**Offton and Willisham Parish Council**

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at Offton & Willisham Village Hall on Tuesday 6th May 2025 at 7:30pm.

Present: Cllr A Cox (V.Chair) Cllr S Frost

Cllr B Wilcox Cllr S Bannister

Cllr C Pinson-Roxburgh Cllr C Eves

Dst Cllr D Pratt 1 Member of the Public

Clerk - T Davis

**Action**

| **1.**  **a)**  **b)**  **c)**  **d)**  **e)** | **Meeting administration (note: Clerk to open meeting if past Chair not present following election)**  **To Elect the Chair and Vice Chair of Offton & Willisham Parish Council**  Vice Chair Cllr Cox asked for nominations for Chair. Cllr Cox advised that Cllr Wells was happy to stand again as Chair and asked for any other nominations. As the only Cllr offering to stand as Chair, Cllr Cox Proposed, this was seconded by Cllr Wilcox and unanimously **AGREED**. Cllr Cox continued to Chair the meeting and welcomed everyone.  **To Co-opt a Councillor** - none to co-opt, to place on next agenda  **To sign Acceptance of Declaration of Office & Data Consent Forms**  This was carried out by all Councillors present  **To consider & Approve Apologies for absence**  Apologies were given from Cllr Wells and Cllr Seddon along with Cty Cllr Oakes  **To receive Declarations of interest on agenda items**  Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh notified the council of a non-pecuniary interest for item 13f |  |
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| **2.**  **a)** | **To Approve the draft minutes of 18th March 2025 and for the Chairman to sign as a true record**  The minutes were Unanimously **AGREED**  Matters arising from 18th March minutes  None |  |
| **3.** | **Public Participation Session** (To hear reports from the County Councillor, District Councillor and Comments from the Public)  A resident arrived early to advise of a housing issue and communication with Mid Suffolk District Council this was noted by the Clerk and relayed to Cllr Pratt on their arrival. Cty Cllr Oakes report was noted by Council. Dst Cllr Pratt had presented their report and was happy to take any questions and confirmed they would take forward the housing issue. |  |
| **4.** | **To confirm the General Power of Competence (GPC) does not apply**  This was noted by the Council |  |
| **5.** | **Chair Report, reports from other Councillors not requiring a decision**  A written report from Cllr Wells was given as below which was read out by Cllr Cox:-  **Flood Planning**  In response to flooding in the parishes, we have set up a working committee to review our flood plans and to provide resources that can be accessed by the community to respond and prepare for adverse weather. This has been led by Councillor’s Seddon and Bannister who have done an excellent job in engaging County and District Councils to consolidate resources and information as well as setting up regular public meetings to review proposals.  **Pylons**  The Council has been supporting local Pylon Groups in their efforts to highlight the impact on our parishes of the proposed solution and route of the Norwich to Tilbury pylon route. We have been part of a tour of the locality by local MP Patrick Spencer and have his support in opposition of the proposal by National Grid. We have also submitted responses to consultations to the Government and National Grid with support and collaboration from local and regional pylons groups.  **Village Hall**  We continue to support the Village Hall and have extended our financial support of the venue, recognizing the value that it brings to local community groups.  **Biodiversity**  We have worked with the District Council with the support of Councillor Dan Pratt to explore ways that we can support the biodiversity aims of the Council through the planting of trees and hedgerows in our parishes.  **Rural Transport**  We had early engagement with Passenger Transport groups looking to provide bus routes for the rural communities and are pleased to see the Mid-Suffolk Taxi Bus service up and running and will be keen to see this benefiting Offton and Willisham as the routes are expanded.  I would like to thank all the Councillors for their hard work and efforts over the past year and our Clerk, Teresa Davis, for her organisation, administration and advice over the period. |  |
| **6.** | **Clerk Report, with details of emails and correspondence up to the period 22nd April 2025**  Since the last meeting I have continued to manage the administrative and financial tasks of the council including in this period organising the Annual Village Meeting (AVM), End of Year Accounts and keeping up to date on Local Government Reorganisation. Final accounts have been prepared for audit, the internal auditor has reviewed the accounts and the AGAR is ready for review and signature. All decisions needed are listed on the agenda this evening.  Feedback from SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils) have confirmed the ability set out in Law to make a grant which contributes to the running costs of the Village Hall. Policies have been reviewed and two have been updated and forwarded to Councillors for this evening. Dates recommended for this financial year have been listed at the end of the agenda ready for discussion. Reports received have been forwarded to Councillors for the AVM |  |
| **7.** | **To discuss and agree proposed dates for Parish Council meetings up to May 2026 and the APM for 2026**  **Tuesday 8th July 2025, Tuesday 2th September 2025**  **Tuesday 4th November 2025, Tuesday 6th January 2026**  **Tuesday 3rd March 2026, Tuesday 5th or 12th May 2026 for Annual Council and APM**  The above dates were noted and unanimously **AGREED** by Council | **Clerk** |
| **8.**  **i)**  **ii)**  **iii)**  **iv)**  **v)**  **vi)**  **vii)**  **viii)**  **ix)**  **x)**  **xi)** | **To review & adopt or re-adopt policies:-**  **Internal Control policy review**  **Risk Assessment & Management Policy**  **NALC Financial Orders to include the updates to Procurement**  **NALC Standing Orders to include the updates to Procurement**  **LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct**  **Equality and Diversity Policy**  **Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities**  **ICO Model Publication Scheme & Information Publication Policy and fees**  **Data Policies, Cookie, Retention & Privacy**  **Grants and Donations Policy**  **Safeguarding Policy**  The above policies were brought together, it was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to adopt the above policies i-xi |  |
