

BUNWELL PARISH COUNCIL

www.bunwell-pc.gov.uk

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

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: Cllr M Booty (Chair), Cllr M Crouch (Vice-Chair), Cllr P Palmer, Cllr R Watson and Cllr Julie Worth who arrived at 8.15pm

Also Present: Parish Clerk, County Cllr Catherine Rowett, District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge and 10 members of the public.

MINUTES	ACTION
1. To receive apologies – Cllr D Ward did not attend the meeting.	
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 4th February 2026 – the minutes of the meeting held on 4 th February 2026, pages 635-641, 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 Palmer and Cllr Crouch will continue with updating this information and Cllr Crouch will contact S Norfolk Council for advice	Cllrs Crouch & Palmer
4.2. Possible Nature Recovery Projects in Bunwell – see item 9.3 below	
5. To receive the District and County Councillors' Reports – County Cllr Catherine Rowett's full report is attached to these minutes. In brief she reported on the County Council's budget for 2026-27 and the reinstated elections which will now take place on the 7 th May this year for a two-year term. She also mentioned Community Energy Schemes, Government support for disabled adults' cost of living and Government commitment on post offices. District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge spoke about new funding opportunities, including the Community Facilities Fund, Nature Recovery Grants and funding for Playgrounds in South Norfolk. She then mentioned the unexpected closure of the Post Office in the shop at Bunwell and that she is trying to find out all she can on how the matter can be resolved. The Chairman allowed residents to voice their views on the matter at this time. It seems that Amazon and Evri have been informed of the closure and requested to collect their parcels for redistribution. Other parcels have been taken to the Post Office at Brundall for sorting. The shop owner also has two other shops around Norwich which have also had their Post Offices closed unexpectedly. Cllr Crouch had contacted the CEO of the Post Office to ask for an explanation and their reply states: <i>As you're aware Bunwell Post Office closed at short notice, due to unforeseen circumstances. Full details of the closure and alternative branches can be found here Bunwell NR16 1AB - 544136 - Post Office - Citizen Space. Any updates on the situation, will also be posted to this site.</i>	

I can confirm that the only mail left in Bunwell branch are for the carriers, Amazon and EVRi. Both companies have been notified and are in the process of collecting the mail and rearranging deliveries with their customers. All other mail was collected on the day of closure and transferred to Brundall Post Office.

We're very sorry for the concern and inconvenience caused the local community, following the closure. I can assure you that we're exploring all available options in order to reinstate service in Bunwell as quickly as possible and as soon as we have more information, we will notify stakeholders like yourself, and the local community.

- 6. Resident's Questions** – A resident raised the matter of the 'Book Swap' telephone box on Bunwell Hill and its poor condition. Mr Goddard agreed to inspect the box and the neighbouring noticeboard and contact the PC with costings for repairs.
- 7. To receive and discuss correspondence** – A letter had been received from the Post Office concerning the closure of Bunwell Post Office which was discussed above. A request from the Parochial Church Council asking for a grant to support the upkeep of the churchyard had been received and councillors all agreed that £1,000 be donated in the new financial year. All other correspondence had been forwarded to Councillors and matters of importance have been dealt with or are included in other headings.
- 8. Highway & Footpath Matters** – Notification had been received from NCC Highways that Bunwell Street will be closed for 4 days from the 23rd March to correct sections of failed asphalt. There are no footpath matters to report at this time and the post of taking responsibility for footpaths will be agreed at the Annual General Parish Meeting in May.
- 9. Playground/Village Hall**
- 9.1. Play Area – It had been agreed that a new picnic table was needed soon, and the equipment will be cleaned when the better weather comes. Cllr Crouch will reattach the 'No dogs in Playground' signs. Cllr Crouch
- 9.2. Use of Playing Field by football teams – see discussion at item 11.1 below.
- 9.3. To consider Nature Recovery Project – Cllr Booty is meeting soon with the Head of Bunwell Primary School to discuss their possible involvement in setting up a 'rewilding' area on the Playing Field.
- 10. Local Energy Infrastructure Projects** – Cllr Palmer attended the Open Floor event organised by National Grid on the 12th February, to discuss the Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Scheme. He said that he had suggested that the Planning Inspectorate should visit Bunwell to view the area first hand. The scheme is now waiting for the Planning Inspectorate to consider before approval by the Secretary of State.
- 11. Potential Future Projects** – possible future projects include:
- 11.1. Providing changing facilities for sports teams at the Village Hall - The PC and the Village Hall Committee are in discussion on how best to provide both changing facilities and necessary storage for the Village Hall. Mr Hoolahan had passed on details of possible suppliers of free-standing changing facilities and discussion took place on using possible funding grants and/or part of the Peter Haylock bequest to purchase such a building. The football teams who will use the facility will also be contacted for their views. Cllr Booty
- 11.2. Providing a BMX cycle track on the playing field – Cllr Crouch had arranged for the printing of a flyer to be distributed to all households in Bunwell, asking for the views

MINUTES

ACTION

of parents and youngsters in the village on what facilities they would like to see on the Playing Field.

11.3. Improving the access from the centre of the village to the Village Hall area – this matter will be considered at a later date. Cllr Booty

12. Planning Applications – to discuss and vote on any new planning applications – one listed building application had been received for replacement front and back doors for Rectory Farm, Rectory Lane, Bunwell, Norfolk NR16 1QU. Councillors agreed that they had no objections.

13. Finance -

13.1. Payments for February had been circulated and councillors agreed to these transactions and the cashbook balance was noted.

13.2. A Deposit Account had been opened with Unity Trust Bank for the Peter Haylock bequest.

14. To receive matters of importance from Councillors – no matters were raised.

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

16. Date of next meeting – the next meeting is on Wednesday 1st April 2026 at 7.30pm.

17. Meeting Closed 8.40pm

UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT			
BALANCE AS AT 04.02.26			£22,514.39
RECEIPTS AS AT 04.02.26			
DATE	RECEIVED FROM	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT
29.01.26	Spire Solicitors	P Haylock bequest	120,000.00
BALANCE C/FWD			£142,514.39

PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL THIS MONTH: UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT					
BALANCE AS AT 04.02.26					£22,514.39
PAY TYPE	PAYEE	DESCRIPTION	ACTUAL AMOUNT	VAT	PAYE
BACS	M Ridgwell	Feb Salary & Exps	327.85		
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to month 07	73.40		73.40
BACS	S Norfolk Council	Additional Dog Bin emptying	23.86	3.98	
BACS	Bunwell Village Hall	Hall Hire, Feb	36.00		
BACS	Solopress	Playground flyers (Pd by MC)	49.17		
	Unity Trust	Service Charge	6.00		
		Total	516.28	3.98	73.40
RECEIPTS			120,000.00		
BALANCE C/FWD					£141,998.11

CASHBOOK BALANCE: 04.03.26

Details	CR	DR	
Cash Book Balance Brought Forward			
Unity Trust Bank Current Account	£22,514.39		A

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Receipts this month (see listed above)	B	120,000.00
Payments this month (listed above)	C	516.28
Cash Book Balance Carried Forward (=A+B-C)		141,998.11
	Unity Balance	£141,998.11

Councillor report 27th February 2026, from Catherine Rowett

27/02/2026

Progress report

County Council budget

On 17th February, the Council met to vote on its budget for 2026-7. The final Local Government Finance Settlement was confirmed on 9 February, which included new investment in local services to over £5.6 billion over the next three years. It is the first multi-year settlement in a decade, so that is very welcome. Additionally, councils can have 90% of their historic deficits relating to SEND (Special educational needs and disability) up to 2025-26 written off. However, there's no funding for the other 10% and there are strings attached. It also provides no relief for the deficits that will accrue in 2026-7 and 2027-8. The debts are because Special Educational Needs provision was permanently underfunded during the decades of Conservative government which led to Councils with SEND responsibilities accruing massive debts that increased every year. Overall this is a more benign budget than we ever got with the Conservative government. The Council tax increase will be in line with what the government was presupposing. The administration presented a balanced budget by way of a programme of cuts and savings (42.3 million) and additional investment in services and the Norfolk economy (76.3 million).

