

Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council MeetingHeld on Wednesday 21st January 2026 at 7:00pm

In Bucklesham Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

Cllr Trevor Bickers

Cllr Rhea Gardner

Cllr Clive Lenton (Chair)

Cllr Gemma Marriage

Cllr Kathryn McDonald

Cllr Kathryn Roper

Cllr Lynda Seagroatt (Vice Chair)

Cllr Lee Reeves (ESC)

Cllr Mike Ninnmey (ESC)

Cllr Patti Mulcahy (SCC)

Rachael Rudge (Head Teacher of Bucklesham Primary School)

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

0 members of the public were present.

Before the meeting started, Cllr Lenton paid tribute to former Parish Councillor and Community Council Chairman, Andrew Smith, who had died just before Christmas. Andrew was a highly respected and much loved member of the village who had also served on the Archer Cartwright Bucklesham Charity for many years. Cllr Lenton asked the Clerk to send the Council's best wishes to Andrew's widow, Liz, and his family.

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:**

Cllr Mulcahy spoke about the Active Transport initiative that will link Kesgrave and Martlesham to Ipswich and Woodbridge with improved cycle paths, but recognised this would not directly benefit Bucklesham residents.

The Chair informed Cllr Mulcahy that the Council had received emails from concerned residents, asking if there would be a by-election following her suspension from the Conservative party and defection to Reform. Cllr Mulcahy was also asked how she would navigate her position moving forward, as she had been elected on a Conservative manifesto which was completely at odds with the Reform principles. Cllr Mulcahy said she would act according to her own principles, as she always had done.

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

A report had been sent to the Council prior to the meeting and circulated to all Councillors. Cllr Reeves apologised for his recent lack of communications due to a period of ill health.

Both Councillors spoke at length about ESC initiatives including the new recycling bins, planning issues, and their personal opinions on the possible cancellation of the local elections in May. It was noted that there was a great deal of uncertainty ahead. Cllr Ninnmey invited the Council to apply for funds from his Enabling Communities Budget as he had some remaining which needed to be spent before the end of March. The Clerk thanked him very much and the Council agreed that a great project would be some replacement chairs for the village Hall.

Action: Clerk

- b. Questions from any member of the public:

There were no members of the public present.

4. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 12th November 2025.

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

The Clerk had continued to inform the Councillors 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 request for the speed limit on the Brightwell Road to be reduced had finally been approved after 25 years of campaigning. There will now be a public consultation by Suffolk County Council (SCC) to hear the views of residents and the wider community. If the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is approved, it could still be 12 months before the speed limit is actually reduced. A grant of £10,000 had been secured from East Suffolk Council (ESC) to fund the works as SCC would not cover the costs themselves.

- ii. A 20's Plenty zone had been approved for Main Road on the approach to school and this should be implemented in April. The cost of this is being covered by SCC.
- iii. The Clerk attended further Safeguarding training with Community Action Suffolk (CAS) organised by Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) on 27/11/25. The Council's Safeguarding Policy is now up to date and fit for purpose, and has been checked by Jacqui Wilkinson of CAS. The Clerk also ensured that the Village Hall Safeguarding Policy is up to date.
- iv. Village resident Paul Last had very kindly cleared the ground at the end of the Allotments to make two more half-plots. These had been taken by the next two residents on the waiting list. The young couple at number 38 Levington Lane had kindly allowed the Clerk to dump concrete and bricks uncovered on the new plots into their skip. The tenants who had inadvertently encroached onto the adjacent farmland have now moved their plots back onto the Council's side of the boundary. New signs requesting all dogs be kept on a lead have been installed on the entrance gates.
- v. The Clerk had been successful in securing grants to cover the entire cost of solar panels on the Village Hall roof; therefore the Council would not need to cover the shortfall from CIL, but the Village Hall Committee had been very grateful for the Council's generous offer.
- vi. The repairs to the Village Hall garage had been completed. The Council now owns this and it has been added to the Asset Register.
- vii. The Community Benefit Fund agreement for the Solar Farm had been signed by the Chair and Vice Chair, and witnessed by Cllr Gardner. This was now complete and ready to implemented once the solar farm is producing energy.

6. To discuss the Parking issues at Bucklesham Primary School.

Bucklesham School Head Teacher Rachael Rudge had joined the Council for this item and was welcomed by the Chair and thanked for her attendance.

Following the request in a Bugle Bulletin for residents to join the 'Safer at the Gates' campaign, the Clerk had received two emails from residents urging the Council to do more to manage the standard of parking and driving of parents whose children attend the school.

The Clerk had listed the number of actions the Council had already taken to try to address this ongoing problem, including writing a strongly worded letter to all parents, contacting Suffolk Highways for advice, contacting Suffolk Police for support, leaving leaflets on illegally parked cars, clearing the path to school to encourage walking, and requesting Hi-Viz jackets from the Community Partnership to encourage walking by making it safer.

Members of the Council had also patrolled outside the school and approached parents. None of the initiatives had worked and parents continue to flout the law and park illegally, and some of those who had challenged parents had been subjected to abuse on more than one occasion. The Clerk had also engaged the services of ESC's Parking Services Team, who had pledged to be a presence at school drop-off and pick-up times and carry out parking enforcement.

Mrs Rudge told the Council that she shared villagers' frustrations about the ongoing issue and talked about the numerous initiatives that she had implemented since becoming Head Teacher which included:

- Junior Road Safety Officers x 4 (only older children)
- assemblies to educate children on where their parents should park and about walking to school
- communications with parents through newsletters
- patrol at the end of the day
- Suffolk Highways are booked to do road safety workshops with children in May, and do this annually as part of PSHE lessons
- Newsletter pleas on road safety most weeks
- challenging parking and driving face to face with parents, and phone them up to discuss
- Grant from East Suffolk Council to pay for: art activism project with local artist Jo Chapman, Hi-Viz for those older children that walk, subscription to Living Streets, WOW challenge which encourages and rewards children who walk or cycle to school with badges etc
- Walk, scoot, bike to school weeks throughout the year with rewards for children who do
- Bikeability course for older children every November to teach them how to bike to school safely on their own
- Looking to increase the capacity of the staff car park by using some of the school field to get more staff cars off the road to allow space for parents to park
- Traffic warden comes once a month, gives parking fines and advice
- Survey out currently to parents about the possibility of a 'walking bus' into the village at the end of the day.

The Chair stated that the Council fully support Mrs Rudge, who has also tried in vain to encourage parents to drive and park sensibly, and encouraged those who can to walk to school. However, the Chair reiterated that neither the Head Teacher nor the Parish Council has any power to enforce this.

7. Planning:

- a. To discuss planning application SCC/0170/25sC A12 junctions 58 (Seven Hills) and Woods Lane roundabout, Woodbridge (New road layout)

Cllr Roper and the Clerk had attended a meeting at Melton Parish Council offices on 19/01/26 to discuss this application. Present at the meeting were representatives from Melton, Martlesham, Ufford, and Woodbridge Councils, and representatives from SCC who answered questions on the proposal and the implications for Bucklesham residents.

Cllr Roper shared the following:

- There will be major road improvements from Seven Hills interchange all the way to the junction with Woods Lane, Melton. This will include junction widening, the addition of cycle paths, new pedestrian crossings and signalisation of major roundabouts.
- The rationale behind the project is to save journey time and encourage sustainable travel options.

- SCC envisage a two year construction, starting early 2027. There is no timeline of the works yet but SCC assured us that they will be co-ordinated with other works and road pressures.
- No diversion routes planned at present. No route through the village will be used as an official diversion route. However, a cut-through down Nacton Lane will be used by some vehicles looking to find the quickest way for their journey. There is no way to prevent people using this route as it is perfectly legal. However, it was promised that clear signage will be implemented to discourage this.
- There are no plans to shut Nacton Lane, although this may be shut temporarily during the works.
- Seven Hills roundabout will be modified so there is a continuous filter lane coming from Felixstowe and turning into Ipswich. It will also be signalised, although possibly not at Nacton Lane. Either way, this will create gaps in the traffic, and potentially slow the traffic, allowing villagers to join the Seven Hills roundabout more safely from Nacton Lane.
- No changes are planned for Foxhall roundabout during this work but modifications are planned as part of the work by the team building Brightwell Lakes.

Cllr Roper proposed the Council 'support' the application, as although the works would be disruptive, the end result would benefit residents. This was seconded by Cllr Lenton and all were in favour.

b. To discuss planning application DC/25/4760/FUL single story rear extension, porch extension and replacement driveway in block paving, The Brooke, Main Road IP10 0DR

The Chair noted that all Councillors had studied the documents on the planning portal prior to the meeting. The applicants had been invited to the meeting but had not been in attendance. Councillors were reminded to align their comments to material planning considerations.

Cllr Lenton proposed that the Council register a comment of 'No Objection' to the application. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour.

Action: Clerk

8. Finance Matters:

a. To review accounts as at 31st December 2025 and review Bank Statements.

The accounts for 31st December 2025 had been sent to all Councillors and there were no questions. The Clerk asked Cllr Marriage to sign the Bank Statements.

b. To review the Internal Accounting Procedures and appoint and Internal Auditor for 2025/26.

The Clerk reminded Councillors that one of the annual tasks the Parish Council needs to complete is a review of the Internal Controls for dealing with financial matters and the efficiency of the Internal Audit.

Chair's initials:

Financial Controls

The Council has the following internal financial controls in place:

- Clerk checks invoice against estimate (where appropriate) and queries any differences.
- Clerk sets up online payment.
- Two signatories see electronic copies of invoice and reconcile with online payment details, then authorise payment (signing paper copy of invoice at next meeting).
- Bank reconciliation is produced at the end of each month and sent to Councillors.
- A Councillor reviews the Bank Statements at each meeting (i.e. at least 6 times a year).
- Cllr Roper (acting as Councillor Internal Controller) physically inspects accounts before each meeting and reports back to Councillors.
- Financial Regulations are in place and reviewed annually.

Efficiency of Internal Audit

The Clerk recommended that the internal auditor appointed for 2025/26 is SALC as they are efficient and competent for the following reasons:

- They have a team of experienced and knowledgeable Auditors
- It is an electronic/paperless process saving time and money
- The Council will receive a comprehensive written report
- The return times are very quick
- Their services were successfully used last year

Appointment of Internal Auditor

Cllr Roper proposed that all procedures in place were adequate, and that the Council request the services of SALC for the Internal Audit of 2025/26. This was seconded by Cllr Seagroatt and all were in favour.

In line with this, the Clerk informed the Council that she had once again been using her Year End Preparation Checklist, in preparation for the Audit. This had been circulated previously by email. It had proved very useful as it had helped to avoid having several items on the agenda all at once, as the Council had spread the necessary tasks throughout the year and had a few at each meeting.

c. To discuss and agree the budget for 2026/27.

The budget had been sent out previously and the Council debated at length the various funds allocated. Cllr Lenton thanked the Clerk for the time that she had put into the budget and for setting it out so clearly and explaining it so well. It was noted that there was very little room for unexpected expenditure or for projects that could not use CIL funds. The Chair had previously suggested that the figures needed to be adjusted to reflect the Employers National Insurance contributions, which was an additional expense to previous years. The Clerk had adjusted the figures to reflect this. Councillors were asked to suggest an area of the budget that could be reduced, but none was proposed.

The Clerk reminded the Council that despite prudent financial management, utilising the interest gained from moving CIL reserves into the CCLA investment account, and the revenue gained from the allotments, in order to cover all necessary expenses, the Budget would have to be increased on last year.

