BUNWELL PARISH COUNCIL

www.bunwell-pc.gov.uk

Chairman: M Booty,
Tel: 07712 048925
e-mail: cllr.mike.booty@bunwell-pc.gov.uk

Clerk: Mrs Margaret Ridgwell,
Tel: 01603 871636
e-mail: clerk@bunwell-pc.gov.uk

MINUTES of **Bunwell Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 4th November 2026 at the Village Hall, Bunwell.

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

Also Present: Parish Clerk, County Cllr Margaret Thomas, and 3 members of the public.

ACTION

1. To receive apologies – all parish councillors were present. District Councillor Suzanne Wateridge sent her apologies.

2. To record declarations of interest from Council members in any item to be discussed – Cllr Booty declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9.3.

3. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 7th October 2026 – the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2026, pages 687-695, 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 and Cllr Palmer are in the process of compiling a Community Resilience Plan and will report back to the PC shortly. Following the recent power cuts in the area, it was felt that compiling a list of vulnerable people is a priority, and it was suggested that a simple leaflet could be distributed asking residents what they would most need in an emergency. It was felt that providing power back-up to somewhere like the Village Hall to provide heating and light in an emergency should be the responsibility of the District Council and our Councillor will be contacted to ask for assistance. — Cllrs Crouch and Palmer; Clerk

4.2. Repair and repainting of telephone boxes – Cllr Crouch reported that he is in the process of arranging the purchase of new glass for the broken panes and will organise the repairs and repainting as necessary. — Cllr Crouch

4.3. Repairs and replacement of noticeboards – Cllr Crouch reported that the noticeboard on Low Common needs replacing and the noticeboard outside the Village Hall needs some repairs. Mr Goddard will be asked to help. The main problem with the village noticeboards is a lack of space and the matter of purchasing an additional board will be discussed in conjunction with the budget for next year at the December meeting. — Cllr Crouch

5. Resident's Questions –

5.1. County Councillor's Report – Cllr Margaret Thomas said that the upcoming budget is being discussed by CC at the moment to find ways of meeting a funding shortfall. She spoke about services provided by the County Council to help residents on a range of topics, from support with the cost of heating oil, to

testing electrical appliances for safety. Help is available on the NCC website. She said that there is a mobile help hub touring the county providing help with digital access, such as to the NHS, and Health and Wellbeing support. She provided some literature which will be available at the Friday Coffee Morning in the VH.

5.2. District Councillor's Report – Cllr Wateridge was unable to be at the meeting but had sent in a report which is attached to these minutes. Her report highlights the indecision about Unitary Authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk, and that a decision is likely to be taken early next year. She mentioned that South Norfolk is collecting new toys to donate to children who may be experiencing hardship this Christmas. The closing date is 29th November and there is a link in her report to find drop-off points for donations.

5.3. There were no questions raised by members of the public.

6. To receive and discuss correspondence – A request had been received from the Chairman of the Allotments Committee for the Parish Council approve the appointment of Cathy Combes to the Committee as the PC representative. All were in favour of this appointment. The Parish Council were asked to lend their support to a campaign to install accessible lifts to each platform at Diss Railway Station. Councillors were in agreement that this campaign should be supported so that disabled people and those with pushchairs etc are not discriminated against, by having to cross the rail lines via an overhead bridge with steps up and down. Cllr Crouch agreed to contact the organisers confirming the PC's support. — Cllr Crouch

7. Highways and Footpath Matters –

7.1. The Footpath Warden, Katherine Womack, reported that she had heard from NCC Highways and hopes that the matter of replacing missing footpath signs will be resolved shortly. She asked that walkers ensure that FP8 is used as much as possible to keep the route open. Councillors were very grateful for the excellent work she is doing to supervise the parish's footpaths and especially liked her informative and humorous posts on the Footpath FB page. Her full report is attached to these minutes.

7.2. Proposed diversion of FP3 – no update has been received from NCC.

8. Playground/Playing Field

8.1. Cllr Crouch had confirmed that he will arrange for the repair of the handrail on the slide in the near future together with other minor repairs. — Cllr Crouch

8.2. An application had been submitted to the National Lottery Fund to supply a grant towards a new climbing and target wall for the play area. The result of the application should be received next month.

8.3. Nothing further has been heard from the organisers of the New Buckenham Football Teams concerning setting up a Bunwell Football team. The matter will be discussed when more information is available.

9. Projects –

9.1. Nature Recovery Project on the Playing Field. Cllr Booty reported that unfortunately he had not had time to progress this project but would put forward plans in the next few months. — Cllr Watson

9.2. Changing Facilities for visiting teams. The cost of providing additional storage at the rear of the Village Hall so that the existing changing rooms in the Hall could be used as they were intended, will be discussed further next Spring.

	ACTION

9.3. Village Hall Grant request. *(Cllr Booty left the meeting)*. Following the agreement at the last meeting that a grant of £7,700 be given to the Village Hall, Councillors discussed the funding of this grant, and it was agreed that it was a proper and fitting use of the bequest left by the late Peter Haylock. *(Cllr Booty returned to the meeting.)*

9.4. Norwich to Tilbury Community Fund Project. Following on from Cllr Watson's report concerning how best to ensure that residents can benefit from the Community Fund National Grid are offering, he said that unfortunately there are no further indications from National Grid that local organisations, like Parish Councils, will be consulted on how the Community Fund will be allocated. He will continue to monitor the situation and report on any new developments. If residents wish to comment individually on the Community Fund they can do so at the following address: https://engage360.tractivity.co.uk/2faa1b21-c5f8-460b-9e17-f5b3f50394b2/survey?q=2022%7chFlRf6ZR2yPax3ljbFemWBWCuuvo2xCafQM8aB0XCb90eV6F25FNkEqDKL%2bInS2%2b1qi0I2YVBXWWXVZ51SDsOQ%3d%3d — Cllr Watson

10. Planning Applications – No new applications had been received.

11. To consider and agree Policies requiring three-yearly review. These updated policies had already been forwarded to councillors for their consideration, and all were in agreement with the updates. The following policies will be published on the website in the near future: Complaints, Co-option, Data Protection, Equality, Grant Awarding, Grievance, Health & Safety, IT, Lone Worker, Media, Planning, Record Management, Training & Development.

12. Finance — Cllr Worth

12.1. Payments for October had been circulated and councillors agreed to these transactions.

12.2. Councillors were reminded that the draft budget for next year will be considered at the next meeting.

13. To receive matters of importance from Councillors – Cllr Worth spoke about attending the Bunwell Friday Coffee Morning and asked if councillors were happy for her to represent the Parish Council and give out information as required and bring any questions back to council at the following meeting. All councillors were in agreement with her suggestion.

14. To receive items for the next Agenda for Consideration – To follow up items raised above. Cllr Palmer asked that the Norwich to Tilbury Pylon project be discussed at the next meeting when an update from National Grid should be available. The Budget for 2026/27 will need to be discussed and agreed prior to requesting the Precept.

15. Date of next meeting – the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 2nd December 2026 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting Closed 9.00pm

4th November 2026 Chair, Bunwell Parish Council

……

UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT	
BALANCE AS AT 07.10.26	**£30,451.92**
UNITY TRUST DEPOSIT ACCOUNT	
BALANCE AS AT 07.10.26	**£120,641.38**

RECEIPTS AS AT 07.10.26			
DATE	**RECEIVED FROM**	**DESCRIPTION**	**ACTUAL AMOUNT**
30.09.26	South Norfolk Council	CIL Payment	**£1,160.56**
30.09.26	Unity Trust	Deposit A/c Interest	**£592.96**
Current A/c Balance C/Fwd			**£31,612.48**
Deposit A/c Balance C/Fwd			**£121,234.34**

