

MINUTES of the 72nd ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT LEAVENHEATH on 26th May 2026 at 7 p.m. held at The Village Hall, Leavenheath.

PRESENT: Around 16 people attended including Councillors (Cllrs). Cllr Clare Morgan opened the meeting as the Parish Council (PC) Chair for the past year.

APOLOGIES: were received from our former County Cllr James Finch.

MINUTES OF 7th May 2025 were accepted as a true record.

Suffolk County Council Report

Newly elected County Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton attended and introduced himself. He thanked the previous County Cllr, James Finch, for his 17 years of service and spoke of observing James representing local voices with strength over the pylons. Cllr Faircloth-Mutton spoke of the good turnout for voting and the Reform majority administration. He confirmed the focus will be on the community and common-sense solutions. He is keen to work collaboratively with District Cllr Lee Parker and would like to attend Community Events.

District Council Report

District Cllr Lee Parker attended and reported the Local Government Review and Joint Local Plan. He reminded the Meeting of the Elections planned for May 2027 to elect the shadow Unitary Council. The Unitary Councils are to replace existing District and County Councils on 1st April 2028. Meanwhile, the extraordinary housing targets are to be considered, so work to update the Local Plan continues. The Household Bin changes are just about to start. He thanked the PC for its resilience and continued hard work for the community. He thanked James Finch and wished him well in his retirement. He worked together with James to find solutions and confirmed we were lucky to have an experienced new Councillor going forward and welcomed Cllr Faircloth-Mutton. Following his report, the increasing costs of running the Village Hall in relation to energy and rates were stressed and any support would be appreciated. He was asked about the brown bins, and Cllr Parker confirmed the arrangements were unchanged. He offered to support where he could.

Parish Council Chairmans report, Cllr Clare Morgan, Chair, read her report which is available on the PC website. She spoke of a busy productive year and thanked her fellow Councillors, the Clerk/RFO and our supportive District and County Councilors over the past year. She congratulated Cllr Lee Parker who is now Chair of Babergh District Council. She thanked Community Volunteers and those involved in the new Play area including Greg Deeks and his well-deserved award. She confirmed that Neighbourhood Planning is being monitored considering changes. She is delighted after the PC supported the start-up of Leavenheath Events; they have now moved to independent management. She spoke of the Village Hall as a Community hub and Village Green as an important asset. Following her report there was discussion on the absence of the LSPN and how best to get information out to residents without accessing the internet. The LSPN was helpful in sharing forthcoming Events in the Village including at the Village Hall. County Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton offered to pay the cost of the first month of a new newsletter should someone come forward to run it.

PC Finance report: Read by Debbie Hattrell, Responsible Finance Officer RFO and is available on PC website. No questions followed the report.

Village Hall Report was read by Jill Dunkley from the VH Committee: Available on PC website. The discontinuation of the solar project was due to the need for a costly survey to assess viability. It was suggested the National Grid could be approached for a community grant towards the survey.

Village Green report: Read by Paul Mortlock, available on PC Website. Following his report a resident suggested a No dogs sign to be displayed on the other side of the fence so people could read it approaching the Play area.

Leavenheath Events: No report was provided, however, they were busy finalizing plans for the Village Fete on 4th July.

Community Pantry and Get Together Report, The Clerk read the report, available on the PC Website.

Friends of St Matthews, Jane Gurden, Chair of Friends of St Matthew gave a report which is available on the PC Website. They have raised substantial funds towards the toilet and server project, however, still have a significant shortfall. They will be applying to CIL soon and asked for support from the County and District Cllrs and the PC.

Footpaths: Cllr Chris Davy introduced himself as the new warden and reported on his progress to date. He is walking the paths and liaising with the SCC Right of Way Officer to get the issues resolved. His full report can be found on the PC Website. Questioning was about walk leaflets which will be investigated. Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton agreed to provide the updated digitalized footpath map *this was received & uploaded to PC Website.

Any Other Reports from the Village

The Lady Anne Windsor Charity Annual Report is available on our website. Graham Walker gave a report as a Trustee of the Charity. He gave the background of providing single occupancy Almshouses and that the Charity owns a 13-acre field off Plough Lane which could be used for further truly affordable local housing for the Parishes served by the Charity. They have made progress with the District Council, however, need a Housing Association to get involved, which requires more evidence on the local housing need.

Elector's Questions and Observations - The Chair noted the request for more footpath/walks leaflets and PC encouragement for the Community to start up a newsletter. A resident then questioned about the bus service in the Village. Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton advised the new administration at the County Council are to research the bus provision and would welcome any suggested improvements. The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Items to take forward to PC - Community Newsletter, Walk Leaflets.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.