

Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 9th September 2026 at 7:00pm
In Bucklesham Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

Cllr Trevor Bickers
Cllr Gemma Marriage

Cllr Rhea Gardner
Cllr Kat McDonald

Cllr Clive Lenton (Chair)
Cllr Lynda Seagroatt (Vice Chair)

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

Cllr Mike Ninnmey (ESC) Cllr Patti Mulcahy (SCC)

0 members of the public were present

1. Apologies for absence:

a. To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Roper (work commitments).

b. To accept apologies for absence.

Cllr Lenton proposed Cllr Roper's apologies be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr McDonald and all were in favour.

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.

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:

i. Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy:

Cllr Mulcahy was in attendance but had not sent a report prior to the meeting.

Cllr Mulcahy spoke about how the Local Government Reorganisation had been paused and what this could mean for the future unitary Councils in Suffolk. At the present time the situation was not completely clear.

Cllr Mulcahy also reported that the Brightwell Road speed limit reduction process was well underway but may still take a few more months. She informed the Council that she had met with residents of Bucklesham Heath and had requested a traffic survey to ascertain levels of traffic and speeds along that stretch of the Brightwell Road.

Chair's initials:

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

Cllrs Reeves had sent his apologies for absence. Monthly reports had been sent by Cllrs Ninnmey and Reeves and these had been circulated and added to the Agenda as Appendix A. Cllr Lenton thanked both Councillors for supporting the Thriving Places grant application for the Village Hall kitchen renovations. The grant application had been successful and work would be starting soon.

Councillors discussed the problems with East Suffolk's 'Better Recycling' scheme and acknowledged the service had not been anywhere near good enough. Many residents had been in contact with the Clerk expressing their frustration and annoyance about the lack of collections and the state of some of the unemptied bins.

Councillors also discussed the changes to the way planning applications will be decided in future. Cllr Lenton and the Clerk will be attending the upcoming Planning Forum to learn more about the new processes.

b. Questions from any member of the public:

There were no members of the public present.

4. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 8th July 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 Marriage 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 still not yet complete so the Clerk stated she would put this on the next agenda for November's meeting when it could be discussed further.
- ii. The Clerk reported that over the summer she had received many emails thanking the Council for providing the play equipment on the Playing Field. Although it was fair to say that the very large increase in visitor numbers had caused some difficulties for residents of end of Levington Lane and Field View, it was clear that the play area had provided a free, safe, and enjoyable space for families to spend time outdoors over the summer holidays. The Clerk had been supported by residents and Cllr Gardner in checking the equipment and clearing litter on a daily basis throughout the summer.
- iii. The junior defibrillator pads expire at the end of September and the adult pads expire in December. The Clerk reported that she will order replacements for both sets.

Chair's initials:

- iv. The application for the Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS) Bronze Award had been submitted and feedback from the triage stage received. The Clerk reported that there had been just three areas that the Council needed to address; the removal of Councillors home addresses from their Register Of Interests; evidence that the Council approved the application by a Resolution; and evidence that the Council published all documents supporting the agenda as appendixes. The Clerk had ensured this work has been completed and re-submitted the application. The panel assessments will take place in November, with the Council being informed of the decision in December.
- v. In a statement on 7th September, Angela Rayner MP, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, announced the launch of a review into plans to streamline local government, to ensure it is robust and aligns with new government priorities, following updated and privileged legal advice. The review follows legal challenges and concerns about the process used to reach earlier decisions on new unitary councils for Suffolk. The government has confirmed that implementation in these areas will be paused whilst the review takes place.
- vi. Suffolk Parish Councils were given an opportunity to apply for trees left over from a display at the Suffolk Design Festival in Bury St Edmunds. Bucklesham has been successful in its application and has been awarded one European Larch (2.5.meters tall) and one Dawn Redwood (4.5 meters tall) to plant on the Playing Field. The European Larch was introduced to Britain in 1620 and is very popular in parks and community spaces, but the Dawn Redwood is one of the world's most endangered trees. The Clerk reported she just needs to find someone who can collect them from Bury St Edmunds as they won't fit in her car!
- vii. Following the success of the installation of the play equipment on the Playing Field, the Clerk reported that she had been approached by, and is now working with, six other local Parish and Community Councils advising them on similar projects in their own villages. She had also been advising three other Parish Councils on becoming Sole Trustee of their Village Halls.