In the debate, the Green Group challenged some of the Administration's priorities. Our proposed changes were voted down, but here is a little summary of some of the things we thought would be beneficial. We recommended shifting some bus service funding towards a study to investigate the potential benefits of reduced fares or free bus travel (as in Scotland) to help young adults to access college and work. We suggested running a trial scheme to address the school-run situation outside local schools (using camera enforcement for a "school streets" scheme, in which cars are excluded from the area at school run time). We also proposed to stop spending half a million on extra weedkiller and more frequent verge cutting (added last year as a recurring cost), and to use the money differently: for replacing lost street trees in urban areas (where trees are being lost faster than they are replaced) and to provide regular funding to develop more nature-based flood protection schemes, as heavy rainfall and summer droughts threaten homes, wetlands and chalk streams that once flowed well.

You can watch the debate on the Council Youtube site.

Reinstated elections

County Council elections are now on for May 7th this year, as they should always have been. This will be all-out elections for all County Council seats across Norfolk (including my own) and one third of the seats on Norwich City Council. The term of office to which the new councillors are elected is likely to be two years (if unitary councils are ready to take over by 2028). However, the timetable for local government reorganisation may shift again.

Could you benefit from a community energy scheme (and stop the industrialisation of our countryside)?

The government has announced new funding for community energy projects. It would be good to get some good local schemes that support the people of Norfolk and provide cheap energy, with profits coming back into the community, and local direct control over where the infrastructure goes. Some of our parishes and district councils are working with Community Climate Action to get started on their projects, using bits of parish land.

<https://www.communityclimateaction.uk>.

I recommend joining up to the *Norfolk Environmental Collaboration* (organised by the Norfolk Association of Local Councils). Someone might like to volunteer to be the local community energy champion to take up the ideas. I attended their meeting on Friday 13th February.

Better buses

I'm working on bus shelter improvements in Carleton Rode and Dickleburgh, and a better bus service for Burston and Shimpling and I'd like a bus service for villages such as Ashwellthorpe and Tacolneston, to go to Wymondham. So far I've only got a vague proposal for an on demand service once a week. I don't think this helps young people get to work or college. The good news is that Norfolk County Council has received a multi-year settlement of money for public transport.

Updates from County Council and the Health Board

Parish Partnership results out

99 schemes have won support for their proposals under the parish partnership scheme. From West Depwade I've been happy to support the following successful schemes in this round:

Ashwellthorpe: Traffic calming chicanes, £25,000 Aslacton: Village

Gateways, £8421 Bressingham: Village Gateways, £4548

SAM cameras/equipment for: Great Moulton (£3928), Winfarthing (£4685).

Choosing suitable places to live for later life

The County is trying to raise awareness of the options for places to live for people who have or will have a need for care or support as they get older. Look out for campaign material on TV and social media, and please pass on to people you know who may be struggling to find the right arrangements for their relatives as they get older:

There is a range of interesting, independent apartments and flats available. You can visit the website, or signpost others to find out more, at [Housing with Care and Independent Living - Norfolk County Council](#)

National Information

Government support for disabled adults cost of living

The Government is increasing the minimum income guarantee (MIG) by 7% from April 2026. This should ensure that 150,000 working-age adults who depend on social care can keep at least

£400 more of their income each year, after paying for their care costs. They have also assigned

£723 million for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) next year (this is for people who need to adapt their homes so that they can continue to live independently. Further information [here](#)).

Government commitment on post offices

Following the shock news of the sudden closure of Bunwell's post office (and several others across Waveney Valley, where we've had to campaign with our MP to get them reopened) I'm pleased that the Government's response to the Post Office Green Paper includes a commitment to at least 11,500 branches and a new requirement for a minimum number of full-time, full-service branches. Of course, it's another case where selling off a national infrastructure to the private sector doesn't work, because profit motives conflict with meeting the needs of residents for a vital service that may cost more than it returns in monetary profit for shareholders.

Contact me

Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk. See also my Facebook page [here](#).

Catherine Rowett

27th February 2026

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4th March 2026

Chair, Bunwell Parish Council

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Bunwell District Councillor Report March 2026

Money money money!

The budget for 2026/27 has been approved and the District Council has come up with some nice ideas to help communities with their cash flow and improve both facilities and environments. Full details to follow when I know more but in brief, here are the headlines:

1. A new communities facilities grant, aimed at helping parishes update and maintain village halls and community centres.
2. More money for the Community Action Fund (CAF) when applications open in April. In previous years, the maximum for any one project has been £15k. This has now been more than doubled to £40k but there has to be a minimum of 25% match funding.
3. Another round of the wonderful Nature Recovery Grant is imminent, supporting local environmental projects.
4. A fund specifically aimed at improving playgrounds, worth around £134,000 in total across South Norfolk.
5. And last but not least, the South Norfolk in Bloom Fund will support communities to plant vibrant floral displays and create thriving habitats for bees, butterflies, birds and other wildlife. This lovely scheme is open to applications now until 19th April. I will talk more about this in April's Councillor Report but for now, please refer to the weblink for more details

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communityfunding/south-norfolk-in-bloom-fund>

Extra round of CAF (Community Action Fund)

As you may remember, the Council managed to squeeze in a very last-minute second funding round for the CAF and the excellent trustees at Great Moulton and Aslacton Coronation Hall put together a great proposal for buying AV equipment so they can set up a regular film screening night, Flix in the Stix! We will know by the end of March if this has been successful – fingers crossed!

Update on Bunwell Post Office Closure

As you all know, Bunwell Post Office closed with no notice whatsoever a few weeks' ago. Catherine, Adrian and myself are trying to get to the bottom of what is going on but it appears that this may be linked to the owner (not the staff!) of the shop rather than Post Office Ltd. They have assured us they are doing everything they can to reopen the facility. In the meantime, this link tells you where the nearest post offices are:

<https://www.postofficeviews.co.uk/national-consultation-team/bunwell-nr16-1ab-544136/?fbclid=IwY2xjawQUcZFlEHRuA2FlbQlxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzIxMzIzNDQ4MjAwODkyAAEeK UiczKglwKPNhFW1N0vDrVN rpN8Fy3PnCOdWreTZBNXQQ2LCI-AF8dUYxs aem 28BA67oYAAQGI1z0SFaZq>

Norwich to Tilbury – Examination Hearing

Alongside several residents from Bunwell, Adrian Ramsay spoke very eloquently around the issues connected with Norwich to Tilbury in the Waveney Valley area at the recent Planning Inspectorate hearing in Norwich. His comments, alongside all other interested parties, will now form part of the Planning Inspectorate deliberations and we will expect those to conclude later this year, at which point it will be submitted to the Secretary of State Ed Milliband. If it is approved, construction will begin next year.

East Pye Update

East Pye has submitted their DCO (Development Consent Order). If this is accepted, you will soon be able to register as an interested party if you would like to have a more detailed say on the project. You will subsequently be invited to either attend and speak in person to the Planning Inspectors at the Examination Stage (the same process as the pylons project mentioned above), or submit your comments in writing. If it is accepted, you will be able to do this from 3rd April. <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110014>

Cllr Suzanne Wateridge

Member for Bunwell Ward, South Norfolk Council

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