

BUNWELL PARISH COUNCIL
MILL HOUSE, LENWADE MILL, NORWICH, NR9 5QA
www.bunwellpc.info

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MINUTES of Bunwell Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 8th January 2025 at the Village Hall, Bunwell.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: Cllr M Booty, Cllr M Crouch, Cllr S Spooner and Cllr D Ward

Also Present: Parish Clerk, and 4 members of the public.

MINUTES	ACTION
<p>1. To receive apologies – apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Chapman and Watson, also from County Cllr Rowett and District Cllr Wateridge. Vice-Chairman, Cllr Booty, chaired the meeting in the absence of Cllr Chapman.</p>	
<p>2. To record declarations of interest from Council members in any item to be discussed – there were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>3. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 4th December 2024 – the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2024, pages 551-557, having previously been circulated to all members, were agreed and signed by the Vice-Chair.</p>	
<p>4. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting 4.1. Update on Village Emergency Plan – Cllr Chapman and Crouch will bring more information to the next meeting.</p>	<p>Cllrs Chapman & Crouch</p>
<p>5. To receive the District and County Councillors' Reports 5.1. County Councillor, Catherine Rowett, had sent a full report which is attached to these minutes. She mentions in her report the proposals for local government devolution, bus services, health issues and news from Central Government. 5.2. District Councillor, Suzanne Wateridge, sent her report which is attached to these minutes. She also mentioned devolution, as well as an update on Solar Projects.</p>	
<p>6. Resident's Questions – A resident raised the issue of the National Grid's Plans for installing pylons from Norwich to Tilbury. A recent newsletter said that residents along the proposed route of the new transmission line from Norwich to Tilbury will receive a copy of the latest community update newsletter. This edition provides an update on some of the key issues that were raised during the statutory consultation held in summer 2024 and National Grid's responses to these points. The newsletter also explains that they have identified some potential local changes and will hold targeted consultations before confirming any decisions on these. More information on the local consultations over the coming weeks. Email: contact@n-t.nationalgrid.com for more information.</p>	
<p>7. To receive and discuss correspondence – emails received had been forwarded to Cllrs and dealt with as required.</p>	

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8. Working Groups – to receive updates from:

- 8.1. Planning Development Group – there are no updates to report at the moment

9. Highway & Footpath Matters –

- 9.1. Update on NCC Highways Department drainage system work – The improved drainage system has now been completed and residents in the area report that there have been no problems with flooding. Unfortunately, the road surface that has been left is not good and NCC Highways will be contacted to urge them to carry out remedial work. Efforts to improve the drainage of surface-water in the Parish is also proceeding. The Councillors expressed their thanks to Jason and Sarah Goddard for their efforts in ensuring this work was completed to safeguard residents from future flooding problems. **Clerk**
- 9.2. Safety issues crossing the Turnpike outside the Village Hall – Councillors were pleased to report that the crossing signs that were installed by NCC are now working effectively and that motorists should be more aware of the possibility of pedestrians crossing the road. County Cllr Rowett will be contacted to see if she has any further news on safety issues in this area. **Clerk**
- 9.3. Safety issues at the junction of Bunwell Street and Church Lane – Following the recent accident at this junction between a cyclist and a vehicle, councillors discussed the possibility of any improvements that could be made to avoid motorists turning right into Church Lane cutting the corner and causing a hazard to road users approaching Bunwell Street from Church Lane. The accident is still being investigated by the Police and the councillors will await the outcome of any report before proceeding further.
- 9.4. The Footpath Warden confirmed that all the necessary evidence had been collected to enable the footpath from Greenways to Barhams Lane to be added to the Definitive Map. The poor condition of the footbridge at the end of FP1 where the footpath from Carleton Rode meets Bunwell Street was reported, and it is understood that Carleton Rode PC are arranging for this to be repaired. It was reported that some walkers are still allowing their dogs to run free on footpaths in our area. This is both dangerous and anti-social, particularly at such times as sheep are likely to be heavily in lamb and lambs could be lost. Please could all walkers ensure their dogs are on a lead and under control at all times.

10. Playground/Village Hall –

- 10.1. It was suggested that a clean-up operation be organised for the Spring when residents could be invited to help. A suitable time will be arranged when the weather improves.

11. Planning Applications – to discuss and vote on any new planning

applications – no applications have been received or decisions made since the last meeting.

12. Finance

- 12.1. Payments for December had been circulated and councillors agreed to these transactions. The Cashbook balance was noted.
- 12.2. The proposed Budget for 2025/26 had been forwarded to councillors for their consideration before the meeting and they were all in favour of the proposal, including a Parish Precept request of £15,500 from South Norfolk Council. This is unchanged from the current year.

13. To receive matters of importance from Councillors – it was noted that the collection for the Poppy Appeal in Bunwell in November had raised £1,247 – many thanks to the generosity of residents.

14. To receive items for the next Agenda for Consideration – To follow up items raised above.

15. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 5th February 2025 at 7.30pm

16. Meeting Closed 8.30pm

UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT	
BALANCE AS AT 04.12.24	£23,913.89

RECEIPTS AS AT 04.12.24			
DATE	RECEIVED FROM	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT
BALANCE C/FWD			£23,913.89

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL IN OCTOBER: UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT					
BALANCE AS AT 04.12.24				£23,913.89	
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	PAYE
BACS	Bunwell Village Hall	Hire of Hall, Dec	30.00		
BACS	Information Comm Office	Data Protection Annual Fee (Pd by MR)	40.00		
BACS	Wix.Com	Website Domain and site fee	129.60	21.60	
BACS	M Ridgwell	Dec Salary & Exps	318.95		71.00
BACS	Unity Trust	Service Charge	6.00		
		Total	524.55	21.60	71.00
RECEIPTS					
BALANCE C/FWD			£23,389.34		

CASHBOOK BALANCE: 04.12.24

Details	CR	DR	
Cash Book Balance Brought Forward (Unity Trust Bank Current Account) A	£23,913.89		
Receipts this month (see listed above) B			
	Payments this month (listed above) C		524.55
	Cash Book Balance Carried Forward (=A+B-C)		23,389.34
	Unity Balance		£23,389.34

Devolution

Just before Christmas, the government put out a plan for local government reorganisation and restructuring that has sent the entirety of Suffolk and Norfolk into a spin, along with many other parts of the UK. Proposals include elected mayors for large areas (in our case Norfolk and Suffolk together) and unitary authorities that combine the functions of District and County councils and eliminate the layer of representation that is currently District Councillors'. Since these are the people closest to the actual places you live and elected to serve small groups of villages rather than large areas, this seems a way of taking power away from local places and centralising it in large authorities, rather than real devolution.

There is an option for councils who are keen to progress these changes quickly to apply for a fast-track restructure, including postponing this year's May elections so that new councillors could be elected for the new authorities once the new structure has been approved. Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils are holding emergency meetings this coming week to discuss whether to apply for this fast-track process. I shall be opposing that idea, since I believe that we should not extend the time of people elected four years ago and prevent the people from electing the representatives they want now. The people elected four years ago do not have a mandate to make these massive changes for Suffolk and Norfolk. People need to have a say in what happens, and that is best done by having elections.

If the Council votes to request the fast-track system, it is not particularly likely that the government will say yes, since we are so far from even beginning to work out what the new local government unitary authorities would be like. The discussions will clearly take some years to reach any conclusion, and then there are many practical difficulties about actually transferring the staff and offices etc.

We shall know what the Council votes to request, on the 9th January, but we shan't know what the government says about it till later.

Buses

Norfolk has just received an allocation of £15.9m for one year (2025-2026) to improve local bus transport. The funding allocation is split £7.4m capital and £8.5m revenue. This comes on top of the £49.5m we won for 2022-2025 (the highest award of any non-metropolitan authority).

With the original allocation our officers worked closely with bus operators. This is what they did:

- Introduced new services, added evening & Sunday services, increased frequency of buses;
- Built new improved waiting areas – gold stops and travel hubs;
- Introduced more real-time information screens at stops and a QR board at every stop;
- Introduced a £1.50 fare cap in King's Lynn, Thetford and Gt Yarmouth and a 25% discount on weekly, monthly and group tickets;
- Introduced bus priority measures like bus lanes and junction improvements.

