

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

**Chairman:** J Chapman,  
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**MINUTES** of **Bunwell Parish Meeting** held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at the Village Hall, Bunwell.

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

**Also Present:** Parish Clerk, District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge and 8 members of the public.

<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>1. To receive apologies</b> – apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Watson and from County Cllr Rowett.</p> <p><b>2. To record declarations of interest from Council members in any item to be discussed</b> – there were no declarations of interest.</p> <p><b>3. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025</b> – the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025, pages 564-569, having previously been circulated to all members, were agreed and signed by the Chair.</p> <p><b>4. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting</b></p> <p>4.1. Update on Village Emergency Plan – Cllr Chapman and Crouch have filled in details of the help available if an emergency should occur in the village, such as places of refuge, people with tractors, 4x4 vehicles, chainsaws, refreshment facilities, etc., but it was agreed that it would be helpful to raise the matter at the Annual Meeting to see if there were other offers of help.</p> <p>4.2. National Grid Pylon Route Consultation – The Parish Council had sent in a full and detailed objection to the changes proposed in the latest route change through Low Common, and local residents had also written extremely detailed reports showing that the proposed changes would do nothing to protect the environment of the area and were blatantly false in their statements. The Parish Council’s website has links to these documents on its front page to help keep residents up to date with the latest efforts to protect the Parish.</p> <p><b>5. To receive the District and County Councillors’ Reports</b></p> <p>5.1. County Councillor, Catherine Rowett, had sent a full report, together with her apologies, which is attached to these minutes. She mentioned the highway matters she is progressing, the proposals for local government devolution and the County Council’s budget for the coming year. Highways have received a £56 million grant for highway maintenance, but she urged residents to report any potholes or problems on the NCC website. Information from central Government included a regional lockdown for poultry to prevent bird flu in our region and a consultation on proposed changes to Ofsted inspections.</p> <p>5.2. District Councillor, Suzanne Wateridge’s full report is attached to these minutes. She also mentioned that she and Cllr Rowett had been to visit Brick Kiln Lane to</p>	

view the area likely to be devastated by the proposed NG pylon route. Experts in the field of ecology and trees had also attended and both the County Council and District Council had not only objected to the changes to the route but complained that their previous representations had not been heeded. She also mentioned that South Norfolk have set up a Nature Conservation Fund and applications for ideas to enhance the natural environment could be sent in to attract funding. Cllr Wateridge's own Councillor Ward Funding had been successful in helping a playgroup in Great Moulton, the new library at Bunwell Primary School and the purchase of a new trail camera to record wildlife in Fir Covert Wood in Carleton Rode.

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- 6. Resident's Questions** – A resident raised the matter of pedestrian safety when crossing The Turnpike and this is reported at item 9.1 below.
- 7. To receive and discuss correspondence** – emails received had been forwarded to Cllrs and dealt with as required. An offer of a grant of £300 to support village events to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day had been received, but at the moment nothing is planned in Bunwell. A Litter-Pick in the parish is to be organised and details will be advertised shortly.
- 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. Safety issues crossing the Turnpike outside the Village Hall – The vehicle-activated signs at this site have been replaced by Highways and no further action will be taken until a report is received from County Cllr Rowett concerning the feasibility study she asked Highways to undertake.
- 9.2. Safety issues at the junction of Bunwell Street and Church Lane – Following the recent accident at this junction between a cyclist and a vehicle, no further information has been received from the Police.
- 9.3. There are no matters of concern at the moment relating to footpaths in the village.
- 10. Playground/Village Hall** –
- 10.1. The removal of the adult play equipment was agreed, and the area should be clear to allow the area to be cut when grasscutting of the playing field commences soon.
- 11. Planning Applications – to discuss and vote on any new planning applications** – a revised application had been received (No.2024/0423) for four dwellings on Bunwell Street between Nos. 106 and 114. The Council will forward their views to the Planning Department, pointing out that the entrance to one of the properties means that vehicles will be reversing onto Bunwell Street almost opposite Rectory Lane causing a safety issue and that lorries exiting Rectory Lane onto Bunwell Street are likely to have to run over the footway outside the properties.
- 12. Finance**
- 12.1. Payments for February had been circulated and councillors agreed to these transactions. The Cashbook balance was noted.
- 13. To receive matters of importance from Councillors** – no new concerns were raised.

**14. To receive items for the next Agenda for Consideration** – To follow up items raised above and to consider items for inclusion at the Annual Meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> May.

**15. Date of next meeting** – Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025 at 7.30pm

**16. Meeting Closed 8.35pm**

<b>UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT</b>	
<b>BALANCE AS AT 05.02.25</b>	<b>£22,803.00</b>

<b>RECEIPTS AS AT 05.02.25</b>			
<b>DATE</b>	<b>RECEIVED FROM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACTUAL AMOUNT</b>
<b>BALANCE C/FWD</b>			<b>£22,803.00</b>

<b>PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL IN OCTOBER: UNITY TRUST CURRENT ACCOUNT</b>					
<b>BALANCE AS AT 05.02.25</b>				<b>£22,803.00</b>	
<b>PAY TYPE</b>	<b>PAYEE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACTUAL AMOUNT</b>	<b>VAT</b>	<b>PAYE</b>
BACS	Bunwell Village Hall	Hall Hire Feb	30.00		
BACS	M Ridgwell	Feb Salary & Exps	318.75		71.20
BACS	HMRC	PAYE to month 11	71.20		
	Unity Trust	Service Charge Feb & Mar	12.00		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>431.95</b>		<b>71.20</b>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>					
<b>BALANCE C/FWD</b>				<b>£22,371.05</b>	

**CASHBOOK BALANCE: 05.03.25**

<b>Details</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>DR</b>	
Cash Book Balance Brought Forward (Unity Trust Bank Current Account) <b>A</b>	<b>£22,803.00</b>		
Receipts this month (see listed above) <b>B</b>			
	Payments this month (listed above) <b>C</b>		<b>431.95</b>
	Cash Book Balance Carried Forward (=A+B-C)		<b>22,371.05</b>
	<b>Unity Balance</b>		<b>£22,371.05</b>

Councillor report 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025, from Catherine Rowett

27/02/2025

Progress report

We now have additional signs and the wrongly placed signs in Forngett relocated, though with some not entirely satisfactory outcomes. There is also an issue with the placing of one of the new signs in Furze Green. I've now received the consultation for the new speed limits in Bressingham. I'm assisting Shelfanger with inquiries about village gates.

I've uncovered some explanations for the mysterious new bus stops but would prefer that changes were made in consultation with residents and bus users. I've sent on the suggestions for bus improvements that I received during

January. I included ideas for more effective consultations and evidence-based planning for bus services as a substantial component of our Green Group

amendments to the Cabinet's budget but it was voted down by all the other parties, and instead the Council has decided to spray more weedkiller poison. I am pretty sad about that.

I've been involved with visits and urgent work to challenge the threat to woods in the Bunwell Hill area that arise from the changes proposed by National Grid from the proposals they put out in 2024. I've been feeding into the County Council response as well as my own. I'm working with residents in Carleton Rode about speeding on Ugate Street and with Dickleburgh and Rushall on questions about their buses to Pulham.

### Devolution and local government reorganisation

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 like centralising power in large authorities, rather than devolution.

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils decided to apply for the option of a fast-track restructure, and this has now been approved by the Minister and includes the cancellation of this year's County Council elections. Unfortunately this means that the councillors who have no mandate to continue beyond May will now be in charge of redesigning local government for Norfolk and Suffolk. It seems unlikely that the new plans will be ready in time for a new council to be elected in 2026. It's ironic that a project supposedly about devolving power to the local level is done by removing any opportunity for the local people to have any say on this or anything else.

A consultation has now been launched by the government regarding the idea of having an elected mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk (which is called "Devolution"), so please do add your thoughts to that. You can find it here: [Norfolk and Suffolk devolution - GOV.UK](#).

Note, this consultation is not about the change to local councils and combining district and county councils in a number of councils for Norfolk. That is called "Local Government Reorganisation".

### Budget

The Council met on 18<sup>th</sup> February to vote on Cabinet's the proposals for how to deliver a balanced budget for next year within impossible constraints, where revenue doesn't match the demand for what we have to deliver, and the level of council tax rise permitted doesn't match inflation or the increased costs for social care workers that result from the rise in the minimum wage and national insurance. Did you know that for every £1 of the Council's revenue, more than 60p goes to adult social care and children's services (education and looked-after children, adult social care) which are statutory duties that are going up every year? 13p goes to fund the police and the rest (24p) is for everything else (including transport, highways, public health, museums, libraries, waste and a load of other things as well as running the council offices). Costs have been rising faster than inflation, and the latest settlement from government includes a small uplift to cover National Insurance but does not meet the increasing demand on services. The Council passed the budget as proposed by the Conservatives, which was not surprising. Alternative ideas for saving some of the services from cuts and redirecting some of the spare cash to things we actually care about were put forward by the Greens, Liberal Democrats, Labour and one of the independents. But to no avail.

### Road repairs

Norfolk has been allocated £56 million for highways maintenance. Please report potholes and decaying road conditions in Norfolk to the county council by completing their online form: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes). However, a new report shows that the Department for Transport is totally out of touch with the extent of the decay to rural roads. See the report [here](#).

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### [Info from County Council](#)

#### Norfolk Rural Business Awards - nominations open

Farmers, food and drink producers, tourism attractions and others that champion our county are eligible for the Norfolk Rural Business Awards. A call has gone out for nominations. These awards were launched last year by Norfolk County Council in partnership with the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association.

The closing date for applications is Monday 21 April. The final shortlist will be announced in May and the winners will be announced at the Royal Norfolk Show in June. Further details about the awards, award categories, and how to apply, are available [here](#).

### [Info from Central Government](#)

#### Bird Flu (avian influenza)

We're in a regional lockdown for poultry to prevent bird flu. People with small or large flocks of chickens that normally roam free need to keep them indoors. Guidance on how to prevent your chickens or ducks from getting it, and stop it spreading, is available [here](#).

#### Consultation on proposed changes to Ofsted inspections

The Government has launched a consultation on proposed changes to the way Ofsted records its inspections of schools. The proposed changes will come in from autumn term 2025 and include a new report card approach reporting on key aspects of each school, giving a suite of grades for each key area. Critics reckon that is not a great improvement. Some of us think that the inspection regime is not fit for purpose and Ofsted is an obstacle to good education. The consultation is seeking views from parents, carers, professionals or learners. The link to the consultation is available [here](#). It opened on 3 February and closes on 28 April 2025.

#### Contact me

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

*Catherine Rowett*

27th February 2025

## **Bunwell District Council Report – March 2025**

### **Nature Conservation Fund**

Perhaps having a Green Party Councillor on the council for the first time has rubbed off, as it's just been announced South Norfolk has put aside £10,000 towards a nature recovery fund, to encourage biodiversity and creation of green spaces in the county.

Applications can be from parish and town councils, community groups, schools, charities and landowners. At the time of writing, forms and further guidance were not yet available on the website but we know there will be five funds available in total and all projects must be completed by April 2026. Priority will be given to projects that incorporate:

- A Miyawaki Mini Forest
- Pond creation and restoration
- A circular walk

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/climate-change-environment/trees-biodiversity/nature-conservation-fund>

## **Resilience/Emergency Plan**

Councillors had a briefing from the council's Resilience team about what the council has put in place in case of emergencies, such as flooding, drought (fires), heavy snow/cold weather and pandemics. I know that Bunwell Parish Council has been putting their own Emergency Plan together and the council team are very happy to be contacted if anyone would like to do the same. They can offer advice, a template for a plan and even come and speak to parish councils if desired. Contact Simon Faraday-Drake ([simon.faraday-drake@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:simon.faraday-drake@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk)) or Jenny Bloomfield ([jenny.bloomfield@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.bloomfield@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk))

## **Councillor Ward Allowance Funding Success!**

I was delighted that all three of my applications for the ward allowance funding were successful. A pot of £1,000 will be shared between Caterpillars Playgroup in Great Moulton (who were also successful in receiving a Keep It Going grant from the council), Bunwell Primary School PTA (towards their new library) and Fir Covert Wood in Carleton Rode (to purchase a new trail camera to record wildlife footage).

The next funding scheme from the Council will be the return of the Community Action Fund, which will open in April. Please let me know if you have any early ideas for this.

## **Devolution Update**

Nothing has been decided yet, despite what you may read to the contrary in the EDP, and discussions are still ongoing in all the district councils, as well as the county council, about whether the new divisions would comprise of one, two or three unitaries. Don't forget to have your say in the public consultation which you can access online and Catherine and I will keep you updated on developments at the council

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation>