

LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL PARISH COUNCIL

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

Monday, 4th November 2024 7.15 pm

Present:

Cllr John Ross (Chairman)
Cllr Derek Dickerson
Cllr John Parrish
Cllr Neil Downing
Cllr Ann Wignall
Cllr C Yeo
Parish Clerk Angie Buggs
Cllr Lee Reeves East Suffolk 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).

Report from Cllr Patti Mulcahy Suffolk County Council

A copy of Cllr Mulcahy's report has been uploaded to the Parish Council website and a copy appended in the minute book. **Action: Clerk**

A member of the public commented that he believed there is a great deal of 'wiggle room' in the budget figures for the year 2025/2026 and highlighted the items he referred to:

Replacement Laptop – PC should consider whether the amount in the budget can purchase a sufficiently higher-grade laptop.

Chairman's Allowance – Necessity of budgeting for a Chairman's Allowance.

4-Year Plan – £1,000 required to be in the budget?

Operation and Maintenance – £1,450 for general maintenance.

90.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mike Ninnmey East Suffolk Council and Cllr Patti Mulcahy Suffolk County Council.

91.24 CODE OF CONDUCT & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

92.24 TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 2ND SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 2nd September 2024 which had previously been circulated, were approved, and signed as a true record by Cllr J Ross (Chairman) with the following amendment:

86.24 PLANNING

- b. **To discuss and agree the Parish Council's comments on DC/24/2940/TPO 1x Mixed Group Holly and 1 Hawthorne tree – To fell. Due to high maintenance and allowing more light onto lawn area creating a vista view to the open fields. The Driftway Church Lane Levington Ipswich Suffolk**

...TPOs. "She reported that only one reply had been received from a near neighbour which stated that 'although he was generally in favour of trees which are the subject of TPOs not being felled in the case of the holly and the hawthorn he saw no reason to object'. Neil Bixby could not be contacted for his opinion as he was on holiday."

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

All items arising from the previous minutes were covered as part of the agenda.

94.24 FINANCE

a. **Income**

Warm Welcome Funding (75% of total funding)	£1,500.00
Precept Second Half	£6,250.00

b. **Expenditure**

Mrs A J Buggs Salary & Expenses September/October 2024	£796.49
Searle Printers Newsletters (reissue of damaged cheque)	£114.00
CAS IT Support	£234.00
CAS Website	£60.00
Levington Village Hall Hire	£50.00

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

c. **Bank Balances**

Current Account as at 30 th September 2024	£25,986.87
Deposit Account as at 30 th September 2024	£8,940.25

The Parish Council noted the balances as at the 30th September 2024 for both the Community Account and the Premium Account.

d. **To discuss and approve the Half Year Accounts 2024/2025**

The Clerk reported that the half year accounts 1st April 2024 – 30th September 2024 had previously been circulated to all councillors. Cllr J Parrish proposed that that the Parish Council formally adopt the half year accounts, seconded Cllr D Dickerson – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

The Clerk reported that although attempts had been made to move the Parish Council bank accounts to NatWest, which had taken a considerable amount of work, NatWest has stated that the wrong forms had been submitted although they had advised Cllr C Yeo of the process. Unfortunately, therefore the Clerk has to start the whole process again. **Action: Clerk**

e. To discuss and agree the draft budget 2025/2026

The Clerk reported that the Budget 2025/2026 had previously been circulated before the meeting and a copy had been uploaded on to the Parish Council website a week prior to the meeting. The Parish Council considers that it needs to budget for its running costs without the necessity of operating out of general reserves. The total expected budget expenditure is predicted to be £12,975.00, however with the carryover from 2024/2025, bank interest and VAT, the Parish Council anticipate requiring a precept of £12,878.60 which according to East Suffolk Council would amount to a -1.3% reduction on the council tax for residents as against 2024/2025.

The following lines of the budget were explained in greater detail.

Operation and Maintenance

A sum of £1,450 to cover ongoing costs over the course of the year for example maintenance of Tricker's Wood, Church Field and the Village Green.

4-year Plan

As a result of the village survey the Parish Council identified a 4-year plan. To enable the Parish Council to deliver against that plan an allocation was placed in the budget of £1,000 to cover any unforeseeable costs.

Chairman's Allowance

In 2023 the Parish Council decided to adopt a policy of putting a Chairman's Allowance in the budget to cover low level expenditure which might arise over the financial year. The Chairman's Allowance can cover expenditure items which require a 'quick' decision or cover any expenditure incurred by the Chairman as part of his duties such as additional training not offered by Suffolk Association of Local Councils. This is allowable under Regulation 25.