The Clerk also reminded the Council of their own General Reserves Policy, and the recommendation from the Internal Auditor of the requirement to hold between nine and twelve months' Net Reserve Expenditure (NRE) (which would be £16,935) and that currently there was only £6,825 NRE held by the Council.

Cllr Lenton proposed the Budget be agreed, this was seconded by Cllr Bickers with all in favour.

d. To discuss and agree the Precept for 2026/27.

Following the previous discussions with regards to the Budget, a lengthy discussion took place regarding the necessity for a rise in the Precept to cover the increased costs. It was agreed that although the Parish Council manage the finances very well, and the Council were extremely mindful of the continued financial hardships that many residents continue to face, it would be necessary to request an increase in the precept in order to cover all expenses as it was not possible to find any areas of savings. This would likely mean an average increase of 12p per week per household.

It was proposed by Cllr Lenton that a figure of £16,245.00 be requested from East Suffolk Council for the precept. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers, with all in favour.

e. To discuss ordering more 'Welcome to Bucklesham' postcards.

The Clerk reminded the Council that the postcards contained a welcome message to new residents directing them to the village website. The original pack of 50 postcards had been used since they were printed in 2022. The Clerk often received very positive comments from new residents regarding the postcards and felt it was an excellent way to ensure they were given all relevant information about living in Bucklesham.

A quote had been obtained from Suffolk Digital printers, with 50 postcards costing £44 and 100 costing £49.90. The design had been updated to reflect the new email address and website of the Council, but Cllr Marriage suggested that a competition could be organised to ask for a new photograph of a village scene. The Clerk agreed to add this request to the next Bugle.

Cllr Lenton proposed the Council purchase 100 postcards once the new design had been finalised and approved, this was seconded by Cllr Bickers, and all were in favour.

f. To authorise the following invoices for payment:

None	£0.00
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g. To note payments made since last meeting:

i.	NGF Play (play equipment deposit)	£37,040.16
ii.	Bucklesham Village Hall (purchase of garage)	£1,300.00
iii.	Clerk's salary and expenses (Oct/Nov/Dec)	£2,464.61
iv.	Bucklesham Village Hall (Hall hire for 2025)	£480.00
v.	Suffolk Digital (Bugle printing)	£88.00
vi.	Suffolk Cloud (website hosting)	£120.00
vii.	HMRC (Clerk's PAYE)	£207.31
viii.	SCL Landscape (grass cutting)	£1,494.00

h. To note payments received since last meeting:

i.	Port Community Grantmaking Programme (for play equip)	£2,000.00
ii.	Bucklesham Community Council (for play equip)	£3,801.60

i. To note Bank Balances as at 31st December 2025:

i.	Current Account (No. 80152285)	£14,053.52
ii.	CCLA Investment Account (No. PS1007890-001)	£51,000.00

Cllr Roper, acting as Councillor Internal Controller, had inspected the accounts on 16/01/26 and had reported her findings to the Council via email.

Cllr Roper proposed that finance matters *f* to *i* were accepted, seconded by Cllr Lenton, with all in favour.

Action: Clerk

9. **Highways:**a. To discuss the Community Speed Watch (CSW).

The Clerk reported that despite a second request in the Bugle for volunteers, not enough people had come forward and offered to offer to help with the CSW. Without sufficient volunteers, a workable timetable could not be produced to make the project viable.

Cllr Lenton expressed his deep disappointment with the lack of help from residents, particularly as speeding is an issue that so many people complain to the Council about. It was agreed to continue to look for support in the hope that just a few more people would come forward.

b. To discuss joining the 'Better Together Campaign – Parish Councils across Suffolk working together to make their communities safer'.

The Council had been contacted by the Clerk of Moulton Parish Council to ask if they would like to join a county-wide campaign aiming to lobby SCC to make policy changes regarding speed limits on rural roads.

An initial meeting had been held with SCC's Chris Chambers, who said he was there to listen and that he recognised things needed to change. The lobby group feel that they will have more success if all Councils with similar issues work together.

The Council agreed that working collaboratively was a very good idea, but as the meetings look set to be held in-person in West Suffolk it may be unrealistic to expect someone from Bucklesham to travel.

The Clerk was asked to offer support and to be kept informed with the progress of the campaign, but that no representative would be sent from Bucklesham unless the meetings were online.

Action: Clerk

10. Playing Field

a. To discuss the New Play Equipment Project.

The Clerk reported that a further £2,000 grant had been obtained for the project from the Port Community Grantmaking Programme, which would decrease the amount of CIL needed.

NGF had produced a final design of the area, which had been shared with the near neighbours and everyone was happy. NGF are booked in to start the installation at the beginning of April after the Bank Holiday weekend (if the weather allows).

The Clerk was asked to inform Terry Seagroatt of the date of the installation, as he had agreed to remove the old equipment. This will need to be done in March. A group of strong residents had also volunteered to help with the removal of the large, awkward pieces.

b. To discuss the repeated problem of dog mess on the Field.

The Clerk had been contacted by a distraught parent during the Christmas holiday, whose children had been playing on the play equipment but had to leave as there was copious amounts of dog diarrhoea in the area. Cllr Lenton had attended and had spent considerable time cleaning up the mess. Representatives from the Council then also did a sweep of the Field and removed a substantial amount of dog mess from the football pitch, woodland walkway and bike jumps.

Councillors agreed that this is an ongoing problem, no doubt made worse by winter months when people walk their dogs off the lead in the dark and cannot possibly be aware of where they foul. No CCTV camera would work in such conditions or cover such a large area. The solution of locking the gate was debated, but this has proved problematic in the past as it always relies on the Clerk unlocking and locking the gates at a set time every morning and every evening, asking people to leave at locking up time, and dealing with the fallout from annoyed residents.

Notices about dog fouling have been written in the Bugle on numerous occasions, and it appears to have little effect. Councillors agreed that the problem is made worse by people walking with dogs (often more than one) off lead, and not paying attention to where they foul. However, as the Field is not patrolled, it is impossible to prevent this.

Requesting dogs be kept on a lead at all times would also be impossible to enforce as residents could just ignore this. The Clerk reminded Councillors that she had challenged a resident who had allowed his three dogs to foul on the Field without picking it up, and that an intimidating and very unpleasant incident had then occurred.

Cllr Roper suggested that the Council look again at the cost of fencing in the Play Area once the new equipment has been installed, in the hope that there may be CIL funds remaining. The previous quote for a fence around the play area (compliant with RoSPA regulations) was £20,000. This would, however, not prevent dog fouling on the rest of the field, including the football pitch, bike jumps and woodland walkway. The Clerk was asked to write about this again in the next Bugle and ask residents for their suggestions on how to solve the problem.

Action: Clerk**11. Village Hall:****a. To discuss the Parish Council becoming Sole Trustee of the Hall**

The process of the Parish Council becoming the Sole Trustee of the Village Hall is well underway. The Clerk reported she is receiving support and advice from Community Action Suffolk's Village Hall advisor, and is confident that the Council can do all of this in-house without needing to pay for the services of a solicitor.

The next step is to hold a public meeting to allow all residents to have their say on the proposal. This has been arranged for Wednesday 11th February at 7pm in the Village Hall and has been advertised in the Bugle. The Clerk has prepared a presentation. The proposal will be shared with the public, along with the wording of the Resolution which will amend the original Village Hall Constitution. The Resolution has been written by the Clerk, shared with the Village Hall Committee and Parish Council, after having been approved by legal experts at Community Action Suffolk and an independent advisor. The Trustees of the Hall (Village Hall Committee) will vote on the Resolution at the AGM.

If agreed to by Trustees, the Parish Council can become the Sole Trustee at the Village Hall AGM on 08/04/26. The Clerk has written drafts of all necessary documents (including new management policies) and these will be shared at the AGM.

