

LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

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

Monday, 7th July 2025 7.15 pm

Present:

Cllr Chris Yeo (Chairman)
Cllr Derek Dickerson
Cllr Neil Downing
Cllr A Wignall
Cllr C Myhill
Parish Clerk Angie Buggs
4 members of the public

County Councillor's Report Cllr Patti Mulcahy Suffolk County Council

A copy of the report is appended in the minute book and available on Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council website.

District Councillors' Report Cllr Mike Ninmey East Suffolk Council / Cllr Lee Reeves East Suffolk Council

A copy of the report is appended in the minute book and available on Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council website.

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 member of the public reported that incidents of anti-social behaviour on footpaths have been reported to the Police.

A resident stated that part of verge in Church Lane looks beautiful but other areas look uncared for and the wildflowers need to be replenished in the area from the entrance to Church Field to The Driftway. **Action: Cllr A Wignall / Cllr D Dickerson**

153.25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Parrish (sickness), Cllr Sarah Gregory, Cllr Mike Ninmey, Cllr Lee Reeves and Cllr Patti Mulcahy.

154.25 CODE OF CONDUCT & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

155.25 TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 13th MAY 2025.

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

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

146.25 TO DISCUSS PROGRESS OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025

This item will be placed on the agenda for the September Parish Council meeting. **Action: Clerk**

147.25 TO DISCUSS AND AUTHORISE THE WORK RE TRICKER'S WOOD BY A TREE SURGEON

This item will be discussed under Item 8 of the Agenda.

148.25 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE LITTER PICKING

Cllr N Downing is working with a resident to produce a Risk Assessment. **Action: Cllr N Downing**

151.25 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

h. ESPA

This item will be discussed under Item 14 of the Agenda.

157.25 TO DISCUSS AND APPOINT A NEW COUNCILLOR

The Chairman reported that Chris Myhill had put himself forward to become a Parish Councillor and the Clerk had checked her eligibility. Cllr C Yeo proposed Chris Myhill be co-opted on to the Parish Council, seconded Cllr A Wignall – all in favour. The Clerk said he would arrange for the completion of the Register of Interests with East Suffolk Council. **Action: Clerk / Cllr C Myhill**

158.25 FINANCE

a. Income

None

b. Expenditure

Mrs A J Buggs Salary & Expenses May/June 2025	£859.72
HMRC Tax/NI	£528.82
Trevor Brown Audit	£200.00
Ann Wignall VE Day Costs	£292.72
A J Buggs Refreshments Annual Parish Meeting	£99.46
J Parrish Soft Drinks Annual Parish Meeting	£82.94
Seale Newsletters	£114.00
Levington Village Hall Hire	£350.00
ICO Data Protection Fee	£52.00

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

c. Bank Balances

Current Account as at 31 st May 2025	£11,762.24
Deposit Account as at 31 st May 2025	£24,205.83

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

d. Audit Report 2024/2025

1. To discuss and accept the contents of the Internal Audit Report.

The Clerk had previously circulated the Internal Audit Report 2024/2025 to all councillors. The Internal Auditor Trevor Brown highlighted two areas on which the Parish Council should take action:

Recommendation 1: The Unpresented cheque 101142 for £20 is dated 1 June 2022 and is now out-of-date and should be written back into the accounts as a deduction from Payments in accordance with accounting practice for the treatment of written-back cheques. Following this action, the cheque will no longer have to be included as a balancing item in each Bank Reconciliation undertaken for the Council.

Recommendation 2: The Council should ensure that when cheques are signed by Signatories, the counterfoils of each cheque are also signed or initialled by Cheque Signatories to meet the financial control requirements listed within the Council's Financial Regulations item 6.5.

Cllr N Downing commented that two of the earmarked served items appeared to be out of date.

£5,000 earmarked on 6 July 2022 for Speed restraining/traffic calming measures - £3,000 earmarked on 6 July 2022 for Signal Booster for the Village Hall.