Together with the DfT's £2 bus fare cap (now sadly rising to £3), Norfolk has achieved a 16% increase in passenger journeys over the last year. Passenger satisfaction has gone up to 87% (from 78% in 2023). We've got some fantastic new electric buses which are quiet and clean and with superb passenger information. Norfolk is doing better at all this than most places nationally. The new £15.9m allocation will allow officers to plan for more of this, but since it is only a year's allocation we need to spend it on things that can be delivered by March 2026 and the money going into revenue

initiatives (e.g. more frequent buses) would either need to be sustainable after March 2026 or we'll need to find other funding to keep them going.

Council officers would like to hear our ideas on what would help with encouraging you and other local people to use the bus and make it easy to do so – is it evening services, better waiting areas, more bus priority measures for example? They need to build our delivery plan to send to the DfT by the end of March 2025. I'd like to hear your suggestions by the last week of January.

One suggestion we made recently was that all rural bus stops should have a few cycle racks nearby to help you get to and from the outlying hamlets that aren't on the bus routes and leave your bike safely. Bus shelters combined with cycle parking might be good for young people going to school and college. Later buses home so that workers can return after a day's work in Norwich would be useful. Parking provision at Long Stratton to enable people to park and ride has also been suggested by some parishes.

Please think about what would make you try the buses and what for and let me know what would help and what stops you doing that at present!

Health

Public Health's annual Ready to Change campaign launched on 30 December, to encourage Norfolk residents to sign up to a 30-day health challenge. There is a simple online self-help tool using behaviour change science to support improvements to health.

You can choose a challenge from this list of five:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating healthily
- Being more active
- Drinking less
- Quitting smoking

For 30 days you get email updates full of expert advice, guidance and support to help you reach your goal. Once you've completed your challenge, you're encouraged to maintain the healthy lifestyle longer term. The tool is available throughout the year.

Ready for a new you in 2025? Sign up at www.readytochange.co.uk.

Info from Central Government

Bird Flu (avian influenza) government update, new cases in Norfolk

A rising number of cases of bird flu have been identified in Norfolk. Guidance on how to prevent it and stop it spreading is available here.

Contact me

Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk. See also my Facebook page here.

Catherine Rowett 3rd January 2025

Bunwell District Councillor Report January 2025

As you might expect, it's been very quiet at the Council over the Christmas period but I just wanted to update you on two areas:

Local Government Devolution

Those of you who are interested might have heard about the publication of the government's White Paper on local government devolution last month. The main thrust of this is that they want to devolve more power to local councils, which is to be applauded: however, they also want to cut costs and have strongly suggested the best way to do this is by merging the many district councils in Norfolk and Suffolk into the County Council, to form one or two large unitary councils in each county, with a directly elected Mayor across both.

We in the Green Party are opposed to the idea of abolishing district councils. Local people should be represented by local councillors and councils, not a remote, huge and unwieldy unitary council far from its residents. In addition, there is talk that the County Council elections, which are due this May, could be postponed. Catherine, along with the other Green Councillors, will be putting their thoughts forward at the Extraordinary Full County Council Meeting this Thursday 9th January and we will be able to update you further at our next meeting. Please do contact us if you have any questions in the meantime about this.

Update on Solar Projects

As you know, the East Pye non-statutory consultation closed in December. We also discussed Station Road Solar in our last meeting. Although this officially classed as Tivetshall, it also impacts Great Moulton. We have now been given a reference on the Council's planning portal which is 2024/3817 if you want to take a look at the various documents there.

At Full Council in December, I voted for a Lib Dem motion, which was carried, to support the CPRE Rooftop Solar Campaign, as well as a separate motion to ensure oversight of the many solar farm energy project applications that seem to be popping up all over South Norfolk at the moment. As stated previously, of course we want renewable energy and must stop burning fossil fuels as quickly as possible, but it is not fair that South Norfolk seems to be disproportionately targeted by these schemes, especially when some of them do not offer any benefit to local communities.

Community Ward Allowance

I have a small pot of money (£1k) to allocate before the end of February towards community projects. This can cover a much wider remit than the CAF funding and I am open to any ideas you may have – do please get in touch if you do!

Cllr Suzanne Wateridge

Member for Bunwell Ward, South Norfolk Council

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