The Parish Council, as Sole Trustee, legally has to hold two meetings a year as well as the AGM. The Clerk suggested the first meeting be straight after the AGM on 08/04/26 (once the public have left), and the second is six months later on 14/10/26. The existing Committee, then acting as the Parish Council's Village Hall Committee, can continue to hold four meetings a year as they do now (in January, April, July and October).

All existing Committee members can continue to be on the Village Hall Committee if they wish, but this committee must also include three Parish Councillors. As the Parish Council will be liable for any committee decisions, they must be fully involved in any decision making and will need to be aware of any implications. Moving forward, the Parish Council will make all major decisions, but the day-to-day running of the Hall will be down to the Village Hall Committee. Cllr Seagroatt proposed Cllrs Lenton and Gardner join her on the Village Hall Committee and this was seconded by Cllr Marriage. Cllr Lenton and Gardner agreed to stand, and all were in favour.

12. To discuss Bucklesham's Emergency Plan.

Cllr Roper and the Clerk had attended a webinar on Emergency Preparedness and Building Community Resilience with East Suffolk Council's Emergency Planning Officer. Cllr Roper informed the Council that there were currently 10 volunteers for the Emergency Plan, with various skills and equipment to offer if needed. Cllr Roper proposed that the Village Hall be officially registered as an Emergency Hub in the event of a major incident. Cllr Seagroatt seconded this and all were in favour.

Action: Cllr Roper

13. To receive report from Cllr Bickers on the Cross Parish Group meeting on 08/12/25.

Cllr Bickers had attended the meeting as a representative of the Council and the minutes of the meeting had previously been circulated to all Councillors.

Cllr Bickers reported that it was a friendly, productive and informative meeting but that it was very concerning to hear news of so many potential new housing developments at Foxhall (Bloor Homes), Orwell Green Garden Village (south of Bloor Homes proposal, approximately 2,700 homes), and the land opposite the Seven Hills crematorium.

Cllr Bickers agreed to attend future meetings of the Cross Parish Group and the Chair thanked him for his commitment to this.

14. To discuss the invitation to apply for a grant of up to £20,000 from the Valencia Communities Fund.

The Clerk was contacted by Sarah Walton from Derbyshire Environmental Trust (DET) to inform the Council that they are managing residual funding from the Valencia Communities Fund, which closed in July 2025. The Council was invited to apply for funding for any project in the vicinity of Valencia landfill sites (Masons in Great Blakenham).

The Council discussed possible village projects that would meet the criteria of the fund. It was agreed that the best project to take forward would be a refurbishment of the Village Hall kitchen. The Clerk had already checked and the administrators would agree to fund this project in principle.

It was agreed that the Village Hall kitchen was in need of updating and the new plans could include further storage space for regular groups, an under-counter fridge, freezer and dishwasher, new flooring and worktops including new sink units. The Village Hall Committee had met on 13/01/26 and welcomed the proposal as they felt kitchen was in much need of an update.

The application would need to be submitted by 31/03/26 with all relevant information included. Councillors agreed that the residents of the village could be consulted on this proposal at the Village Hall meeting on 11/02/26, which had been arranged to discuss the Parish Council becoming the Sole Trustee of the Hall. The Clerk agreed to do all work necessary for the application, but noted that Cllr McDonald would always be available to share her expertise in this field.

15. To receive agenda items for the next Parish Council meeting (Wednesday 11th Feb 2026).

The Clerk informed the Council that two separate planning applications had come in after the publication of the agenda, and therefore, if they wished to discuss them and comment on them to ESC, there would need to be another meeting before the scheduled meeting in March. This had been arranged for 11/02/26 at 6:30pm, just before the scheduled village meeting to discuss the Parish Council becoming Sole Trustee of the Village Hall.

There were no other agenda items as at the meeting from the 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.

Action: Clerk

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date:

Ruth Johnson

Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair's initials: