Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council Meeting

Held on Wednesday 8th July 2026 at 7:00pm
In Bucklesham Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

Cllr Trevor Bickers
Cllr Rhea Gardner
Cllr Gemma Marriage
Cllr Kat McDonald
Cllr Kathryn Roper
Cllr Lynda Seagroatt (Vice Chair)

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

Cllr Lee Reeves (ESC)
Cllr Mike Ninnmey (ESC)

3 members of the public were present

1. Apologies for absence:

a. **To receive apologies for absence.**
Apologies were received from Cllr Lenton (family commitments).

b. **To accept apologies for absence.**
Cllr Seagroatt proposed Cllr Lenton's apologies be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour. Cllr Roper proposed Cllr Seagroatt chair the meeting in Cllr Lenton's absence. This was seconded by Cllr McDonald and all agreed. Cllr Seagroatt agreed to chair the meeting.

2. To receive any:

a. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest on Agenda items.**
There were none.

b. **Declarations of Other Registrable Interests or Non-Registrable Interests on Agenda items.**
Cllr Bickers declared an ORI in item 8.h as the planning application was for the property next door to his own.

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:

i. Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy:

Cllr Mulcahy had emailed the Clerk on the afternoon of the meeting sending a report and apologies as she would not be able to attend. Councillors remarked that unfortunately the report had been sent too late in the day for most of them to be able to read before the meeting, as many had been at work.

ii. East Suffolk District Cllr Mike Ninnmey and Cllr Lee Reeves:

Monthly reports had been sent by Cllrs Ninnmey and Reeves and these had been circulated. Cllr Seagroatt thanked Cllr Reeves for supporting the Thriving Places application for the Village Hall kitchen renovations and for replying to the Clerk's request for this so quickly, meaning the application could be submitted before the deadline.

Cllrs Reeves and Ninnmey talked at length about the problems with the 'Better Recycling' scheme and acknowledged the service had not been good enough. A lengthy explanation and answers had been given in their report prior to the meeting and this has been sent out to residents in a Bugle Bulletin.

Councillors also discussed the changes to the way planning applications will be decided, and encouraged Parish Councillors to attend the upcoming Planning Forums to learn more about the new processes. Cllr Seagroatt and the Clerk committed to doing this.

b. Questions from any member of the public:

A member of the public asked for his additional comments to be added to the Call For Sites list of comments already compiled by the Council. The Clerk had previously forwarded the resident's comments via email and the Chair assured the resident that all Councillors had read these and that this would be discussed at item 8.a.

4. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 20th May 2026.

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

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

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 Clerk had been asked to find alternatives to the email provider currently used to send Bugle Bulletin email alerts. Unfortunately, the investigations were not yet complete so the Clerk stated she would put this on the next agenda for September's meeting when it could be discussed further.

ii. The Clerk informed the Council that NGF Play had been asked to check the new play equipment on three separate occasions as there had been issues reported. These issues had been highlighted to the Clerk by two responsible children who use the equipment regularly and had noticed changes. NGF reported that due to the extreme heat, some pieces of the wooden equipment had shrunk, meaning bolts needed to be tightened. The pieces in question had been fenced off and NGF had attended within two days and resolved the issues.

iii. The Highways Self Help Scheme volunteers spent four hours cutting the path to school in June, ably assisted by Head Teacher Rachael Rudge. Many emails of thanks had been received. There were also comments made that the work should not be reliant on volunteers as enough money is paid in Council Tax for Suffolk County Council to be doing it. The Clerk had replied to all emails explaining that Suffolk Highways state there is no money in their budget to undertake such work, so either the volunteers would have to do it, or it would not get done.