The Chair said it was great to know that Bucklesham's Clerk was helping other Councils in improving their communities, and that this will no doubt be forming good networking relationships with our fellow Councils.

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 included as Appendix B to the Agenda. There were many points to update the Council on; the improvements to the Playing Field; improvements on the Allotments; the success of the Thriving Places grant application for the Village Hall kitchen renovation; the many community events that had taken place over the summer; the purchase of further Highways equipment; further improvements and updates to the website; 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 **blue** so it was easy to identify all the work that had recently taken place.

CLLr Lenton thanked the Clerk for all her hard work on this and commented that once again an amazing amount of work had been achieved by the Council over only a few weeks.

Chair's initials:

7. To receive Village Hall Report from Cllr Seagroatt.

Cllr Seagroatt's report had been included in the Agenda as Appendix C:

It has been another very busy few months for the Village Hall Committee.

To help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Hall, the Committee organised a 'birthday' party for all children and grandchildren of Bucklesham residents, and it was a huge success. The Hall was filled with giggling party-goers participating in traditional games from the 1970s such as musical chairs, pass the parcel and pin the tail on the donkey. This was followed by a 1970s buffet complete with cheese puffs, cheese and pineapple hedgehogs, and jelly and ice-cream. A great time was had by all!

The entrance hall has been decorated in a calming sage green and it looks much smarter and more welcoming ready for the Village Hall Open Day on 12th September. The Hall will be open from 11am to 3pm. This is a free event, with complimentary tea, coffee and cakes to show residents what the Hall has to offer them and their families. Representatives from many Hall user groups will be there.

To ensure the Hall is up to legally required standards, the Committee commissioned a Fire Risk Assessment, a Legionnaires Survey and an Asbestos Survey. Following receipt of the reports, there are a few things that the Committee will action but on the whole, the Hall was given a clean bill of health.

Undeterred by the failure of a grant application to Valencia for the kitchen refurbishments, the Committee tried again, but this time for an East Suffolk Council Thriving Places grant – and this time, we had success! With the money already in the bank, we have booked the work to take place in February '27. Improvements will be made to the kitchen, and we will knock through from the kitchen to the committee room, making it possible to hire the Hall to two separate groups at the same time. This will generate more revenue for the Hall, but will also enable us to host more groups.

To finish the year long 50th anniversary celebrations, the Hall is hosting a Beetle Drive on Friday 23rd October. This fun fast-paced dice game is suitable for the whole family and will be a great way to round off the summer of fun.

8. To receive Community Council report from Cllr Seagroatt.

Cllr Seagroatt's report had been included in the Agenda as Appendix D:

The Community Council has been busy planning events for the Village.

The next event is the annual Scarecrow Festival to be held over the weekend of 12th and 13th September. Residents pay £5 to enter as many scarecrows as they like to be on display over the weekend. Maps of the participating households will be available from Lois Mackinlay which will include voting slips. A trophy and bragging rights await the winner.

The Community Council will man a stall at the Village Hall Open Day on 12th September which will allow the Trustees to show all residents the work of the Council and what is on offer for them. It will also be an opportunity to encourage more residents to join in with events.

The Christmas Craft Fayre will take place on Saturday 28th November in the Village Hall from 10am to 2pm.

Chair's initials:

A Christmas evening event will be held on Saturday 5th December in the Village Hall. A band has been hired to play 50s 60s and 70s music. It will be a 'Bring your own refreshments' event.

To celebrate the Community Council's 60th anniversary next year, the Trustees of the Council are planning to hold a traditional Village Fete on 17th July 2027. There will be old fashioned stalls and games which will all be free of charge for all. There will also be a barbeque and ice creams on sale and hopefully competitions such as welly throwing and egg and spoon etc.

9. Finance Matters:

a. To review accounts as at 31st August 2026 and review Bank Statements.

The accounts for 31st August 2026 had been sent to all Councillors and there were no questions. The Clerk asked Cllr McDonald to sign the Bank Statements.

b. To set budget timetable for 2027/28 budget.

