructure** – *None received*

Signed.......... Date.....13/2/2025.....¹

8. Governance

- a. Precept agreement/signing – **Precept Approved and signed. Clerk to submit – see attached**
- b. Donation requests – Headway, CAB, Chinwags, EAAA, Claydon girls football team

Chinwags – Representative Jenny Day presenting Chinwags Communities Together, located in Stowmarket, hosts a FREE CommuniTEA Chinwag at the Great Blakenham Village Hall every month to combat social isolation and loneliness among individuals aged 60 and over. They create a welcoming environment filled with various activities, entertainment, and, of course, refreshments like cake and fruit! With around 30 attendees each month, it's clear there's a strong demand for this initiative. Dedicated staff and volunteers help make this possible. Currently funded by Mid-Suffolk Council, this support will end in April 2025. Jenny the representative at the meeting is seeking additional funding to sustain the group for another year if possible – **Donation of £1000 approved.**

Headway Suffolk - Headway Suffolk is a community charity dedicated to providing rehabilitation, support, and care for individuals affected by acquired brain injuries, strokes, dementia, multiple sclerosis, and other neurological conditions.- **Donation of £500 approved. Councillor Leonard was not involved in the approval process due to him declaring an interest.**

East Anglian Air Ambulance - Dedicated to enhancing and delivering life-saving services, offering advanced pre-hospital medical care to those who are critically ill or injured in our community, available around the clock by both air and road during some of the most challenging moments in our lives. – **Donation of £500 approved.**

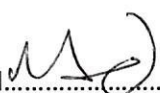
Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk has continued to offer vital support to the residents of Great Blakenham, tackling important challenges like debt, financial literacy, energy, employment, housing, benefits, consumer rights, legal issues, family matters, health, and education. They have also been organizing food parcels for those in need. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis has made our services increasingly essential. We are dedicated to providing advice through various methods, including phone, email, and a growing number of in-person consultations. Over the past year, Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk assisted 39 individuals in Great Blakenham with a total of 488 issues, with many clients facing multiple challenges throughout the year - **Donation of £500 approved**

Claydon Girls Football Team – The team were hoping to raise £600 so that they can send under 10s girls team to play on the pitch at Portman Road – **Informed that they had achieved target amount on their JustGiving page. Advised if need further funding going forward to contact the clerk.**

- c. Three mobile phone contract – **The annual SIM contract for clerks' phones has been extended for another year at a monthly rate of £13.00, reflecting a 13p increase per month.**
- d. Visit to Gipping Valley Bowls Club – **The club has extended an invitation to councillors to visit and observe the progress of the pavilion construction, as well as to understand how the council's donation is being utilised. Clerk to contact and arrange.**

9 Allotments

- a. Update on licence /signing - **In November 2024, the solicitors representing the landowner of the allotment site indicated that negotiations or a license with an expiration date of October 10, 2026, needed to commence. If the parish council did not proceed, the landowner would require the land to be vacated. The Councillors unanimously agreed to sign the license to ensure the land's continued use. Councillors Durrant and Leonard made some amendments to the proposed license, which the solicitor subsequently accepted. The Councillors have signed the license and returned it for the landowner's signature, with a copy pending receipt. The Clerk to inform the current plot owners of these developments.**

Signed.......... Date.....13/2/2025..... 2

- b. Discuss offer of alternative site - **An alternative parcel of land located across the road from the existing allotment site has been offered from the landowner, but it was agreed to reject the offer due to frequent flooding and inadequate access for vehicles and parking. The clerk will inform the land owners solicitors.**

10. Village Maintenance

- a. Discuss Tender Contracts – **Not all the councillors had managed to review the draft contracts submitted by the clerk. Agreed to defer until next meeting.**

11. Churchyard and Cemetery – No updates

12. Training and Development for Councillors and Clerk - No requests received

13. Finance

- a. To consider approving and making the following payments: **Approved**

Gipping Valley Bowls Club	B	Plastering, boarding and insulation - Inv pro forma 2494 Wall2wall Plastering	£13,626.00	LGA 1972 s111
Gipping Valley Bowls Club	B	AB Electrical – proforma invoice 1871	£9360.00	LGA 1972 s111
Payroll	B	Ending 31.12.2024	£1,741.90	LGA 1972 s111
HMRC	B	P30 Ending 05.01.2025	£353.50	LGA 1972 s111
Nest	DD	Month 9 Ending 31.12.2024	£126.90	LGA 1972 s111
EE/K Grimwood	B	WIFI/mobile reimbursement	£28.04	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Maintenance/street cleaning as per tender Inv	£2021.17	LGA 1972 s111
Suffolk.cloud	B	Hosting & supporting website 2025/005	£120.00	LGA 1972 s111

- a. Payments outside of meeting December 2024

Shades	B	Maintenance/street cleaning as per tender Inv 2584, 2585, 2586	£1959.17	LGA 1972 s111
Payroll	B	Ending 30.11.2024	£958.04	LGA 1972 s111
EE/WIFI	B	Wifi/Mobile reimbursement	£28.04	LGA 1972 s111
Three((H3G)	DD	Clerk Mobile	£11.87	LGA 1972 s111
Nest	DD	Pension month 8 ending 30.11.2024	£41.08	LGA 1972 s111
Lloyds Bank	DD	Multipay Card – Thompson Morgan	£88.95	LGA 1972 s111
Lloyds Bank	DD	Monthly card fee	£3.00	LGA 1972 s111
Unity Trust	DD	Monthly Bank fees	£6.00	LGA 1972 s111

- c. Money Received

Unity Trust bank	Credit interest 31.12.2024	£64.57
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Bank Balance @ 30.11.2024

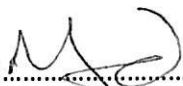
Unity Trust Current Account Balance - £208,424.29

Unity Trust Saver Account Balance - £9,641.73

Bank Balance @ 31.12.2024

Unity Trust Current Account Balance - £205,328.14

Unity Trust Saver Account Balance - £9,706.30

Signed.......... Date.....3.12.2025³.....

14. Reports -To receive reports from Councillors assigned to the following:

a. Village Hall –

Three representatives from the Gt Blakenham village hall committee (GBVH) attended the meeting to provide updates on progress thus far and to address any concerns, particularly regarding the solar panel proposal from Port One.

The GBVH acknowledges that the solar panel proposal would likely result in lower electricity costs for the hall; however, they remain hesitant to move forward with the agreement due to ongoing issues with MSDC and Port One representatives, who have not supplied sufficient information regarding the advantages of the offer. They believe that thorough due diligence is necessary before making a commitment. An invitation has been extended to the relevant parties to attend their upcoming meeting, allowing for questions to be addressed.

It was advised that several tasks relating to the sustainability report have been completed. While they believe the roof is waterproof, they agreed that having it surveyed would be helpful to confirm its suitability for solar panels and any further work outlined in the sustainability report, e.g. guttering.

The community has provided positive feedback regarding the events organised over the past year e.g. Christmas party. This response has highlighted the need for such initiatives to continue, particularly for the less affluent members of the community. This success motivates them to continue helping the community.

The bar /events and clubs are generating positive financial outcomes, leading to a much improved bank balance. They hope to use some of this bank balance to improve the CCTV at the hall amongst other things.

They still have big challenges in recruiting additional trustees and volunteers to help with the hall especially in regards to help with applying for grants and donations.

The PC recognises the dedication and improvements made to the hall under the new committee's leadership including club relationships. They fully support the village hall's future and have allocated funds to assist with potential requests going forward. As always, requests for support should include all relevant information, like quotes and any additional funding they may have secured, and must be submitted to the clerk prior to the meeting. This allows councillors to make informed decisions regarding approval. Councillors have asked for a list and potential photographic evidence of the work completed for their records. Additionally, they would like to receive a copy of the roof report upon its completion. PC has confirmed that they are currently unable to provide a councillor as a trustee for the committee, but they are optimistic that this situation may improve in the future. They also request that all communications be directed through the clerk.

15. Correspondence

None received

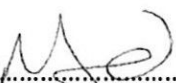
16. Future meetings

a. To note invitation for items to be considered in the next meeting.

b. To note the date of the next scheduled Meeting on **13th February 2025** and any items for the agenda.

Karen Grimwood - Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Date: 10/01/2025

Signed  Date 3/2/2025 ⁴

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT JANUARY 2025

Amber Cold Weather Alert

Parts of Suffolk woke up to wintry scenes on the morning of Sunday 5th January. Snowfall was seen in most parts of the county with it settling on roads and pavements during the early hours and a serious amber cold weather alert was issued by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Met Office. The amber alert, which is the second most serious alert issued by the UKHSA, means the forecast cold weather is expected to impact health and social care services. The alert was extended at the weekend until 12pm on Wednesday, January 8. The UKHSA is advising people to keep their homes to at least 18C and keeping windows and doors closed to reduce drafts.

Councils across the county activated Severe Weather Protocols (SWEPs) to help rough sleepers as temperatures drop below zero. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils urged people to report anyone sleeping in their car, empty buildings or the open so that the rough sleeper outreach team could find them and offer support or assistance.

Devolution

The English Devolution White Paper was published on 16th December 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

The White Paper sets out the Government's support for unitary councils and it will be inviting reorganisation proposals from two-tier areas such as those in Suffolk. However, it gives no specific proposals for Suffolk.

It says it would expect any new unitary councils to have a population of 500,000 or more, but there may be exceptions. There is no timetable, but it expects some unitary councils to be created in this parliament.

The Government also makes it clear that it sees Mayoral authorities being introduced nationwide, with additional devolved powers around infrastructure and development projects, housing, transport and skills.

The role of district, town and parish councils

According to the paper, in areas with two tiers of local government, before moving to a single tier, the government will establish Combined County Authorities but not Combined Authorities. In those cases, while districts will not be constituent members, the government expects effective levels of collaboration to be demonstrated between constituent members and district councils, especially where the district council covers the primary city or economy in that county.

It says it also wants to rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice.

New government housing targets

What has changed?

In December, the Government announced new housing requirements for every District and Borough Council in the country. These increased the housing requirement in Mid Suffolk up to 734 (up 37%). To ensure the housing requirement can be met, councils must demonstrate there is a 'housing land supply' for the next five years. This is assessed every year, and the figures are published alongside the Annual Monitoring Report. Whilst the current housing

land supply is determined against the adopted Joint Local Plan requirement of 535 homes for Mid Suffolk, the Council wants to ensure that we give our communities confidence by maintaining a plan-led approach to decision making whilst acting promptly to respond to the Government’s new policy and deliver what is expected of us.

What does this mean for Mid Suffolk’s Joint Local Plan?

The Council met with the Planning Inspectorate just before Christmas and the Joint Local Plan Member Cross Party Working Group met recently. It is concluded that there will be a formal review of the Joint Local Plan, building on the work that has already taken place. This work will be considered during the review, but it is unavoidable that the council will have to gather further evidence and carry out additional engagement ahead of the formal review process. If the Council can’t demonstrate a five-year land supply there is a risk that national planning policies would start to take priority over the Joint Local Plan.

A revised timetable, our Local Development Scheme, will be published no later than March on our websites following agreement at meetings of the Councils.

In the meantime, Part One of the Joint Local Plan remains in place and will continue to carry statutory weight when planning decisions are made in Districts, alongside Neighbourhood Plans and national policy. Our websites will continue to be updated with the latest information at www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/jointlocalplan.

A Press Release is about to be issued which describes the housing supply over the last five years:

Year	Mid Suffolk		Babergh	
	Housing requirement	Housing completions	Housing requirement	Housing completions
2023/24	535	1,014	416	604
2022/23	534	1,234	420	624
2021/22	529	862	417	758
2020/21	513	672	403	402
2019/20	535	451	416	293

It can be seen that Mid Suffolk have exceeded their housing requirement in the last few years.

Changes to fast-track planning approval process

On 9th December the government announced that planning decisions are set to be fast-tracked as part of new measures set out to increase economic growth and housebuilding:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-overhaul-of-planning-committees-to-get-britain-building>

Under new plans to modernise the planning approval process, applications that comply with local development plans could bypass planning committees to help tackle delays.

The measures would see a national scheme of delegation introduced, the creation of streamlined committees for strategic development and mandatory training for planning committee members. *(Note that in Mid Suffolk District Council there is already extensive training for planning committee members which is updated on an ongoing basis).*

Under the new plans, local planning officers will also have an enhanced decision-making role to implement agreed planning policy.

There will be new immediate mandatory housing targets for councils to increase housebuilding. While remaining committed to a brownfield first approach, the updated National Planning Policy Framework will require councils to review their greenbelt boundaries.

For any enquiries about this working paper, please contact: planningcommittees@communities.gov.uk

Plan for Change:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-change>

New council powers to increase housebuilding and infrastructure

On 19th December, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government set out proposals to empower councils to buy cheaper land through the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders and build homes and infrastructure as part of the government's Plan for Change.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-council-powers-to-boost-housebuilding-and-infrastructure>

The proposed changes mean councils, Mayoral Combined Authorities and other public bodies, including Homes England, will be able to directly take control of vacant and derelict land from landowners paying a fair price and not inflated 'hope value' costs, where they are delivering in the public interest.

The reforms expand existing legislation allowing 'hope value' to be removed in more circumstances where social and affordable housing is being built, accelerating housebuilding.

The consultation on Compulsory Purchase Process and Compensation Reforms will be open for eight weeks and closed on 13 February 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/compulsory-purchase-process-and-compensation-reforms>

Funding to prevent homelessness and help rough sleepers off the streets

On 18th December) the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced almost £1 billion of funding for councils to help prevent families from becoming homelessness and to help rough sleepers off the streets.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/largest-ever-cash-boost-to-turn-the-tide-on-homelessness>

This includes £633 million for councils through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, to help prevent homelessness before it happens, reduce reliance on temporary accommodation and target resources where it is needed most.

Reminder: Reforms to the Right to Buy consultation

On 20 November, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government launched a consultation seeking views on how the Right to Buy should be reformed to deliver a fairer and more sustainable scheme.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-the-right-to-buy/reforming-the-right-to-buy>

The consultation follows the reduction in maximum Right to Buy cash discounts announced in the Autumn Budget 2024

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-11-20/hcws238>

The consultation closes on 15 January 2025. If you have any questions, please email:

righttobuy.consultation@communities.gov.uk.

New Business Growth Service announced

On 7 December, the government announced [a new service that will support businesses to grow and thrive](#).

The Business Growth Service will include a revamped web offer, launching in the first half of 2025. It will be developed and will work in partnership with small businesses, local and devolved governments in the UK, with locally led delivery at its core, to ensure the service provides the information and resources smaller firms need from the government.

Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Consultation: Reforms to The Bathing Water Regulations 2013 – closes soon

On 12 November, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Welsh Government launched a consultation inviting people to share their views on modernising bathing water regulations.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-the-bathing-water-regulations-2013>

Defra and the Welsh Government are seeking views on:

- The removal of automatic de-designation after five years of 'poor' water quality
- Changes to the designation criteria of bathing sites
- Removing the fixed dates of the bathing season from regulations

The consultation closes on 23 December. Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Public health update

Government accepts advice on spring 2025 COVID-19 vaccination programme

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that the following groups should be offered COVID-19 vaccination in spring 2025:

- adults aged 75 years and over
- residents in a care home for older adults
- individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed

Flu and COVID-19 surveillance report - Latest update 3rd January 2025

This report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-report-published>) brings together the latest surveillance data, along with the latest public health advice for COVID-19, flu and Respiratory Syncytial Virus RSV.

In week 52:

- COVID-19 activity decreased across most indicators and was at baseline activity levels
- Influenza activity increased across most indicators and was at high activity levels

- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) activity decreased across most indicators and was circulating at low levels of activity

Government announces COVID-19 Day of Reflection 2025

The government has confirmed that a COVID-19 Day of Reflection will take place on 9 March 2025 to remember the pandemic and its impact on communities.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-covid-19-day-of-reflection-2025>.

To mark the fifth anniversary of the pandemic, people in the UK are invited to come together to remember and reflect on this period of our history as well as their own experiences.

The day will be an opportunity for the public to remember and commemorate those who lost their lives during the pandemic, reflect on the sacrifices made and the impact on our daily lives, and pay tribute to the work of health and social care staff, frontline workers, researchers and all those who volunteered and showed acts of kindness during this unprecedented time.

NHS England's Pharmacy First campaign

NHS England has produced a campaign toolkit to help councils encourage their audiences to visit their community pharmacy. The campaign aims to increase the public's awareness of the breadth of support community pharmacists can offer to patients. It focuses on the Pharmacy First service that allows pharmacists to provide some prescription medicine for seven common conditions, if needed, without the need to see a GP or prescription, i.e.

- Earache
- Impetigo
- Insect Bite
- Shingles
- Sinusitis
- Sore Throat
- Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Councils would have to register for an account to get the resources.

<https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-primary-care/think-pharmacy-first/>

*Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
07/01/2025*