The Chair asked the Clerk to minute the Council's thanks for the hard work of all the volunteers.

iv. Suffolk Highways *have* cleared the drainage grips at the bottom of Levington Lane after nearly six years of requesting this (once annual) task be carried out. This will hopefully prevent further flooding at the end of the lane.

v. The Community Speed Watch team have completed their training, and the first session took place on Monday 6th July. The Clerk reported that she had written to Rachael Rudge, Head Teacher of Bucklesham Primary School, to ask her to remind parents why the group had been set up. Unfortunately, some parents were less than supportive of the efforts of the CSW team but the initiative had been started in direct response to parents' concerns about the speed of traffic through the village. Although two volunteers had dropped out, the Clerk was hopeful that other people may offer to help in the future, meaning the current volunteers would need to do fewer sessions each.

vi. Comments had been made to the Clerk and Cllr Seagroatt as to the condition of one of the plots on the Allotments. The tenant of this plot is one of the Councillors. The comments had alluded to the fact that the plot was not being managed in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement. The Clerk assured the complainant that all plots were being monitored by the Council following the Council's Allotment Management Policy, and all tenants were treated equally regardless of their position on the Council.

Action: Clerk

6. To review the progress of the BPC's Action Plan for 2026/27.

The Action Plan had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting and had been an attachment to the Agenda. There were many points to update; the publication of all Policies and Procedures; managing the Playing Field; the Allotments; the Village Hall; Highways issues; website updates such as Planning, Police, and Highways pages; and many more examples of collaborative working within the village and wider community. The Clerk had republished the updated Action Plan on the website with the updates in red so it was easy to identify all the work that had recently taken place.

Cllr Seagroatt thanked the Clerk for all her hard work on this and commented that an amazing amount of work had been achieved over only a few weeks.

Action: Clerk

7. To receive Village Hall Report from Cllr Seagroatt.

Cllr Seagroatt reported that it had been a very busy few months for the Village Hall Committee.

The Hall had been chosen to host Community Action Suffolk's Annual Village Hall and Community Buildings Conference on 10th June. The day had been a huge success and the Committee had received numerous complimentary emails from delegates on the fantastic facilities at the Hall and the hospitality received.

To celebrate the Hall's 50th anniversary, the Committee unveiled a commemorative plaque recognising Francis William Ramsey for gifting the land for the Hall, and his daughter Evelyn Bloomfield for her 50 years' service on the Village Hall Committee. Evelyn was surprised by the Committee and her family with an afternoon tea to celebrate.

To continue with celebrations, preparations are well under way for the 1970s Night on 31st July with music from Thin Wild Mercury. Tickets are selling very well, at a nostalgic price of £1.50 only. This will be followed in August with the traditional 1970s children's party for all village children and grandchildren.

The Committee are forming a local Village Hall Consortium. This will consist of members of neighbouring local Hall's Committees, asking questions, sharing ideas, problem solving and learning from each other. So far Martlesham, Levington, Nacton, Newbourne, and Waldringfield have all willingly accepted the offer to join. The first meeting will be held in Bucklesham in September.

The fire alarm has been serviced and all the fire extinguishers have been replaced. Cllr Seagroatt and the Clerk met with Stuart Hunter, Fire Safety Officer from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, who undertook a detailed Fire Safety Inspection of the Hall and gave advice and guidance on how to ensure the Hall was compliant with the law. He concluded that the Hall was compliant and he had no concerns about the fire safety procedures in the Hall.

Stuart recommended that an up to date Fire Risk Assessment be undertaken as a matter of good practice, but assured Cllr Seagroatt and the Clerk that this was something competent members of the Committee could do.

Broadband has been installed at the Hall and hirers are making full use of it. This will be another positive asset to the Hall and hopefully will increase the hire potential. There will now be a possibility to livestream events at the Hall, which is something the Community Council are investigating.

Ruth has completed an application to ESC's Thriving Places Investment Fund for the renovation of the kitchen and to knock through to the committee room after the Valencia grant application was unsuccessful.

8. Planning:

a. To discuss the Council's response to East Suffolk Council's (ESC) Call For Sites:

Following the additional Parish Council meeting held on 20th May, the Clerk had received further comments from residents of the village with regards to Site 10 and Site 449. These had been forwarded to Councillors prior to the meeting and were summarised by the Clerk to remind Councillors of their content.

Councillors discussed at length the additional points that had been raised. Many of these points had already been discussed at the previous Parish Council meeting, and some were deemed not relevant. However, the Council agreed to add the following comments to the previously compiled list. This would be submitted to ESC once the Council was asked to comment on the sites.

In addition to the generic points already made, specific points were made about the individual sites as follows:

i. Site 10 – land on Main Road opposite Meadow View

- The proposed entrance to Site 10 will be on a steep gradient. This means that any cars exiting will need to nose into the road to have a clear view. Any developers must ensure the planning application mitigates for this when designing the entrance.
- The Forge is a Grade II listed building and as such needs to be protected. A previous planning application (DC/19/2568/OUT) was refused by the planning authority as it was deemed to be detrimental to the property. Any planning on Site 10 could be considered a threat to the historical rural setting of this building.

The Chair reminded Councillors that these sites had merely been submitted to ESC following the Call For Sites and that no assessment of the suitability of the sites had been made, and no planning applications were in at this stage. No comments had been asked for by East Suffolk Council on the Call For Sites map as of yet. Once the consultation process is underway, the Council will have its comments in place ready to respond. Cllr Gardner stated ESC informed her that this may not now occur until the Summer of 2027.

b. To discuss SCC/0170/25SC A12 improvements between Seven Hills and Woods Lane.

The Chair noted that all Councillors had been sent a link to study the documents on the planning portal prior to the meeting.

This application had previously been discussed in January 2026 and the Council had supported the proposed improvements to the A12. No Councillors had any further comments on the additional changes. Cllr Seagroatt proposed the Clerk did not send any further comments to SCC. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

c. <u>To discuss DC/26/1915/FUL Change of use from agricultural land to residential. Two story extension to existing dwelling, new garage and associated works, Potash Cottage, Chapel Road, IP10 0BS.</u>

The Chair noted that all Councillors had been sent links to study the documents on the planning portal prior to the meeting. The original application had previously been discussed in November 2025 and the Council had supported the application. No Councillors had any further comments on the additional changes. Cllr Roper proposed the Council 'Support' this amended application. This was seconded by Cllr McDonald and all were in favour.

d. <u>To discuss DC/26/2142/FUL Reconstruction and change of use of existing outbuilding to provide accommodation, Grove Farm, Chapel Road, IP10 0BS.</u>

The Chair noted that all Councillors had been sent links to study the documents on the planning portal prior to the meeting. Councillors were reminded to align their comments to material planning considerations.

Councillors made the following comments:

- It is not close to any other building so will affect no one.
- It is far from the road, we supported the original application for the renovation of Grove Farm and this is an addition to that application.

Cllr Bickers proposed the Council 'Support' the application. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour.

e. <u>To discuss DC/26/2055/FUL Engineering works to lay underground cable for Solar Farm, Brightwell Road.</u>

The Chair noted that all Councillors had been sent links to study the documents on the planning portal prior to the meeting. Councillors were reminded to align their comments to material planning considerations.

Councillors made the following comments:

- These plans will change the existing permissions granted to lay the cable across the fields, meaning farmland will no longer need to be dug up. As the cable will instead follow the route of the road, this will be far less impactful on the environment – however, it will mean more disruption for road users while the works take place.
- Planning permission is not usually required when Permitted Development rights are exercised, which possibly indicates that there are limited environmental impacts from these sort of works.
- The original application (DC/24/3419) stated that the cabling works installation would be occurring at the same time as the construction of the solar farm. If the plan is now to route the cables down the C375 Brightwell Road, there will be a considerable amount of traffic chaos all at the same time.

- This will have an impact on the residents of Bucklesham Hall and the cottages and we should request that any impact from construction vehicles or loss of services is kept as minimal as possible.
- This won't destroy any habitats and they will just resurface the road after laying the cable.
- I would suggest that this is far better than the previous alternative.

Cllr Bickers proposed the Council 'Support' the application but requested that the planning authority consider the following points:

- That the Traffic Management Order (TMO) be robust and not allow works vehicles to attend the site during school drop off and pick up times.
- That conditions be put in place to ensure construction traffic does not use Bucklesham Hall drive.

This was seconded by Cllr McDonald and all were in favour.

f. To discuss the Parish Council's response to ESC's Local Plan Consultation Questionnaire.

The Clerk had sent the questionnaire to all Councillors prior to the meeting to allow them to decide if they wanted to reply as a whole Council or as individual residents.

Cllr Seagroatt suggested that any Councillor who wished to reply should do so as an individual resident. The document was very lengthy and it would be a very difficult task to complete such a long questionnaire as a whole Council, and not something that there would be time for in a Parish Council meeting. It was also noted that it would be very difficult to agree on a consensus of opinion as planning is a very emotive subject.

g. To discuss DC/24/0412/FUL Intensification of use at Twisted Oaks, Bucklesham.

The Chair noted that all Councillors had been sent links to study the additional documents on the planning portal prior to the meeting.

The Council had originally objected to this application as there were Health and Safety concerns over the proximity of a footpath. It was understood that the Rights Of Way officer had now withdrawn their objection after being satisfied with changes made by the applicant.

The Council had been informed by ESC that the planning officer's recommendation was conditional approval, therefore, under their Scheme of Delegation, the application had to be reported to the Referral Panel. The Referral Panel then considered the application and agreed that it can be a delegated decision.

Cllr Gardner reported that the planning portal was now showing permission had been granted.

h. To discuss DC/26/2038/FUL First Floor Side / Front Extension and Two Storey Rear Extension, Dunelm, Main Road, Bucklesham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP10 0DR.

Cllr Bickers left the meeting as he had declared an ORI.

The Chair noted that all Councillors had been sent a link to study the documents on the planning portal prior to the meeting. Councillors were reminded to align their comments to material planning considerations.

The Clerk informed the Council that the neighbours to the left of the property had expressed their concerns over the planning application as they felt it was disproportionately large, that the balcony would overlook their private garden, and the extension would cause a loss of light into their property.

Councillors made the following comments:

- It is a Juliette balcony and not a platform balcony so no different to a large window.
- The plans show that the extension will result in a loss of car parking space on the driveway.
- There are no windows on the side of the building, only on the back and therefore it cannot be considered to be overlooking.
- The extension is large, but no larger than many others in the village that we have supported.
- We have to take into account the neighbour's objections, but we have supported similar planning applications and I am minded to support residents who want to improve their properties.
- Loss of light for a garden is not a material planning consideration, however loss of light to a property is.

After considerable discussion, Cllr Seagroatt proposed the Council make 'No comment' on the application to neither support or object. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

Action: Clerk

Cllr Bickers returned to the meeting.

9. Finance Matters:

a. To review accounts as at 30th June 2026 and review Bank Statements.

The accounts for 30th June 2026 had been sent to all Councillors and there were no questions. The Clerk asked Cllr Marriage to sign the Bank Statements.

b. To approve the SALC recommended increase in mileage rates from 45p to 55p per mile.

Following guidance from HMRC, the Society of Local Council Clerks have recommended that Councils increase the amount reclaimable for mileage from 45p to 55p per mile. Cllr Seagroatt proposed the Council accept this recommendation. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour. Councillors and the Clerk were encouraged to claim milage expenses even for short journeys as there may be some who would need to claim but might be discouraged if others did not.

c. To authorise the following invoices for payment:

i.	None	£0.00

d. To note payments made since last meeting:

i.	NGF Play (Balance of play equipment)	£86,427.05
ii.	David Bracey (Playing Field inspections)	£630.00
iii.	Suffolk Digital (printing)	£35.00
iv.	Sadie Windscheffel (photography workshops)	£900.00
v.	Barker Gotelee (legal fees)	£65.40
vi.	Nordwell Fire Security (Village Hall fire extinguishers)	£440.30
vii.	R Johnson (photography workshops expenses)	£79.43
viii.	R Johnson (Clerk's Salary and expenses April/May/June)	£2,340.32
ix.	Nordwell Security (Village Hall fire alarm test)	£180.00
x.	G Marriage (expenses for Self Help Scheme)	£49.98

e. To note payments received since last meeting:

i.	AJ Gallagher Insurance (overpayment refund)	£27.00
ii.	HMRC (VAT refund)	£2,956.43
iii.	SCC Highways (Highways equipment refund)	£4,797.11
iv.	Bucklesham Village Hall (reimbursement for Fire Extinguishers)	£370.25
v.	HMRC (VAT refund)	£14,592.06
vi.	Donation for Play equipment fence from resident	£20.00
vii.	Bucklesham Village Hall (reimbursement for Fire Alarm testing)	£150.00

f. To note Bank Balances as at 30th June 2026:

i.	Current Account (Unity Trust Bank)	£26,321.87
ii.	Investment Account (CCLA)	£6,000.00

Cllr Roper, acting as Councillor Internal Controller, reported that she had inspected the accounts and everything was in order. She also asked the Clerk to transfer £25,000 from the current account to the investment account. Cllr Seagroatt proposed that finance matters *c* to *f* were accepted, seconded by Cllr Bickers, with all in favour.

Chair's initials: ………………

10. Allotments:

a. <u>To discuss building a composting area on the site for the green waste resulting from the Highways Self Help Scheme's work.</u>

The volunteers from the Highways Self Help Scheme had cleared the path to school on 14th June and had collected a lot of green waste that was not possible to take to Foxhall Recycling Centre. As agreed by Cllr Lenton, it had been taken to the Allotments and left at the top of the entrance to the pit.

Cllr Marriage explained that the Council did not want tenants to deposit their green waste in the pit as it was still full of rubbish that had been left there over many years: metal, glass, and plastic objects as well as green waste. Once all the unwanted objects have been removed, the Council would consider utilising the pit as a wildlife area.

Cllr Marriage stated this work would have to wait until next year once all the vegetation had died back and it was possible to see what was still down there. It was noted that it would take a lot of work to clear the pit but that hopefully volunteers and tenants would help. In the meanwhile it would be possible to build a composting bay at the top of the pit beside the entrance.

The Clerk informed the Council that Terry Seagroatt had indicated he would be willing to make a composting bay from old pallets and that another tenant had offered to help turn the land over with his machinery. Cllr Marriage suggested that Terry be thanked for his offer and be asked for a quote to make the composting bay. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in favour.

Action: Clerk

11. Playing Field:

a. <u>To discuss grassing and rebuilding the sides of the bikes jumps.</u>

Councillors had previously agreed that the sides of the bike jumps needed to be turfed in order to prevent them from crumbling away. In order to save money an attempt had been made to grass seed the area, but this had not been very successful.

In order to prevent further erosion of the banks of the jumps, Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the sides be turfed as originally agreed. Councillors agreed this must now wait until the autumn.

b. <u>To discuss the fencing in the new play area.</u>

Despite signage and numerous requests in the Bugle, residents are still allowing their dogs to roam all over the new play area. The Clerk had received many emails from concerned parents that dogs were frequently urinating up against the new equipment.

Councillors agreed that fencing in the play area would be desirable although there was still a concern that dog owners would ignore the requests to keep dogs on the outer side of the fence.

Cllr Seagroatt suggested that when the Council receives any more CIL funds this would be a project for consideration but until that time the project would have to be put on hold due to a lack of available funds.

Action: Clerk

12. To confirm by resolution that all the required documents, information and conditions are in place for the LCAS Bronze award, and that these are published on the Council's website, where applicable.

The Clerk had sent all Councillors the application form to LCAS and all supporting documentation to apply for the Bronze Award. All Councillors agreed that the Council was indeed ready to apply after having checked all links were working and all documents had opened correctly.

