

**Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council Meeting**  
Held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 7:00pm  
In Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

Cllr Trevor Bickers

Cllr Rhea Gardner

Cllr Clive Lenton (Chair)

Cllr Gemma Marriage

Cllr Kathryn Roper

Cllr Lynda Seagroatt (Vice-Chair from item 5)

Cllr Mike Ninnmey (ESC)

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

6 members of the public were present

**1. Apologies for absence:**

- a. To receive apologies for absence.  
There were none.
- b. To accept apologies for absence.  
There were none.

**2. To receive any:**

- a. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest.  
There were none.
- b. Declarations of Non-Pecuniary Interest.  
There were none.
- c. Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items.  
There were none.
- d. Declarations of Gifts or Hospitality received over the value of £50.00  
There were none.
- e. Notification of Lobbying with reference to Planning Applications to be discussed.  
There were none.

**3. Public Participation – To receive:**

- a. Reports from County and District Councillors:
  - Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy:

No report or apologies had been received from Cllr Mulcahy. An update on the Council's formal complaint with regards to Cllr Mulcahy's lack of engagement would be discussed at item 11.

Chair's initials: .....

- East Suffolk District Cllr Mike Ninnmey and Cllr Lee Reeves:

Cllr Reeves had sent his apologies, but Cllr Ninnmey was thanked for his attendance and the detailed monthly reports that had been circulated to all Councillors.

Cllr Ninnmey talked at length about various issues involving the District Council and updated Councillors on many local topics.

- b. Questions from any member of the public:

Members of the public were reminded by the Chair that any questions of the Council about agenda items could be asked at this time, but once the meeting reconvened, members of the public would not be permitted to speak again and may only observe the proceedings.

The members of the public present were all Allotment Tenants who gave their opinions on the future use of 'the pit'. Some were keen to continue using the pit as a composting area and many had safety concerns over encouraging other non-tenants into the area. The Chair assured the members of the public that the Council wished to work with them and that he was sure a compromise could be reached that would suit all parties.

**4. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024:**

All Councillors agreed that the Minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Gardner proposed that the Minutes should be signed, this was seconded by Cllr Roper and all Councillors agreed.

The minutes had already been published on the website in draft form in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

**Action: Clerk**

**5. To elect a Vice-Chair of the Council for the remainder of 2024/25 and signing of 'Declaration of Office'.**

Following Cllr Lenton assuming the role of Chair at the last meeting, Cllr Lenton proposed Cllr Seagroatt assume the role of Vice-Chair. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour. Cllr Seagroatt agreed to stand as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the 2024/25 term of office.

**6. Clerk's Report – To receive updates on matters not requiring debate or decision.**

The Clerk had continued to inform the Council of ongoing issues via a weekly email. Much of the work that the Clerk had been involved with was on the agenda, however some specific points were highlighted:

- i. The Clerk reported that the bike jumps on the Playing Field had been completed, with Jake Nichols from TRU7 very generously supplying 190 tonnes of soil and lending the use of his earth moving machinery at no charge to the Council, and James Perks from Twisted Oaks and his friends expertly shaping the soil into the jumps, all in their own time and again at no cost to the Council. One of the parents of the children who will benefit from using the jumps had organised a collection for bottles of both gentlemen's favourite tippie and a 'thank you' card signed by the children.
- ii. The Clerk reported that the changeover from the previous email address and website to a gov.uk domain name had been far from smooth. Many issues had occurred and the Clerk had spent many hours rectifying the problems. Specialist advice had been sought from Mark Fowler at FowlerWeb, which had been invaluable. Initially, emails sent by the Clerk were not recognised by most other servers and were being blocked or going into Spam or Junk folders. Not all of these issues have been resolved but the Clerk has been assured by Suffolk.Cloud that they will be corrected over time.
- iii. Cllrs Lenton and Marriage, along with the Clerk, had undertaken an inspection of the Allotments. The vast majority of plots were in excellent order and Councillors found very few problems. The Clerk had been asked to write to two Tenants asking them to clear up their plots as they appeared to be unmanaged and their weeds were affecting nearby plots (breaching the terms of their Tenancy Agreement). Both of these Tenants had been asked to tidy up their plots by the end of November, which gave them 10 weeks' notice. A further Tenant had decided to relinquish their plot which freed this up for the next person on the list. All Tenants have paid their annual rent.
- iv. The last communication received from Novus (now called Innova) with regards to the Solar Farm was in August when they stated that they expected to submit the planning application for the cable route operation in the next few months.
- v. The Council cannot submit an application for funding for the Ninja Trail until February 2025, when 12 months will have passed since the previous application.
- vi. The Clerk had received many emails from residents regarding the recent chaos caused by BDUK when installing a fibre network. Suffolk Highways stated that the decision to close the roads was not theirs but was the responsibility of Network Assurance (another department of Suffolk County Council). The Clerk impressed upon Highways the difficulties that had been caused by road closures, including preventing the school bus and an ambulance getting through to the village. The Clerk had organised a BBC Radio Suffolk article to be broadcast from the Shannon, with interviews with a concerned parent and a local business owner to highlight the issues faced. The problems with the school bus not getting through was resolved after the radio piece. No assistance had been received from Cllr Mulcahy.