The Chairman stated that the proposed budget 2025/2026 had been posted on the Parish Council website since the 29th October and asked whether councillors considered this to be sufficient time for residents to contemplate the budget for 2025/2026?

Following discussion, the Chairman proposed the following questions to councillors.

Question 1 Cllr J Ross proposed that the budget 2025/2026 should be agreed today and not go forward for ratification at the January 2025 Parish Council meeting, seconded Cllr A Wignall – all in favour.

Question 2 Cllr J Ross proposed that the Parish Council agree the draft budget for the financial year 2025/2026, seconded Cllr C Yeo – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

f. To discuss and approve the Precept for 2025/2026

The Chairman reported that if the Parish Council set the precept at £12,878.60 this would mean a -1.34% reduction in the Council Tax. There is still an outstanding item this year which is the amplification of the Village Hall which will be discussed in January 2025 which could cost in the region of up to £3,000.

Cllr J Ross proposed that the Parish Council precept for £12,878.60 in line with the 2025/2026 budget, seconded Cllr J Parrish – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

g. To discuss the adoption of the Local Government Pay Award for the Clerk

Cllr J Ross stated that the Local Governance Pay Claim 2024/2025 had been circulated to all councillors. Cllr J Ross proposed that the Parish Council agree to increase the clerk's salary as recommended by NALC (Salary Scale LC1 13) back dated to the 1st April 2024, seconded Cllr A Wignall – all in favour. **Action: Clerk**

95.24 TO AGREE PARISH COUNCIL / ANNUAL PARISH MEETING DATES FOR 2025

Cllr J Ross reported that the Parish Council had been requested to move some of the Parish Council dates from a Monday to alternative days to enable some residents to attend who take part in a local group.

Following discussion, it was agreed to set the hold Parish Council meetings in 2025 as follows:

Monday, 13th January 2025

Tuesday, 4th March 2025

Tuesday, 13th May 2025 (Annual Parish Council Meeting)

Wednesday, 21st May 2025 (Annual Parish Meeting)

Monday, 7th July 2025 (TBC)

Tuesday, 2nd September 2025 (TBC)

Wednesday, 5th November 2025 (TBC)

Action: Clerk / Cllr J Ross

96.24 TO DISCUSS THE LEVINGTON AND STRATTON HALL EMERGENCY PLAN

Cllr N Downing gave a report based on the Draft Emergency Plan which he had circulated to councillors. Relevant points:

- The draft Emergency Plan is based on the template which was provided by East Suffolk Council. This Emergency Plan is much simpler than our previous plan.
- There is a lot more focus on how we support and help vulnerable residents in our parishes.
- The draft Emergency Plan must be approved by East Suffolk Council.
- There is a list of outstanding items still to be dealt with.
- The Parish Council cannot sign off the plan until we have produced a version we are happy to send to East Suffolk Council.
- To action the Emergency Plan, the parishes have to create a Community Emergency Planning Group (CEPG). Members of the CEPG do not have to be parish councillors however the CEPG must have a Chair, a Clerk, a Rest Centre Co-ordinator and an Information Co-ordinator. The CEPG must meet at least twice a year.
- The types of emergencies are documented in the plan.
- Gathering of voluntary information on vulnerable residents and agree secure storage medium for completed forms.
- A minimum of two residents to state they are evoking the plan.

Comments:

- The Parish Council should be the first line of governance and there should be a standing item every 6 months on the Parish Council agenda.
- The CEPG to be a mixture of residents from the community and the Parish Council. A minimum of two Parish Councillors.

- It was noted that potentially those residents without capacity are the most vulnerable group.
- Consideration should be given to meeting the requirements of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- It was suggested that between now and the Parish Council meeting in January 2025 we recruit volunteers to take part in the Emergency Plan initiative and to submit a draft Emergency Plan to the Emergency Planning Unit and seek their guidance on obtaining approval.

Cllr J Ross thanked Cllr N Downing for all his hard work. It was agreed that the Emergency Plan should be placed on the Parish Council agenda on the 13th January 2025. **Action: Cllr N Downing / Clerk**

97.24 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE FUTURE OF THE LEVINGTON WARM WELCOME 2024/2025

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had acquired funding from East Suffolk Council to provide a Warm Welcome Room in Levington for 4 sessions a week in the Village Hall on a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings as from 4th November 2024 for 20 weeks. Cllr J Ross explained that the funding would be paid 75% upfront and the remaining 25% after 3 months upon satisfactory completion of monitoring reports. The Clerk reported that each session is 3 hours long and each 1 ½ session has a supervisor. Supervisors have been allocated from the 4th November until Christmas and our thanks go to Sally Long and Helen Kingston-Ross for organising the rotas. Cllr J Parrish and Cllr J Ross agreed to act as Lead Councillors on behalf of the Parish Council. **Action: Clerk / Cllr J Parrish / Cllr J Ross**

98.24 TO RECEIVE AND AGREE THE CELEBRATION ARRANGEMENTS TO MARK VE DAY 80 – 8TH MAY 2025

On Thursday, 8th May 2025 villages and communities are encouraged to light Beacons and Lamp Lights of Peace to mark the VE Day 80 at 9.30 pm and to raise a unique VE Day flag at 9 am. Communities, where possible, hold parties of celebration throughout the day.

Cllr J Ross said that there are a lot of residents in the villages whose family members had served in the Second World War and the village should mark the occasion. It was noted that the date set for the celebration is a Thursday therefore it was likely that the earliest time any celebration could start would be 6 pm. Following discussion Cllr A Wignall agreed to act as Lead Councillor. Cllr Wignall said that she would put a draft plan together and report back to the Parish Council. **Action: Cllr A Wignall / Clerk**

99.24 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE THE ASSET REGISTER

Each year the Parish Council are required to update and approved the Asset Register. The Clerk had sent out a copy of the Asset Register to all councillors prior to the meeting for discussion.

Thermal Imaging Camera – Location to be changed to Village Hall.

Gas Cylinders for Beacon – Location to be changed to Old Felixstowe Road Stratton Hall.

Mitsubishi HC5500 Digital Projector – Location to be changed to Village Hall.

Camcorder – Location to be changed to Village Hall.

Dell Vostro 3700 Laptop – Currently stored at 1 RHW.

Logitech pointer etc for above laptop – Currently stored at 1 RHW.

The Clerk was asked to write and request the resident to return the Digital Project and the Camcorder to Cllr J Parrish so they can be stored in the Village Hall so they are always accessible to the PC and

residents. The Clerk was asked to find out whether the Dell Vostro Laptop and the Logitech pointer is still functional. **Action: Clerk / Cllr J Parrish**

The Asset Register to be updated to reflect the changes. **Action: Clerk / Cllr J Parrish**

100.24 PLANNING

a. General – Updated Planning List for November 2024

The Parish Council noted the contents of the Planning List.

101.24 CORRESPONDENCE

All relevant correspondence has been forwarded to councillors.

102.24 REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

a. Church Field Warden

Report from Cllr Derek Dickerson

Cllr Dickerson reported that Church Field had recently been used for a party and straw bales were used to sit on. It had been reported that a fence post along Church Lane is rotten. Cllr Dickerson has inspected all posts, confirms one is rotten, but in his view is weight bearing and not in need of immediate repair. **Action: Cllr D Dickerson**

b. Village Hall

Report from Cllr John Parrish

Cllr J Parrish reported that at the recent Village Hall Trustees meeting the following items were discussed.

1. Levington Warm Welcome Room.
2. Amplification of the Village Hall.

The Trustees acknowledged the reasons why amplification is required for Parish Council meetings therefore they will be very pleased to consider any proposals to improve the sound in the Village Hall.

3. Parish Council cupboards.

Cllr J Parrish and David Long have completed the work on sorting out the two cupboards which the Parish Council had been storing documents and there is now a spare cupboard which is empty. It was noted that both cupboards are owned by the Village Hall Trustees.

c. Sir Robert Hitcham's Almshouses

Cllr J Ross stated that Nacton and Levington Parish Council each nominate a trustee to serve on the Board of Trustees. The Parish Council's nominated trustee was Sue Parrish who has now resigned and therefore the Parish Council needs to nominate a replacement. The Parish Council will write an article to appear in the Parish Magazine asking if anybody would like to volunteer to represent the Parish Council on the Board of Trustees. The Parish Council thanked Sue Parrish for representing them and her contribution in the role. **Action: Cllr A Wignall / Cllr J Ross**

d. Public Transport

Report by Marian Rose

Bus Services

Bus users may have noticed in the recent Budget that the bus fare cap, previously due to expire on 31 December 2024, has been extended to 31 December 2025. However, the current £2 single fare will rise to £3 from 1 January 2025. This will still represent a significant reduction on 'normal' fares & cheaper than many car park fees.