| **9.** | **To discuss forming or keeping committees, panels or working groups for 2025-2026 eg: Employment Panel**  Councillors discussed the need for existing groups and panels. It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to keep the Flood Working Group and Employment Panel. Discussion took place in respect of potential new groups to be formed. It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously AGREED to establish a Pylon Working Group with Cllr Eves and Cllr Pinson-Roxburgh as leads for this group. This group can then feedback and update the Parish Council and put forward recommendations for decisions. |  |
| **10.** | **To review the Standing Items on the agenda:-**  **i) Road Erosion -** This was deferred to wait for Cty Cllr Oakes to provide an update  **ii) Emergency Flood Plan -**Invites would be sent out to the next update |  |
| **11.** | **To (re)appoint new councillor(s) to maintain the Parish Council Defibrillator**  Both existing Councillors, Cllr Cox and Cllr Wells were happy to continue in this role |  |
| **12.** | **To review training needs for councillors**  Cllrs agreed to review the training available from SALC and to let the Clerk know when they would like to undertake training, such as the introductory course specifically for Councillors. | **Clls &**  **Clerk** |
| **13.**  **a)**  **b)**  **c)**  **d)**  **e)**  **f)**  **g)**  **h)** | **Finance**  **Current Bank Balances as at 31st March 2025:-**  **Current Account = £1,816.56**  **Savings Account = £14,855.66**  **Barclays residual = £00.04**  **Known Income received as at 30th April 2025 –**   * + 1. **BMSDC Precept - £5,900.50p**   **To confirm payments made since 18th March 2025 meeting**  **i. HMRC P30 - £5.00**   * + 1. **Clerk Wages April - £421.94**     2. **Yr End Wages Correction - £0.88p**   **To approve payments for authorisation (Resolution required)**  **i. SALC Payroll - £54.00**  **ii. Clerk Wages for May - £421.94**  **iii. Clerk Mileage, Expenses & Office Allowance - £118.65**  **iiv. SALC Membership - £324.63**  **iiiv. Heelis & Lodge (Internal Auditor) - £130.00**  **ix. Village Hall Room Hire for year ending March 2026 - £135.00**  The payments i-ix were Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously AGREED to be paid.  **To review, approve and for the Chair and RFO to sign the CIL expenditure for year end 31st March 2025** Council reviewed the CIL expenditure form and noted the ringfenced funds for the Compost Toilet. This was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** and Cllr Cox as acting Chair signed the documentation along with the RFO (Clerk).  **To Review and Approve the Offton & Willisham Village Hall Grant application of £700 plus the reimbursement of the Oil invoice for £640.14 which is in line with legislation LURA 2023 highlighting running costs & the LGA 1972 S.133 - a total grant of £1340.14 for 2025-26 (£340.14 over budget)**  The Council were glad the right legislation had been located and the increase in grant to the Village Hall on the basis above was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to be paid  **To confirm transfer of £1,500 underspend from the current account to reserves following the end of the 2024-25 financial year**  Council were happy for surplus funds to be transferred to the savings account. It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED**  **To Review and Approve the Year Accounts ending 31st March 2025**  Council were happy to accept the accounts for the full year, this was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** | **Clerk**  **Chair**  **Clerk**  **Clerk**  **Clerk** |
| **14.** | **To (re)appoint a Councillor to review financial accounts prepared by the RFO each quarter**  Council were happy to reappoint Cllr Cox to review the accounts for the financial year head |  |
| **15.** | **To discuss & approve Bankers for 2025-26 (RFO recommends continuing with Unity Bank Online)**  Council were unanimously **AGREED** to stay with Unity Bank |  |
| **16.** | **To discuss & approve Internal Auditor for 2025-26 (RFO Recommends keeping Heelis & Lodge)**  Council were unanimously **AGREED** to remain with Heelis & Lodge |  |
| **17.** | **To discuss & approve Workplace Pension Scheme for 2025-2026**  It was noted by Council that a letter would be sent to the Clerk in respect of this | **Clerk** |
| **18.** | **To review & approve Internal Auditor Report for 2024-2025 accounts (no recommendations)**  Council had reviewed the report & thanked the Clerk for another favourable internal audit with no recommendations. It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to approve | **Clerk** |
| **19.** | **To review & approve the Annual Governance & Accountability Return Section 1 (Resolution required)**  Council had reviewed Section 1 of the AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return). It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to approve | **Clerk** |
| **20.** | **To review & approve the Annual Governance & Accountability Return Section 2 (Resolution required)**  Council had reviewed Section 2 of the AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return). It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to approve | **Clerk** |
| **21.** | **To review & approve the Certificate of Exemption (Resolution required)**  Council had reviewed Certificate of Exemption for the AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return). It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously **AGREED** to approve | **Clerk** |
| **22.** | **To confirm regular payments that will be made over £100 during 2025-2026:-**  **i. Clerk Monthly Wages £421.94**  **ii. SALC Annual Membership Fees up to £350**  **iii. Zurich Insurance up to £400**  **iv. MSDC Annual Litter and Dog Bin up to £350**  Council reviewed the regular payments yet to be made over the year. It was Proposed, Seconded and Unanimously AGREED for these payments to be made a reported on after they had been carried out. | **Clerk** |
| **23.** | **Planning & Governance Consultations**  **i) BMSDC - Statement of Community Involvement on Planning notifications - Closes 12th May**  Council discussed this consultation and were concerned about the lack of letters, especially for older people and felt that more letters should be received, not just neighbours. | **Clerk** |
| **24.** | **To discuss plans for an Offton & Willisham Summer Celebration**  This matter was discussed and Cllr Frost volunteered to be organiser with a view to organise something in August if others were able to help in some way. | **Clerk** |
| **25.** | ***item 25 to be heard without the public due to meeting exemption within the Openness of Local Government Bodies Act 2014 s.1.2.***  **To Discuss and Approve Clerk holiday request**  The Clerk’s holiday was **AGREED** |  |
| **26.** | **Next Meeting 8th July 2025 at 7:30pm** |  |

