Semer Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Thursday 6th August 2026 commencing at 7.00pm.

In attendance: Councillors Steve Nuttall (Chair), Jackie Barraclough, John Lawrence, James Pitcher, Christan Ross, Victoria Waples (Clerk); County Councillor Robert Lindsay and District Councillor Leigh Jamieson.

1. Chair's welcome including the statement for the reporting at meetings of the council – Councillor Steve Nuttall welcomed all to the meeting and the statement for reporting at meetings was taken as read to all present.

2. Apologies for absence: there were no applicable apologies for absence.

3. Code of Conduct and Declaration of member's interests:
   i. To receive declarations of registrable interests, other and non-registerable interests as detailed in Appendix B of the Local Code of Conduct - there were no applicable interests declared.
   ii. To receive notification of gifts or hospitality exceeding £50 – there were no gifts or hospitality to declare.

4. Minutes of meetings:
   i. To approve the minutes of the Annual Council Meeting of 28th May 2026 and to give authority to the Chair to sign the minutes in accordance with legislation - It was **resolved to approve the above minutes and grant authority to the Chair to sign them as being a true and accurate record of the meetings that tool place.**

5. Public Forum:
   i. To receive the report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay – Councillor Lindsay was invited to submit his report (a copy of which can be seen at Appendix A) and drew the meeting's attention to the following:
      - Bus 51 update and working solution
      - Potential sell-off County Council's assets
      - Melting roads
      - Dunwich wildfire update
      - Commuter buses
      - Send places
      - Budget out-run
      - Consultation on cuts to Healthy Child Services
      - Judicial review
   ii. To receive the report from District Councillor Leigh Jamieson – Councillor Jamieson was invited to submit his report (a copy of which can be seen at Appendix B) and drew the meeting's attention to the following:

- Conservation Areas
- Semer areas for conservation status
- Babergh have lost their 5-year land supply due to government reworking of housing targets
- Corks Lane – sold 16 of 48 properties – results of review awaited

iii. To receive comments from the public on the agenda as published or concerning Semer – there were no members of the public present.

6. Parish Matters: to receive an update on items raised at previous meetings: none were reported as outstanding.

7. Statutory Business: there were no matters to consider.

8. Planning:
   i. To receive the slides and a report from the Town and Parish Council Liaison Meeting in July 2026 – all noted receipt of the slides as circulated.
   ii. To receive an update on the Local Plan system including the Local Plan Timetable – the timetable was noted.
   iii. To note that the Clerk has responded to the Local Plan Scoping Consultation (deadline 31st July 2026) on behalf of the Parish Council – all noted the response in relation to Semer as submitted by the Clerk with specific responses on future development.
   iv. To note the designation of three new Neighbourhood Development Plan Areas by Babergh District Council (Suffolk) – effective Monday 29 June 2026 - Belstead Parish Council, Nedging-with-Naughton Parish Council, and Preston St Mary Parish Council – all noted the areas so designated.
   v. To consider the possibility of designating all or part of Semer as a conservation – it was suggested that there were enough historic buildings together in Ash Street along with the water meadows around the Church and buildings located along the Church Lane area including Union Hill and Semer Wood to consider an application for conservation status. All noted that there would be a need to collate evidence and that such a setting could place a limitation on certain types of development. It was agreed that all would seek to ascertain historical documents relating to the area for further consideration.

9. Financial Report:
   i. To consider and approve the following items for payment: it was resolved that the following be approved:
      - Clerk's Hours to date – £484.20
   ii. To approve the following retrospective payments:
      - HMRC – PAYE due to 5th June 2026 £94.80
   iii. To note the receipt of the following items: none
   iv. To note the bank balances to date and consider the financial position as at 3rd August 2026 – the meeting noted the reconciled of £3,634.20.
   v. To note the budget to actual report for the period ending August 2026 – all noted the figures to date (income of £2,250.00; expenditure of £1,718.73) including the minor

variance of an underspend of £64.97 for the budget to actual at August 2026. This was due, in the main to underspends in bank charges, insurance and subscriptions, offset by the slight overspend in staffing costs.

10. Year-End Processes: to consider the following as part of the year-end process:
    i. To note receipt of the confirmation of an exemption from a Limited Assurance Review from the external auditor – it was noted that the external auditor had provided a message indicating that they had received and logged the notification of exempt status for the year ending 31st March 2026. As such no review would be performed and there would be no auditor certificate and report issued.
    ii. To note the expiration of the period for the exercise of public rights has passed – the period ended on 14th July 2026 and the meeting noted that there had been no requests to view the accounts and associated documents for the prior year.

