



EARL STONHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at the Village Hall on **Monday 16th March 2026 at 7.00pm**

Present:

Councillors: M Gillett (Chair)
D Turner (Vice-chair)
S Budd
M Mann
J Barnet-Lamb
D Cawston (Co-opted at the meeting)
D Brenig-Jones (Co-opted at the meeting)

In Attendance Mrs S Edgar – Clerk
Cllr M Hicks – County Councillor
Cllr N Hardingham – District Councillor
4 Members of the Public

ES112/25/26 – TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies had been received and accepted from Cllr H Stanford as he was in Tanzania.

Apologies had been received from Cllr S Baker due to work commitments. It was noted that as 6 months had now passed since Cllr Baker had attended a meeting, she would now be automatically disqualified. Cllr Gillett agreed to contact Cllr Baker to discuss the way forward. Clerk to contact Elections to confirm the process should Cllr Baker wish to remain.

ES113/25/26 – TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

ES114/25/26 – TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

None received.

ES115/25/26 – TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th JANUARY 2026

It was AGREED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2026 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

ES116/25/26 – PUBLIC FORUM

Simon Oldfield, resident, was present at the meeting and gave an update on the Debenham Road Campaign. The Speed Survey on Blacksmiths Lane had been carried out w/c 6th March 2026. Residents believe that it was not the ideal time, as there is belief the traffic levels are reduced due to the current economic climate, which may affect the results. Cllr Hicks confirmed the Officers View can be challenged, adding residents are able to carry out as many speed surveys as they wish to support the cause, if they can fund the cost of these.

ES117/25/26 – CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLORS

The Clerk had circulated the two applications received prior to the meeting.

IT WAS AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: To appoint Derek Cawston & Diana Brenig-Jones to fill the two vacancies and both individuals accepted the respective positions.

Cllr Gillett welcomed the new councillors and invited them to partake in the rest of the meeting.

ES118/25/26 – TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HICKS

Cllr Hicks had provided a report which had been circulated prior to the meeting and published on the village website.

Cllr Hicks read through the main points as follows:

- Norwich to Tilbury: The full report had now been circulated. The County Council still object to the proposals and believe offshore is an affordable option if the deadline is extended.
- Highways: Trial scheme to allow the removal of vehicles blocking resurfacing works which have been notified in advance. Each abortive visit for works costs the taxpayer significant money and frustration having to reschedule works.
- SCC Restructure: CEO to step down and joint CEOs are recommended for appointment saving circa £90kpa.

ES119/25/26 - TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) TO REVIEW THE ACTION TRACKER

The Clerk provided an update on any items with notable progress that were not listed elsewhere on the agenda including:

- Transfer of website to .gov.uk – No progress to date as we would like to redesign the website at the point of transfer. The Clerk had chased Suffolk Cloud who are still in the process of updating templates for this but had provided a link showing a mockup to date.
- Tree Stump on Village Green – The Clerk confirmed quotes had been provided for stump grinding which ranged from £400-500. Other alternatives suggested are to use copper nails or drilling and chemicals to kill the stump and speed up the decay process. This would still take a fair amount of time and there were concerns regarding these methods in a public area. With no clear consensus on the way forward Cllr Gillett suggested we hold, pending the quotes for other works to determine what funding is available.
- Fen Lane – The Clerk confirmed works had commenced which included works to the drainage system prior to repair of the road. No timescales had been provided by Highways and a response had not been received regarding a detailed breakdown of the planned works.

The Clerk confirmed chasers had been sent on all other necessary ongoing items.

b) CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk advised she had carried out an exercise with Cllr Turner to cross reference the people on the village email list against properties in the parish. The results confirmed we only have around a third of the village on the mailing list. Cllr Turner had included a flyer with the latest Recorder deliveries to try to encourage people to register their details and confirmed we had only had a few additions since.

The Clerk had received an update from MSDC regarding the recycling bins sited at the village hall. Their plan is as follows:

- Glass - To remain and monitor usage
- Paper – Will be removed by September 2026
- Textile – Will remain with collections to continue via the current third party

The Clerk advised two contractors had been approached regarding quotes for the remainder of the tree works but these had not yet been received.