7. Allotments:

- a. To discuss connecting the Allotments to the water supply.

The Clerk had completed a report for Councillors concerning connecting the Allotments to the water supply following a request from a Tenant. This had been circulated to all Councillors and Tenants on 29<sup>th</sup> October (see Appendix A).

Councillors discussed the request at length. Although CIL funds could be used for this project, given the huge costs involved, and the fact that very few residents would benefit, Cllr Lenton proposed that the project did not go ahead. It was felt that most Tenants had made provisions for the collection of water themselves and did not want to use any mains supply. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour.

The Clerk was thanked for the considerable amount of time that had been spent on the very comprehensive report which had aided Councillors in their decision making.

- b. To discuss the future use of 'the pit'.

When undertaking an inspection of the Allotments in September, Cllrs Lenton and Marriage had been disappointed to discover the pit was being used to dump allotment waste by some Tenants, breaching the terms of the Tenancy Agreement, which states:

*8.r) ...The Tenant will not use the allotment, or allow the allotment to be used, for the storage of rubbish, and will not dump any rubbish on other allotments or **uncultivated areas within the boundaries of the allotment site;***

It was felt by Cllrs Lenton and Marriage that there could be a better use of the land, such as clearing the pit of the rubbish and developing an area to encourage wildlife which could off-set the natural habitat lost by the recent Castlemore Homes development. Councillors were mindful of the request by some Tenants to have a shared composting space and the offer of some tenants to help build and manage this. They also were aware that many Tenants had concerns about non-tenants walking through the site, and the potential for antisocial behaviour and theft from plots. The Clerk was asked to arrange a meeting one weekend morning for Tenants and Councillors to meet on site and speak freely with regards to the best way forward. The Chair stated again that he was certain a compromise could be reached.

- c. To discuss the purchase of a notice board for the site.

The Clerk informed the Council that there were some old, faded signs on the site and that there was no information on display detailing who owned the site, who to contact in the event of a problem, or any health and safety notices. The Clerk suggested purchasing a notice board rather than replacing signs, as the information in a notice board could be updated and changed whenever necessary. The notice board could also show a copy of the Tenancy Agreement for Tenants' reference and other helpful information. The Clerk informed the Council that the cost of a notice board could be covered by CIL funds. Cllr Marriage proposed that the Council purchase a notice board for the Allotments. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in favour.

Action: Clerk

Chair's initials: .....

**8. Documentation:**

- a. To review the 'Risk Assessment (Financial)' and 'Risk Assessment (Non-Financial)' (as sent to Councillors on 06/09/24).

The Risk Assessments, both Financial and Non-Financial, need to be reviewed and re-adopted annually. All Councillors confirmed these documents had been reviewed. The acquisition of the Allotments had been included on the Non-Financial Risk Assessment. The Clerk agreed to publish these documents on the website.

- b. To review 'Asset Register' and approve revised document (as previously sent to Councillors on 06/09/24).

The Clerk reminded the Council that the Asset Register needed to be reviewed and adopted annually, or each time a new asset is included. The Allotments had been added. All Councillors confirmed the Asset Register had been reviewed. The Clerk agreed to publish the Asset Register on the website.

- c. To adopt the Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy (as sent to Councillors on 24/10/24).

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) are encouraging all Councils to adopt such a policy and the Clerk had already circulated a draft to Councillors. The Clerk is due to attend a Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) training on the policy to ensure the Council is fulfilling its obligations. All Councillors confirmed they had read the draft Policy. Cllr Roper asked whether the Disciplinary Panel would be made up of Councillors or independent individuals outside of the Council. The Clerk replied that the Monitoring Officer was appointed by ESC but she would confirm this at her forthcoming training session. Cllr Lenton proposed the Council adopt the Policy and thanked the Clerk for writing this. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour. The Clerk agreed to publish the new policy on the website.

**Action: Clerk**

**9. Planning:**

- a. To discuss planning application DC/24/3525/FUL – Change of use of former watermill from use as offices to residential dwelling, Bucklesham Water Mill, Newbourne Road, Bucklesham IP10 0BY

All Councillors confirmed that they had studied the planning documents in relation to the application before the meeting. Two Councillors had attended a face-to-face meeting on-site at the Water Mill with the applicants, Mr and Mrs Johnston, and Ben Willis, the Director of Vision Design and Planning Consultants. Representatives from Suffolk Highways were also present at the start of the on-site meeting.

Councillors made the following comments:

- I am reassured that the development is a considerate project that would make use of, and therefore preserve, this local landmark.
- This would be a positive addition to the village.
- There is a professional team that have been working on this for some time.
- This is a straightforward renovation and update which will enhance the general location.

Cllr Roper proposed the Council support the application. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in favour. The Clerk was asked to register the Council's support for the application on the ESC Planning Portal.

**Action: Clerk**

**10. Finance Matters:**

- a. To review Accounts as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and review Bank Statements.

The Accounts for 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 had been sent to all Councillors and there were no questions. The Clerk asked Cllr Lenton to sign the Bank Statements and Accounts Sheets.

- b. To discuss and provisionally agree the proposed Budget for 2025/26.

The Clerk had previously sent out the proposed Budget document for Councillors to consider. A lengthy discussion ensued about the best way forward for the year ahead as all costs to the Council had increased and the Budget was very tight. Councillors discussed three or four different items on the Budget and whether the amounts were appropriate. The Clerk was asked to amend the figures in light of the discussion.

It was agreed to consider this again at the January meeting when the final decision would be made. The Clerk informed the Council that despite the Council's prudent financial management, utilising the interest gained from moving CIL reserves into the CCLA investment account, and the revenue gained from the allotments, the Budget would likely have to be increased by an estimated 10%, which equated to £5 per Band D household per year, to cover the additional estimated price increases. This equated to 10p per Band D household per week. Cllr Roper impressed upon the Council the need to strongly consider the implications that any rise in the precept would have on some residents of the village who may already be struggling.

Cllr Bickers reminded Councillors of the Council's own General Reserves Policy, and the recommendation from the Internal Auditor of the requirement to hold twelve months Net Reserve Expenditure (NRE) (which would be £11,720) and that currently there was only £6,074 NRE held by the Council.

- c. To receive new recommended pay rates from NALC for Clerk’s pay grade and to discuss accepting them.

SALC had informed the Council that the negotiations between the unions and the NALC had finally been concluded and the new recommended pay grades had been agreed. Following the Clerk’s review in July, Cllr Brinkley (the former Chair) and Cllr Gardner had previously recommended the Council agree to award the Clerk the ‘cost of living’ pay rise (see previous minutes page 242 item 10). The budget had allowed for this.

The new pay award would increase the Clerk’s salary by 63p per hour from £15.21 to £15.84. Cllr Lenton proposed that the Council agree to accept the new pay grade and award the Clerk the ‘cost of living’ pay rise. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

- d. To discuss the request for funding from:

A sum of £50 had been budgeted for grants for the financial year 2024/25, and it had previously been agreed that the Council should not use any more of the precept to award funds to outside organisations and charities. Any residents wishing to support such organisations could do so privately. With that budget in mind, Councillors discussed the following requests for financial support:

- I. Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal £50.
- II. East Anglian Air Ambulance £50
- III. Citizens Advice £ (unspecified request)
- IV. Disability Advice Service £ (unspecified request)

Cllr Lenton proposed that the Council support the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal with a grant of £50, given the special circumstances of the charity and those it supports. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in agreement.

Given the restrictions of the Budget, Cllr Roper proposed that all other requests for funding were refused this year. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour. The Clerk was asked to write to the applicants, thanking them for their work but explaining the financial situation of the Council.

**Action: Clerk**

- e. To authorise the following invoices for payment:

- i. None £0.00

f. To note payments made since last meeting:

i. A J Gallagher (insurance)	£675.21
ii. R Johnson (Clerk’s salary and expenses July/Aug/Sept)	£1,547.00
iii. P K F Littlejohn (External Auditor)	£315.00
iv. FowlerWeb (IT support)	£120.00
v. M H Goals (wheels for goals)	£107.52
vi. T Seagroatt (village maintenance)	£896.46
vii. Microsoft subscription	£65.55
viii. SALC (payroll services)	£22.80
ix. Signs For You (bike stand and bike jumps signs)	£358.14

g. To note payments received since last meeting:

i. ESC (2 <sup>nd</sup> half of precept)	£5,860.00
ii. Rent from Allotments	£544.00
iii. CCLA Investment interest	£359.72

h. To note Bank Balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024:

i. Current Account (No. 80152285)	£9,291.38
ii. Savings Account (No. 00605875)	£0.00
iii. CCLA investment Account (PS1007890-001)	£57,000.00

Cllr Seagroatt proposed that finance matters e to h were accepted, seconded by Cllr Marriage, with all in favour.

**Action: Clerk**

**11. To receive updates on the formal complaint made towards Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy.**

The Clerk had received an update from Nigel Innes, the Monitoring Officer at East Suffolk Council, stating that as part of his initial assessment of the Parish Council’s complaint, he had been in communication with Cllr Mulcahy. As part of the complaints process he had then instructed an independent person and had shared those communications with them. The Council will be informed of the decision as soon as these assessments are concluded.

The Chair noted once again that Cllr Mulcahy could have been helping the Council with the many Highways issues in Bucklesham if she had been in attendance at this meeting. The Clerk also informed the Council that Cllr Mulcahy had refused requests to use any of her Locality Budget to support the Village Hall, even though she still had £3,491 remaining from this year’s allocation.

**Action: Clerk**

**12. To discuss where to install the spare cycle racks sent in error.**

The Council had accidentally been sent two lots of bike racks (when only one had been ordered) with the grant money received to celebrate the Tour of Britain passing through Bucklesham. The company who supplied the racks did not require them to be returned or paid for. Councillors discussed suitable venues around the village where they could be installed.

Chair’s initials: .....

The Clerk had asked Rosemary Watson if the Church might like them but Rosemary explained that getting such things sanctioned was an extremely difficult and lengthy process. Cllr Bickers proposed that The Shannon be offered the racks as many people do cycle to the pub and leave their bikes leaning against the wall. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

**Action: Clerk**

**13. To agree Parish Council Meeting Dates for 2025.**

The Council agreed that the most convenient day for all Councillors is a Wednesday. The Clerk reported that the second Wednesday of the month has been saved for the Council by the Village Hall Committee for the year ahead.

The meeting dates for 2025 were agreed as follows:

- Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025
- Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025 (*will include Annual Parish Meeting and Community Council AGM*)
- Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025
- Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025
- Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025

**14. To co-opt a Parish Councillor and signing of ‘Declaration of Acceptance of Office’.**

The Clerk had advertised the role of Councillor in a special one-off flyer that was circulated around the village in the hope that a resident would come forward. Unfortunately, no one had come forward at the time of the meeting. Councillors and the Clerk agreed to continue to look for someone willing to take on this role.

**15. To receive agenda items for the next Parish Council Meeting (Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025).**

There were no new agenda items as at the meeting from Councillors, but the Clerk reminded them that all projects going forward would be included and that any new items should be notified to her at least one week before the meeting.

As this was the final meeting of the year, the Chair thanked all Councillors and the Clerk for their hard work in 2024, and wished all in attendance at the meeting a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Action: Clerk**

The meeting closed at 8:27pm.

Signed: .....  
Chair

Date: .....

*Ruth Johnson*  
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair’s initials: .....