

MINUTES of the MEETING of LEAVENHEATH PARISH COUNCIL which was held on Wednesday 4th March 2026 at 7.00 p.m. at Leavenheath Village Hall.

PRESENT: Cllr C Morgan (Chair), Cllr J Evans (Vice Chair), Cllrs C Davy, P King and T Taylor. District Cllr L Parker, County Cllr J Finch, D Hattrell (Clerk) and 7 members of the public attended in person. There were no requests for a video link.

PUBLIC FORUM: Nothing was raised. The Meeting was closed briefly during the Correspondence Agenda item of closure of LSPN to allow other contributors to join the discussion.

APOLOGIES: were received from Cllr Sally Whitelaw and accepted by the Parish Council PC. County Cllr J Finch was to arrive later at the meeting due to other meetings he was attending.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST: Nothing was declared.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 7th JANUARY 2026: These were accepted as a true record.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES: Nothing was raised.

UPDATES FROM COMMUNITY, ORGANISATIONS AND WARDENS ON URGENT MATTERS:

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

Village Hall Report

No report was provided.

Tree Warden's Report

Nothing had been received in relation to trees.

Footpath Warden's Report

Cllr Chris Davy had provided a detailed report which was circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting.

Police Report

December crimes

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

1 x Violence and sexual offence near SBN Golf Club - action to be taken by another organisation.

January crimes

1 x Violence and sexual offence on or near Hawthorn Way - under investigation

1 x Other theft on or near The Old Road - investigation complete, no suspect identified

Village Green Report

Some hedge cutting and tree work has been carried out from this year's budget. Weedkilling is being arranged. The contract work for this coming season has been costed and remains within budget. The PC has formally registered the land - Village Green. Some items remain outstanding on the jobs list.

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT: District Cllr L Parker attended and reported:-

On 24 February 2026, Babergh District Council (BDC) approved its 2026/27 budget following challenging financial pressures and a tighter government funding settlement.

The budget includes a 2.99% increase in the Council's share of council tax, resulting in a Band D charge of £199.52 per year (an increase of £5.79 annually).

- The budget aims to protect core services including waste collection, planning, leisure, environmental health and support for vulnerable residents.
- Continued investment in priority projects and community facilities remains part of the capital program.
- The administration emphasised prudent financial management considering ongoing funding pressures and proposed local government reorganisation.

The budget seeks to balance financial responsibility with maintaining service standards for residents across the district, including rural wards such as Assington.

In February, BDC approved an updated Biodiversity Action Plan (2026–2030), reaffirming its commitment to protecting and enhancing nature across the district.

- Habitat restoration and creation
- Tree and wildflower planting initiatives
- Strengthening wildlife corridors
- Supporting biodiversity gain requirements

This work aligns national environmental legislation and Suffolk-wide nature recovery ambitions and will influence future planning and land management decisions.

During February, BDC (jointly with Mid Suffolk DC) formally objected to proposed new electricity pylons across parts of the Suffolk countryside due to landscape and visual impact, heritage implication and cumulative infrastructure pressures on rural communities.

The authority has called for alternative approaches to be properly considered and is representing district residents' interests in the ongoing consultation and examination process.

BDC announced the launch of a technology donation initiative to help reduce digital exclusion across rural communities.

Finally, BDC have published a map of all sites submitted during our most recent 'call for sites' held as part of our Joint Local Plan Review. Publishing these submissions is a routine, transparent step that allows communities to see what land has been suggested, but it's important to be clear that the submission of a site does not give it planning status and does not mean it *will* be developed. All submitted sites will now be assessed carefully against planning policy, environmental constraints, infrastructure needs and deliverability considerations. This

assessment will then be published in a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) in Spring 2026, and everyone will be able to have their say on potential site allocations when we publish our draft Local Plan for consultation later in the process.

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

"One Suffolk," proposal aims to replace six councils with a single unitary authority to save £39.4 million annually after five years, contrasting with higher costs under a three-council model. The plan aims for improved services, financial resilience, harmonized council tax (with reductions in some areas), community empowerment, enhanced highways, unified planning, technological innovation, and economic growth. A proposed Council Tax increase of 4.99% aims to generate £27.4 million, with specific weekly cost increases for typical households.