**Meeting Closed at 8:50pm**

**Addendum**

1. **Dst Councillor Report - May**

**District Council Report for Battisford and Ringshall Ward**

**Including Barking, Battisford, Great Bricett, Ringshall, Offton and Willisham**

**Free Compost for Mid Suffolk Residents**

Residents in Mid Suffolk can collect free compost this spring. The aim is to support people to live a greener and healthier lifestyle through growing their own food and plants. The giveaway coincides with International Compost Awareness Week form 4th to 10th May. The nearest collection event is taking place at Needham Lake on Sunday 11th May from 8 am. The event will run on a first come first serve basis and attendees are allowed a maximum of two bags per vehicle.

**Funding for Community Projects**

Our website now includes a new webpage to promote our available funding schemes and non-financial support. The new page covers information on financial support for a range of community projects and events. For more information see - <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/community-funding>. Other funding streams include the Suffolk Greenest County’s Climate Community Match Funder and Aviva’s Community Fund.

**Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation updates**

Mid Suffolk held an additional full council meeting on April 10to discuss the council response to the consultation on the Government’s devolution plans. Mid Suffolk councillors recognised the positive impact a mayor could potentially bring but also shared concerns of limited representation of community leaders at the mayoral level. Councils in Suffolk share the view that more devolved powers from government could bring benefits for the region, but conversely, a centralisation of power away from local communities would lose the benefit of local expertise and knowledge.

