

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 1st April 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.

Also Present: Parish Clerk, District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge and 4 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 March 2026 – the minutes of the meeting held on 4 th March 2026, pages 642-647, 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. Update on Closure of Bunwell Post Office – the Post Office has now been reopened.	
4.3. To consider repainting and repairing village telephone boxes. Cllr Crouch agreed to obtain costings for the possible glass types and paint for repairing the boxes and Mr Goddard kindly agreed to assist with the repair of the noticeboard on Bunwell Hill.	Cllr Crouch
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 heating oil crisis; the Full Council Meeting on 24 th March; road and green spaces improvements; Parish Partnership results; sewerage and fly-tipping; and updates from the County Council and the Health Board. District Cllr Suzanne Wateridge spoke about new funding opportunities, including the Community Facilities Fund, Community in Action Grant and In Bloom Grant. She commented on the demolition of South Norfolk House in Long Stratton and the plans to build new houses on the site, and the Council's Mindful Villages programme, to promote residents' mental health and wellbeing, which is going from strength to strength. Bunwell has just been awarded this status thanks mainly to the wonderful Community Art Club CIC run by Rachel Duffield at Bunwell Village Hall and Carleton Rode Jubilee Hall. Her Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/communityartclubs gives details of what is on offer. Suzanne hopes to arrange a mental health training session for local Parish Councils later in the year. Her full report is attached to these minutes.	
6. Resident's Questions – A resident commented on the overgrown footpaths and missing footpath signs in the village. Residents are reminded that anyone can visit	

the County Council Highways website and put in a report very easily on problems relating to footpaths and roads.

- 7. To receive and discuss correspondence** – any correspondence of importance had been passed to councillors for consideration or are included in agenda items.
- 8. Highway & Footpath Matters** – Despite notification having been received from NCC Highways that Bunwell Street would be closed for 4 days from the 23rd March to correct sections of failed asphalt, nothing had been done. The clerk will write to Highways to ask for an update. The question of dogs being allowed to foul the footpaths and pavements in the village was raised and residents are reminded that this is an offence which can result in a £100 fine. Please respect residents and walkers and clear up after your dogs. The Parish Council have bought 8 dog bins in recent years and pay over £900 per annum of residents' money to have the bins emptied. Clerk
- 9. Playground/Village Hall**
- 9.1. Play Area – It had been agreed that two new picnic table should be purchased, and Cllr Crouch obtain costings. He will also liaise with the Village Hall to organise a clean-up days. Cllr Crouch
- 9.2. Use of Playing Field by football teams – Cllr Booty will contact Tivetshall FC to discuss possible grant availability and their use of Bunwell Playing Field while possible changing facilities are being considered. Cllr Booty
- 9.3. To consider Nature Recovery Project – Cllr Booty will be meeting with Eastons to discuss the setting up a 'rewilding' area on the Playing Field. He will also contact Norfolk Wildlife Trust for advice on such a project.
- 10. Local Energy Infrastructure Projects** – Cllr Palmer agreed to follow up this matter to find out further information on the scheme which is now waiting for the Planning Inspectorate to consider before approval by the Secretary of State. Cllr Palmer
- 11. Potential Future Projects** – possible future projects in the village should be planned and made ready for applying for grants when they become available. These 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. Firm prices for the buildings, bases and fixings will be finalised so if it is agreed to go ahead with this provision, any grants can be applied for. 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 of parents and youngsters in the village on what facilities they would like to see on the Playing Field. Responses are beginning to be received and once the cut-off date at the end of May is reached, the results will be analysed. Cllr Crouch
- 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.
- 12. Planning Applications** – An application had been received for the conversion of the existing garage into a garden room/home office together with the erection of a new garage/store to the side of the main bungalow at: Caledonia, Wymondham Road, Bunwell. Councillors agreed that they had no objections.
- 13. Finance -**

Updates on what I'm doing

Heating oil

The price rise for heating oil is seriously affecting a lot of our rural households, some of them very urgently. Adrian Ramsay is currently putting in work at Parliament to ensure that short term help is quickly put in place for those affected. The good news now is that the government is finally considering decoupling electricity prices from gas prices, so that people will begin to see the savings that come from renewables by contrast with the expensive fossil fuels. Recent research from Oxford University has shown that the benefits to the UK residents would yield very small tax benefits (only about £16 to £82 per household) and no reduction in energy costs, while benefits to householders from shifting instead to renewables would be between £105 and £441 per annum. So we'll be massively much better off from investing in renewables instead (besides the fact that climate breakdown is a serious threat to national security generally and farming in particular).

Norfolk Heating Oil Crisis Fund

Thanks to funding received from the government, Norfolk County Council has set up a £3 million crisis fund to support residents affected by the rise in heating-oil prices.

Who can access support?

Help is available to those who are on low incomes, typically households with less than £35k coming in each year. Priority will be given to those who are due to run out of oil and are at imminent risk of losing access to heating and hot water. Once eligibility is confirmed, the council will offer grants of around

£350 per household. There is also support available around setting up payment plans with oil suppliers.

