

## Semer Parish Council

### **Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.**

In attendance: Councillors Steve Nuttall (Chair), Jackie Barraclough, John Lawrence, James Pitcher and Victoria Waples (Clerk).

1. Chair's welcome including the statement for the reporting at meetings of the council – the Chair for the meeting opened the meeting and thanked all for attending. The statement on reporting at meetings of the parish council was taken as read.
2. Apologies for absence:
  - i. Verified apologies of absence were received from Cllr. Richard Keens. It was resolved to approve the submitted apologies.
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 such interests declared.
  - ii. To receive notification of gifts or hospitality exceeding £50 – there were none declared.
4. Minutes of previous meetings:
  - i. To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 – it was resolved to approve the minutes as a true and accurate reflection of the matters discussed. Approval was given to the Chair to sign the minutes in accordance with legislation.
  - ii. To approve the minutes of the additional parish council meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025 - it was resolved to approve the minutes as a true and accurate reflection of the matters discussed. Approval was given to the Chair to sign the minutes in accordance with legislation.
5. Public Forum:
  - i. To receive the report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay – the meeting received the report from Councillor Lindsay – a copy of which can be seen at Appendix A. There were no matters for onward submission.
  - ii. To receive the report from District Councillor Leigh Jamieson - the meeting received the report from Councillor Jamieson – a copy of which can be seen at Appendix B. There were no matters for onward submission.
  - 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 from residents.
6. Parish Matters: to receive an update on items raised at previous meetings:
  - i. Union Hill – A1141 – the meeting was advised that the work to Union Hill in relation to the change in speed limits was now complete. It has been confirmed that all of the centre line road markings have now been installed between the A1141 and Overgang Road and confirmation had been forthcoming stated that there are no cat's eyes to be installed at this point as the Hill never had them. Snagging signage and vegetation maintenance had been carried out. The Give way sign erected at Mill Lane had been turned around to face the opposite direction and the derestriction sign had been repositioned on the centre island at the junction of the A1071 and Stone Street. Council noted correspondence received from a member of the public on the works that had been carried out and their overall funding.
  - ii. Semer Meadow Bridge Farm works – to receive an update on funding for these works from District Councillor Jamieson – the Clerk advised the meeting that whilst she had submitted the Locality Budget Forms for a contribution from Councillor Jamieson's budget, he had

So signed and approved at the meeting of 19.03.2026

indicated that he had originally agreed to allocated funds to the Roundabout Magazine. Should this not be progressed then he could offer that funding to the bridge works. Anticipated sum was in the region of £500. He had hoped to respond to the Council by this meeting. The Clerk agreed to chase this and clarify the monies that could be offered from his locality budget.

## 7. Statutory Business:

- i. Babergh District Council – Notice of [Community Governance Review](#) – it was **resolved that the council did not wish to propose any changes to parish arrangements for effective governance.**

## 8. Planning:

- i. To review and consider the following planning applications as submitted by Babergh District Council: to search for the application use this link:  
<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/application-search-and-comment>
  - DC/25/04820 – Householder application – erection of new side and rear extensions and pergola (following demolition of existing rear extension). Location: Brett Cottage, Ash Street – it was **resolved that the council had no comment to make on this application.**
- ii. To note the determination by Babergh District Council of the following planning application: none at time of serving.
- iii. To receive and consider the [Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Call for Sites 2025](#) and the [Babergh and Mid Suffolk Draft Five-Year Housing Land Supply Position](#) – both of these documents were noted and confirmed as having been received by those present.

## 9. Financial Report:

- i. To note receipt of the following monies since the last meeting: the meeting noted the following movement into the account:  
Babergh District Council – Precept (2): £2,000  
Contributions to Union Hill 40mph speed limit - £2,700
- ii. To consider and approve the following items for payment: it was **resolved that the following payments should be approved:**
  - Clerk's Hours to date – £638.60
  - SCC – Union Hill 40mph speed limit: £6,050.00
  - HM Revenue and Customs: (retrospective approval required): £81.40
  - LAC Masonry Ltd: (retrospective approval required): £2,460.00
- iii. To note the bank balances to date and consider the financial position as at 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025 – council noted the reconciled bank balance of £10,309.58.
- iv. To consider the budget to actual position as at November 2025 – the meeting noted the overspend for the budget as at November 2025 due, in the main, to works carried out on the bridge leading to Church Meadow. Whilst Locality Funds had been applied for, the sum being offered was unclear but council was hopeful of a contribution of £400. The overspend for this budget line (approx. £1,210) would be taken from the council's earmarked reserves for this project. Council noted the projected overspend at the year-end, acknowledging that earmarked reserves would be allocated to correct the position.
- v. To receive the final account for the A1141 speed limit change – (Union Hill (A1141) (40mph) Speed Limit and Revocation) – all noted that of those who had responded to the requests for financial contribution, only one had declined to support the project. As such it would be left to the parish council to cover the additional sum of £500. This was in addition to the £2,850 previously allocated from council's reserves. Council was made aware that the

financial contributions for the changes were as follows: Kersey PC £1,800; Letts Swim Pools £400; Semer PC £3,350 and anon £500. It was **resolved that the bill in the sum of £6,050 be released for payment.**

- vi. To consider and receive the 1<sup>st</sup> Draft of the budget for 2026-2027- it was **resolved that the council was minded to approve the budget for 2026-2027 in the sum of £4,714 to be funded from the precept £4,500, wayleave for Church Meadow £4.60 and reserves £209.40.** It was understood that given the indicative tax base of 68.96 (a decrease of 2.6% over that for 25-26), this would give the parish a potential Band D dwelling council tax element of £65.25. This would be an increase of £8.77 per annum or 15.53%. The figures would be approved at the January meeting once the tax base had been confirmed by Babergh District Council.

10. Councillor Reports:

- i. To receive urgent matters of concern:

- It was noted that work had been commissioned to a tree on parish council land. At this stage there were no further details but it was noted that the work had been carried out on health and safety grounds.

11. Correspondence:

- i. Consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk and Suffolk - all noted that the consultation had commenced effective 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and would last until 11<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Overview was given in regard to the statutory consultation which sought views on the proposals that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has received following the Secretary of State's invitation to councils in Norfolk and Suffolk to submit proposals for unitary local government for their areas – all were made aware of the consultation and encouraged to respond as interested parties. TO access the consultation use this link: [Local government reorganisation in Norfolk and Suffolk](#).
- ii. BMSDC – Town and Parish Updates – [to receive the monthly report for November 2025](#) – all confirmed receipt of the updates.
- iii. BMSDC – Local Government Reorganisation – the meeting noted the latest communication on this matter.
- iv. SCC – Local Government Reorganisation – the meeting noted the latest communication on this matter.
- v. SALC – Local Government Reorganisation and devolution – the meeting confirmed receipt of updates from the local county association
- vi. SALC – all confirmed receipt of the weekly bulletins as emailed to councillors for their perusal. Councillors noted that they should contact the Clerk if there are any items of interest / training courses they wish to attend.
- vii. To receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response – there were no such matters raised.

12. Date of next meeting: all noted the dates for future meetings being: 15 January 2026 (change of date) and 19 March 2026.

13. There being no further business to transact, the Chair closed the meeting at 19.48pm.

## Appendix A – Report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay

**Daily Hadleigh to Stowmarket Bus route** - I'm pleased that a timetable has now been drawn up for this proposed new service. Importantly, timing of this daily route is in line with ordinary working and college hours, rather than just for shopping. Hadleigh Community Transport, operator of the 461 and 462, does not want to take it on. Highways is in talks with the Transport Made Simple new owner of Konectbus (an East Anglian operator) to see if they are interested. If not, it will be put to tender.

**Local government reshuffle plan latest** - We await the minister's decision sometime next year on whether he will go for a single unitary council across the whole of Suffolk – as proposed by the Conservatives who currently control Suffolk County Council – or for three unitaries, as proposed by all five district and borough councils in the county – controlled by a mix of Greens, independents, Labour and LibDems.

The Government have said they will consult communities on the two options.

In terms of councillor numbers, the Conservatives are advocating that the current 350 odd councillors across Suffolk comes down to 140, while the districts are talking about a less drastic reduction to about 200.

Next May 2026 the county council elections (that were postponed from last year) are planned to be held. At the same time there will be a poll to elect a newly created Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk. That person will take office straight away. All five major political parties (bar, so far, Reform) have now chosen a candidate.

May 2027 – yet another election for “shadow” unitary councillors who will have a year to select a leader and a cabinet, find a headquarters, recruit staff etc before...

May 2028 – county council and districts are dissolved and the new unitaries start functioning.

**Local nature recovery strategy approved** - On 9 September, the council's Cabinet voted to approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was produced following a public consultation on the draft strategy between April and June this year. Most of the area mapped out for Suffolk's nature priorities is private farmland, and the strategy does not make improvement mandatory, but the officers who have produced the strategy will now work with landowners to support them and work to find investment for measures in the strategy. Landowners can use areas mapped in the strategy to produce 'units' of biodiversity for purchase by developers, as they will be required to meet the government's new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which state that all development should be increasing biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. The units of biodiversity do not need to be onsite or near the development.

Post May 2026, the new Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk will be in charge of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

**Predicted £20m needed from risk reserve to finance budget gap this year** - After the second quarter of the financial year, the council is predicting that it will overspend by £20.4m by the end of the 2025/26 financial year, which it will balance by taking money from its Risk Reserve.

Alongside this is a forecast that the council's interest cost will increase to £4.9m to cover a surge in its “dedicated schools grant” debt. The soaring cost of education, particularly special needs education, is no longer being met by schools grant the council gets from Government. The Government has promised to review the level of the grant. But in the meantime, in common with many other education authorities across the country, the council now has to borrow to make up the shortfall. The schools grant debt is forecast to rise by £70m to a total of £168m by year end.

Other cost pressures for the council include placements for children in care, care purchasing and mental health services in adult social care.

**Solar Together Scheme for 2025** - The Solar Together Suffolk scheme, which has so far installed 32,000 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households, is now open for registration for 2025. The scheme also includes battery storage and EV charge points. The scheme requires householders to register online, and pre-approved solar PV suppliers then take part in a 'reverse auction' to bid for the work. After this, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which they can choose to accept or not. Telephone and email helpdesks are available to support residents in making an informed decision. The scheme is run by Suffolk's councils in partnership with iChoosr, who have been working with UK councils on the Solar Together scheme since 2015. For more information and to register, visit <https://solartogether.co.uk/suffolk/home>

## Appendix B – Report from District Councillor Leigh Jamieson

**Semer Bridge funding** - I have forwarded on the locality funding form to the grants team. Unfortunately, I have had a lot of requests this year for money and with a limited budget of only £2000 across all eight parishes it has been spread thin. I have been waiting on someone who I had promised money to earlier in the year. If they drop out, I may be able to help with some more money. However, at the moment I can only spare £400.

**Listed Building Window improvements** - Babergh and Mid Suffolk have one of the highest numbers of listed properties in the country. Unfortunately, owners of these historic properties often find it difficult to heat them due to their poor energy performance. Very often the single glazed windows are a significant factor in this, and it leads to higher bills for owners and is costly for the environment. Historic England says retrofitting historic buildings will be fundamental to achieving net zero. Previously owners had to apply to the councils for Listed Building Consent to make upgrades. This could be time consuming and was not always successful. The Councils, working closely with Historic England, have now introduced a new Local Listed Building Consent Order – the first rural councils in the country to achieve this. Local Listed Building Consent Orders allow local planning authorities to make a pro-active and blanket grant of consent for listed buildings within a defined area.

It makes sensitive improvements quicker and easier:

- Secondary glazing on historic windows - Grade II listed buildings can now have secondary glazing installed on historic windows without needing consent from the council, subject to certain conditions.
- Replacement of windows in Grade II listed buildings with double glazing, or energy saving glass – Where original windows have already been replaced after receiving listed building consent, they can be replaced again, subject to conditions.
- Replacement of an existing window in a modern extension to a listed building - Windows in Grade II listed buildings can be replaced, or have secondary glazing installed, if they have previously received listed building consent, subject to conditions.

**Local Government Review** - The Council submitted its proposal for three unitary councils on the September cut off. The proposal was a Central and Eastern Unitary, an Ipswich and Southern unitary and a Western Unitary. Each council will be made up of 60-80 councillors. With three councils we will have three representatives on the mayoral board for Suffolk. We believe that three smaller councils will be able to provide specific joined up services for local communities while still saving a cumulative sum of up to £34m over 5 years.

**District Wide Governance Review** - At the last Babergh Full council meeting it was agreed that a community governance review will be undertaken to look at the following aspects of governance arrangements for existing parishes:

- to consider the names and styles of any existing parish council
- to consider the number of councillors to be elected to any existing parish council;
- and
- to consider any grouping arrangements.

The review, which has been requested by a number of parishes in the district, will not automatically mean there will be changes but it will examine whether there is a case for change. The CGR Working Group is not seeking a particular solution at this stage. It wishes to test views and assess what solutions are the right ones to pursue with each individual parish. As a parish council you should have received a request for submissions back in May, if you wanted to submit one. No submissions were required if you are happy with the status quo.

**Council Call For Sites** - In preparation for the Joint Local Plan review the council has begun a 'Call for Sites.' The Call for Sites, which began on the 20th of October runs until 5pm on 9 January 2026. This invites submissions of land to be put forward for consideration to be included in Local Plans - for uses such as housing, employment, sports and leisure and community purpose although no site put forward will automatically see development take place.

Each suggested site will be considered by planning teams before it is decided whether it goes forward as a proposed Local Plan site allocation. Decisions about preferred allocations will be based on a range of evidence and assessment, as well as through public engagement.

So signed and approved at the meeting of 19.03.2026

**Corks Lane** - The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and I - I am vice chair, have initiated an investigation into the Corks Lane development. Initially we have instigated a full review of everything that has happened from 2017 until now. We will then take this before the Overview and Scrutiny committee to ascertain which areas are of greatest concern. The plan is then to seek independent advice on these areas.