Those of state pension age can obtain a pass from Suffolk County Council to allow free bus travel. You **can** use your free travel bus pass:
from 9:30am to 11pm, Monday to Friday
all day on weekends and bank holidays
anywhere in England on local bus services only.

First Bus, who operate the 75 and 77 service between Ipswich and Felixstowe, have recently introduced a system on their buses to show the route and 'next stop' on a screen and also a loudspeaker announcement. This is particularly useful now that the darker days are with us as it can sometimes be tricky to work out where you are on a country route where there are no streetlights to help.

Their application is also a useful aid for those with a smart phone. It shows you where the buses are on your route and when they are expected to arrive at your stop (though it is not infallible so should not be relied upon 100%).

Residents who follow the local news may be aware of a scam doing the rounds. This apparently offers a Smartcard which purports to offer six months' travel on Ipswich Buses for just £2. I think this comes under the warning that if something sounds too good to be true then it probably is!

Residents who are unwilling to walk to the Old Felixstowe Road may wish to consider leaving their car in the big layby and then catching the bus. Some of us do this already and find it useful, especially if planning a journey after dark.

At the last PC meeting, I asked the Parish Council for help in getting the hedgerow and verge along Bridge Road cut back as it has become dangerous for pedestrians. Angie tells me that she has reported this to both East Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council. To date there has been no response.

Train Services

As with buses, it is possible to get rail discount cards:

16-25, 26-30, Senior, Two Together, HM Forces, Veterans railcard and Disabled Persons Railcard holders can save 1/3 on First Class and Standard Advance tickets. Family and Friends Railcard holders can save 1/3 on all Standard Advance tickets. Greater Anglia Club 50 cardholders can save 20% (online) or 10% (at stations) on First Class and Standard Advance tickets.

Although Greater Anglia's Autumn Hare Fare sale has finished there are still good offers to be had via their website and thereby enjoy a journey more relaxing than travelling by car.

e. Footpaths

Report from Cllr John Parrish

The left-hand post to which the swing gate at the end of Pilots Way is attached has rotted away at the base. Stephen Rackham is happy for the Parish Council to report it to Martin Williams Footpaths Officer Suffolk County Council.

Residents in the village have again complained about dog fouling. Ian Angus has spoken to Stephen Lomas at the Ship and they have agreed that a rubbish bin can be sited at the entrance to the Ship and one dog poo bin can be sited on the Church Wall. I have explained to Ian Angus that currently East Suffolk Council are not emptying any additional bins. **Action: Clerk**

f. Port Liaison Group

Report by Cllr Derek Dickerson / Cllr John Parrish

Nothing to report. A Zoom meeting will be held on the 19th November 2024 but neither myself or Cllr J Parrish are able to attend.

g. Police / SNT / ASB

Nothing to report.

h. ESPA

Nothing to report.

i. Trickers Wood

Report by Cllr Ann Wignall

Cllr J Ross said that Neil Bixby Tree Warden has been to assess the trees in Trickers Wood and has reported that there are two small trees which need to be removed and once the Parish Council has given approval he will go ahead with the work. It was noted that the Parish Council is the decision maker and Neil Bixby is our adviser therefore Neil should, as he does, refer to the Parish Council before undertaking any maintenance work.

Cllr J Ross stated the Parish Council has agreed to Neil and Tom Bixby joining the Tree Warden Group, however it is not known whether they have joined or been to any meetings. **Action: Cllr A Wignall**

103.24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, 13TH JANUARY 2025 IN THE VILLAGE HALL

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.

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

A member of the public commented that the Parish Council should take advice before purchasing a new computer to ensure that it is the right specification.

A member of the public stated that he would like to see an exhibition in the Village Hall of artefacts relating to the VE Day 80 Celebrations. He queried whether it should be referred to as a celebration or a memorial. Cllr J Ross said that literature is available on the internet giving details of the day.

A member of the Village Hall Trustees stated that when the Trustees met it has been agreed not to increase the hire charges for the coming year.

A member of the public commented that the Annual Parish Meeting can be held any time between March and May.

A member of the public stated there is a piece of porcelain which was given to the Parish Council to mark Levington and Stratton Hall winning the Village of the Year Competition. It was agreed that Cllr J Parrish should discuss where the porcelain should be stored. **Action: Cllr J Parrish**

A member of the public said that a notice should be put near the dog bins to remind dog walkers that they need to act responsibly when disposing of dog excreta.

Signed..... Date

Angie Buggs
Clerk to Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council