Cllr C Yeo stated that these items would be reviewed in November 2025 when the Parish Council considers the budget for 2025/2026.

Cllr C Yeo said the auditor had recorded his appreciation for the Clerk's assistance during the course of the audit work and for the careful presentation of the Council's documents for audit. This comment was noted by the Parish Council.

Cllr A Wignall proposed that the Internal Audit Report 2024/2025 be accepted, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

2. Confirmation of Exemption of External Audit

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received formal notification of its exemption status for an External Audit for the year ended 31st March 2025. It was noted that the Parish Council's income or expenditure was required to be less than £25,000 to be exempt from an External Audit. **Action: Clerk**

159.25 TO CONFIRM WHETHER THE PARISH COUNCIL CONTINUES TO MEET THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE FOR THE YEAR 2025/2026

The Internal Auditor has confirmed that the Parish Council continues to meet the criteria for the GPoC until the next Parish Council elections. Cllr C Yeo confirmed the change from the previous meeting, seconded Cllr C Myhill – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

160.25 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE AND DISCUSSION REGARDING TPOs

Pilots Way

Cllr A Wignall reported that a request had been submitted to East Suffolk Council on the 16th June 2025 asking for TPOs to be assigned to the trees in Pilots Way. Details were provided to East Suffolk Council concerning the damage which had occurred to the trees. Subsequently, an email has been received from East Suffolk Council stating that in this situation TPOs would be ineffective and therefore it is not relevant for TPOs to be assigned.

Cllr C Yeo stated that the Parish Council had received a request from the person who allegedly carried out the damage to the trees requesting a meeting with the Parish Council. Cllr J Parish and Cllr C Yeo will arrange a meeting. **Action: Cllr J Parrish / Cllr C Yeo**

Trickers Wood

A request has been sent to East Suffolk Council asking for permission for the Tree Surgeon Seth Lord of Native Gardens & Trees to carry out the necessary work on the trees in Trickers Wood. East Suffolk Council have contacted Seth Lord asking for a list of the trees which need treatment.

Owl Box

Cllr A Wignall reported that she would be meeting with Suffolk Barn Owl Group in Trickers Wood on the 15th July to replace the owl box. **Action: Cllr A Wignall**

161.25 TO DISCUSS AND CONFIRM THE NALC FINANCIAL REGULATIONS 2025

Cllr C Yeo reported that the new Financial Regulations had been sent to all councillors. These are NEW Model Financial Regulations 2025 which must be adopted by the Parish Council and as indicated on the document, anything in bold indicates a legal requirement which a council cannot change or suspend. Cllr C Yeo stated that the Parish Council has a year to approve the new Financial Regulations and proposed that this item be deferred until the September meeting to enable councillors to consider the changes. It was agreed that the Clerk would send a copy of the current Financial Regulations to all councillors for comparison. **Action: Clerk**

162.25 TO DISCUSS AND CONFIRM THE NALC STANDING ORDERS 2025

Cllr C Yeo reported that the new Standing Orders had been sent to all councillors. These are NEW Model Standing Orders 2025 which must be adopted by the Parish Council and as indicated on the document, anything in bold indicates a legal requirement which a council cannot change or suspend. Cllr C Yeo stated that the Parish Council has a year to approve the new Standing Orders and proposed that this item be deferred until the September meeting to enable councillors to consider the changes. It was agreed that the Clerk would send a copy of the current Standing Orders to all councillors for comparison. **Action: Clerk**

163.25 UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON EMERGENCY PLAN

Cllr N Downing reported that the first draft of the Emergency Plan had been written and sent to Suffolk County Council for sign off. Some additional changes have been made recently due to the concerns about flooding and fire risk in parts of the village. A member of the public Bev Chalcraft has volunteered to be a Fire Warden for the village. The Parish Council will consider funding training the Fire Warden. **Action: Cllr N Downing**

164.25 PLANNING

a. General – Updated Planning List for June 2025

The Parish Council noted the contents of the Planning List.

b. DC/25/1568/FUL 1-2 Gun Hill Cottages Church Lane Levington Ipswich Suffolk IP10 0LQ Installation of roof windows and rebuilding of existing garden store – Lead Councillor Cllr Chris Yeo

Application has now been approved by East Suffolk Council Planning Department.

c. DC/25/1509/FUL Almshouses Bridge Road Levington Suffolk Listed Building Consent Re-roofing works, new loft hatch, minor chimney and brick repair works – Lead Councillor Cllr John Parrish

Application has now been approved by East Suffolk Council Planning Department.

d. DC/25/1668/FUL Cedarwood Bridge Road Levington Ipswich Suffolk IP10 0LZ Erect car port and shed. Convert lean-to greenhouse to store. Extend driveway to carport – Lead Councillor Cllr Neil Downing

Application has now been approved by East Suffolk Council Planning Department.

165.25 CORRESPONDENCE

All relevant correspondence has been forwarded to councillors.

166.25 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

a. Church Field Warden

Report from Cllr Derek Dickerson

A beech tree on the corner of Pilots way has had a lower branch removed.

b. Village Hall

Report from Cllr John Parrish

No further development regarding amplification of the Village Hall. We are still exploring the various options available. The fire extinguishers and electrics have now all been updated and certified by an electrician. The beacon and the spare gas bottles remain at Cllr C Yeo's property and not returned to the Village Hall. It was agreed by Parish Council that these items should remain at the councillor's property. **Action: Clerk to update the Asset Register**

c. Sir Robert Hitcham's Almshouses

Report from the Parish Council appointed trustee

No report.

d. Public Transport

Report from Marian Rose

First Bus continue to operate a regular service with numbers 75 and 77 running between Ipswich and Felixstowe via the Old Felixstowe Road (aka the old A45). This of course is only useful for those who can get to these bus stops under their own steam. Regular visitors to

Parish meetings know that I frequently mention the overgrown verges, in Bridge Road, which make walking to the bus stops difficult, when trying to get off the road to avoid traffic. SCC have recently cut back the verge along Bridge Road which has improved this situation. However, the problem of overgrown hedges, at head height, along the stretch between Red House Walk and the Barn remains. The PC have arranged for this hedge to be cut back by the landowner, after the nesting season, thus this should be done in the next few weeks.

The PC had promised to instigate a 'clear up' day around the village when we planned to trim back other verges and give the bus shelters another clean. I mention this as a reminder that a date has not been fixed, as far as I am aware.

Another issue which concerns me is that it is often difficult to get bus drivers' attention when waiting at the Ipswich-bound bus stop at Bridge Road. One is forced to watch carefully for the bus and wave frantically to get them to stop! I raised this problem during a video conference call in May, organised by Suffolk County Council and SCC have accepted my request for work to be done to improve visibility at this location.

I have also been trying to get vegetation cut back at the bus stop on the Ipswich-bound side of the Old Felixstowe Road, by Stratton Hall Drift, opposite Walk Farm. The bus stop sign is barely visible behind the greenery. I sent a photo of this to an SCC bus contact and his comment was that I should report this using the SCC Highways reporting online tool. He felt it was so bad that it would be marked for immediate attention. However, having reported as instructed, they replied that they did not feel this came under their 'intervention criteria'! I emailed back to my contact and also to our SCC Councillor on 23 June, asking for their help, but neither has replied to me. I wrote again yesterday (6 July) asking for their advice as to how we can get this work done. This bus stop is often used by visitors, who have moored at the marina so are unfamiliar with the area, thus a clear indication of where the buses stop is vital.

I have confined this public transport report to the local bus services only as I feel this is the element most affecting our parishioners.

e. Footpaths

Report from Cllr John Parrish

Both the rails leading up to the foreshore at the end of the boardwalk are still a major hazard for any person reliant upon them for stability when going up or down the steps. The footpath sign is still propped up against a tree on entry to Levington lagoon carpark. No updates regarding dog fouling thus "no change". It was agreed that the Clerk should contact the Rights of Way and Access, Suffolk County Council. **Action: Clerk**

f. Port Liaison Group

Report by Cllr Derek Dickerson / Cllr John Parrish

A Port Liaison Group meeting was held on the 20th May 2025 via Microsoft Teams.

It was reported that business remained healthy in Q1, with container volumes up 13% on the previous year. Gemini, the new Maersk/Hapag arrangement had switched services to London Gateway effective February 2025 for departures from Asia, so the effects were not felt until April, therefore are not reflected in Q1 volume. A number of new services have committed to Felixstowe since the announcement including the Premier Alliance, a Far East alliance new to Felixstowe, the Ocean Alliance and two South American services.

On 4th March 2025 CK Hutchison announced that it had reached an 'in principle agreement' with a consortium of Black Rock Global Infrastructure Partners and Terminal Investments Ltd to sell its interest in 43 ports in 23 countries, including Felixstowe, Harwich International and London Thamesport. The deal is subject to the normal due diligence and regulatory clearances. CKH has agreed a 145-day exclusive period for the negotiations.

Recruitment continues with 74 new starters at the port so far this year.

The majority of port traffic remains Asia focussed and continues to go around the Cape, rather than through the Suez Canal. There have been mixed signals regarding improvements to this situation although no immediate change is planned by the shipping lines. Going via the Suez Canal is approximately 9 / 10 days quicker and will cause a double hit of 2 weeks' worth of ships arriving in the same week when vessels return to the Suez route.

A consequence of Maersk leaving has been rail volumes dipping due to some rail services relocating to London Gateway. Felixstowe retains 27 daily rail services, approximately 24% of market share by rail.

Trimley Estates Report

- The lack of commercial allocated employment land to support the port in various ways remains an ongoing issue. The creation of HGV charging hubs require more space to park and more facilities for drivers waiting whilst vehicles charge. Exploratory work being undertaken on how to accommodate the increased level of demand with the available space, it is difficult for smaller operators with small yards. As the port decarbonises battery and electrical usage, the need for hybrid/clean HGVs will increase. The allocation of appropriate agricultural land for commercial use adjacent to the A14 is an item to be addressed at the next local plan review. A chief concern is the lack of suitable space to support Felixstowe, in comparison, London Gateway has significant development land on its doorstep. The same applies at Tilbury.
- Demand for residential land continues and the market remains steady as people continue to want to live on the peninsular.
- Sustainability - the principal agenda item is to create HGV charging facilities to satisfy HGV's that currently use diesel and can park along the A14 and required to support port activities.
- Planning Applications: Howlett Way remains a live application that will be progressed on a re-designed basis, reflecting many different groups' comments in the second half of this year.
- In relation to the Estate more generally o facing a drought and an ever-increasing risk of fire as crops ripen o experiencing increased levels of vandalism and trespass across the Estate and Trimley branch line railway. The Port Police and distribution park's security team undertaking more checks. o seeing greater numbers of walking and cycling visitors using footpaths coastal walk, beach and Nature Reserve and the Suffolk cycle route is growing in popularity.
- Trinity College continues to contribute to the Port Community Fund in addition to a wide range of other local community groups and small businesses.

The next meeting will be held on the 11th November 2025.

g. Police / SNT / ASB

Nothing to report.

h. ESPA

Report from Cllr Neil Downing

The detailed meeting minutes have already been made available to Parish Councillors so this brief does not aim to repeat the minutes. This brief contains some simple observations from the meeting and potential areas that Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council could take forward.

Overall thoughts:

The meeting was well attended with several representatives from East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council, and around 8 other Parish Councils.

What was clear is that the group is generally trying to help by sharing information amongst one another from their experiences of where they have successfully opposed plans. What was also very clear was that the group collectively have a very good handle on the process involved in planning, which once again would be very useful knowledge to have available to Levington and Stratton Hall in the future.

I believe that this is a group that we should remain part of, assuming that a suitable representative volunteer can be found.

ESPA also now have meetings directly with the senior council leaders 3 times per year. This would be a good opportunity for us to address questions and issues directly should the need arise.

Westerfield Quarry Proposal:

Of all of the presentations, this was the most interesting (and scary). A proposal for extracting 1.7 million tonnes of sand and gravel from farmland near Westerfield over the next 16 years. To put it into context for the poor residents, this means approximately 80 LGV trucks per day for the next 16 years through their village.

What struck me from this presentation was several things:

1. Sometimes we think we have problems! Just even imagining what this would be like for Levington does rather send a shiver down the spine.
2. How well organised the village was in terms of residents and their strengths and knowledge (engineering, construction, legal and other).
3. Westerfield PC have spent a lot of time and energy prior to the application working on and getting sign off for their 'Neighbourhood Plan'. This has been approved by East Suffolk Council and if the local plan is followed then this kind of activity should not be allowed. Whether it is or not would be a test for the council but if we do not have a local plan then perhaps we should create one?

According to the council members, the hierarchy of importance when it comes to making planning decisions is as follows:

- a. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- b. East Suffolk Local Plan

c. Neighbourhood Plans

Tuddenham Housing Development:

This was less interesting except for the fact that it has parallels to what's currently happening in Levington. It's an application for 25 properties that has been ongoing for over 6 years without resolution. There are numerous issues such as poor access, no footpath and the planning portal now contains over 300 documents making it almost impossible to understand what is relevant. There have also been what appear to be serious lapses in process and ESPA is helping Tuddenham PC raise this shoddy process with East Suffolk Council for resolution.

Closing thoughts:

1. What was clear is that if (as we expect) more applications will happen in future if we want to oppose them, we should be more organised. I was already convinced but now even more so that the key to success is in having well considered and thought-out arguments that focus on a few key areas. The 'throw-the-kitchen sink-at-it' approach will certainly not work. **ACTION: Do we consider expanding the role of the lead councillor for high profile applications to more of a campaign manager with appropriate time allocation for the task?**
2. We should discuss and explore someone to take a look at building a Neighbourhood Plan. According to East Suffolk Council representatives at the meeting work on a new Local Plan is just starting (they confirmed that all Parish Clerks will be informed about how we can be involved in the process shortly). This new Local Plan will offer the chance to build neighbourhood plans around it so we should explore how we do that. **ACTION: Do we want to nominate a lead councillor for this or make it part of our PC priorities?**

Cllr C Yeo stated that if the Local Plan is being redrawn the Parish Council should be communicating with the ESPA. **Action: Clerk**

i. Trickers Wood

Report by Cllr Ann Wignall

Please refer to Minute 160.25.

167.25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 2nd September 2025

Cllr D Dickerson offered his apologies for the September meeting.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.25 pm.

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

A member of the public commented that when the new Local Plan is published councillors should read it thoroughly as there are large amounts of information which might be overlooked.

A resident stated that some years ago the Parish Council were advised that a Neighbourhood Plan does not carry any weight in terms of planning.

A resident asked whether the Emergency Plan is available for sharing with villagers and whether members of the Parish Council had seen it. Cllr C Yeo stated that as soon as the framework has been approved by Suffolk County Council it will be published to residents. Cllr N Downing said that when the Emergency Plan is signed off the village will need to appoint an Emergency Planning Committee.

One of the duties of the Emergency Planning Committee is to review the plan every year. The plan has been updated from the previous plan to meet the GDPR criteria. **Action: Cllr N Downing**

Signed..... Date

Angie Buggs
Clerk to Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council