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: ***UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT***					
BALANCE AS 07.10.26			**£30,451.92**		
PAY TYPE	**PAYEE**	**DESCRIPTION**	**ACTUAL AMOUNT**	**VAT**	**PAYE**
BACS	M Ridgwell	Oct Salary & Exps	342.25		
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to month 8	75.80		75.80
BACS	Microsoft	Annual fee	84.99		
BACS	Norfolk PTS	Training, MC	62.40	10.40	
BACS	Broadland Tree Services	Grasscutting, Sep	672.00	112.00	
BACS	South Norfolk	Dog bin annual charge	827.40	137.90	
BACS	Village Hall	Rental Sep	36.00		
	Unity Trust	Service Charge	7.00		
BACS	Broadland Tree Services	Grasscutting, Oct	672.00	112.00	
BACS	Bunwell Village Hall	Hall Hire Oct	36.00		
BACS	Wix (Pd by MR)	Annual Domain Name Fee	129.60	21.60	
BACS	Parochial Church Council	Donation for treework	480.00		
		Total	**3,425.44**	**393.90**	**75.80**
BALANCE C/FWD			**£28,187.04**		

CASHBOOK BALANCES: 04.11.26

Details	**CR**	**DR**	
Cash Book Balances Brought Forward Unity Trust Bank Current Account **A1**	**30,451.92**		
Unity Trust Deposit Account **A2**	**120,641.38**		
Receipts this month (see listed above) **B**	**1,160.56** **592.96**		
Payments this month (listed above) **C**	**3,425.44**		
Cash Book Balances Carried Forward (=A1+A2+B-C)			**149,421.38**
Unity Current Account Balance			**28,187.04**
Unity Deposit Account Balance			**121,234.34**
Total Bank Balances			**£149,421.38**

◆ COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

TO PARISH COUNCILS | NOVEMBER 2026

Councillor Margaret Thomas
County Councillor for West Depwade Division
Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
margaret.thomas.cllr@norfolkgov.uk

This is my **November report**, covering the last month and highlighting matters of particular relevance to our parishes and rural communities in **West Depwade**.

£ Norfolk County Council Budget Consultation 2027–28

Norfolk County Council is consulting on its proposed 2027–28 budget. The Council faces a **£35.927 million budget gap**, with pressures including growing demand for adult social care and children's services, inflation and reduced government funding.

The consultation includes a proposed council tax increase and **86 proposals** to deliver **£32.273 million** in efficiencies and cost reductions. It closes on **7 December 2026**, with final budget decisions due in February 2027.

I encourage residents and parish councils to make their views known.

✉ Leader's Letter on Government Funding for Norfolk

The Leader of Norfolk County Council has written to the Government calling for a fairer and more sustainable financial settlement for Norfolk.

The letter identifies a projected **£148.5 million funding gap** between 2027–28 and 2030–31, alongside forecast cost pressures of **£343.3 million**.

Of particular relevance to West Depwade, the Leader argues that the funding system does not sufficiently recognise Norfolk's older population, rurality, hidden deprivation, longer travel distances, workforce pressures and the cost of delivering services to dispersed communities.

The letter also highlights pressures on adult social care, children's services, SEND provision and home-to-school transport, together with concerns about the growing reliance on local council tax.

The Leader is asking the Government to properly recognise the additional costs of rurality, remoteness and sparsity when funding councils.

◆ Norfolk and Suffolk Devolution

Norfolk County Council has renewed its formal consent for the proposed Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Subject to the required approvals, it would cover areas including transport, skills, housing and economic growth, with access to a long-term investment fund of more than £1.1 billion.

For West Depwade, it is important that rural communities have a strong voice and that transport, digital connectivity, housing, employment and infrastructure needs are properly represented.

4th November 2026 Chair, Bunwell Parish Council

……

★ SEND Reform Plan

The Government has approved Norfolk's three-year Local SEND Reform Plan, aimed at providing earlier help, improving inclusion and expanding specialist support.

Plans include reducing waits for neurodiversity assessments, increasing mental health support and doubling Specialist Resource Bases in mainstream schools by 2028.

Government approval also means that approximately 90% of Norfolk's historic Dedicated Schools Grant SEND deficit, around £185 million, is expected to be repaid.

Providing appropriate support closer to home is particularly important for rural families.

♥ Adult Social Care

As Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, I continue to be involved in strategy, forward planning, transformation and budget setting.

Our focus includes prevention, supporting people to remain independent for longer and ensuring rural communities have fair access to care and support.

Recruitment, workforce capacity and care availability remain important challenges in rural areas. I will continue to ensure that the needs of West Depwade residents are properly considered.

▲ Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has been rated Good following its latest inspection.

Inspectors reported significant progress, with all previously identified areas for improvement addressed. This is welcome news for our rural communities, where effective emergency response and prevention services are particularly important.

⌂ Kinship Care and Support for Families

Norfolk County Council continues to promote support for relatives and family friends caring for children when parents are unable to do so.

The Council's Virtual School provides advice, advocacy and educational guidance for children in care, children in kinship care, care leavers and children with a social worker.

Residents involved in kinship care are encouraged to find out what support is available.

● Employment and Careers Support

Norfolk's Working Well programme supports residents with disabilities, long-term health conditions and other barriers to employment.

The programme has received almost 3,000 referrals and supported more than 2,200 people since October 2023.

The Council is also delivering the government-funded Connect to Work programme with local partners, aiming to support more than 4,000 people.

↗ Support for Rural Businesses

A £140 million East of England Investment Fund has been launched to provide commercial finance to new and growing businesses.

Loans range from £25,000 to £2 million, with equity investment of up to £5 million. Businesses can contact the New Anglia Growth Hub for advice about eligibility and other available support.

4th November 2026 Chair, Bunwell Parish Council

…….

🏠 Heating Oil Crisis Fund

The Heating Oil Crisis Fund remains active and open for residents who may need support with the cost of heating oil.

It forms part of Norfolk County Council's wider Crisis and Resilience Fund, which helps people experiencing financial hardship with essential household costs.

Nearly £4 million is also being invested in 26 voluntary and community organisations across Norfolk to provide advice, practical help and longer-term support.

I encourage parish councils to make residents aware that help is available.

⚡ Free Winter Electrical Safety Testing

Trading Standards and Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service are providing free safety testing of electric blankets, heated throws, heat pads and small portable heaters.

Sixty per cent of the items tested last year failed, highlighting the importance of checking older electrical heating equipment.

Residents can also take an item on behalf of a relative, friend or neighbour who is unable to attend.

⌨ Tech Skills for Life

I have been working with Norfolk County Council's Digital Services team to promote **Tech Skills for Life**, particularly in our rural communities.

As more everyday services move online, some residents, particularly older people and those who lack digital confidence, can find accessing services such as GP appointments increasingly difficult.

I encourage parish councils to consider arranging a **Tech Skills for Life drop-in session**, perhaps as part of a coffee morning or other community activity. Residents can receive practical digital support in a familiar local setting.

Parish councils can contact the team directly, or contact me and I will be happy to help.

☎ Contact details

Email: techskillsforlife@norfolk.gov.uk

Telephone: 01603 306241 / 01485 536420 / 01493 448246

Hours: Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm

Website: Tech Skills for Life

• Local drop-in sessions

- Tibenham Community Hall – third Wednesday of the month, 10am–1pm
- Long Stratton Library – second Monday of the month, 11am–1pm
- Harleston Library – first Monday of the month, 12pm–2pm
- Diss Library – fourth Wednesday of the month, 10am–12pm
- Co Lab, Diss – third Wednesday of the month, 2pm–4pm
- Attleborough Library – first and third Mondays of the month, 10am–12pm
- Attleborough Foodbank at The Lighthouse – second Tuesday of the month, 10am–11am

Sessions are subject to change and do not run on bank holidays, so residents are advised to check with the team before travelling.

4th November 2026 Chair, Bunwell Parish Council

……

▲ Highways and Flooding

I continue to raise and pursue highways issues brought to my attention by parish councils and residents with the Highways Department.

I have also written to Water and Waste Management about continuing flooding problems across my division.

Following the serious flooding of winter 2020–21, parish councillors and residents spent considerable time gathering evidence and providing detailed local information, as requested. There is understandable concern that this has not resulted in sufficient practical action or follow-up.

I have asked what support will be available this winter, what action has followed from the information previously supplied and who residents and parish councils should contact before and during flooding.

I have made clear that residents need a straightforward route to support and should not simply be passed between different agencies.

✷ East Pye Solar

A further round of Planning Inspectorate hearings has been announced for **East Pye Solar**. The latest Deadline 1 submissions have been published and the Examination Library is being updated.

An **Open Floor Hearing** is scheduled for **17 November 2026**, followed by a **Compulsory Acquisition Hearing** on **18 November 2026**.

I will continue to oppose East Pye Solar and other large-scale solar projects across Norfolk because of my concerns about their impact on productive agricultural land, rural communities and our countryside.

I will represent residents at the forthcoming hearings and ensure that their concerns are clearly put before the Examining Authority.

◆ Working for Our Communities

I continue to represent residents and work hard on your behalf to pursue the issues raised with me.

I encourage everyone to contact me with any issues affecting you, your family or your community.

Margaret Thomas

District Councillor Report November 2026

Back to Unitaries!

As I said at the end of my last report something like: “we do not know if and when the Unitaries will be reintroduced”, no sooner were the words out of my mouth, than Jim McMahon (Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Growth) told council leaders in Norfolk and Suffolk at the end of October that unitary elections were back on but pushed back a year.

I’m sure most of you are totally confused by now and have likely heard enough on the subject but it appears that as I said previously, the District Council elections will still definitely take place in May 2027. However, it now looks likely that they will be followed by the Shadow Unitary Elections in May 2028, with final Unitary Council investment in May 2029. This means District Councillors elected next May will have a shorter term of two years, while County Councillors who were elected this May will have a year longer.

4th November 2026 Chair, Bunwell Parish Council

……

We think the government are planning to stick with the 3 unitary option ie East Norfolk (where Bunwell would sit), West Norfolk and Greater Norwich, but it is all to be fully confirmed towards the end of this year or early next.

Consultation on Vehicle Anti-Social Behaviour
Under the existing Public Spaces Protection Orders, South Norfolk and Broadland Councils empower police and council officers to tackle anti-social behaviour linked to vehicles, such as excessive noise, street racing, dangerous driving, vehicle stunts and other activities that can negatively affect communities.

This has been very successful and has led to a reduction in complaints and a decrease in demand on police and council time, so the councils are looking to extend the existing orders for another three years. They have launched a public consultation on this which closes on November 27th https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/community-safety/public-space-protection-orders/have-your-say-on-vehicle-related-anti-social-behaviour

South Norfolk and Broadland Business Awards 2027
Nominations are now open until 10th December and the usual rules apply, with businesses nominating themselves in various categories, while the public can vote for their favourite pub and their favourite retailer:
https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/news/nominations-open-for-broadland-and-south-norfolk-business-awards-2027

Christmas Toy donations
South Norfolk is collecting new toys to donate to children who may be experiencing hardship this Christmas. The closing date is 29th November and there are various donation drop-off points. Perhaps parish councils may have been sent the flyer already but just in case, I have forwarded it to the clerks to print off and attach to noticeboards if that's possible (info is via a QR code)
https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/christmas-toy-donation-appeal

Cllr Suzanne Wateridge
Member for Bunwell Ward, South Norfolk Council
m: 07943 180556 suzanne.wateridge@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

Footpath Warden Report 04/11/26 – October goings-on

A fairly quiet month - the usual round of residents' concerns, inspections and reports. There are no updates on any of the ongoing issues, at least none that I can report at the moment... I thought I would have an update about footpaths 8, 9, and 14, but...

I had a good conversation with Frances Salway (NCC Countryside Access Officer) about them, and she has assured me the council are taking matters seriously. A proper update is coming, I just don't know when!

What I can share is that I have been advised to encourage people to walk the cross-field footpaths as much as possible. There are four in particular that become overgrown with crops very quickly and walking them this time of year will kill the crops off, preventing issues further down the line.

Those paths are:

FP2 – the section North across the field to Packway Barn

FP3 – From the bridge at the junction with Bunwell FP2, East across the field to Forncett FP2 (please make sure you stay on the path to the south of the ditch and do not disturb the badger's outlier sett on the North side)

FP8 – from Wood Lane by the end of the playing field to the Banyards Hall lane, then across to the barn (there is a barn on top of the footpath, use your best judgement to decide how to navigate that section if continuing on)

Katherine Womack
Pedantic Pedestrian

4th November 2026

Chair, Bunwell Parish Council

…….