

**MINUTES of the MEETING of LEAVENHEATH PARISH COUNCIL** held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 7.00 p.m. at Leavenheath Village Hall.

**PRESENT:** Cllr C Morgan (Chair), Cllr J Evans (Vice Chair), Cllrs P King, T Taylor, S Whitelaw and Cllr Chris Davy joined the Meeting once co-opted. District Cllr L Parker, County Cllr J Finch, D Hattrell (Clerk) and 5 members of the public attended in person. There were no requests for a video link.

**PUBLIC FORUM:** The Chair wished everyone a Happy New Year!! A resident had brought an Enforcement Notice at Edies Lane to which an Appeal had been made. The Parish Council (PC) hadn't been consulted. The reasons for the Enforcement were explained as change of use and the building not being in the curtilage of the existing dwelling. She praised the helpfulness of Planning Enforcement, however, expressed concern about future vehicular access and potential business use. It was agreed for the PC to circulate details and then if considered appropriate, to provide comments to the Appeal. District Cllr Lee Parker also agreed to investigate, and the Clerk will circulate the emails to him for this purpose – **Action D/Cllr L Parker and Clerk.**

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr Sue Felgate had resigned from the PC at the end of 2025, so the Vacancy was to be reported in the usual way.

**CO-OPTION OF MEMBER:** Chris Davy was invited to join the PC. This was resolved and the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form duly completed. Cllr Chris Davy then formally joined the meeting as a Parish Councillor.

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST:** Nothing was declared.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 5<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2025:** These were accepted as a true record.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:** Cllr Chris Davy volunteered to take over from Sue Felgate the Footpath Warden role. Cllr S Whitelaw agreed to give him the relevant Footpath map. A resident had requested an update to Footpath 13, so it was agreed to provide Cllr Davy with the final emails from the previous warden updating the position – **Action Clerk.**

#### **UPDATES FROM COMMUNITY, ORGANISATIONS AND WARDENS ON URGENT MATTERS:**

Reports were provided for the Village Hall, Footpaths, Village Trees, Village Green, Community Woodland and from the Police Website.

#### **Village Hall Report**

**Village Hall Solar Project** – The PC has received notification that the Village Hall have decided not to pursue this project currently.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, the Village Hall Management Committee (LVHMC) held its Christmas Fayre. They thanked everyone who supported this successful event which raised £912 for the Leavenheath Village Hall Charity! This money will go directly towards maintaining and improving the village hall & car park.

Many residents have probably noticed the works being carried out to the side of the village hall (meeting room). This has taken a little longer than anticipated, but they hope to reveal what will be placed in this area in the very near future!

They are pleased to announce that the new EV charger has been installed in the car park. The new charger has the capacity to charge two vehicles at once. You will need to bring your own charging cable & form of payment. However, please bear in mind that the charger is **not** owned or managed by the Village Hall Committee. It is managed by a company called **Connected Kerb**, and their contact details are on the charger unit should you experience any faults or have any enquires.

The Management Committee now has 9 volunteers! They have already started looking at fundraising events for 2026 - and will update everyone on their website: [www.leavenheathvillage.com](http://www.leavenheathvillage.com) and on Facebook & Instagram. They would like to thank residents for their fundraising event suggestions which are all being considered. Please contact them with fundraising ideas or suggestions in general - they love to hear them and will help ensure the hall caters for the whole community. In addition, if any residents have spare time to help organise or help run an event, or help the committee with some maintenance, especially in the garden & car park as Spring comes around, they would be so grateful!

### **Tree Warden's Report**

Nothing had been received in relation to trees.

### **Footpath Warden's Report**

Cllr C Davy has now taken over as Footpath Warden.

#### **Police Report - September**

1 x Vehicle crime on or near The Old Road - investigation complete, no suspect identified

1 x Violence and sexual offence on or near The Ridings - Action to be taken by another organisation

A specialist agency or body (such as the Environment Agency, Office of Fair Trading, local authority or RSPCA) will be taking further action in relation to this crime. The victim has been advised of this.

1 x Vehicle crime on or near Champion Way - Unable to prosecute suspect

#### **October**

1 x Violence and sexual offence on or near Stoke Road - investigation complete, no suspect identified

1 x Criminal damage and arson on or near Plough Lane - investigation complete, no suspect identified

1 x Violence and sexual offence on or near Honey Lane - investigation complete, no suspect identified

#### **November**

1 x Violence and sexual offence on or near SBN Golf Club - under investigation

1 x Violence and sexual offence on or near Hawthorn Way - Action to be taken by another organisation

A specialist agency or body (such as the Environment Agency, Office of Fair Trading, local authority or RSPCA) will be taking further action in relation to this crime. The victim has been advised of this.

## Village Green Report

Paul Mortlock gave a report confirming the Annual Return has been made to the Charity Commission for 2025. One applicant has joined the Village Green Committee. The proposed ongoing maintenance work was for weed treatment to the Village Green and the hedge cutting. The green cutting contract was budgeted to continue into next season.

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT:** District Cllr L Parker attended and reported about the Local Government Reorganisation which is consuming much of their time at the District Council. The Consultation was due to end on 11<sup>th</sup> January, and he noted it was an agenda item for this PC meeting. In other matters, controversially, parking charges are being increased by 20%. Locally he will investigate the financials in relation to the discontinued solar project for the Village Hall. He will speak to his CIL team to see what can be done.

**SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT:** County Cllr J Finch attended later into the Meeting and his report covered: -

**Suffolk Bus Funding:** Suffolk County Council (SCC) secured over £26 million in Government funding (2026-2029) to improve bus services, ticketing, and infrastructure, including real-time passenger information, upgraded bus stops, and accessibility enhancements – He asked for any feedback from bus users and potential users of improvements that can be made with the pledged funds over the coming years.

**Disability Project Grant:** A £139k grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund will support the "Beyond Labels" project, celebrate disability and promote inclusion through personal stories, workshops, and community activities.

**Firefighter Recruitment:** Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service saw a 32% increase in applications and a 38% rise in female representation in the recruitment pool compared to last year.

**Sunnica Infrastructure Concerns:** Sunnica Ltd initially proposed changes to planning permissions for future large-scale projects but later announced it would focus only on amended Order Limits around Burwell substation.

**One Suffolk Proposal:** Veteran journalist Paul Geater supports the idea of replacing Suffolk's six councils with one unified authority, citing efficiency and preserving Suffolk's identity.

**Primary School Applications:** Parents were to apply for primary school places by 15 January 2026 for children born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022.

**Councillor Priorities:** James Finch's priorities include education, supporting vulnerable people, jobs and growth, localism, and building on Suffolk's strengths, supported by strong financial management and fair council tax.

In local matters, he mentioned the National Grid reinforcement and discussed the scale of the compound. In relation to the County Council Elections, a decision would be made as to whether to postpone them again.

**URGENT HIGHWAYS SAFETY MATTERS:** County Cllr James Finch was asked for an update in respect to the Vehicle Activated Signage pole installation at Honey Tye. He explained our area contact has been absent, and the remaining team are over stretched. However, he will chase for the installation of the two poles and for details of a community-based contractor to carry out the installation – **Action County Cllr J Finch**. The Clerk agreed to contact our Insurers in relation to the two devices – **Action Clerk**. The PC is grateful for some hedge-cutting along the A134 and

Cllr J Finch agreed to try to ascertain whom we should thank. He was asked about the process regarding the speed limit inconsistencies along the A134 and the temporary reduction for the National Grid Reinforcement. It was noted that changing the speed limit permanently is very costly and the PC agreed, the finances would be better spent elsewhere.

**FINANCE:** The Bank Balances as of 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026 were £15090.32 in the Community Account and £30,223.86 in the Rate Reward Account making a total of £45314.18.

The following pre-agreed payments were made: -

<b>Cheque No.</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Payee</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b><u>At 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025</u></b>			
Funds Transfer	1129.41	Clerk/HMRC/SCC	Staffing costs
Funds Transfer	50.00	Leavenheath VH	LE - Bingo
Payment	276.00	Leavenheath Scouts	LE - Santa Sleigh 25
Payment	18.10	Expenses	LE - Santa Sleigh 25
<b><u>At 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026</u></b>			
Funds Transfer	1121.94	Clerk/HMRC/SCC	Staffing costs

Income during December included £570.10 – proceeds from LE – Santa Sleigh 25 and Bank Interest of £87.93.

The above payments were resolved.

### **Budget and Precept for 2026/27**

The Finance Meeting was held the previous evening where all the figures were scrutinized. The spreadsheet was circulated to the full PC ahead of this meeting. **A Precept of £23056 (5% increase) was resolved.** The illustrative Band D charge would be £38.63, an increase of £1.84 on last year (5%). This was proposed by Cllr P King, seconded by Cllr J Evans and unanimously carried. The Charging form was duly completed and signed – **Action Clerk to submit ahead of the deadline.**

**Third quarter budget review** – this had been circulated to members and was noted.

**Review of Policies** – the Finance Meeting reviewed the existing Financial Regulations and reported that these still meet our needs. Our internal controls have had minor updates, and these were recommended for approval. It was therefore resolved to approve the Financial Regulations and Internal Control Statement – These will be updated on our website – **Action Clerk.**

**Set-up Grant for Leavenheath Events** – The Events Committee are currently part of the PC, and many events have been arranged since the committee was formed. The PC has underwritten and had insurance to cover events and as public money has been audited on the Income and Expenditure. The success of Events now leads to independent management formed from the successful committee members and volunteers. It has been suggested that a Community Interest Company (CIC) is formed. Having sought advice from Community Action Suffolk (CAS), the PC are supportive of this proposal. A small registration fee will be required of £65, and appropriate insurance should be arranged. CAS have offered to help set up appropriate policies etc. for the CIC.

The Finance Meeting therefore recommend a substantial start-up grant of £5000 be paid to the newly formed CIC. Additionally, subject to suitable quotes, the PC will also consider reimbursing

the first year's insurance cost and the fixed registration fee of £65. This should give sufficient start-up to enable "Leavenheath Events CIC" to underwrite their own events going forward. **This was resolved.** The meeting was closed briefly to seek feedback from a member of the Leavenheath Events Committee in the public area. He confirmed he could now go back to the other members with this information and although he could not speak on behalf of the other members, the proposal was well received, and he was positive the next stage is to set up Leavenheath Events CIC and proceed on this basis. The timescale should be just ahead of our March Meeting if all goes to plan. No other Events are taking place in the interim, which makes this transition easier to manage.

**St Matthews toilet and server project** – the Finance Meeting had reserved up to £500 towards this project. The final amount is to be resolved by the full PC as the project progresses. This was resolved. It was agreed to seek further updates and agree the principle of offering some financial support at the appropriate time – **Action Clerk.**

*(It can be noted that the previous legal restriction to support churches has been clarified, so support can be made under our General Power of Competence).*

**Village Hall Solar Project** – The PC has received notification that the Village Hall have decided not to pursue this project currently. However, the PC supported the proposal, so if in the future it can proceed, the PC will look at the Finances to see if there is a way to support. Cllr S Whitelaw agreed to communicate with the Village Hall Committee in this regard – **Action Cllr Whitelaw.**

**Other Recommendations from the Finance Meeting** – The final recommendation was that this PC continues to adhere to the National Pay scales and Terms for Clerks. This was resolved.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW CONSULTATION:** This was discussed and on balance the Parish Council favoured the proposal for 3 unitary councils as this could lead to better local representation than just 1 unitary council. The Chair agreed to respond to the consultation on behalf of the PC ahead of the deadline – **Action Chair.**

**LEAVENHEATH EVENTS:** The Events Committee are currently part of the PC, and many events have been arranged since the committee was formed. The PC has underwritten and had insurance to cover events and as public money has been audited on the Income and Expenditure. The success of Events now leads to independent management formed from the successful committee members and volunteers. The PC supports the suggested Community Interest Company (CIC) proposal. A small registration fee will be required of £65, and appropriate insurance should be arranged. CAS have offered to help set up appropriate policies etc. for the CIC. See further details under the Finance Agenda item. The financial proposal was resolved, and a member of Leavenheath Events is taking this forward to the other members.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** On-going correspondence was noted by the meeting.

**IDEAS TO IMPROVE THE VILLAGE:** The on-going matter of weeds on roadsides and overgrown trees obstructing walkways was raised. Cllr C Davy offered to visit a homeowner in this respect and politely ask them to arrange for their trees to be pruned to prevent the issue going

forward. This is a neighbourly suggestion and would save going through a more formal and lengthy process – **Action Cllr Davy.**

**MAINTENANCE OF VILLAGE ASSETS:** It was noted that most of our grit bins are on gritting routes so do not fulfill the criteria for refilling. It was agreed to check the one on Wrights Way and report on the reporting tool if it needs refilling. The bin and noticeboard repairs that are outstanding and Cllrs Evans and Whitelaw agreed to take the lead should contractors need further information. The Clerk will revisit the correspondence in the interim – **Action Cllrs Evans, Whitelaw and Clerk.**

**REPORTS AND QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS:** Nothing was raised.

The meeting closed at **8.40 p.m.**

**The next PC Meeting is scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026.**

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**Planning Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**The following Planning Applications were discussed: -**

- A) **Hunters Lodge, Stoke Road, Leavenheath** – Household application for alterations to existing dwelling, side extension and front porch and to remove exiting rear boot room – DC/25/04995.

The PC had **No Objections** between Meetings.

- B) **Any other urgent Planning Matters:** - We have received correspondence from a resident regarding an appeal concerning an enforcement matter at Edies Lane.