Young people's involvement shaped the 2025 Public Health Report, emphasizing youth social action's role in improving health and reducing inequalities. Suffolk County Council SCC also highlighted progress in SEND services, with improvements in governance, timeliness, and multi-agency collaboration, alongside plans for new provision for children with complex needs, including a new Suffolk-based school. A recent DfE review praised Suffolk's efforts but recommended further enhancements.

A significant Anglo-Saxon burial site at Sizewell C revealed high-status graves with weapons, personal items, and a harnessed horse, offering insights into 7th-century society. Alongside, at least 11 burial mounds were identified, despite poor bone preservation.

The Norwich to Tilbury pylon scheme faced opposition from SCC, citing environmental concerns, lack of alternatives, and inadequate planning, with objections emphasizing the need to protect landscapes and ensure better management.

A new 19-minute documentary features Adam Buxton highlighting fostering's importance, showcasing local foster families who provide vital support to vulnerable children.

Following his report, Cllr Finch explained they were waiting for feedback from the Secretary of State on which Unitary Council option will be progressed.

It was agreed to put the full report from Cllr Finch each month on our website – **Action Clerk**.

URGENT HIGHWAYS SAFETY MATTERS: In relation to the posts for the Vehicle Activated Signage devices in Honey Tye, SCC are arranging to install these. Cllr Finch agreed to ascertain timescales. He was also asked to help identify a contractor to locate the devices on the posts.

FINANCE: The Bank Balances as of 26th February 2026 were £12,714.24 in the Community Account and £30,223.86 in the Rate Reward Account making a total of £42,938.10.

The following pre-agreed payments were made: -

Cheque No.	Amount	Payee	Details
<u>At 3rd March 2026</u>			
Funds Transfer	1115.45	Clerk/HMRC/SCC	Staffing costs
Funds Transfer	396.00	Bowman & Son	VG - Maintenance
Funds Transfer	350.00	Peter Irving	VG - Maintenance
Funds Transfer	95.58	G Deeks	LE - General

At 1st February 2026

Funds Transfer	1164.14	Clerk/HMRC/SCC	Staffing costs
Funds Transfer	130.00	Suffolk.Cloud	Email/domain costs
Funds Transfer	24.00	Leavenheath VH	L/Events – General
Funds Transfer	16.00	Leavenheath VH	PC hall hire

The above payments were resolved.

Review of Asset Register 2026

The Asset Register was reviewed. New assets acquired during the financial year will be added including the Vehicle Activated Signage. The up-to-date document will be uploaded to the website as usual – **Action Clerk.**

Street Lighting progress report and quotes for further obsolete lanterns

LC6 – lantern replacement was authorized as agreed. We have been advised that some of our remaining lanterns are now obsolete which means when they fail, repair is not possible. Quotes were circulated for replacement lanterns. Cllr Sally Whitelaw had investigated between meetings and confirmed all the lights were lit up after dark, so there is no great urgency to replace the remaining lanterns. It was agreed to budget to replace the lanterns either when they fail or when budget allows.

Any Other Urgent financial matters.

An update had been circulated in relation to the projects at St Matthew’s Church

LEAVENHEATH EVENTS: Update in relation to forming Leavenheath Events CIC. A representative from the newly formed CIC explained the progress and the set-up costs. The CIC has been formed and a bank account opened. Insurance is in the process of being arranged. They are being guided by Community Action Suffolk and will formally write to the PC shortly seeking set-up grant and reimbursements. Their first planned event is in April. They were thanked for their actions in making this happen. It was approved for the Clerk to issue the payment between meetings subject to satisfactory documentation following the resolution already agreed – **Action Clerk.**

CORRESPONDENCE: On-going correspondence was noted by the meeting. Closure of LSPN. Emails had been circulated between meetings. The Meeting was closed to allow David Baker and Peter French to contribute. They explained the background and that they were at the Stoke by Nayland meeting the previous day. They have conducted surveys in Stoke by Nayland Parish with good support for a newsletter going forward. They have researched the following: - Costs, Editing, Typesetting and Distribution. In view of potential commercial advertising, it would need a suitably qualified Parish Council, Community Interest Company or small charity to run it. Potential volunteers are already showing an interest. The successful similar models locally are under the leadership of motivated community focused individuals. Distribution could be monthly or quarterly. Following the discussion, it was agreed to formally thank the attendees and the Chair agreed to devise a resident’s questionnaire to assess demand in our Parish – **Action Chair and Clerk.**

IDEAS TO IMPROVE THE VILLAGE: including Cllr C Davy item – litter picking and volunteers. It was agreed for Cllr C Davy to research the equipment we already have with fellow Councillors – litter picking equipment and high-viz – **Action Cllr Davy**.
The Chair will seek volunteers on a FaceBook and Website poster – **Action Chair**.
The Clerk will check with BDC provision of bags and collection of rubbish – **Action Clerk**.
On other matters, it was agreed for Cllr Davy to contact Peter Irving, Tree Surgeon, for advice on the ivy in the cherry trees on the entrance to Wrights Way. If appropriate remedial work will be ordered – **Action Cllr Davy**.

MAINTENANCE OF VILLAGE ASSETS: Under the Asset Register item in Finance, it was agreed for the details of our VAS devices to be confirmed to the Clerk – **Action Cllr Evans**.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: It was agreed to consider combining the Annual Parish Meeting with the May Annual PC Meeting as last year. The Clerk is to check availability of main hall or if unavailable to check other potential dates in May – **Action Clerk**. Thereafter, arrangements will need to be made, so ideas to be shared with the Chair via email.

REPORTS AND QUESTIONS FROM CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS:

Nothing was raised.

The meeting closed at **8.52 p.m.**

The next PC Meeting is scheduled for 26th May 2026 following the Annual Parish Meeting in the main hall at the Village Hall.

Planning Meeting on 4th March 2026

The following Planning Applications were decided by the Planning Authority: -

- A) Planning Permission was granted to convert outbuilding to dwelling at Hynards, Harrow Street - **DC/25/04443**.
- B) Permission was granted for conversion of cartlodge to annex at Hare Cottage, Harrow Street - **DC/25/04472**.

The following Planning Applications were discussed: -

- A) **Enforcement Appeal - 30 Edies Lane - APP/D3505/C/25/3376611.**
The PC objected to this Appeal due to non-compliance with the Local and Neighbourhood Plans.
- B) **Application for new dwelling at 30 Edies Lane and re-consultation with new information - DC/26/00213.**
The PC objected to this application between meetings as follows: -
 - 1) *There is no buffer between the proposed development and open countryside - Design Guidelines SPC.03 - (Leavenheath Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide).*
 - 2) *It does not meet our Leavenheath Neighbourhood Plan key design principles 5.1.3 - i, v, and vi*
 - 3) *It would interfere with the public footpath network*
 - 4) *The poor proximity to water hydrant for fire safety*
 - 5) *This would represent over development of a remote site.*
A further correction is that the application states no substantial trees or hedges are to be removed. This is somewhat disingenuous as the site has been substantially cleared of mature trees and hedging has already been removed.
- C) Listed Building application at Heathcote, Honey Tye - **DC/26/00426.**
The PC had **No Objections**.
- D) Thomson Farm, Cock Street - **DC/26/00569** - Listed Building application for external restoration.
A response will be issued ahead of the deadline.
- E) Thomson Farm, Cock Street - **DC/26/00675/676** - Householder and Listed Building applications for solar panels.
A response will be issued ahead of the deadline.
- F) Bramford to Twinstead discharge of access requirements. It was agreed no further comment will be required at this stage. This PC has already engaged at the various stages regarding access.
- G) **Any other urgent Planning Matters:** - The Appeal to the Enforcement Notice has been arranged as a public hearing at Leavenheath Village Hall. It was agreed to seek full details to circulate to the full PC to enable attendance at the hearing - **Action Clerk**.