Cllr Seagroatt thanked the Clerk for all her hard work in getting the Council ready, and reiterated that for such a small Council, gaining the Bronze Award would be a magnificent feat. All Councillors agreed to keep their fingers crossed for a positive outcome.

Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the Clerk apply for the Bronze Award from LCAS, this was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

13. To discuss the Clerk's Review and recommendations arising from it.

Cllrs Lenton and Gardner had met with the Clerk on 30th June to review the Clerk's working practices over the past year. The minutes of the Clerk's Review had been sent to all Councillors by Cllr Gardner.

It had been agreed by Cllrs Lenton and Gardner and the Clerk that the relationship between the Council and the Clerk remains excellent. The Clerk thanked the Council for their support and encouragement during what had been another very busy year.

Of particular note this year was the successful completion of the New Play Equipment Project, and the work needed for the Parish Council to become Sole Trustee of the Village Hall. The Chair recognised the considerable work that had taken place and all Councillors thanked the Clerk for her efforts. The Clerk made it clear again, as she had last year, that she was more than happy to do the extra work needed for such projects and was very glad that they had been a success.

It was acknowledged by all that some parishes of a similar size pay their Clerks for fewer hours. However, many of those Clerks are not also the Responsible Finance Officer, or administer the village website, administer an email alert service, manage the Playing Field, manage the Allotments, or write the village newsletters, as Bucklesham's Clerk does. These roles are often undertaken by Councillors or other members of the community in a voluntary capacity. In the absence of anyone wishing to take on these extra roles, it will continue to fall to the Clerk, and the Chair stated that she should be paid for all this extra work and it should not be expected that she do it as part of her regular duties.

It had been noted by Cllr Gardner that the Clerk is also now co-ordinating the new Community Speed Watch Group, and the Highways Self Help Scheme. The Clerk stated she was happy to continue doing this work and that she accepts a portion of the role is voluntary. Councillors reiterated that she must make the Council aware if at any point she feels she is struggling to keep up with the work load and she must let the Council know if there is anything they can do to help.

Cllrs Lenton and Gardner had recommended in their report that any 'Cost of Living' increment be awarded once negotiated with the unions by NALC. The Clerk was grateful for this commitment. Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the Council award the Cost of Living increment. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all were in favour. Cllr Seagroatt also noted the recommendation from SALC that the Clerk receives additional holiday pay entitlement as per her contract, as she had been in continuous service for more than 5 years. Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the Council honour the contract and award the additional entitlement. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all were in favour.

As the Council is now Sole Trustee of the Village Hall, Cllrs Lenton and Gardner had recommended in their report that the Village Hall no longer pay Ruth as Clerk of the Hall, but that the Council pay the Clerk additional hours to administer the Hall instead. The Village Hall could then reimburse the Council with a contribution from Hall revenue.

Advice had been sought from Community Action Suffolk and Suffolk Association of Local Council's payroll service with regards to the proposal and both had agreed it was a sensible way forward. Cllr Gardner proposed that the Council increase the Clerk's hours to match the hours currently paid by the Village Hall Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Seagroatt and all were in favour. It was noted that this would be at no extra cost to the Council as the Village Hall Committee would be reimbursing those hours paid.

It was agreed by all Councillors that the Parish Council remains in an excellent position going forward. The Clerk was thanked for her time, enthusiasm and commitment to the village.

14. To receive agenda items for the next meeting of the Parish Council (Wednesday 9th September 2026).

There were no other 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.

The Clerk suggested that a report from the Community Council be added to each agenda. This was something that happened regularly many years ago, but when the Community Council ceased to be active it had stopped. Cllr Seagroatt stated that now that the Community Council is proactive again it will be an excellent way to share with residents of the village all the hard work that takes place and a way to promote their activities.

The meeting closed at 8:59pm.

Signed: ……………………………………………………………… Date: ……………………………………….
Chair

Ruth Johnson
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair's initials: ………………