

## Semer Parish Council

### **Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.**

In attendance: Councillors Richard Keens (Chair), Jackie Barraclough, John Lawrence, Steve Nuttall, James Pitcher and Victoria Waples (Clerk) and District Councillor Leigh Jamieson.

1. Election of Chair – to elect a Chair for the year 2025-2026 and to receive the signed Declaration of Acceptance of Office – following acceptance of his nomination, **Council resolved that Councillor Keens be elected Chair for the year 2025 – 2026.** In accordance with legislation, Councillor Keens signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
2. Chair's welcome including the statement for the reporting at meetings of the council – the Chair opened the meeting and thanked all for attending. The statement on reporting at meetings of the parish council was taken as read.
3. Apologies for absence:
  - i. There were no applicable apologies of absence.
  - ii. Apologies were received from County Councillor Robert Lindsay.
4. 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 such interests declared.
  - ii. To receive notification of gifts or hospitality exceeding £50 – there were none declared.
5. Minutes of previous meetings:
  - i. To approve the minutes of the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and to give authority to the Chair to sign the minutes in accordance with legislation - **Council resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting and gave approval for the Chair to sign the minutes in accordance with legislation.**
6. Public Forum:
  - i. To receive a report from the County Councillor Robert Lindsay – Cllr. Lindsay's written report was noted (*a copy of which can be seen at Appendix A*). There were no questions for onward submission
  - ii. To receive a report from the District Councillor – Cllr. Jamieson's written report was noted (*a copy of which can be seen at Appendix B*) and provided commentary on items within the report. He provided answers to the questions posed.
  - iii. To receive comments from the public on the agenda as published or concerning Semer: there were no members of the public present and the clerk confirmed that she had had no submissions in writing.
7. Parish Matters: to receive an update on items raised at previous meetings:
  - i. A1141 speed limit change – Suffolk County Council (Parishes of Hadleigh, Semer and Kersey) (Stone Street) (A1141) (Union Hill (A1141) (30mph and 40mph Speed Limit and Revocation) Order 202 – to receive an update on this project, including timeframes – all were made aware that Suffolk County Council Highways had provided a progress update on the proposed speed limit changes due to be implemented on Union Hill, Semer and Stone Street, Hadleigh. Posts had been installed onsite (whilst pre-patching was being carried out)..The route is being surfaced dressed on 30<sup>th</sup> August and a week later the new markings and studs along with speed limit terminals and repeater signs will be installed. An update was also

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provided in relation to vegetation clearance along Union Hill. A landowner had undertaken works and trimmed back vegetation which had improved the situation. The Enforcement Team is yet to hear back from another landowner as to whether they intend to carry out the required works.

8. Statutory Business:

- i. Standing Orders – to review and adopt revised standing orders as per the model issued by NALC in March 2025 - all noted that new model standing orders had been issued by NALC which covered amendments to Standing Order 14 and 18 (in part). The meeting **agreed to adopt the revised standing orders based on the 2025 version and tailor them, where applicable, to Semer Parish Council.**
- ii. To agree to the annual subscriptions for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026: County Association membership fee; data protection fee and Microsoft Office 365 – the meeting **agreed for the items of expenditure to be incurred up to the budget set subject to them being brought back to the relevant meeting as retrospective payments for approval.**

9. Planning Matters:

- i. To note the determination of the following planning applications:
  - DC/25/01390 – Listed Building Permission Consent - Replace glazing to 3 No windows and full replacement of 2 No windows Ash Street Farm, Ash Street, Semer.
  - DC/25/01357 - Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Erection, Extension or Alteration of a Building for Agricultural or Forestry use Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Sch 2, Part 6, Class A/B/E - Erection of extension to existing agricultural building. Location: Hollow Trees Farm Ltd, Hadleigh Road, Semer – formal approval of the details of the proposed development is not required.
- ii. To receive the briefing pack from the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025 with parish and town councils to update on the Joint Local Plan and how Babergh and Mid Suffolk are planning for the future. The meeting noted receipt of the briefing pack that had been produced detailing the impact of the government's housing targets on Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Given the increased targets for the districts, the councils had decided to review its Joint Local Plan adopted in November 2023 which was the blue print for the districts' future until 2037. A new Local Development Scheme was adopted in February 2025 which sets out the timetable for the review. Commentary on the benefits of a Neighbourhood Development Plan was included within the briefing plan along with the councils' interim formula approach for the proportionate allocation of housing targets for all villages in both districts. The provisional figures gave Semer a target of 20 dwellings over a 20-year period. They were to be treated as minimum figures and could be subject to changes as the Joint Local Plan Review progressed. The meeting agreed that it would wait for further updates from the district councils on the progress of further call for sites prior to commenting.
- iii. To receive the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) presentation slides as given at the above briefing meetings and to discuss the way forward – the meeting acknowledged receipt of the slides. Discussion ensued over the merits of a plan, the steps to be followed and area to be covered and whether a number of specific areas could be accommodated within one plan. It was noted that once the boundary for the NDP had been agreed by BDC then a consultant could be engaged to assist with the development of the plan. It was agreed that the first steps were to engage with the community to ascertain whether there would be support to assist with the production of a neighbourhood development plan. It was agreed that prior to canvassing interest in the village, the parish council needed to understand the

processes and benefits of a NDP. The Clerk was asked to enquire whether the Neighbourhood Planning Team at Babergh District Council would be amenable to attending a joint meeting with representatives from Lindsey and (and perhaps neighbouring villages such as Nedging with Naughton) to provide more information as to the process and benefits of a NDP.

10. Financial Report:

- i. To consider and approve the following items for payment: **all agreed for the following payments to be so approved and paid:**

- V Waples – Clerk’s Hours to date including reimbursement of expenses - £367.56
- SALC – Membership Fee - £105.06
- Trevor Brown – Audit Fee - £160.00

Council to retrospectively approved the following payments settled since the last meeting: **all agreed for the following to be retrospectively approved:**

- HMRC – PAYE to 5 April 2025 - £179.20 paid in April 2025.
- ICO – Data Protection Fee - £47.00 paid in April 2025.

- ii. To note receipt of the following monies: the meeting noted receipt of the following sums of money into the council’s bank account:

- Parish Precept – 2025 – 2026 – Part 1 - £2,000.00 as paid in April 2025.

- iii. To note the bank balances to date and consider the financial position at 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025 – the bank balances, following a review of the statement versus the cashbook, were confirmed at £9,502.95.

- iv. To review and approve the renewal insurance for the year 2025-2026 in the sum of £204.94. All were made aware that prior to the renewal of the insurance, the Clerk had undertaken a review of the council’s insurance requirements to ascertain whether the renewal cover was adequate. This had resulted in amendments to the existing policy and the renewal premium reflected the amendments The meeting **resolved to accept the renewal in the sum of £204.94.**

11. Year-End Processes: to consider the following as part of the year-end process:

- i. To receive and adopt the Annual Internal Audit Report for the year ending 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025 - **all agreed to accept the narrative report as written and submitted.**

- ii. To consider and decide the actions to be taken following the recommendations arising from the Internal Annual Report –all noted the comments as raised within the narrative report with particular reference to the progress the council had made over the coming year. It was **agreed that the clerk will draw up a list of policies to enable the council to consider further those that might be appropriate for adoption later in the year.**

- i. To receive and approve the Payments and Receipts Accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 - **all approved the accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024** which were summarised as follows:

Brought forward balance 01.04.24	£8,322.24
Receipts for 2024 - 2025	£3,504.60
Expenditure for 2024 - 2025	£4,097.69
Carried forward balance 31.03.25	£7,729.15

- iii. To consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2024-2025 as per Section 1 of the AGAR - **the meeting agreed that having reviewed the statements, all could be answered in the affirmative.** The Chair and Clerk were given approval to sign Section 1.

- iv. To consider and approve the Accounting Statement for 2024-2025 as per Section 2 of the AGAR - **the accounting statements were received and approved and accepted as**

**reflecting the council's overall financial position.** The Chair was given approval to sign Section 2 of the AGAR.

- v. To consider and approve the recommendation from the RFO that having fulfilled the criteria required, Council considers itself exempt from a Limited Assurance Review - as the Council was a smaller authority where the higher of all gross annual income or gross annual expenditure did not exceed £25,000, and that it met the qualifying criteria as set out in the Certificate of Exemption, it was able to declare itself exempt from sending the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor for a limited assurance review. **Council approved the exemption confirming that it met the requirements.**
  - vi. Should Agenda Item 11vii be so approved, to delegate authority to the Chair to sign the Certificate of Exemption for 2024-2025 by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 - **the Chair was given permission to sign the Certificate of Exemption and the Clerk was instructed to ensure that the relevant paperwork was submitted to the external auditors by the due date of 1<sup>st</sup> July.**
  - vii. To receive the dates from the RFO of the period for the exercise of public rights and the publication requirements of the AGAR for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 –3<sup>rd</sup> June until 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 – the meeting noted the dates set by the RFO which were confirmed as Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June until Friday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024.
12. Councillor Reports: there were none submitted for consideration.
13. Correspondence: to receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response –
- i. BMSDC – Town and Parish Updates – [to receive the monthly report of April 2025 & May 2025](#) – all confirmed receipt of the reports
  - ii. BMSDC – to note that the District CIL Funding Bid Round 15 will be open to new applications from 1<sup>st</sup> May and will close at 12.00pm on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025 – all noted the dates.  
Church Meadow Bridge – following further investigation, it was agreed that further quotes would need to be obtained (perhaps from bricklayers) but overall it was considered that the works were not as extensive as first thought.
  - iii. Cycle Club Sudbury – it was agreed that it was acceptable for competitors to park on the meadow but access must be made available at all times for local residents. This had been fed back by local residents, but it was agreed that the clerk would make the organisers aware of this condition.
  - iv. To receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response – there were no further matters coming forth for noting.
14. Date of next meeting: all noted the dates for future meetings being: 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025; 20 November 2025; 22 January 2026; 19 March 2026.
15. There being no further business to transact, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.29pm..

Appendix A – Report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay

**40mph speed limit Union Hill - new cross road signs** - Highways have put in the posts for the new 40mph limit, which they did while some pre-patching ahead of doing a surface dressing was carried out. They will come back to install the actual signs on 30<sup>th</sup> August when they are also doing the surface dressing. About a week after that, when the loose chippings are bedded in, they will come back again to install new markings and studs. As you are probably aware, they are doing a similar thing on Stone Street section where the limit is going from 40mph to 30mph.

I also asked Highways to renew the cross road signs which have faded, which they have agreed to do.

**Increasing School Places for SEND Students** - On Tuesday 1 April, Cabinet voted to increase the number of school places in the county for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

1. £18.6m to be spent creating about 100 places would be created within existing mainstream schools, from next academic year.

2. Up to £12m to create 100 places the following year in “satellite” locations of existing special schools in Suffolk. Since the Cabinet report was tabled, the government has announced that Suffolk will receive an extra £9.4m to invest in new SEND school places. Plans will now be drawn up by the Local Area SEND Partnership on how to spend the money.

**£4m for “skills bootcamps”** - The Department for Education has allocated Suffolk County Council up to £4m to be spent delivering free skills training to an extra 1,345 adults across Norfolk and Suffolk this year. Courses last up to 16 weeks and offer a combination of online and in-person learning. Employers can work directly with training providers to create courses that align with their needs. Those interested in taking part in the Skills Bootcamps can find more information here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/supporting-employers-training-your-workforce/skills-bootcamps>

**6,000 Public EV Chargepoints Planned** - Suffolk County Council will be installing around 6,000 new public electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints across the county. From the summer, many will be on residential streets, with many locations suggested by residents following the survey which was undertaken last year, or by liaison with communities and district/borough councils. The majority of installations will be bollard-style units at the kerbside, suitable for long-stay or overnight charging, when drivers will be able to benefit from an overnight off-peak tariff, and there will also be a dedicated resident’s tariff which features discounted charging at all times. Public car parks will also see a number of rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoint installations, for quicker charging. This project has been made possible due to a successful £5.3 million bid by SCC to the government’s Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund. This summer’s roll-out will use a proportion of this funding, with a further £16 million of funding provided by the chargepoint operator, *Believe*.

**Local Nature Recovery Strategy** - The County Council is asking the public to provide specific local suggestions for nature reserves and habitat creation in their area by responding to their consultation by 11 June 2025 at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations)

Appendix B - Report from District Councillor Leigh Jamieson

**Car parks** - Babergh, unlike all other districts in Suffolk, had long been able to provide free parking in our main towns. It was a concession that we all cherished but it was something that the council was struggling to continue to fund. While the last administration initially put forward the proposals, continued pressure on the council budget meant that the council had to instigate the charges this term.

Finalised in the early autumn the charges came in to affect in January this year with charges in Hadleigh starting at £1 for one hour in the short stay car park or £1 for two hours in the long stay. Green Party councillors in Hadleigh and Sudbury strongly opposed the implementation of the charges, and I do feel that a free period of an hour or thirty minutes could have been worthwhile. However, although it is too soon to ascertain if there has been any detrimental effect on the towns, early reports indicate that takings are in line with the councils’ predictions. The council will monitor the situation, and Scrutiny committee will review progress later this year.

**The properties at Corks Lane** finally started to go up for sale with some properties already purchased. The development which has been a difficult project for the council, will eventually see the original buildings transformed into new high-quality homes, with a mix of one, two, three and four-bedroom apartments and one cottage. Unfortunately, due to a number of factors including the pandemic and the rising costs of materials the

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cost of the project continues to rise. As the only party not to have been directly involved in the sell off, Green Councillors have called for a full independent inquiry into the way the whole venture has been handled.

Green Party cabinet members identified **Housing** as a serious concern early on and by working with the new housing team they have implemented a number of new policies. Also, more importantly, the full housing stock assessment is now almost complete. At the start of the current administration the team were saying that this would take at least four years to complete. The Green Party head of housing did not accept this target and through her persistence the stock check is now 80% completed already.

Another success for the council is the introduction of **Listed Building Consent orders and Listed Building Development** orders which allow owners of listed buildings to upgrade windows and install PV panels and other renewable technologies. Full council approved the initiative put forward by Green Party councillors, in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, back in the autumn.

Other topics discussed over the last year included the proposed changes to **waste collection**. Back in September the cabinet agreed that the collections will change to a three-weekly cycle with two separate recycling bins, for different materials, along with the introduction of new weekly food waste collections from 2026. The plan is for one recycling bin for things like glass and cartons, while the other will be for cardboard and paper. The general waste bin will be the third bin, and one bin will be collected each week along with the food waste bin.

**Kingfisher Leisure Centre** in Sudbury has also been a big issue this year. Following routine maintenance to the roof in August contractors discovered more complex problems that left the pool closed until the New Year. The repair costs were unbudgeted and have placed an unexpected burden on the already difficult finances.

In terms of finance, **the budget** is a continuing concern to members and officers alike. Despite making savings and additional income totalling £2.6million, the council still had to use £630k from its financial resilience reserve to plug a budget gap and still faces a budget shortfall of £14.6m over the six years from 2024/5 to 2029/30. Further savings and, unfortunately, additional increases in council tax, fees and charges are unavoidable.

**Late in the year came two big announcements from national government.** Firstly, The new Labour governments commitment to build 1.5million homes has resulted in 86% uplift in Babergh's housing delivery commitments. The council now has a requirement to build 775 new homes a year across the district - 16,275 properties in 20 years including a 5% buffer requirement. This is a huge ask for the council and will have ramifications for every parish in the district. The Green Party head of planning is working with the planning team to encourage parishes and towns to develop neighbourhood plans. In this way the residents can have a direct say on where they will accept development and what that development will look like.

This announcement was shortly followed by the **Devolution and Local Government Reforms** plans that will see the creation of a single Mayoral Combined Authority for Suffolk and Norfolk, with Unitary Councils replacing County and District Councils in 2028. Following their acceptance onto the fast-track program, both Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils cancelled elections, planned for this May. Instead, elections for the new Mayor will take place in May next year. National government will decide the size and number of unitary councils at some point in the future. The Suffolk district and Ipswich borough councils have submitted a case for two or three unitary councils as their preferred choice.

Multiple unitaries are vital in order to keep councils truly local to the people they serve and to meet the differing needs and aspirations of our county's diverse communities. Providing a locally based unitary authority big enough to deliver but small enough to care.

The interim report submitted to Government by the borough and district councils said creating multiple unitary authorities for Suffolk would achieve greater outcomes for residents, grow the economy and provide flexible solutions to meet the needs of local communities – in a way that a single mega-council covering a vast geographical area would fail to do.

Babergh has teamed up with Mid Suffolk and Suffolk Councils to offer companies access to the successful **Solar for Business initiative**. Businesses can now reduce their carbon emissions and save money on energy bills by signing up to have solar panels provided and installed on their premises, for free.

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Electricity generated by the panels will be sold to the business at a rate lower than their current tariff, helping to slash energy bills and improve their bottom line.

Solar for Business has been running successfully in West Suffolk for nine years – helping more than a hundred companies to save a total of around £700,000 and 2,000 tonnes in harmful CO2 emissions per year.

To be eligible, businesses must be within West Suffolk, Babergh or Mid Suffolk's district boundaries, and must have a minimum electricity consumption of 5,000kWh per year. For a firm paying 25p/kWh this would mean electricity bills of around £1,250 per year.

To find out more about the scheme, email: [environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk), call 01284 757631 or visit: [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/solarforbusiness](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/solarforbusiness)

**Communities continue to receive funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).** Developers pay a fee when work starts on a development, which the councils then reinvest in neighbourhoods via their towns and parish councils. Twenty-two of Babergh's town and parishes receiving a portion of £274K.

A **community development fund** has been introduced to coincide with the start of the 2025/26 fiscal year and aims to streamline the administration of council grants. The new Community Development fund encompasses both capital and revenue funding, making the application process simpler for organisations to complete and receive the funding they need. Local VCFSE (voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise) organisations could apply for up to £20,000 toward new or existing projects that provide important services and support to their communities.

**Two new electric bikes** can now be hired in Sudbury thanks to a new partnership between the council and Suffolk-based electric bike company EEZYBIKE. From May this year, residents and visitors in Sudbury can hire an electric bike to make their journeys more environmentally friendly. Two new electric bikes have been located by Kingfisher Leisure Centre, situated within a solar-powered pod, the bikes make for an exciting new way to enjoy the local cycle routes and surrounding area.