On a request made for volunteers to form a committee for the Norwich to Tilbury project, it was confirmed that no one had come forward. Cllr Gillett confirmed we have registered and submitted our original comments, but the ongoing process is not an accessible one.

ES120/25/26 – TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HARDINGHAM

Cllr Hardingham was present at the meeting and read through the main points of his report as follows:

- Call for Sites – There are two submitted for Earl Stonham land opposite Village Hall and Haggars Mead - although a resident stated there should be a third and fourth also.
- Norwich to Tilbury – MSDC have called for a delay to the project to allow time for alternatives to be considered and costed.
- MSDC Budget - Has been approved which included a 2.99% increase in Council Tax.

A copy of the full report will be uploaded to the village website once received.

Cllr Gillett raised the ongoing enforcement cases with Cllr Hardingham as follows:

- Shepherd & Dog – It was clearly being used for residential purposes and Cllr Hardingham agreed to re-raise but stated whilst it is still set up with the capacity to trade as a pub, enforcement is unlikely. Cllr Gillett confirmed this was understood but would like the issue resolved and the necessary application made for change of use rather than going nowhere.
- Moat Farm – Out of hours working had again been reported. Cllr Hardingham suggested dated photo evidence would be useful rather than just verbal accounts.
- Wicks Lane – The fencing is currently a live case.
- Mobile Homes to rear of Roseholm – Cllr Hardingham confirmed the process is first to negotiate, then allow a retrospective application if this is likely to be approved. If not, enforcement then takes place. This case has now been escalated to a senior enforcement officer.

ES121/25/26 - TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT AND FINANCIAL MATTERS (Continued)

c) TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk reported on the Council's current financial position and movements since the last meeting. It was reported that the balance in the accounts on 28th February 2026 was £7,799.88.

The Clerk confirmed we had received some confirmed costs on items we had to estimate for the budget being Grass Cutting, which has increased by 10% versus the 7.5% forecast which had a minimal impact at circa £40. Bin emptying costs had come in with only a minimal increase, despite what was expected, so there was a benefit of around £400.

Since setting the budget, correspondence had been received regarding the renewal of the Microsoft Licence, which was initially set up in March 2025 as part of the laptop package for the new Clerk. As this item was approved after 2024/25 budget and therefore not included, the item required approval. **IT WAS AGREED:** To renew the Microsoft Licence at a cost of £115+VAT which remains unchanged from the prior year.

The Clerk confirmed invoices had been issued for Recorder advertising <https://grammartrinds.com/totalling-vs-totaling/> totalling £355. £165 had been paid to date and one advertiser had cancelled.

On allotment revenues, all were paid apart from Mr Nunn. The Clerk confirmed we only hold a postal address for the individual and despite attempts via other means, no response had been received. Cllr Budd agreed to liaise with the family regarding payment.

d) TO AUTHORISE PAYMENTS AND NOTE RECEIPTS

The Clerk reported the following payments be authorised: -

ESVH	Hall Hire 19th January 2026	£14.00
D Turner	Xmas Tree Lights	£52.01
Paul Williamson Ltd	Christmas Tree	£150.00
Susan Edgar	Clerk's Office Allowance/Exp (January)	£26.00
Susan Edgar	Clerks Salary (January)	£318.85
Vertas Group Ltd	Grass Cutting 01/01/26-31/03/26	£463.36
BT Group PLC	Broadband for Village Hall	£32.34
ESVH	Transfer of payment from ESPCC received in error	£375.00
Forward Africa	Donation	£100.00
ESPCC	Donation	£600.00
Susan Edgar	Clerk's Office Allowance/Exp (February)	£63.49
Susan Edgar	Clerks Salary (February)	£318.85

It was AGREED: That payments totalling £2,513.90 be approved.

The following receipts were noted:

Lloyds	Savings Interest	£10.25
Jack De-Cova	Allotment Rental	£202.15
Resident Donation	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£100.00
Resident Donation	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£100.00
Resident Donation	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£120.00
Resident Donation	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£80.00
Resident Donation	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£100.00
Resident Donation	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£100.00
Lloyds	Savings Interest	£9.48
Resident Donation	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£30.00
Stonham Parva PC	Debenham Road Campaign Donation	£100.00

e) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

Cllr Mann confirmed that he had checked the relevant documents in relation to the bank reconciliation.

It was AGREED: That the Bank Reconciliation be approved.

f) **INTERNAL AUDITOR**

The Clerk confirmed SALC were able to carryout our audit for the 2025/26 year and had provided a copy of their Letter of Engagement which had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting.

IT WAS AGREED: To accept the terms of engagement and appoint SALC as our Internal Auditor for the 2025/26 year.

ES122/25/26 – APPROVAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following policies and procedures were reviewed and approved as follows:

- a) Internal Audit Control and Risk Management Arrangements – A review was undertaken of the Internal Audit Controls. On the Risk Assessment, items had been added for Other Income, Payment of Invoices and Traveller Encampments.
- b) Financial Regulations and Standing Orders – Annual Review. No changes since adopted in May 2025.
- c) Data Protection Policy – Annual Review. No changes. The Clerk advised this was not on a NALC standard and we should look to adopt these going forward which was agreed by councillors.
- d) Document Retention Policy – Annual Review. No changes. The Clerk advised this was not on a NALC standard and we should look to adopt these going forward which was agreed by councillors.
- e) Publication Scheme – Amendments had been made for the new Clerk’s details and accessibility and the addition of some policies – Sexual Harassment and IT. The Clerk advised we should also adopt the ICO publication scheme in full which was agreed.
- f) Sexual Harassment Policy – Annual Review. No changes.
- g) IT Policy – A new policy had been drafted to cover off the requirements of Assertion 10.

ES123/25/26 – PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Clerk confirmed no applications had been received in the period

ES124/25/26 – PLANNING DECISIONS

The Clerk confirmed no decisions had been received on applications in the period

ES125/25/26 – SOLAR FARM

The Clerk confirmed following a request that a written update had been received. There is still no firm construction programme due to delays with confirmation of connection to grid, relating to changes under the “Gate 2 Process”. This had been expected by the end of 2025 and although they have been notified they will receive an offer, with connection prior to 2030, the full details of this are yet to be confirmed.

ES126/25/26 – A1120

Cllr Gillett confirmed he had been in contact with Highways regarding the condition of the road. Over the last six months since the SID’s had been installed, data shows circa 500k vehicles have travelled through. The road is also subsiding on the edges due to HGVs having to get close to the road edge when passing other HGVs. Highways have forwarded the information to the asset team to comment on the future planning.

ES127/25/26 – UPDATES

- a) **Speeding** – Cllr Gillett confirmed most vehicles are driving at less than 35MPH based on the SID data and is hopeful that Speedwatch will be carry out some sessions in the summer months.
- b) **Footpaths** – Cllr Turner raised whether the bi-annual (March/September) footpath meeting is required. It was proposed that rather than have the separate meeting, the Clerk contact Tony Stevens for any issues and the dates of the Village Walks and add to the main agenda for March & September.
- c) **Village Hall** – The new screen had now been installed to assist visibility and works were due to be carried out to repair the potholes in the carpark.

ES128/25/26 – MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr Barnet-Lamb spoke about a recent news story regarding the death of a 15-year-old and how in connection with this he was hoping to arrange a CPR Training session in connection with the Air Ambulance. Cllr Turner agreed to circulate on the village email to gauge interest.

ES129/25/26 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday, 18th May 2025 at 7:00pm – This will be the Annual Parish Meeting followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting. Cllr Turner offered her apologies as she will be on holiday for the next meeting. Cllr Gillett raised the point of a speaker and suggested a charity associated with sudden adult death – availability would need to be confirmed. No other suggestions were made. Clerk to contact WI about refreshments.

The meeting finished at 8:38pm

Chair..... Dated.....