11. Councillor Reports:
    i. Himalayan balsam growing in and around Church field –it was noted that this was a registrable invasive species and that it was the responsibility of the joint riparian owners – Parish Councill the Church and the adjacent landowner to take appropriate action. All agreed that this should be revisited at the next meeting and a course of action approved.

12. Correspondence:
    i. BMSDC – Town and Parish Updates – to confirm receipt of the monthly reports for June through to August 2026
    ii. BMSDC – NSIP and large-scale energy projects – to confirm receipt of the updates from BMSDC
    iii. Local Government Reorganisation – to note the latest communications on this matter and the new website set up on the behalf of the Suffolk LGR Implementation Board
    iv. SALC – to note the invite to attend the SALC Super Forum on Local Government Reorganisation on 17th September 2026 (online) – all were made aware of the invitation.
    v. SALC – to confirm that all weekly bulletins are emailed to councillors for their perusal. Councillors to contact the Clerk if there are any items of interest / training courses they wish to attend.
    vi. To receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response.

13. Date of next meeting: all agreed the following dates for futures meetings: 26th November; 21st January 2027 and 11th March 2027.

14. Closure of Meeting: there being no further business to transact, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.03pm.

DRAFT

Signed……. Date: 26.11.2026

Appendix A – County Councillor Report

Bildeston road closure and 51 bus

I'm pleased to say that between them, 51 bus operator TMS, Anglian Water and SCC have agreed to put on an extra bus for the duration of the Bildeston road closure. One - the 51 - will operate between Hadleigh and Stowmarket, via Semer and Needham Market and the other, the 51s, will run just between Bildeston and Stowmarket. The 51s and 51 minibuses can be flagged down anywhere on route so long as it is safe to stop. One-way fares are capped at £3, will be free in August for kids aged between 5 and 15 and are likely to be capped £2 from January.

Reform looks at selling off assets to stop successor councils getting them

Michael Hadwen, Suffolk's Reform leader has been recorded by an undercover reporter telling Reform councillors at a private meeting that he is looking at selling off the county's three wholly - owned companies to private interests to prevent the successor three unitary councils from inheriting them. Hadwen was recorded by the Local Government Chronicle saying: "We have some wholly owned companies that I'm looking to release into the market, basically to give off everything we can, because other than what we need to give the unitaries, I don't want to give them anything extra, because they're going to collapse financially immediately." There is no evidence for his repeated assertion that unitaries will collapse. However, selling off income earning assets, increasing the county's annual spend and spending precious reserves on his judicial review is likely to help that come about.

Melting Roads, heatwave and climate change

Parts of over 20 Suffolk roads melted during the heatwave we saw at the end of June and in early July. Highways had to use gritters with granite chips instead of salt to try to repair them. The A143 was closed for a week. At this stage we do not know what the extra cost implications are of these needed repairs.

Reform cancel climate emergency

At the full county council meeting in July, between heatwaves, Reform councillors proposed a motion to cancel the climate emergency declared in 2019. That declaration, seconded by me seven years ago, led to an action plan by which the council saved £3.9million a year. The motion is similar to ones Reform, who obtain two thirds of their funding from wealthy fossil fuel interests, have passed in Norfolk, Essex and several other authorities they control. At Suffolk, slightly amended motion was eventually passed with the support of Reform and Conservative votes, though the other parties voted against. At a protest we staged outside Endeavour House against the motion, the firefighters union representative said that they were woefully under-resourced to fight the fires that were breaking out all over the county due to the drought and heat.

Dunwich wildfire latest

At the time of writing (Weds afternoon) the fire is considered "stable" after a week but not out since it is likely to be burning underground via oil-rich plant roots and could re-emerge if not continually damped down. This spells disaster for Suffolk's largest area of natural heathland habitat since it is estimated that it will be 25 years before the habitat manages to regrow fully. Many of us will may be dead by then.

Buses

189 out of 490 parishes in Suffolk do not have a commuter bus. Yet there is now funding for bus services available from Government. So at the July council meeting I proposed a motion to draw up a costed plan for a minimum level of bus service to every parish in Suffolk. This was voted down by Reform. Meanwhile the county has won £564,000 funding from Government to fund a feasibility study into Suffolk (or Suffolk and Norfolk) running their own bus service using franchising. Franchising works (in London and Greater Manchester) by the council setting fares, timetables and routes and simply paying bus companies to provide the buses and drivers. It would allow the council to use profits from the major routes to subsidise the more rural ones.

Signed……. Date: 26.11.2026

DRAFT

£19m more agreed for creating more local SEND places

The cabinet on Tuesday 14 July agreed proposals to spend £18.9m of High Needs Provision Capital Funding received from the government on increasing the number of specialist education placements in the county for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – 248 new places will be created in both mainstream and specialist schools

Budget Outturn for 2025-26 Financial Year

Cabinet on 14 July also reviewed the council's financial outturn for the financial year ending 31 March 2026. The council overspent last year by £15m overall, a figure which the council will need to take from its reserves to balance the books. The main areas of overspend for the council are in Care Purchasing for Adult Social Care, and Children in Care placements.

Public Consultation on Cuts to Healthy Child Service

The county has begun a public consultation on proposed cuts to its Healthy Child Service, which is provided by the council's Public Health team. They want to cease providing support to parents under the age of 21 after they have a baby, and axe the Community Staff Nurse role from Health Visiting teams. The consultation runs until 18 September, with a decision likely to be made at Cabinet after that. You can read through the proposals and respond to the consultation here: https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations-petitions-and-elections/consultations/healthy-child-services-consultations

Appendix B – District Councillor Report

Constable Country protected

At last week's council meeting it was agreed that the historic area in and around East Bergholt made famous by the work of John Constable has been given enhanced protection after Babergh District Council approved the expansion of the existing conservation area. The Conservation Area will protect the area around two of the most important features of Constable's work – Flatford Mill and Willy Lott's Cottage – which until now had not been included within a conservation area despite their architectural and historic interest. The decision comes during the year of the Constable 250 celebrations, which commemorate 250 years since the birth of the artist. It also coincides with the arrival of The Hay Wain – Constable's iconic 1821 oil painting depicting Willy Lott's Cottage – in Suffolk for the first time, with the masterpiece now on display at Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich.

Council loses Five-year housing land supply

As a result of National Planning Policy Framework changes, the Councils have had to apply a 20% buffer to their five-year housing land supply requirement rather than the 5% buffer previously applied. The annual housing requirements set out in Policy SP01 of the adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 are 416 homes for Babergh and 535 homes for Mid Suffolk. These figures are less than 80% of the most up to date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, which are 790 homes for Babergh and 757 homes for Mid Suffolk. Since the start of the month this results in Babergh having a 4.68-year housing land supply figure and Mid Suffolk having a 6.73-year housing land supply figure.

What this means is that Babergh's local housing policies are treated as out-of-date under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), triggering the "tilted balance" and a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means the default stance for new planning applications shifts heavily toward approval, weakening the council's control over where homes are built.

Council takes steps to reduce fire risk

The councils operate a number of wildflower meadows within the open spaces it manages to increase biodiversity across the districts. However, recent heatwaves and drought have led to increased concerns over risk of fires – with biodiversity experts offering reassurance over the

steps being taken to ensure responsible land management. Seasonal mowing would usually start in late August, but the councils have decided to bring this forward following the prolonged hot, dry weather during June and July. There have also been discussions with partners, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, raising awareness of increased risk of field fires due to the recent weather conditions.

Community Investment

Community infrastructure payments have been used to upgrade play areas in Sudbury and Hadleigh. In Sudbury money went to Belle Vue Park and the Aubrey Drive play area, while £76k was used for improving the play area at the Calais Street recreation ground in Hadleigh. In each case, proposals include upgrading facilities to create more inclusive play equipment that is designed to support children with disabilities, incorporating sensory play features and ground level activities as well as features to ensure safe and accessible fun for all.

Meanwhile, Hadleigh Leisure Centre also received £101k towards a project to increase the capacity of the fitness suite and repurpose a ground-floor room into a community space.

Community Days out

Families across Babergh and Mid Suffolk can enjoy two free community fun days this summer, with a packed programme of activities on offer for all ages. The events will take place between 10am and 2pm at Belle Vue Park in Sudbury on Wednesday 12 August, and at Stowupland Village Hall on Wednesday 19 August. There will be a wide range of activities for families to enjoy, including everything from bouncy castles and axe throwing to arts, crafts, and dancing. Alongside the free activities, local organisations and charities will also be on hand with information stalls, offering advice and access to important local resources. Each community fun day is free to attend, and families need only turn up on the day to take part. However, children that receive means tested free school meals are also able to pre-book some activities and order a free lunch by visiting the Eequ booking platform.

Locality Funding

I am pleased to say that I have £2000 locality funding that I am happy to use to help projects in the village. However, I have already had a couple of requests from Elmsett so if there is anything in the village that needs assistance, please let me know.

DRAFT