Residents can apply to the Norfolk Heating Oil Crisis Fund through the council's website at www.norfolk.gov.uk/HeatingOil

Longer term we need to be building energy security and resilience by helping households to access the support for household renewable energy schemes (see below).

Those who are in financial hardship can also access a range of support through the council's Crisis and Resilience Fund (Further details [here](#)) which offers crisis payments for unexpected financial shocks and support to build financial resilience, including budgeting advice, grant applications, and debt referrals.

Full Council on 24th March

The Full Council meeting was an embarrassment. Despite the chair insisting that there was to be no electioneering, the Conservative leader gave several party political broadcasts and election manifestos, including in her opening statement. The Reform councillors are usually silent throughout and leave before the debate on motions, but this time Councillor David Bick (Reform councillor from Thetford) gave an election address making out that the council was encumbered with debt (apparently having no notion of fiscal responsibility or investing to save). The Liberal Democrats presented a manifesto outlining their commitment to protecting the environment. It was almost as if everyone was afraid of the Green Party and needed to use the Chamber as a performance space. The chair did not intervene to stop any of it.

Because of the time spent on these performances I did not get to ask the question that I was intending to ask of the cabinet member for economic growth about the uneven playing field for local businesses, which is the effect of cheating by businesses that flout planning law and get away with retrospective planning applications or resisting enforcement. Nor did we get time for the motion that we were proposing.

However, we did debate a motion about food labelling (brought by the Conservatives). In our amendment to that motion we sought to tell the truth about the damage caused to farming by both the Conservative government (including the Brexit-related red tape and trade barriers), the Labour government, climate change, oil prices and other preventable catastrophes; and we sought to defend hard-pressed farmers from attack by their neighbours, and encourage them to contribute to local energy schemes by hosting small solar farms for the benefit of Norfolk communities (something which the Conservatives seemed keen to outlaw). It is worth noting that much land is used for biofuels, which produce energy at less than a tenth of what you can produce from the same hectare used for wind or solar generation.

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

On 13th March I attended an excellent conference organised by Adrian Ramsay for organisations interested in nature recovery and community energy etc in Waveney Valley area and there were some inspiring examples of the good stuff that's going on.

The government has announced new funding for community energy projects. Some of our parishes and district councils are working with Community Climate Action to devise a scheme to benefit local people and get clean cheap energy: <https://www.communityclimateaction.uk>. If you haven't already, do join up to the *Norfolk Environmental Collaboration* (organised by the NALC).

Road and green spaces improvements

I've now exhausted this year's local member fund and have allocated funds to the following works from it, or contributed to the projects:

Dickleburgh Dove Meadow nature conservation work: £3,000

Carleton Rode: initial safety measures for Upgate Street, including signs, white paint etc. £6,000

Winfarthing: towards the parish's share of the PP bid for SAM3 equipment, £1,000 Carleton Rode: towards the parish's share of the bus shelter improvements, £420 Tibenham/Bunwell: two horse riding signs near the stables on Cargate Common, £1,500

From next year's fund we are planning to undertake a feasibility study towards a reduced speed limit on part of Upgate Street.

Parish Partnership results

99 schemes across Norfolk have won support for their proposals under the parish partnership scheme. Of my parishes, we've won these:

Traffic calming chicanes, £25,000, Ashwellthorpe

Village Gateways: Aslacton £8421; Bressingham, £4548

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

Footpaths

I'm chasing some information relating to the impassable footpaths in Bressingham and Fersfield, some of which are on the official rota for cutting by the County Council, but seem not to be clear at all.

Better buses

I'm seeking a second conversation with the buses officer to ask him for a regular bus service for villages such as Ashwellthorpe and Tacolneston, travelling towards Wymondham. The good news is that Norfolk County Council has received a multi-year settlement of money for public transport.

Sewage and fly tipping

It's not new, but we do have a problem of commercial fly tipping in the countryside. Please report incidents to the District Council. You can also ask your district councillor for "No Fly

Tipping" notices (these help with securing a conviction for offenders).

I've been in touch with the Environment Agency about the outflow of sewage near Dickleburgh Moor. I believe Anglian Water has made promises....

Updates from County Council and the Health Board

Local Government reorganisation

We have now had the announcement from the government, saying they have opted for the plan for 3 councils for Norfolk (and three for Suffolk). The effect is that these parts of South Norfolk will be in the East Norfolk council, but parts of South Norfolk and Broadland that are suburbs and commuter belt for Norwich will be incorporated into the Norwich area. It is doubtful that this arrangement will be financially sustainable since the East Norfolk council will include deprived areas with high social needs, coastal erosion areas with high costs from climate issues, and coastal areas with a high proportion of retired people and second homes. As yet, also, there is no provision towards the huge costs of reorganising, with this scheme being the most expensive of the recommended options to implement.

Five for a fiver on Norwich Park & Ride

Norfolk County Council is reducing the price of group tickets on all Norwich Park & Ride services from this coming Sunday (29th March). Groups of up to five people will now be able to enjoy all-day travel on Park & Ride services for just £5 making it even better value for families and cheaper than parking for more than 3 hours in most city centre car parks. For one person, the price is £3 (for concessions £2); for two people £4.

Nine new Specialist Resource Bases to open this year

Nine new bases providing 110 specialist places are opening at mainstream primary schools this year as part of Norfolk's Local First Inclusion programme to increase capacity for children who need additional support. This includes one Specialist Hub of Inclusive Practice (SHIP) now open at Roydon Primary School near Diss (16 places) and several others.

National Information

County Councils Network (CCN) response to the National Planning Framework

The CCN has [published its consultation response](#) to the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), warning that the reforms would weaken local communities' voice and increase the risk of speculative, unsustainable development in rural areas.

Additionally mandatory housing targets introduced last year mean county areas face, on average, a 56% increase in expected delivery: 64,000 homes a year (around 1,245 a week) which is over seven times the increase for councils in England's major cities. But houses in rural places are not selling, and developers aren't completing the plans that have already been approved. It's no solution to a housing crisis that's about existing housing being unaffordable and stock piled by the wealthy investors in lucrative and high-demand areas.

Land use framework

The Government's new [land use framework](#) has now been published. This is guidance on how land is used across England, to balance farmland with valuing nature and pressures such as housing and industry. It has three parts:

- A vision for England's future landscapes, informed by land-use change analysis
- Principles to guide land-use decision-making
- Actions to support land-use change, delivered with partners

The full framework is available [here](#). It commits to maintaining overall food production in England, and to support food security and economic growth. It also sets out how the Government will protect the most productive land and give farmers (owners and tenants) greater rights, data and certainty to invest. This is all excellent but directly conflicts with everything in the two items I listed above (about housing targets in rural areas and the threats in the new planning framework). You couldn't make it up.

Children and parents to pilot social media bans, time limits and digital curfews at home.

Social media bans, digital curfews, and time limits on apps will be piloted in the homes of 300 teenagers in a first of its kind trial by the UK government. This runs alongside the [digital wellbeing consultation](#), which is closing on 26 May 2026. The pilot studies will last 6 weeks and test how different restrictions affect young people's day-to-day lives.

Both the children and the parents taking part will be interviewed at the beginning and end of the pilots to understand the impact limiting social media has had on their family life, sleep and schoolwork.

Contact me

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

Catherine Rowett

27th March 2026

Bunwell District Councillor Report April 2026

Community Action Fund Success!

I am delighted to report that Aslacton and Great Moulton Coronation Hall were successful in their bid for funding from the squeezed-in second round of the Community Action Fund. An excellently written application by the trustees put them in a very strong position and they will now receive over £11,000 to enable them to buy AV equipment for their Flix in the Stix initiative which looks very exciting! This means the local community can watch films at a much reduced rate with no need to go into Norwich or Diss to do so.

The next round of the Community Action Fund is now open and we have more money and a longer window to apply this year. Applications open on 1st April and close on August 16th. I am able to apply for projects between £1,000 and £40,000 this year.

For full details please visit the council's website:

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/community-safety/community/funding/community-action-fund>

Community Facilities Grant

While we are on the subject of grants, do have a think about this newly introduced grant which

focuses on funding capital improvements to a community facility/building. These could be major refurbishments or adding solar panels, heat pumps etc. They can also cover playground refurbishments. I can propose applications between £10,000 and £50,000, and the application window is the same as the CAF so lots of time to come up with ideas. Again, the council's website has all the information: <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/community-safety/community/funding/community-facilities-grant>

In Bloom Grant

If you would like to encourage biodiversity in your villages and create beautiful colourful displays of flowers and plants, this is the grant for you. For every pound parish and town councils spend, South Norfolk Council will match it, so with around 150,000 residents in South Norfolk, that means up to £150,000 could be invested (you do have to provide match funding however). Once again, full details are on the website. And funding doesn't just cover planting flowers and trees – it can also cover things like bat, bird and owl boxes, as well as community orchards and allotment projects: <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communityfunding/south-norfolk-in-bloom-fund>

South Norfolk House site sale agreed

As you know, South Norfolk House was demolished after the majority vote was passed by councillors to do so (though I was not one of those who agreed to this). The site has now been sold to a developer for, and I quote, 'a minimum of 60 high-quality, 100% affordable homes, directly addressing the needs of local residents'. 100% affordable is a very vague term and I would like more details on this. And do we really need more houses in Long Stratton? These are questions I will be bringing up at our next Full Council meeting in May.

Bunwell Becomes a Mindful Village

The Council's Mindful Villages programme, to promote residents' mental health and wellbeing, is going from strength to strength. Bunwell has just been awarded this status thanks mainly to the wonderful Community Art Club CIC run by Rachel Duffield at Bunwell Village Hall and Carleton Rode Jubilee Hall. Do visit her Facebook page to see all the wonderful things she offers <https://www.facebook.com/communityartclubs>

I am hoping to get all four Bunwell parishes together this year for a mental health training session if anyone is interested, from the council's fully trained team. I attended a session myself last year and I found it a really enlightening and enriching experience. Workshops are two hours long and can take place in the evening or whenever most people have availability.

Cllr Suzanne Wateridge

Member for Bunwell Ward, South Norfolk Council

m 07943 180556 suzanne.wateridge@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

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