All District and Borough Councils in Suffolk have published their joint proposals for two or three unitary authorities across the county, but the exact boundaries for these authorities is yet to be determined. This contrasts with Suffolk County Council’s vision for a single unitary authority in Suffolk. Letters to this effect have now been sent and acknowledged by the Secretary of State. Now more detailed business plans for the proposed new authorities will need to be finalised and agreed.

**Locality Awards**

The Locality Grant fund is now closed for 2024/25 but will re-open for applications when the next round of funding begins - hopefully in late May/early June. More information can be found at:  <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/web/mid-suffolk/w/locality-awards>    

| **Dr Dan Pratt**  Ward Member for Battisford and Ringshall  Chair of Mid Suffolk District Council  **E:** [daniel.pratt@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.pratt@midsuffolk.gov.uk)  **T:** 07775389193 | Chief Executive's Office |  |
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1. **Cty Cllr Report - May**

County Council report – May 2025

# Flood schemes cash from government welcomed by council

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Operational Highways and Flooding, has welcomed confirmation by the Environment Agency of funding for flood relief schemes in Suffolk.

The agency has announced that it will be spending £68 million on projects across East Anglia, of which flood schemes in Suffolk have been allocated more than £14 million.

Flood relief schemes across Suffolk will receive a share of the money from the Environment Agency.

Flood resilience schemes in Needham Market and Debenham as a result of Storm Babet also get funding - £560,000 in Needham Market and £81,000.

These projects, led by the Environment Agency, will fund flood doors and other measures to prevent flood water entering individual properties.

Suffolk County Council supported the EA to identify affected homes and promote the availability of this funding.

The council’s Flood Investigations and Grants Team also administers a separate grant fund specifically to support those properties flooded during Storm Babet. This grant closes for new applications in May.

# Suffolk Highways launches weeds and grass management programme for 2025

Spring has sprung and Suffolk Highways has commenced its summer maintenance works, which will see teams cut thousands of miles of grass verges and treat 2,300 miles of weeds.

Grass cutting is scheduled to start in May, with the grass verges alongside A and B roads across Suffolk being cut first and receiving two cuts each summer.

Verges alongside smaller roads, such as the county’s C and U class roads, will be cut once during the summer season.

Cutting is typically undertaken by tractors with a flail as this is the most efficient and effective way to undertake the vegetation works and dry weather is required as, similarly to household mowers, wet grass can clog the machinery.

These cuts are solely for safety purposes and district and borough councils will usually supplement these with amenity cuts throughout the year.

Suffolk Highways does not cut village greens, parks and open spaces, or rural verges that are not adjacent to the road.

Weed treatments have already commenced across the county.

Two treatments are applied to weeds in urban areas across Suffolk annually if it is deemed that the weeds may pose a safety risk due to obscuring visibility for road users or causing damage to pavements, kerbs, or surrounding walls.

Weeds in rural areas are not included in the annual weed treatment programme but will be treated on a site-specific basis if they are identified as being harmful or noxious.

All weed treatments are weather dependent and cannot be applied in high winds or if rain is forecast due to this reducing the effectiveness of the treatment.

Glyphosate is currently used for the treatment as this is not harmful to people or pets and has proved to be more effective than alternatives previously trialled in Suffolk.

However, a substitute for this is still being sought to support Suffolk County Council’s continued ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

Further information on the [grass cutting programme](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-pavements-and-verges/trees-grass-and-weeds/grass-cutting) and [weed treatment programme](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-pavements-and-verges/trees-grass-and-weeds/weed-control), including the planned dates for this to take place in local areas, can be viewed on the council’s website.

# Nature recovery plan aims to revive Suffolk's wildlife

A new strategy has been drafted to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and a consultation has been launched (Wednesday 16 April) for you to share your views.

Suffolk’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help it recover.

Together these strategies will form a national ‘nature network’, proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Suffolk County Council has been leading on a strategy for the county, working closely with other local authorities, nature experts, and a wide range of interested organisations.

This has been coordination with Norfolk, through the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](https://www.nsnrp.org/). The two counties are working together to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and connect across the landscape.

The consultation on the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open to everyone in Suffolk - residents, landowners, land managers, farmers, businesses and the wider community.

There is also the opportunity to view and respond to maps of local areas, where specific measures to help nature could be taken.

Both opportunities to provide feedback will close on 11 June 2025 and can be found at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations).