

LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING IN THE VILLAGE HALL HELD ON

Monday, 3rd March 2025 7.15 pm

Present:

Cllr John Ross (Chairman)
Cllr Derek Dickerson
Cllr John Parrish
Cllr Neil Downing
Cllr C Yeo
Cllr A Wignall
Parish Clerk Angie Buggs
Cllr Patti Mulcahy Suffolk County Council
6 members of the public

VILLAGE FORUM

An opportunity for residents to give comments on any issues on the agenda. (As per standing orders max 15 minutes unless otherwise directed by the Chairman, a member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes).

A resident asked about the latest position regarding the trees in Pilots Way. The Chairman said this item cannot be discussed whilst there is an on-going investigation.

A resident asked why the funds in the Parish Council current account had not been transferred to the deposit account. This is due to the Parish Council trying to open a new account with NatWest which is still on-going. It was agreed that Cllr C Yeo and the Clerk would try to move this forward. **Action: Clerk / Cllr C Yeo**

County Councillor's Report Cllr Patti Mulcahy Suffolk County Council – written/verbal report. A copy is appended in the minute book.

District Councillors' Report Cllr Mike Ninnmey East Suffolk Council / Cllr Lee Reeves East Suffolk Council – written report. A copy is appended in the minute book.

116.25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Lee Reeves and Cllr Mike Ninnmey.

117.25 CODE OF CONDUCT & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

118.25 TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 13th JANUARY 2025

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 13th January 2025 which had previously been circulated, were approved, and signed as a true record by Cllr J Ross (Chairman).

119.25 MATTERS TO REPORT FROM THE LATEST MINUTES (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

99.24 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE THE ASSET REGISTER

Deletion of data on the old Parish Council laptop.

Cllr N Downing agreed to delete the data on the obsolete laptop before disposal.. **Action: Cllr J Parrish / Cllr N Downing**

120.25 FINANCE

a. Income

None

b. Expenditure

Mrs A J Buggs Salary & Expenses January / February 2025	£841.34
Seale Printers Newsletter	£150.00
Seale Printers Newsletter	£114.00
Levington VH PC Meetings + WR	£725.00
Louise Overbury Dog Bags	£16.39
Helen Kingston-Ross WR Refreshments (£2.01 underpaid due to calculation error to be corrected when next invoice received.)	£44.45
Ann Wignall Flag and Lantern of Peace	£179.17

Cllr J Ross proposed, seconded Cllr D Dickerson that the above expenditure is approved – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

c. Bank Balances

Current Account as at 31 st January 2025	£24,548.29
Deposit Account as at 31 st January 2025	£9,073.76

The Parish Council noted the balances as at the 31st January 2025 for both the Community Account and the Premium Account.

d. To note the reduction in cost for the gov.uk domain

The Parish Council noted the reduction in the cost of the gov.uk domain by £88.00 over 2 years.

e. To discuss appointment of Internal Auditor 2024/2025

The Clerk reported that Trevor Brown had been the Parish Council's Auditor since 2019 and provided sound advice and support. Cllr J Ross proposed, seconded Cllr D Dickerson that Mr Trevor Brown be appointed as Internal Auditor for 2024/2025 – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

121.25 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE THE FORMAT OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025

The Annual Parish Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 21st May 2025.

At the Parish Council meeting in January councillors agreed that the Parish Council would organise the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting along the following lines.

- A celebration to say "Thank You" to the village organisations.
- A Joint venture by the Parish Council and the Church.
- Village organisations should talk about what they envisaged for the future year.
- A Cheese and Wine Evening.

Cllr J Ross said that he had discussed with Margaret Angus the concept of a joint meeting with the Church but for various reasons this is not viable; however, Margaret has offered to donate wine to the Annual Parish Meeting. **Action: Clerk**

The Parish Council discounted the idea of having a guest speaker and agreed that the evening should be very informal. Various local groups should be encouraged to talk about what they are planning for next year. It was also suggested that the meeting would be an opportunity for residents to raise with the Parish Council important things affecting the village.

Councillors discussed the food element of the food and wine. Cllr J Parrish proposed that the Parish Council allocate £200 to cover food, soft drinks, paper plates etc, seconded Cllr A Wignall – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

In addition to the meeting being chaired by the Chairman of the Parish Council need to arrange the following:

1. Flyer to be printed and distributed to inform residents of the programme of events.
2. Cheese and food to be purchased.
3. The Village Hall to be prepared and subsequently tidied after the meeting.
4. Invitations to be sent to various village groups asking them to talk about their plans for next year.
5. Appropriate music to be played.

Action: Clerk / All councillors

122.25 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE THE CELEBRATION ARRANGEMENTS TO MARK VE DAY 80 – 8TH MAY 2025

Cllr A Wignall reported that the following had been organised.

1. Levington and Stratton Hall have been registered with the Pageant Master Bruno Peek notifying him that a celebration will take place on Thursday, 8th May 2025.
2. A Lamp of Peace has been purchased.
3. A commemorative flag has been purchased and will be flown on St Peter's Church Mast from 9 am on the 8th May 2025.

It is anticipated that various displays will be available to view in the Village Hall. Parish Councillors volunteered to be available in the Village Hall for the 9.5 hours when it is open. There will also be a cake competition. It was agreed that the Village Hall would be open from 12 pm to 9.30 pm. The Beacon and Lamp Lights of Peace will be lit 9.30 pm. Cllr C Yeo volunteered to light the Beacon. **Action: Cllr C Yeo**

Plan for the Day

9.00 am	Raise VE Day Flag
12 pm – 9.30 pm	Village Hall. Displays relating to WW11 and VE day prepared by Village Recorder Louise Mann, Village Organisations and a celebration cake competition.
6.30 pm onwards	Ringing of the Church Bells to celebrate Peace. Picnics on Church Field

9.30 pm

Lighting of the Beacon and the Lamp of Peace by Cllr C Yeo.

Costs

Village Hall	£100.00
Commemorative Flag	£120.67
Lamp of Peace	£58.50
Sound System	£0.00
Total Cost	£279.17

VE Day Booklets to be printed on the Parish Council printer. **Action: Clerk**

123.25 TO AGREE THE NEXT PRIORITY ITEM IN THE 4-YEAR PLAN AND CONSIDER WHETHER TO INCLUDE 20 MPH SPEED LIMITS

Cllr J Ross reported that the 4-year Plan was adopted by the Parish Council in January 2024, created from a survey of residents in October 2023. It was intended to provide the Parish Council with a mandate to consider items identified by residents in a collective consultation. These are items to consider secondary to the core responsibilities of the Parish Council.

It was agreed that the following two items are completed and can be closed.

- Dog Waste
- Management of Church Field

The following 3 items are currently open.

- Emergency Plan. Cllr N Downing (Lead Councillor) reported that the document has been sent to Suffolk County Council for approval. **Action: Cllr N Downing**
- Website. Cllr N Downing agreed to act as Lead Councillor. Cllr J Ross reported that the Parish Council section of the website is complete. However, training and development of the local organisations' pages were still to be developed. It was agreed to organise training with OneSuffolk. **Action: Cllr N Downing**
- Flooding. Lead Councillor Cllr J Parrish.

It was agreed that these items should remain open.

The following 2 items are currently awaiting consideration.

- Speeding – Councillor noted the change of position of Suffolk Police in relation to enforcement of 20 mph speed limits. Councillors agreed to close this item.
- ANPR Camera – Councillors agreed to close this item.

Councillors agreed that due to the lack of capacity for additional workload by councillors the Parish Council are not in a position to take on additional items.

It was agreed to add the Amplification of the Village Hall to the 4-year Plan. Cllr J Parrish agreed to act as Lead Councillor. Amplification of the Village Hall to be discussed at the September 2025 Parish Council meeting. **Action: Clerk**

124.25 ADOPTION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 2024/2025

a. Risk Assessment

No change in the Risk Assessment since it was reviewed in 2023/2024.

- b. **Standing Orders** No changes have been made to the Financial Regulations since it was reviewed in 2023/2024.
- c. **Financial Regulations**
No changes have been made to the Financial Regulations since it was reviewed in 2023/2024.
- d. **Code of Conduct**
The Parish Council's Code of Conduct is based on the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020.
- e. **Mission Statement**
No changes have been made to the Mission Statement since it was reviewed in 2023/2024.

Cllr N Downing proposed that the Parish Council's Policies and Procedures be adopted for 2024/20245, seconded Cllr J Parrish – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

125.25 TO DISCUSS TRICKER'S WOOD, PILOT'S WAY AND CHURCH FIELD

Trickers Wood

Report from Cllr A Wignall

A meeting with Neil Bixby (Tree Warden) was first held in Tricker's Wood on Thursday, 6th February. During that meeting it was identified that a number of trees were carrying dead wood and one tree had died and rotted and was resting in a holly tree. Later it became apparent that a Sycamore tree was also suffering from sooty bark disease.

Tricker's Wood is covered by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 14/84 and therefore it would be necessary to make a planning application for any remedial work that would need to be carried out and this work would need to be carried out by an approved/registered tree surgeon.

A further meeting was held with Neil Bixby, in Tricker's Wood on Sunday, 23rd February. During this meeting photos were taken of the types of trees needing maintenance and a map was created identifying most trees in the wood. Neil also provided the details of a tree surgeon who would undertake this work.

A Tree Surgeon (Seth Lord), Native Gardens and Trees, was contacted who has undertaken work within Levington and for the Parish Council in the past. He is also familiar with Trickers Wood. Seth Lord is coming to inspect the wood on the 8th/9th March. He anticipates that the work will take approximately 8 hours at a cost of £550 plus VAT.

Cllr A Wignall proposed that the Parish Council pay £50 to Neil Bixby for the work he has already carried out on Tricker's Wood, seconded Cllr J Parrish – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr A Wignall proposed that the Parish Council approve the expenditure of £550 plus VAT for the work on Tricker's Wood, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

Pilot's Way

Cllr A Wignall proposed that TPOs (Beech and Chestnut Trees) should be applied for on all trees on the boundary line in Pilot's Way to protect them in the future, seconded Cllr D Dickerson – all in favour. **Action: Cllr A Wignall**

Church Field - Repairs to the Fence

Background

The Parish Council received a report that several of the fence posts Church Field alongside Church Lane being rotten. The Parish Council Tree Warden is completing work at St Peter's Church and has offered to drive-in supporting posts (with a metal spike to prolong lifespan), at the time of completing the unrelated work at the Church.

The materials for the fence repair have been costed at £100. Cllr D Dickerson has assessed the need and agrees with the findings. The Parish Council has a budget allocation set aside for maintenance of Church Field. Due to the fact that the matter required a timely decision, Cllr J Ross wrote to councillors on the 11th February 2025 asking for their views on:

Decision 1 – Do we accept several of the Church Field fence posts are rotten and need repair and the viable and cost-effective approach is to support the existing posts with others (rather than consider replacing the posts which would involve dismantling sections of the fence and likely incur a far higher cost)?

Decision 2 – Do we authorise expenditure of £100 on this work (materials) to be completed by our Tree Warden (no cost)?

Decision 3 – Cllr J Ross proposed the Parish Council agrees to Decisions 1 and 2. These should be outside of our meetings as a) rotten posts may pose a safety risk to users of the field or pedestrian walkway and b) it is a very cost-effective option and aligned to work at the Church and it is not reasonable to seek to delay the work at the Church whilst we make a decision. This would likely result in a solution at greater cost to the Parish Council.

All councillors responded in agreement; thus, the decision was taken to commission the repairs.

Cllr J Ross proposed the expenditure of £100 to complete the repairs, seconded Cllr J Parrish – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

126.25 TO DISCUSS CREATING A COMMUNITY HUB FROM APRIL 2025

The Levington Warm Room/Space and Community Hub is a Parish Council initiative provided for the benefit of parish residents. The Warm Room started in November 2022 which came about after a questionnaire was circulated to all residents of the Parish which suggested a Warm Room was needed by some of our residents.

The project was managed by volunteers from the village which enables the Warm Room to be held in the Village Hall for 4 mornings a week between 09.30 – 12.30. The Warm Room is funded by East Suffolk Council and has been very successful in bringing residents together not just for keeping warm but also for the social aspect.

Once again, the Warm Room 2025 is coming to an end on the 31st March 2025 but with continued feedback received from residents that one of the real benefits of the Warm Room was the community contact and the positive effect that it has on mental health, the justification continues to exist for a Community Hub from 1st April to 31st October 2025 inclusive.

The proposal is the same as the previous two years, that it operates for 1 morning every 2 weeks (one session of Village Hall hire) on a Thursday morning. This will have an associated cost of £60 x 7 months (£420), with approximately £80 of cost providing users with tea/coffee. Total Cost: £500

The Parish Council discussed the proposal and agreed -

1. Cllr J Ross proposed that the Parish Council agree with the concept of the Community Hub, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour.
2. Cllr J Ross proposed that the Parish Council agree to underwrite the cost of £500 if funding is not secured, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour.

Action: Clerk

127.25 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE LITTER PICKING

Cllr J Parrish introduced the item. Previously, organised litter picking by volunteers in the Parishes had been coordinated by resident a resident. Such events were held a couple of times per year, people are grouped, given zones consisting of roadside areas (either 30mph or 60/70mph), provided with picking equipment, and the resident arranges for the many bags of rubbish/TVs/wheels/etc to be collected by the council.

The resident had written to the Parish Council suggesting it take the lead in organised litter picking events, and that one was due. Cllr J Ross thanked the resident on behalf of the Parish Council for coordinating litter picking with the volunteers.

Cllr J Ross asked councillors whether they believed the Parish Council should take on the responsibility for coordination of organised litter picking events in Levington and Stratton Hall.

Councillors had differing views, although all recognised the dangers involved in working on the roadside, particularly derestricted speed roads. Some Councillors thought the Parish Council should accept responsibility, others stated it is the responsibility of East Suffolk Council. Several councillors expressed concern about the fact that some of the litter was dangerous and was hazardous waste.

Cllr J Ross expressed the view that if the Parish Council was to take on responsibility for coordinating organised litter picking events, a Risk Assessment should be carried out and East Suffolk Council should be asked to provide equipment.

Cllr J Ross asked councillors to vote on two possible options:

1. The Parish Council should not take on responsibility for litter picking? **In favour:** Cllr A Wignall
Cllr C Yeo and Cllr J Parrish
2. The Parish Council should take on responsibility for litter picking? **In favour:** Cllr D Dickerson,
Cllr N Downing, Cllr J Ross

There was no clear unanimous decision.

The Clerk was requested to establish whether the Parish Council's insurance policy would cover volunteers whilst litter picking as part of a Parish Council organised event, and whether a Risk Assessment was required. **Action: Clerk**

It was agreed that once this information has been gathered the Parish Council could then make an informed decision. **Action: Clerk (next meeting)**

128.25 DEVOLUTION UPDATE

Suffolk County Council have announced that they are drawing up plans to create one council for Suffolk, which they are predicting will make delivering public services simpler, cheaper and quicker and better meet the needs of residents and businesses.

This follows the recent government announcement that Suffolk's county, district and borough councils will be replaced with a single-tier system.

Suffolk are developing plans that demonstrate the benefits of consolidating all services under one unitary authority.

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.

Suffolk County Council are going to evidence how one authority for Suffolk is the only effective way to deliver against the government's criteria and warn that splitting services among multiple bodies would force the duplication of essential functions - such as social care and highways maintenance - currently managed at a county level.

The key benefits of one council are:

Simpler for residents – fewer councils 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, county-wide approach to financial planning
- **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.

Suffolk County Council will submit an initial proposal to the government by 21 March 2025, with a more detailed business case to follow later in the year.

The government will then undertake a public consultation.

Here's what Cllr Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's new cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, is saying about it:

“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 a 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.

129.25 PLANNING

- a. **General – Updated Planning List for March 2025**
The Parish Council noted the contents of the Planning List.
- b. **DC/25/0161/TPO 1NO Horse Chestnut (T5 on Order) – Crown reduce by 30% in height and crown width High Trees, Bridge Road, Levington, Ipswich IP10 0LZ**
Parish Council Comments – No objection.

130.25 CORRESPONDENCE

All relevant correspondence has been forwarded to councillors.

131.25 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

- a. **Church Field Warden**
Nothing to report.
- b. **Village Hall**
Nothing to report.
- c. **Sir Robert Hitcham’s Almshouses**
Nothing to report.
- d. **Public Transport**
Nothing to report.
- e. **Footpaths**
Report from Cllr John Parrish

Footpath sign at Levington Lagoon has still not been replaced. The gate at the bottom of Pilots Way has been repaired. **Action: Clerk**

f. Port Liaison Group

Report by Cllr Derek Dickerson / Cllr John Parrish
Nothing to report.

g. Police / SNT / ASB

Nothing to report.

h. ESPA

Nothing to report.

i. Trickers Wood

Report by Cllr Ann Wignall

A rota has been agreed with Tom Bixby for the cutting of the field. Tom will start cutting in March. The equipment that Tom uses will also cut wet grass, so it is not necessary to wait for the grass to dry out before cutting. Cllr A Wignall confirmed that the grass will be cut ahead of the VE Day celebrations. **Action: Cllr A Wignall**

132.25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 13th May 2025 IN THE VILLAGE HALL

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.40 pm.

VILLAGE FORUM (Opportunity to raise issues not necessarily on this agenda)

A member of the public asked whether there would be a charge for admission to the Village Hall during the VE Celebrations on the 8th May. Cllr J Ross replied that there would be no charge.

A member of the public said that he had a detailed map of the trees which was completed at the time the TPOs were granted and he would pass a copy to Cllr A Wignall.

A member of the public stated that the muddy state of the footpath extending beyond the boardwalk and on the foreshore should be a Parish Council priority and does not understand why they are not. The Ship advertises the local walks to its customers, many people visit Levington for the purpose of using these footpaths.

Several councillors expressed that during the winter in the countryside footpaths do get muddy, and appropriate footwear should be worn. They recognised that none of the many walkers they meet when walking has made any comment about the poor state of the footpaths.

In answer to being asked what they would like the Parish Council to do, the resident thought the boardwalk should be extended to the foreshore, that the Parish Council should co-ordinate funding applications and could contribute from its savings.

Cllr J Ross informed it wasn't part of the 4-yr plan as it was not an issue raised by numerous residents in response to the survey. It was also noted that footpaths are a County Council responsibility, and the footpaths mentioned are across private land. It was not for the Parish Council to spend public monies on these matters.

Cllr J Ross said the Parish Council would write again to District Council, Suffolk County Council and Martin Williams Footpath Officer Suffolk County Council. **Action: Clerk**

A member of the public stated that there are four or five residents who carry out litter picking whilst walking their dogs. He commented that the Parish Council had always taken responsibility for litter picking, borrowing equipment from East Suffolk Council. Cllr J Ross recognised that residents picking litter whilst walking their dogs is quite different to the organised events discussed in the earlier agenda item. He explained that as discussed by councillors earlier, questions need to be asked before the Parish Council could consider agreeing to take responsibility for co-ordinating the litter picking events as a Parish Council initiative. The resident commented that a Risk Assessment had been undertaken. Cllr J Ross said that as stated previously the Parish Council will revisit litter picking with a view to deciding whether to adopt it. **Action: Clerk**

Signed..... Date

Angie Buggs
Clerk to Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council