The Clerk set out the following timetable for the Budget and this was agreed:

- 1st November – Draft Budget established and sent to Councillors
- 12th November – Draft Budget discussed at full Council meeting
- January 2027 meeting – Budget agreed by full Council

c. To agree Reserve Allocations

The Reserve Allocations had been sent to all Councillors and attached to the agenda as Appendix E. After discussion, Councillors agreed the following Earmarked Reserves:

- Allotments £0.00
- Office Equipment replacement - £500.00
- Election Expenses - £1,000.00
- Staff Costs Emergency Fund - £500.00
- Brightwell Road Highways Works - £2,168.61 (remaining from ESC grant)
- Photography Workshops - £1,156.65 (remaining from ESC grant)

The total held in Earmarked Reserves was agreed at £5,325.26

The Clerk informed the Council that there would be money in reserves for the Allotments once the rents were paid in October. The money in CIL funds is currently £14,173.41 (with £3,091.73 needed for the reduction in speed limit on the Brightwell Road). General Reserves currently stand at £7,766.86.

The Clerk reminded the Council that it is necessary to hold between 3-12 months NRE (Net Revenue Expenditure) in General Reserves. The Council should be aware of the guidance as given in Proper Practices (March 2021) which states that "The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months NRE." The Council should also be aware of the guidance as given in the Practitioners Guide 2026-27 which states that 'The reason for the wide range is to cater for the large variation in activity level between individual authorities. The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months.

Chair's initials:

The Council committed to continue to strive towards holding more in Reserves in line with guidance from the Internal Auditor, and in line with their own updated Reserves Policy.

- d. To acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and Section 3 of Part 3 of the 2025/26 AGAR from PKF Littlejohn (as published on website).

The Clerk informed the Council that this year Bucklesham had been chosen to undergo a much more thorough inspection of their accounts by the External Auditor, and that this had been very extensive. A considerable amount of time had been spent by the Clerk supplying the External Auditor with all the information that they had requested.

The Clerk advised that following the extensive External Audit, Section 3 of Part 3 of the AGAR 2025/26 had been returned by PKF Littlejohn with 'no recommendations'. This means that the Auditor found the accounts were all in order to the required high standard.

Receipt of Section 3 of Part 3 of the AGAR and Notice Of Conclusion of Audit were acknowledged by the Council.

The Clerk was applauded by the Chair for all her hard work in getting the Audit through to conclusion, especially for the additional work that had been required this year due to the extensive scrutiny undertaken by PKF Littlejohn.

- e. To acknowledge receipt of insurance renewal quote.

Despite the best endeavours of the Clerk, the renewal quote from Gallagher Insurance, and further quotes for comparison, had not been received at time of publishing the Agenda. However, the Gallagher quote had finally been received by the Clerk and had been forwarded to Councillors prior to the meeting.

The Clerk had asked all Councillors to study the insurance documents forwarded as the responsibility was theirs. For comparison last year's premium was £1,330.88.

Insurer	Premium	Public liability	Asset Cover	Village Hall Cover
Gallagher (Hiscox)	£2,730.34	£10,000,000	£158,000	£1,009,050
CAS (Ansvar)	£1,859.58	£10,000,000	£220,000	£1,009,050
Clear Councils	tbc			

As the quotes requested had not been received at the time of the meeting, and the insurance was due for renewal before the next meeting in November, Cllr Bickers proposed that the Council grant the Clerk the authority to make the decision, along with the Chair, as to which insurance company to go with for the year ahead. This was seconded by Cllr McDonald and all were in favour.

Action: Cllr Lenton and Clerk

Chair's initials:

f. To authorise the following invoices for payment:

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

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| i. Suffolk Digital (Bugle and inserts printing) | £150.00 |
| ii. SALC (Training) | £43.20 |
| iii. HMRC (Clerk's PAYE) | £150.02 |
| iv. Capital Fire (Village Hall Fire Risk Assessment) | £432.00 |
| v. Clive Lenton (keys for garage) | £24.00 |
| vi. Suffolk Computing (tech help) | £60.00 |
| vii. Thurlow Nunn Standen (Highways equipment) | £3,454.89 |
| viii. Environcheck (Village Hall water testing) | £480.00 |
| ix. R Johnson (Photography w/shops expenses) | £52.23 |
| x. R Johnson (Photography w/shops expenses) | £51.69 |
| PKF Littlejohn (external audit) | £378.00 |

h. To note payments received since last meeting:

- | | |
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| i. Bucklesham Village Hall (Fire Risk Assessment donation) | £360.00 |
| ii. Bucklesham Village Hall (Water Testing donation) | £400.00 |

i. To note Bank Balances as at 31st August 2026:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| i. Current Account (Unity Trust Bank) | £379.92 |
| ii. Investment Account (CCLA) | £27,500.00 |

Cllr Roper, acting as Councillor Internal Controller, had been unable to inspect the accounts due to illness. She had informed the Clerk that she would endeavour to do this at the earliest opportunity and report back to the Councillors. Cllr Bickers proposed that finance matters *f* to *i* were accepted, seconded by Cllr Gardner, with all in favour.

Action: Cllr Roper

10. Playing Field:

a. To discuss turfing and rebuilding the sides of the bikes jumps.

Due to the lack of rain and extensive heat over the summer it had been necessary to temporarily close the bike jumps as the sides were crumbling. Councillors had previously agreed that the sides of the bike jumps needed to be turfed to prevent this from happening, but that this had needed to wait until the autumn.

James Perks from Twisted Oaks had offered to guide the Council through this work and many parents and children had offered assistance. Now that the autumn was here and it was a more appropriate time to do such work, the Council agreed that repairs must be made and maintenance must be carried out. In order to prevent further hold-ups, Cllr Lenton proposed that a budget of £500 be agreed so that the turf can be purchased and laid when the time is right. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour.

Chair's initials:

Cllr Lenton and Cllr Marriage agreed to meet on the Field to discuss the best way forward and to accurately measure the area. The Clerk would then be asked to gain updated quotes for the turf from the same three companies as last year in order to get an accurate figure.

Action: Cllr Lenton, Cllr Marriage and Clerk

- b. To discuss closing the gates at dusk and installing a closing time clock at the entrance to the Field.

In an attempt to alleviate the issue of dog mess on the Playing Field, thought to be exacerbated by dog walkers on the Field after dark, the Council had been locking the gates at dusk. During the summer months the latest time for closure had been 9pm.

Cllr Lenton proposed that the gates continued to be locked at dusk (as per the published 'Rules for the Field') as the nights draw in, but no earlier than 4pm in line with all Ipswich parks. It was accepted that this may be inconvenient for residents who are not able to access the Field before 4pm, however in the interests of keeping the Field safe for all users, it would be necessary. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Seagroatt with all in favour.

The Clerk suggested that a closing time clock be installed at the entrance to the Field clearly informing users of what time the Field will close. This could be altered as the weeks go by to indicate an earlier closing time. Cllr Seagroatt suggested that a notice be displayed in the notice board giving times of closing throughout the year and that this would be adequate.

Action: Clerk

- c. To discuss the Councillors and Clerk attending training for inspecting play equipment and organising weekly checks of the equipment.

The Clerk strongly recommended that the new play equipment be inspected by the Council, or representatives of the Council, on a weekly basis. Weekly inspections were previously carried out, which included litter picking and checking the equipment, but this had ceased in recent years. During the summer there had been several incidents where nuts and bolts had become loose and an amount of litter had been left.

Cllr Gardner and the Clerk, along with some parents, had undertaken daily visual inspections and litter clearing.

David Bracey, from David Bracey Play Inspections, who inspects the whole Field quarterly, recommended to the Clerk that a weekly inspections by volunteers are undertaken. This is also recommended by NGF Play, the play equipment manufacturer, and is part of the terms and conditions of the warranty.

David Bracey offers an on-site training course for £150 regardless of how many Council volunteers attend. The Clerk requested that the Council strongly consider this offer and that as many Councillors as possible commit to being part of the weekly inspections and litter picks. If some Friends Of the Playing Field (FOPS) and parents would also commit to help, it would only be necessary for individuals to undertake their turn once every few months.

Chair's initials:

Councillors discussed the matter at length and agreed that formal training was not necessary as Cllr Marriage had already undertaken the training and would be prepared to disseminate it to all volunteers. Cllr Lenton asked the Clerk to investigate if quarterly inspections were a legal requirement and whether an annual inspection was adequate. It was agreed that if enough suitable volunteers came forward to help with the weekly checks, that should be sufficient, and it would only be necessary for individuals to take a turn once every few months. Cllr Lenton and Cllr McDonald agreed to try and recruit volunteers to help at the Village Hall Open Day on 12th September. The Clerk agreed to ask any of the FOPs if they would also be able to help.

Action: Cllr Lenton, Cllr McDonald and Clerk

d. To discuss installing a fence and gates around the play area.

Fencing in the play area had been discussed many times before by the Council, and an initial quote from NGF Play (who installed the play equipment) had been requested. Fencing in the area is not a legal requirement, however, any fence installed would need to comply with safety standards. As the Council did not have the funds available for such a project at the time, no further action was taken.

The Clerk requested that the Council discuss the project of fencing in the play area in theory, in order to formally set aside some of the CIL funds (or otherwise) if this was something the Council wished to go ahead with. The Clerk reminded the Council that they had a limited amount of time with which to spend CIL funds and that it could not be saved indefinitely.

Cllr Seagroatt stated that she felt it was not necessary to fence in the play area and that the only reason for considering fencing would be to stop dogs. Cllr Seagroatt said the project would cost a considerable amount of money and was unlikely to prevent all dog owners from entering the area which would make it a pointless endeavour.

The Clerk informed the Council that she had spoken to users of play areas that are fenced in (Kirton village and Holywell's Park, Ipswich) and they reported that dog owners frequently ignore the signs and enter the fenced area with their dogs.

The Clerk stated that she had been invited to apply for a Thriving Places award for a fence. If successful, this would potentially fund 70% of the project, but the Council would have to match fund this with the remaining 30% which could be several thousand pounds.

Cllr Lenton asked the Clerk to obtain quotes to fence in the play area and put the item on the agenda for the November meeting when a decision would be made.

Action: Clerk

11. To discuss the difficulties for residents of Oak Tree View with the management company HML.

Cllr McDonald informed the Council that, unlike residents in the rest of the village, Oak Tree View residents are required to pay for the services of a private management company to manage the shared outside spaces. East Suffolk Council do not cut the verges, maintain the roads, or manage the hedges and trees in Oak Tree View.

Chair's initials:

The developer of Oak Tree View, Castlemore Homes, had engaged the services of HML who have struggled to outsource work to reliable contractors.

Cllr McDonald explained that despite residents of Oak Tree View already paying significant sums of money in management charges, and despite a steep increase in those charges to £750 per house, there had been very little work undertaken since the residents moved in. A company came out last week for a few hours and mainly used a strimmer to cut back some of the weeds but the job was not completed. No work has been undertaken to replace any of the dead trees.

Residents are reluctant to take on becoming 'Directors' of the management of the outside spaces as there are still outstanding planning issues mainly around landscaping - no hedgerow between edge of development and field, no play boulders on public open space etc. which was all part of their contracts of sale. Residents feel that they are now at an impasse and wondered if there is anything the Parish Council could do to help.

The Clerk informed the Council that roads can be adopted by the Highways authority so that they become maintainable at public expense pursuant to the 1980 Highways Act. The Department for Transport publish the Advice Note 'Highways Adoption' which is a 69 page document for planning authorities, local authorities, developers, and people living in private streets. The document is provided for guidance only and is not a substitute for independent legal advice.

Cllr Lenton suggested that this document be forwarded to Cllr McDonald in order that she shares it with other residents of Oak Tree View. They would then understand the process needed for the adoption of Oak Tree View by the highways authority (Suffolk County Council).

In the meantime the Clerk offered investigate what, if anything, the Council could do to support Oak Tree View residents.

Action: Clerk

12. To nominate a representative of the Council to lay a wreath at the Remembrance Day Service in St Mary's Church on 8th November.

Cllr Gardner offered to undertake this duty, as she had done in previous years. The Chair thanked Cllr Gardner for the offer and all Councillors agreed she would be an excellent representative of the Council once again at this very important annual event.

Action: Cllr Gardner

Chair's initials:

13. To receive agenda items for the next meeting of the Parish Council (Wednesday 11th November 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 meeting closed at 8:59pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date:

Ruth Johnson
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair's initials: