

BUNWELL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES of **Bunwell Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 1st July 2026 at the Village Hall, Bunwell.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: Cllr M Booty (Chair), Cllr M Crouch, Cllr P Palmer, Cllr R Watson and Cllr D Ward.

Also Present: Parish Clerk, County Cllr Margaret Thomas, District Councillor, Suzanne Wateridge and 5 members of the public.

MINUTES		ACTION
1.	To receive apologies – Cllr Julie Worth sent her apologies.	
2.	To record declarations of interest from Council members in any item to be discussed – there were no declarations of interest.	
3.	To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 3rd June 2026 – the minutes of the meeting held on 3 rd June 2026, pages 659-666, having previously been circulated to all members, were agreed and signed by the Chair.	
4.	Matters Arising from Previous Meeting:	
4.1.	Update on Village Emergency Plan – Cllr Crouch had been in touch with the Emergency Planning Officer from Norfolk CC and he will arrange a meeting between himself and Cllr Palmer to compile a Community Resilience Plan. This would include a list of residents who might be able to help in an emergency, such as flooding, fire, major accident or incident, etc. and also vulnerable residents who might be in need of extra help.	Cllr Crouch and Cllr Palmer
4.2.	Repair and repainting of telephone boxes and Bunwell Hill Noticeboard – Cllr Crouch reported that the broken and unsafe noticeboard had been removed and he will contact Jason Goddard to ask for his help in erecting a replacement. Cllr Ward agreed to measure the glass in the telephone boxes so new glass can be obtained.	Cllr Crouch Cllr Ward
4.3.	Financial support for Village Coffee Shop – A grant of £500 has been paid to the organisers of the Bunwell Coffee Shop and councillors were pleased to hear that the first session had been a great success.	
5.	Resident's Questions –	
5.1.	County Councillor's Report – Cllr Margaret Thomas spoke about the Local Government Review and the legal processes to go through before a decision is made by Government. She also mentioned Local Issues, Council Business and Community Engagement, including the Norfolk Heating Oil Crisis Fund and Big Norfolk Holiday Fun scheme for children. Cllr Thomas's full report is attached to these minutes.	
5.2.	District Councillor's Report – Cllr Wateridge's full report is attached to these minutes, but she mentioned Community Climate Action Plans and said that the Chief Exec, Joolz Thompson is happy to come and talk to Parish Councils,	

churches, schools, village halls and any members of the public who are interested in making their communities climate resilient. She highlighted that Adrian Ramsay's team are hosting an event on the People's Emergency Briefing this Friday 3rd July at 1pm at the Corn Hall in Diss. It is free to attend but you do need to sign up via Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-peoples-emergency-briefing-diss-tickets-1992129100767> Other topics in her report included new Planning Regulations, planned for October this year, Food Waste collections, and Energy Project updates.

- 5.3. Questions from members of the public raised the matter of speeding vehicles down Bunwell Street and Jason Goddard offered to put up fixings to an additional pole so that the SAM2 machine could be used in another site to remind drivers of the speed limit. Another resident raised the matter of football pitches on the playing field and the importance of ensuring that the goals, nets, white lining, etc. are to the required standard. Cllr Booty explained that Tivetshall FC, who plan to use the playing field for their matches in the autumn, are keen to apply for funding to address these issues.

6. **To receive and discuss correspondence** – any correspondence of importance had been passed to councillors for consideration or are included in agenda items. A resident did raise the matter of spending some of the Peter Haylock Bequest to purchase the land opposite the school and church, to ensure that this woodland and natural area could be safeguarded for the use of residents.

7. **Highways and Footpath Matters** –

- 7.1. The Footpath Warden, Katherine Womack, reported that she is keeping an eye on whether footpaths have been cut to maintain access and see that posts are in place where necessary.
- 7.2. Junction of Bunwell Street and Church Lane – Cllr Booty reported that following the serious accident at this site last year, he had spoken to the Police and NCC Highways and they say that no improvements are necessary. The matter will be kept under review but in the meantime residents are asked to drive carefully at this junction.
- 7.3. Cycling on Greenways – It had been mentioned at the last meeting that the blind bend on Greenways and high fences to properties in the area could make it difficult to avoid accidents if more traffic was to be encouraged to use this route. The matter will be kept under review.

8. **Playground/Playing Field** – Cllr Crouch said that he had gone through the recent RoSPA report on the play equipment. There are no immediate repairs to be made but minor faults will be dealt with in due course. A date has been agreed for a clean-up day on Sunday 26th July from 10.00am to 12.00 noon, to tidy up the Village Hall inside and out, and to clean the plastic surfaces of the play equipment. Any residents who can spare the time would be very welcome to come along and help. The date will be advertised on Facebook. Cllr Worth had emailed to say that she had obtained prices for new picnic benches but the fixings already in place are for 2m benches and most current ones are 1.8m. Jason Goddard kindly offered to liaise with the PC to try to find the best solution to replacing the worn benches. Following the recent survey to residents asking what play equipment children would like to see on the playground, top of the list was climbing equipment. Cllr Booty has researched the matter and found a company who offered to supply a climbing wall

Cllr
Worth

MINUTES	ACTION
and target wall which could be erected on the playground, and they are happy to visit and discuss the matter, as well as help to apply for grant funding. It was agreed that the company be asked to go ahead and supply more information.	Cllr Booty
9. Projects –	
9.1. Nature Recovery Project on the Playing Field. It was agreed to discuss this later in the year if there had been any interest from residents in the idea. As there are several potential projects planned for the Playing Field, such as the Climbing Wall, Nature Recovery Project, new Changing Rooms, BMX track and possible flooding of the Playing Field, it was felt that it would be helpful to have a specialist surveyor look at all these projects and provide a comprehensive and cohesive plan for the area. Cllr Palmer offered to look into the matter.	
9.2. Changing Facilities for visiting teams. It was agreed that the Village Hall Committee be asked to consider reinstating the existing changing rooms at the rear of the Hall which are now used as a storage area. If this was possible a decision on providing outside facilities could wait to see how much the Playing Field was used.	Cllr Palmer
9.3. Providing a BMX track. It was agreed to discuss this later in the year.	
9.4. Improving access from the centre of the village to the Village Hall area. It was agreed to discuss this further later in the year.	
9.5. CCTV for the Village Hall and Carpark. Cllr Booty had obtained a quote for this to improve security for hall users. There were also plans to improve the outside doors to the Hall and upgrade the kitchen. The VH Committee will be asked to obtain quotes for these improvements and pass it on to the Parish Council to see if grant funding can be obtained. If match funding is needed, it was agreed that this money could legitimately be taken from the Peter Haylock Bequest as it was a capital project for the benefit of all residents.	
9.6. Norwich to Tilbury Community Fund Project. Cllr Watson had prepared an in-depth report and timetable of liaising with other local councils affected by the proposed National Grid Pylon proposal and how best to ensure that residents can benefit from the Community Fund National Grid are offering. Councillors were appreciative of Cllr Watson's time and effort and agreed that his suggestions be followed up.	
10. Planning Applications – An application had been received to install solar panels on a dwelling and councillors agreed that they had no objections.	Cllr Watson
11. Finance	
11.1. Payments for June had been circulated and councillors agreed to these transactions.	
11.2. Councillors had received the first quarter position statement from the Clerk and the cashbook balance was noted.	
12. To receive matters of importance from Councillors – none were raised.	
13. To receive items for the next Agenda for Consideration – To follow up items raised above.	
14. Date of next meeting – the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 2nd September 2026 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.	
Meeting Closed 9.10pm	

MINUTES				ACTION	
UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT					
BALANCE AS AT 03.06.26			£29,348.18		
UNITY TRUST DEPOSIT ACCOUNT					
BALANCE AS AT 06.05.26			£120,057.70		
RECEIPTS AS AT 03.06.26					
DATE	RECEIVED FROM	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT		
Current A/c Balance C/Fwd			£29,348.18		
Deposit A/c Balance C/Fwd			£120.057.70		
PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT					
BALANCE AS AT 03.06.26			£29,348.18		
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	PAYE
BACS	M Ridgwell	Jun Salary & Exps	332.45		
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to month 3	73.40		73.40
BACS	Bunwell Village Hall	Hall Hire, May 2026	36.00		
BACS	Jason Goddard	SAM2 maintenance	200.00		
BACS	Playsafety Ltd	Annual RoSPA Inspection	223.20	37.20	
BACS	Mr & Mrs Wilson	Start-up Grant for Community Coffee Shop	500.00		
BACS	Broadland Tree Services	Grasscutting	1032.00	172.00	
	Unity Trust	Service Charge	7.00		
		Total	2,404.05	37.20	73.40
BALANCE C/FWD			£ 26,944.13		

CASHBOOK BALANCE: 01.07.26

Details	CR	DR	
Details	CR	DR	
Cash Book Balances Brought Forward			
Unity Trust Bank Current Account A1	29,348.18		
Unity Trust Deposit Account A2	120,057.70		
Receipts this month (see listed above) B			
Payments this month (listed above) C			2,404.05
Cash Book Balances Carried Forward (=A1+A2+B-C)			147,001.83
Unity Current Account Balance			26,944.13
Unity Deposit Account Balance			120,057.70
Total Bank Balances			£147,001.83

Here's a brief update on some of the key issues and activity from the past month.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Update

Local Government Reorganisation remains one of the most significant issues facing Norfolk. In March 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Steve Reed, announced the Government's decision to replace the existing two-tier system (Norfolk County Council plus seven district, city, and borough councils) with three new unitary authorities: Greater Norwich Council, East Norfolk Council, and West Norfolk Council. This is subject to Parliamentary approval via a Structural Changes Order, with implementation targeted for April 2028.

The decision followed a consultation process and proposals from various councils. Norfolk County Council had advocated for a single county-wide unitary authority, while most district councils supported three unitaries. Concerns have been raised about the Minister's decision reportedly going against civil service advice regarding financial resilience, service delivery, and geography.

Judicial Review Developments

On 25 June 2026, Norfolk County Council (under its new Reform UK administration) formally submitted a judicial review application to the High Court challenging the Government's decision-making process. This follows a pre-action protocol letter sent earlier in June. The Council has also instructed officers to pause non-essential work on implementing LGR pending the outcome.

South Norfolk Council has also pursued or signalled legal action, citing concerns over the process and the suitability of the three-unitary model. Similar challenges are being considered or pursued by councils in Suffolk and Essex.

The judicial review is at an early stage. The Court will first decide whether to grant permission for the case to proceed to a full hearing, where the lawfulness of the Government's decision-making (including consultation and criteria application) will be examined. Judicial reviews focus on process and legality rather than the policy merits of the decision itself.

The new Reform UK-led administration at County Hall has made clear its strong opposition to the reorganisation, describing it as unnecessary and costly, and is prioritising efforts to preserve the current two-tier structure where possible.

Next Steps and Implications

- The outcome of the judicial review could impact timelines significantly, potentially delaying or altering the reorganisation.
- Regardless of the legal process, I will continue to monitor developments closely and represent local residents' views.

- Residents should be aware that any changes would affect local services, planning, highways, and council tax over the coming years.

As more information emerges - particularly regarding the court's decision on permission - I will provide further updates.

Local Issues

I have continued to work on a range of local issues raised by residents, including highways, planning matters, environmental concerns and access to local services. If you have an issue you would like me to look into, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Council Business

Recent council meetings have focused on a range of important topics, including council finances, service delivery and future priorities. I have continued to represent the interests of residents and ensure that local concerns are raised where appropriate.

Community Engagement

It has been a pleasure to attend community events, meet with local organisations and speak with residents about the issues that matter most to them. These conversations are invaluable in helping shape the work I do on your behalf.

Norfolk Heating Oil Crisis Fund

I would like to remind residents on an income under £35k that they can apply for help with Heating Oil costs through the council's website at

www.norfolk.gov.uk/HeatingOil or by calling 03448008020

Big Norfolk Holiday Fun

This scheme provides free holiday activities for children 5-16 in Norfolk if children are in receipt of free school meals, apply at :

www.norfolk.gov.uk/bignorfolkholidayfun.

Keeping in Touch

If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please feel free to contact me. Your feedback is always welcome, and I remain committed to representing the interests of everyone in our community.

Kind Regards

Margaret Thomas

Community Climate Action Plans

As Reform are questioning net zero spending in Norfolk, I am very keen to encourage my four parishes to look into ways to future-proof their municipal spaces from the ravages of climate change. The ongoing heatwave we are experiencing at the moment has been directly attributed by scientists to the climate crisis and we know this is not just a one-off.

When you think that this summer is likely to be the least extreme weather any of us will experience, or to put it another way, this could be the coolest summer our children will ever experience, it really puts into perspective how quickly we have to act. Things are not going to get any easier and we have to adapt as quickly as possible.

I have known about Community Climate Action Plans for some time and I recently spoke to the Chief Executive Joolz Thompson. He is willing to give a couple of hours of his time to come and speak to parish councils, churches, schools, village hall committees and any members of the public who are interested in making their communities climate resilient.

There is precedent for this: in Suffolk, nine villages and five separate organisations have come together to form a climate action plan with expert facilitators, to help mitigate the climate emergency locally.

Diss Rugby Club have also put one together and have just received funding to cover their roof in solar panels. In Garboldisham, their plan has scope for agrivoltaics (combining solar fields with crop growing underneath) and a couple of wind turbines which could power 6,000 homes, and generate a profit for the village community, with an annual stipend for each parish council.

The only commitment from interested parties at this stage is to come along one evening and listen to Joolz's inspiring introduction to the concept, explaining how the plans are put together and where the funding comes from. I also need to find a venue to bring all four parishes together for the event. To this end I will be contacting various organisations over the next couple of weeks to see if we can get something booked in for late September.

In the meantime, if you would like to know more about what's involved, this link takes you to the website <https://www.communityclimateaction.uk> or do contact me direct.

National Emergency Briefing

Talking of rapid action on climate change, I am hoping parish councils have heard from Adrian Ramsay's team regarding his hosting of the Peoples Emergency Briefing this Friday 3rd July at 1pm at the Corn Hall in Diss. It is free to attend but you do need to sign up via Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-peoples-emergency-briefing-diss-tickets-1992129100767>

It is a film based around the National Emergency Briefing last November, which brought together leading experts to present the latest evidence on the climate and nature crisis to politicians and other influential people in Westminster. This was buried by the government at the time and many people were not aware of it.

The film combines authoritative scientific content from the experts at the Westminster event with reactions from members of the public and some more familiar faces. It delivers the frank facts about the threats from climate change and the nature crisis, but also the enormous benefits we could reap if the government leads genuine emergency action. And of course we can start that process in our communities as I outlined above!

New Planning Regulations

The government has recently published draft new national guidance that will significantly change how planning applications are determined in the future, to clear the planning backlog, streamline the whole process and get the housing market moving to hit their 1.5m target. The key change is the introduction of a National Scheme of Delegation, which means that most applications will be decided by planning officers, with planning committees focusing only on the most significant or complex cases.

Key takeaways are:

- Routine applications (such as householder proposals and small developments) will not and cannot come to committee. There will be no right of member (aka councillor) call in.
- Only applications that meet a defined “gateway test” - for example due to economic, social or environmental significance (and the nominated officer and chair of the planning committee agree they should be referred)- can be referred to committee, but they should be presumed to be delegated unless they meet these criteria.
- Planning committees will therefore concentrate only on major, strategic or genuinely contentious proposals.

Though still in draft form it’s thought that this will take effect from the end of October this year. I will keep you posted. I have to say from South Norfolk Council’s point of view, not many proposals go to committee each month anyway so I don’t think this will make a huge difference but it will certainly take away our ability as councillors to act on behalf of our residents and call things in to committee when we feel an application is problematic, which is a shame.

Food Waste Collections

It is now confirmed that Phase 1 of the food waste collections will commence the week of 27th July with 28,000 properties, followed by Phase 2 the week beginning 28th September with 40,000 properties. You can now input your postcode onto the website to find out whether you are in Phase 1 or 2

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling/food-waste-collections/south-norfolk-food-waste-collections>

I tried a random Bunwell Street postcode and it came up as Phase 2, and my own address was the same, so I imagine perhaps the whole of the Bunwell ward will be the end of September.

Energy Projects Update

The **FIELD Long Stratton BESS** in Great Moulton has been delayed in coming to committee until towards the end of the year. They have asked for yet another extension for technical reasons and unfortunately the council has agreed to it.

East Pye is now in pre-examination phase. Interested parties had to register and submit their thoughts last month, and the deadline for this has now passed. Once the examination phase begins in the autumn, there will be a chance to make further representations in person.

Apex Business Park Data Centre

Though this does not impact our ward, I know it has been in the press so I thought I would mention it (we were alerted to it as councillors last week as the planning application will be submitted to South Norfolk Council). This site is adjacent to Norwich Main, opposite the Tesco on the A140. The company behind the data centre application, Norwich Apex Ltd, already has permission to build on that site from the council but this would be a new project application, and there is a public consultation event on 7th July in the Keswick Reading Room.

My concern with data centres is how they potentially conflict with our climate and environmental goals. From a brief skim read of the proposal, they suggest they will use a closed loop system to recirculate water to cool the machinery, rather than using up local water supplies, which are already scarce.

However, even if that is the case, there are other concerns such as the energy consumption required to run them and the heat emitted. I am still learning about data centres myself so I will be interested to see the outcome of the current parliamentary committee specifically looking into data centres and their environmental impact (link here to find out more <https://www.watermagazine.co.uk/2026/06/26/mps-to-examine-data-centre-water-demand-in-latest-parliamentary-inquiry-hearing/>)

If East Pye gets the go-ahead, there is inevitably going to be an application to build one in the Great Moulton/Tivetshall area because there will be a permanent National Grid substation here and Norwich to Tilbury nearby. Though I think the South Norwich location is an acceptable one, a location here in our area would be completely unsustainable and I could not support it.

Cllr Suzanne Wateridge

Member for Bunwell Ward, South Norfolk Council

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