

Minutes of Barningham Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7:00pm in Barningham Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs J Chalmers (Chairman), C Hammond, Y Martin, L Hebert, S Baker & WSDC Cllr Bull.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted by the Councillors from N Martineau, R Baxter & SCC Cllr J Spicer.

### **2. Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

2.1 To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda. None.

2.2 To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests. None.

2.3 To grant dispensations as appropriate under Section 33 of the Localism Act. N/A.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting for Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025 were agreed and approved as a correct record.

### **4. Meeting Open to the Public.** 1 members of the public present.

The resident present thanked the Parish Council for the work they have been doing to secure a bus service for the village, the efforts being made are very much appreciated.

### **5. Report from Suffolk County Councillor (SCC): J Spicer**

Cllr Spicer was unable to attend the meeting but reported:

The speeding data, shared by Cllr Chalmers, is really quite encouraging and shows the effectiveness of the VAS devices. Cllr Spicer asked if we had any previous data from, say, 3-4 years ago for comparison? Cllr Spicer agreed to grant £2k towards another device and asked for a formal request ASAP as time is running out for an official request to be submitted. The Clerk confirmed that a formal request has been submitted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Cllr Spicer has sent the Clerk updates on local government “reform” and the proposed new combined authority, a summary of this is shown below. –. One council for Suffolk would make delivering public services simpler, cheaper and quicker, and better meet the needs of residents and businesses, county leaders have said today. Following a recent government announcement that Suffolk’s county, district and borough councils will be replaced with a single-tier system, Suffolk County Council argues that consolidating all services under one unitary authority is the only effective way to deliver against the government’s criteria for local government reform. The move would see all council services, such as waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, highways maintenance, leisure, school placements and travel and street cleaning, all provided by one authority - rather than the six that currently exist in Suffolk. Bringing together district, borough and county council functions is expected to reduce duplication, lower administrative costs and ensure a more coordinated and cost-effective approach to delivering essential services. The council warns that splitting services among multiple bodies would force the duplication of essential functions - such as social care, highways maintenance and schools - currently managed at a county level.

The key benefits of one council are:

**Simpler for residents** – one council would make it easier to understand and contact local government

**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

**Better alignment of services** – since everything is under one roof, services can be more easily coordinated, creating opportunities for improve services for residents

**More efficient decision-making** – with just one council, decisions can be made more quickly

**Stronger leadership** – a single, visible and accountable body providing a clear strategic voice for Suffolk.

The council will submit its initial proposal to the government by 21 March, with a more detailed business case to follow later in the year.

The government will then undertake a public consultation.

Cllr Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said: "The financial benefits of unitary local government are clear. By cutting unnecessary bureaucracy, the new council – whoever may serve on it – will have more money to invest in frontline public services, ensuring better value for taxpayers.

"But reorganisation must go beyond financial savings. It must also deliver greater accountability, speed up decision-making and lead to better outcomes for local communities. There is huge opportunity in pulling together services currently separated across the district, borough and county councils – such as housing and social care.

"If the government is serious about delivering savings, efficiencies, better outcomes for residents and financially sustainable local government, then there is only one answer - one council for Suffolk. Moreover, it is the only model that meets their criteria of serving over 500,000 people.

"One council for Suffolk will provide clear leadership, simplify access to services and eliminate the confusion of navigating multiple councils. Carving the county in two or three – as has been suggested - would defeat the purpose."

The government's plans will also see the election of a mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk in May 2026, who would take control over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, economic development, health improvement and blue light services – along with devolved government funding to deliver positive change.

Cllr Spicer has been assured that Bardwell Road flooding is still on a "watch" list. The speed counter for Coney Weston Road has not been ordered yet as Cllr Spicer needs to seek further guidance from our Community Liaison Engineer, Andrew Moore.

## **6. Report from West Suffolk District Councillor (WSDC): C Bull**

To include any update on works to Old Hall.

At the time of the meeting a formal planning application had not been received from the resident of Old Hall, Coney Weston Road. Cllr Bull will continue to pursue this matter. **Action Cllr Bull**

Cllr Bull offered to pay the balance of the purchase price, for a new VAS after Cllrs Spicers grant has been taken into account. In addition to the report from Cllr Spicer above, Cllr Bull gave the following update from West Suffolk Council. West Suffolk District Council are still in discussion about their preferred option regarding the local government reorganisation. They will submit their response by the March 21<sup>st</sup> deadline. More information about this will be available after this date. It was unclear what impact this reorganisation will have on Parish Councils. The whole situation is moving very quickly.

## **7. Chairman's Reports**

7.1 To receive any update from the Support our Buses project.

A meeting was held at the beginning of February. At this meeting the final timetables were signed off and, with thanks to some local residents, were delivered ahead of the 24<sup>th</sup> February start date. The 73 route has generally been well received, and the timetable allows more time in Bury than previously. Unfortunately, the timetable for the 73a, students' bus has been experiencing issues. This is mainly due to the fact that the agreed timetable does not allow enough time to travel the route. The consequence of this being that the bus is arriving at least 15 minutes late every day to school. This is clearly a source of anxiety for the students who are not enabled sufficient time to get themselves organised ahead of the start of lessons. The bus is also reported as being overcrowded on numerous occasions. These matters have been brought to the attention of the bus operator and Support our Buses group. At the time of the meeting, we were being informed that the timetable could not be changed until September. The Councillors all agreed that this was not good enough and that they supported Cllr Chalmers in trying to address this as a matter of urgency. Cllr Chalmers will continue to work on this, with the support of the Councillors. The next

Support our Buses meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April, in Barningham Village Hall. Cllr Chalmers and the Clerk will attend.

**Action Cllr Chalmers/Clerk**

## **8.Clerk's Report**

8.1 To consider adoption of Grant Policy for the Parish Council.

Following the inclusion of the suggestions made at the previous meeting, this document was approved and adopted. The Clerk will ensure a copy is made available on the website.

**Action Clerk**

8.2 To discuss options for defibrillator training.

The Clerk has sent a request to the Community Heartbeat Trust for cost and availability of a defibrillator training session. At the time of the meeting no response had been received. It was suggested that this was something that may be able to be held at The Royal George. The Clerk will continue to pursue this matter.

**Action Clerk**

## **9. Finance**

9.1 The following accounts were approved for payment/noted.

Administration	Payment	various	£2,539.59
interest	Receipt	Barclays	£94.37
Clothing bank	Receipt	Alford storage	£20.00
Cemetery box & key	Payment	Jan Chalmers	£28.79

The additional accounts check was carried out by Cllr Hebert at the meeting.

9.2 Bank reconciliation, schedule of payments, and budget report.

The Clerk provided the Councillors with a bank reconciliation, budget report and schedule of payments for information.

Audit arrangements to year end 2025 and to agree letter of engagement.

It was agreed that Cllr Chalmers will carry out the internal audit review.

**Action Cllr Chalmers**

It was agreed to appoint SALC as the internal auditor for the period 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025. The price for this will be £282 plus VAT. The Clerk will make the necessary arrangements regarding this.

**Action Clerk**

## **10.Village Matters**

10.1 To receive any update on VAS, to include agreement to purchase new device.

The requests for funding have been submitted to SCC and WSC and have been successful. It was therefore agreed to go ahead with the purchase of a new, solar powered device. This device would cost in the region of £3060. It is proposed that the new device is situated on Hopton Road. As the device is supported by solar power, it should need its batteries changing less frequently, which is of a benefit to the person who manages the devices. The old device will, temporarily, be positioned in Mill Road, in a bid to collect some data from there. Unfortunately, there is not a suitable position for a permanent post to be erected there and none of the current posts fit the criteria for collecting data that can be used for prosecution. Eventually the device, currently at Hopton Road, will replace the one at the shop, as, due to its age, this device is unable to perform as well as the newer models.

**Action Clerk**

10.2 To discuss option for new VAS post Hepworth Road.

The Clerk has written again to two residents, on who's verge the post could potentially be placed. At the time of the meeting, no response has been received. We cannot move forward until this permission has been granted. In the meantime, it was agreed that we should discuss, with Cllr Spicer, the options for additional road markings, for instance roundels or dragons' teeth, which might help with traffic calming.

**Action Clerk**

10.3 To receive any update on grit bin for Bardwell Road.

This matter is still in hand with Cllr Spicer.

**Action Cllr Spicer**

10.4 to confirm details for annual Keep Barningham Beautiful event.

The date was confirmed as 29<sup>th</sup> March 10am -12 noon for the Keep Barningham Beautiful event. The Clerk has prepared some posters for display and will organise the refreshments on the day. It was agreed that the litter picking equipment will be delivered to Cllr Chalmers house.

**Action Clerk**

10.5 To consider options for traffic calming, Coney Weston Road.

As noted under item 5, this matter is in hand with Cllr Spicer. It was agreed that we would like to look at the option to move the 30ph speed restriction, back to the bends, by Hall cottage.

**Action Cllr Spicer**

10.6 To discuss concerns raised over lorries damaging verges in the village.

Concerns have been raised about lorries mounting the verges and causing damage particularly in Coney Weston Road. It was reported that most of the damage was being caused by local lorries, coming out of Knettishall. It was agreed that we would monitor the situation.

**Action All**

10.6 To receive any report from Barningham Primary School.

No report had been received but it was noted that the school have recently been awarded a 'good' Ofsted report, which was really nice to hear.

10.7 To receive any report from the Village Hall.

The Village Hall held another successful Fish and Chip, Bingo Night, which was well attended. They will be holding their AGM in May.

**11.Disability Audit 11.1** To receive any update on progress.

This is in hand with Cllrs Baker and Martin.

**12.Neighbourhood Plan 12.1** To receive any update.

There is no update this month as we are waiting for West Suffolk Council to complete their current consultation.

### **13. Planning (to include any applications/decisions received since the agenda was posted)**

13.1 West Suffolk Local Plan, Main Modifications Consultation

The consultation is limited to the legality and soundness of the main modifications. It does not offer the opportunity to repeat or raise further representations on other parts of the plan or seek wider changes. The Parish council had no comments to make.

### **14. Aggies Piece**

14.1 To agree purchase of seeds for bird feeders at Aggies Piece.

At the last meeting it was proposed that we agree an amount, of up to £100 towards bird feed for Aggies Piece. As this had not been included as an agenda item for this meeting, the Parish Council were not permitted to pass a resolution on this. It was therefore agreed to include this as an agenda item for this meeting. Following further discussion, it was not clear if the Councillors felt that this was the best use of our funds. Bearing this in mind, and mindful to the fact that two members of the Council were not present, one of whom may be able to provide clarity as to if it would be beneficial to the wildlife to supplement the birds feed, it was agreed to postpone the discussion and decision until the next meeting.

**Action Clerk**

### **15.Caretaker's Report**

15.1 To receive any update from the Caretaker

The Caretaker is doing a really good job. He has asked about doing some work to replace some damaged equipment on the Cricket Meadow. It was agreed that, if there are sufficient funds available in our Hags fund, he would be able to do this work as replacement parts are required. The Clerk will check the status of the fund. He has also suggested removing one of the bins in the layby, outside the school, as it is surplus to requirements, and unfortunately seems to attract a

considerable amount of fly tipped waste. The councillors were happy for this to be removed.

**Action Clerk**

**16.Play Area/Cricket Meadow**

16.1 To receive any update.

16.2 To confirm works to be undertaken to hedges at Cricket Meadow.

The contractor has been in discussion with the adjacent landowners about works agreed to cut back the hedges around the Cricket Meadow. It was agreed that this work will be put on hold until the end of the bird nesting season.

16.3 To discuss poster to encourage residents to clear up after their dogs on the Cricket Meadow.

It would appear that the Dogs Trust no longer do the posters we have had previously. The Clerk has been in contact with West Suffolk Council, and they have said they can provide some posters free of charge. The Clerk is making arrangements to receive these.

**Action Clerk**

**17.Churchyard/Cemetery**

17.1 To note further graffiti at the Church.

Very disappointingly, there has been further vandalism at the Church. The Clerk will contact the Church about the Parish Councils continued involvement in its removal.

**Action Clerk**

**18.Biodiversity and Environment**

18.1 To receive any update from Biodiversity and Environment group.

This matter is in hand.

**19.Councillors Reports and Items for Future Agenda**

There were no additional reports or requests.

**20.Correspondence for Information**

There was no additional correspondence for consideration.

**21.Date of Next Meeting.** The date of the next meeting was confirmed, as a week later than normal, to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 7.00pm Barningham Village Hall

**22.Exclusion of the Public and Press To consider the exclusion of the public and press in the public interest for the consideration of the following items:**

22.1 Personnel Issues. None

22.2 Legal Issues. None.

**8.30 PM meeting close.**