



Earl Stonham Annual Parish Council Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held at the Village Hall at 9pm on
Monday 18th May 2026

Present:

Councillors: M Gillett (Chair)
S Budd
H Stanford
M Mann
J Barnet-Lamb
D Cawston
D Brenig-Jones

In Attendance S Edgar – Clerk
L Stone

ES07/26/27 – ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr Gillett declared the meeting open.

Cllr Stanford proposed that Cllr Gillett be elected as Chair, which was seconded by Cllr Barnet-Lamb.

Decision – Cllr Gillett was duly elected Chair.

Cllr Gillett accepted and then took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

ES08/26/27 – ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Cllr Mann proposed that Cllr Turner be elected as Vice-Chair, which was seconded by Cllr Gillett.

Although absent, Cllr Turner had confirmed prior to the meeting she would be willing to continue as Vice-Chair. **Decision** – Cllr Turner was duly elected Vice-Chair.

ES09/26/27 – TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Turner.

ES10/26/27 – TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

ES11/26/27 – TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

None had been received.

ES12/26/27 – TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16th MARCH 2026

It was AGREED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2026 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

ES13/26/27 – PUBLIC FORUM

One member of the public was present. No matters were raised.

ES14/26/27 – TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HICKS

It was NOTED: That the County Councillor was not present at the meeting and that he had attended and submitted a report to the Annual Parish Meeting that was held prior to this meeting.

ES15/26/27 – TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – CLLR HARDINGHAM

It was NOTED: That the District Councillor was not present at the meeting and that he had attended and submitted a report to the Annual Parish Meeting that was held prior to this meeting.

ES16/26/27 - TO APPOINT REPRESENTATIVES TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

- a) **SUFFOLK ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (SALC) – Decision** – Cllr Gillett was appointed representative to SALC.
- b) **VILLAGE HALL – Decision** – Cllr Gillett was appointed representative to the Village Hall.
- c) **CHURCH – Decision** – Cllr Stanford was appointed representative to the Church.
- d) **COMMUNITY EMERGENCY VILLAGE HALL KEY HOLDERS – Decision** – Cllr Turner and Cllr Gillett were appointed key holders for the Village Hall.
- e) **EARL STONHAM TRUSTEES – Decision** – Cllr Budd and Tony Turner were appointed representative to the Earl Stonham Trustees.
- f) **RECORDER PUBLICATION – Decision** – Cllr Turner was appointed representative for the Recorder Publication.
- g) **RECORDER DISTRIBUTION – Decision** – Cllr Brenig-Jones was appointed representative for the Recorder Distribution.
- h) **CAROLS ON THE GREEN – Decision** – Cllr Stanford was appointed representative for Carols on the Green.
- i) **FOOTPATHS – Decision** – Cllr Budd, Cllr Turner and Cllr Mann were appointed representatives for the Footpaths.

ES17/26/27 – AUTHORISATION OF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

It was AGREED: That the annual subscription of £319.74 be paid to the Suffolk Association of Local Councils to renew the Parish Council's membership.

ES18/26/27 – TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) TO REVIEW THE ACTION TRACKER

The Clerk provided an update on any items with significant progress to include:

- Transfer of website to .gov.uk – New templates are still not available. Ro at Pear Space has confirmed we are able to transfer on the current style and update later. The new templates are an additional cost to those quoted for the transfer from .org to .gov. To proceed we would need to confirm the domain name to register and what emails we require. It was agreed we are not keen on migrating all data from the current site. Cllr Gillett suggested we contact Suffolk Cloud for a price comparison on the transfer, check if timescales are available for the new templates and try to clear up anything that is no longer relevant on the current site. **Clerk/Cllr Gillett to action.**
- Footpath Signs – Clerk has now emailed SCC direct with all outstanding issues logged that have now twice disappeared of the "Report It" tool although not fixed and still received no response. **Agreed to send to Cllr Hicks to follow up, Clerk to action.**
- Mobile Homes to rear of Roseholme – Now with a senior enforcement officer. No meaningful response from the Mace's. Site visit was to be arranged, however Cllr Gillett confirmed this had been refused. **Cllr Gillett to email Cllr Hardingham to progress.**

b) TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk confirmed receipt of a successful audit and commented that the auditor this year had been much more thorough than previously, with suggestions provided for improvement which would be covered later on the agenda.

The Clerk confirmed two quotes had been received for the tree works, which had been circulated. The level of these would mean the need to schedule work over 2-3 years. The third company contacted had not responded, so an alternative had been sought and a meeting was arranged for the following week.

c) TO RECEIVE THE CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT

A Budget Monitoring report had been circulated for both the 2025/26 end of year and to date. On the year end budget, the Clerk commented that although expenditure was around £1,900 more than the higher income received, around £1200 of this was additional VAT, which would

be reclaimed and £925 were SID donations, spent this year, which were received the prior year.

On the current year, the Clerk confirmed we had received the first installment of the precept along with a payment of £1,537.36 for CiL relating to Whitehouse Old Barn which was not expected. Confirmation of the Grass Cutting increase has come in at £1,698.96 which was slightly above the budgeted figure of £1,660. Cllr Cawston asked whether we are tied under a contract for this and Cllr Gillett suggested we look to approach other companies to obtain comparisons for the next financial year. **Clerk to action.**

The Clerk confirmed we had received the upfront Recycling payment for 2026-28 which would be the final payment irrespective of recycling going forward. The Clerk asked if this was to be transferred to the Village Hall as with previous payments. Cllr Gillett declared an interest and so did not comment. **IT WAS AGREED:** with all remaining Cllrs to transfer the payment to the Village Hall. **Clerk to action**

d) **TO AUTHORISE PAYMENTS AND NOTE RECEIPTS**

The Clerk reported the following payments be authorised:

CFB IT Solutions	Microsoft License Renewal	£138.00
D Turner	Recorder Expenses 2025/26	£25.00
Susan Edgar	Clerks Salary (April)	£432.12
Susan Edgar	Clerks Office Allowance/Exp (April)	£26.00
SCC	Debenham Road Speed Report	£750.00
SALC	Membership 2026/27	£319.74
BT GROUP PLC	Broadband for Village Hall	£35.94

It was AGREED: That payments totaling £1,726.80 be approved.

The following receipts were also noted:

Lloyds	Savings Interest	£7.91
Quove Accounting	Recorder Advert 2026	£30.00
MSDC	Precept 1st Instalment & CiL	£6,263.86
MSDC	Recycling Credit Feb 2026-Jan 2028	£1,232.00

e) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

Cllr Mann confirmed that he had checked the relevant documents in relation to both the End of Year 2025/26 and current bank reconciliation.

It was AGREED: That the Bank Reconciliations for the year ending 31st March 2026 and current to 30th April 2026 be approved.

f) **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Annual Governance Statement was approved by the Council and signed by the Chair and the Clerk.

g) **END OF YEAR 31ST MARCH 2026 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Statement of Accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting and was presented for approval. **Decision** – approved and signed by the Chair and the Clerk

h) **EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE**

The Exemption Certificate was approved and signed by the Chair and Clerk.

i) **INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The Internal Auditor's Report was received and the Clerk had produced a summary of actions which had been circulated.

It had been noted that our level of General Reserves, which stood at £2,452 at 31st March 2026, are low, which the Clerk had highlighted at budget. It was suggested that a General Reserve Policy is adopted to ensure the recommended level of 3-12 months of expenditure is achieved. Based on the 2026/27 budget this would be between £4-16k. Cllr Gillett requested this be drafted for consideration at the next meeting. **Clerk to action.**

It had been picked up via audit the annual donation made to Forward Africa is 'Ultra Vires' meaning the Council does not have an appropriate power under which to make this spend. The Clerk confirmed we would therefore not be able to make this donation moving forward.

It had been suggested to keep a record of online payment authorisations. The Clerk confirmed emails are already being held and has now also added a column to the cashbook to record this information, to make retrieval easier.

The auditor had advised adoption of the SALC Internal Control Statement. **Clerk to draft.**

The website accessibility statement is out of date and accessibility should be tested annually. Cllr Gillett suggested the provider is contacted to update this. **Clerk to action.**

It had again been raised regarding Councillors having separate emails for council correspondence. If there is no additional cost for this, it was agreed to have these set up for all Councillors when we move to .gov.uk.

There were also some other minor 'best practice' advisories that the Clerk would implement going forward.

j) **CIL REPORT**

The Clerk confirmed we had carried over £3,596.64 and there had been no receipts for CiL within the year. The report had been drafted to include the expenditure of CiL for the Tree Survey and Tree Removal, totaling £975 leaving a balance of £2,621.64.

The CiL report was approved and signed by the Chair and Clerk.

k) **ASSET REGISTER**

The asset register had been updated to include the addition of the two Speed Indicator Devices. There had been no disposals in the year.

It was AGREED: That the Asset Register be approved.

ES19/26/27 – PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Clerk confirmed no new applications had been received within the period.

ES20/26/27 - PLANNING DECISIONS

The following decision was noted:

Ref: DC/26/00275 – Householder Application - Erection of Detached Garage and Garden Shed.
April Meadow, Stearns Lane, Earl Stonham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 5HR – **Granted**

ES21/26/27 – COUNCILLOR VACANCIES

The Clerk confirmed that following no response to the official advertising of the Councillor vacancy, we were now able to co-opt the position. This has been posted on the village website, noticeboards and village email, but no applicants have come forward to date.

ES22/26/27 – UPDATES

- a) **Speeding** – Details of the latest SID data had been presented at the earlier Annual Parish Meeting (APM). Cllr Gillett confirmed we are awaiting the outcome of the Debenham Road/Blacksmiths Lane speed report and will provide an update once received. In regard to Angel Hill, we await the proposed site location from residents, as raised at the earlier APM and also any volunteers for Speedwatch Training. Cllr Gillett also confirmed that Speedwatch had resumed.
- b) **Footpaths** – Cllr Gillett noted that although some footpaths have been cut the one along the menage up to Mud Hall is very overgrown.
- c) **Village Hall** – An update had been given at the earlier APM.

ES23/26/27 - MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr Budd notified the hedge at Lilac Cottage was encroaching onto the road to the point cars were having to use the verge on the other side. **Clerk to write to request this be cut back in line with the property boundary.**

Cllr Gillett and Cllr Stanford expressed their gratitude to Josh at Highways for the Fen Lane works and requested a note be sent in this regard. **Clerk to action.**

Cllr Cawston raised a query from residents regarding whether Fen Lane could be defined under the “Quiet Lane” scheme. Cllr Gillett confirmed this scheme ended some time ago.

Cllr Brenig-Jones raised the issue with the original Coronation Oak dying. The Clerk confirmed this matter had been dealt with and had received confirmation a replacement should have been planted in February 2026. **Cllr Brenig-Jones to check this is in situ.**

ES24/26/27 - DATES OF 2026/27 MEETINGS

It was AGREED: That the followings dates be approved for the 2026/27 meetings:

Monday 20th July 2026

Monday 21st September 2026

Monday 16th November 2026

Monday 18th January 2027

Monday 15th March 2027

Monday 17th May 2027 – Annual Parish Meeting & Annual Parish Council Meeting

ES25/26/27 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 20th July 2026 at 7:00pm

The meeting finished at 9.56pm.

Chair: Dated: