

## Semer Parish Council

### **Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 commencing at 7.00pm.**

In attendance: Councillors Richard Keens (Chair), Jackie Barraclough, John Lawrence, Steve Nuttall, James Pitcher and 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 – the Chair 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. There were no applicable apologies of 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 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 meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> May 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.**
5. Public Forum:
  - i. To receive a report from the County Councillor Robert Lindsay – Councillor Lindsay's written report was noted (*a copy of which can be seen at Appendix A*) and he provided commentary on items within the report:
    - Signs on A1141 progressing.
    - Daily bus between Hadleigh and Stowmarket – extension of current twice / thrice weekly service.
    - SCC Leaflet over Unitary / LGR – marketing exercise.
    - Speed limits – councils are being advised to write into the Portfolio Holder – Chris Chambers – to put the case for a whole country review of speed limits as opposed to merely concentrating on 30mph to 20mph.  
Following discussion on this point, it was agreed that the PC would write to the Portfolio Holder requesting that the criteria is reviewed to allow local communities to obtain the speed limits that are relevant to that community. The council would further communicate to Suffolk County Council that it would have liked the agreed revised speed limit to be extended but at present this was not achievable as the criteria is too onerous. It was confirmed that the council would like to see the criteria reviewed to allow communities to achieve locally representative speeds.
    - Upgrade to the materials recovery facility (MRF) at Great Blakenham.
    - Food waste to go to the anaerobic digestion plant at the Adnams Centre in Reydon/Southwold.
  - 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:  
NDP – withdrawal of funding.

Social Housing – above average in terms of complaints. Performance figures above average.  
Funding pot for improving businesses.

Tree for life.

Tour of Britian coming through the area – Stage 2 early September.

We are Group – free advice and help for those in fuel poverty.

Works to the bridge on Semer Meadow – the Chair had been in communication with Cllr. Jamieson and the Communities team at Babergh District Council regarding works to the bridge and whether funding was available from the district. Further information was required and would be submitted by the Chair the following day.

- 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. 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 advised that the posts have been installed onsite and that surface dressing works were due to take place on 7<sup>th</sup> August, at which time new signs will be erected. Then, approx. 10 days later, a team will return to sweep loose chippings from the carriageway and replace road markings and studs. All legal orders will be sealed in conjunction with these programme dates, meaning new restrictions will be enforceable immediately. It was noted that Semer PC would be the lead council for invoicing and the clerk would seek to recover the contributions from those who had confirmed that they were willing to assist financially. Once all monies had been collated, it was agreed that thanks should be publicise in the local area to all those who had contributed. The breakdown of funds was as follows: Kersey PC £1,800; Semer PC £2,850; local businesses ££1,400; County Cllr. Lindsay (Highways Budget) £6,000; totalling £12,050.

7. Statutory Business: none at time of serving.

8. Planning Matters:

- i. To note the determination of the following planning applications: none at time of serving.
- ii. To receive the letter from Babergh Mid Suffolk on Neighbourhood Planning following the withdrawal of Government funding for Neighbourhood Development Plan preparation – clerk provided an update
- iii. To consider the process to be following during the production of a Neighbourhood Plan including indicative costs and funding streams in the light of 9ii above.

9. 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 - £336.59.

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 July 2025 - £91.80 paid in July 2025.
- ii. To retrospectively approve the implementation of the Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2025 as per the Clerk’s contract. To note the impact on the budget for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 – the increase was approved with the impact being noted as negligible as a 5% increase had been built into the budget for the current year.

- iii. To note the bank balances to date and consider the financial position at 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025 – the bank balances, following a review of the statement versus the cashbook, were confirmed at £8,562.57.
- iv. To consider the budget to actual position as at 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025 – all noted the current position and anticipated rollout at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, taking into account the contributions and expenditure relating to the speed limits on the A1141.
- v. To consider the request from Roundabout Magazine for financial assistance in the form of an annual subscription to offset the costs of producing the magazine. Sum requested is £75.00 per annum – **it was resolved that the magazine should be supported and that the sum of £75 be accepted as an annual subscription.**

10. Councillor Reports:

11. Correspondence: to receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response –

- i. BMSDC – Town and Parish Updates – [to receive the monthly report for July 2025](#)
- ii. SALC – SALC AGM and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – to receive notes and recording of the meeting
- iii. BMSDC – Local Government Reorganisation – to note the latest communication on this matter
- iv. BMSDC –District-wide Governance Review 2025 – to note submission guidelines and timetable
- v. SALC – Local Government Reorganisation and devolution – to receive the update from the local county association
- vi. 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.
- vii. To receive and consider an email submitted by a member of the public concerning the field adjacent to Semer Church – the meeting considered the corresponded received. It was noted that the bee nest has been there for a number of years and was regularly checked. 40 species of wildflowers had previously been identified in the field. It was noted that the main field was cut to ensure that it is accessible for those who wish to use the field. Currently a farmer cuts the field and keeps the hay. It was agreed that the conditions of the original gift of the field be interrogated prior to a decision being taken as to future management of the field.  
The meeting discussed the report of invasive Himalayan Balsam along the stream next to the churchyard. All were made aware that the best treatment would be to cut it before it seeds. If it needs to be disposed of, it must be done in a controlled manner by a licensed operator. It was agreed that the original title deeds would be interrogated as to the exact extent of the parish council land.
- viii. To receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response – there were no further matters coming forth for noting.

12. Date of next meeting: all noted the dates for future meetings being: 20 November 2025; 22 January 2026; 19 March 2026.

13. There being no further business to transact, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.20pm.

Appendix A – Report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay

**40mph signs due to go up on A1141 later this month** - As you are probably aware, the signs for the 40mph scheme are due to go up early in August to coincide with surface treatment of the road. Inclement weather may delay it however.

**Daily Hadleigh to Stowmarket Bus bid successful** - I'm pleased to say that bids from parish councils along the route from Hadleigh to Stowmarket for a daily bus service have been successful and allocated funding. It looks as though Hadleigh Community Transport will use the funding to extend its existing service operated by two routes between the two towns. I hope the new services will be at peak hours morning and evening so that people can get to the mainline train station in Stowmarket in time to get to London, Cambridge etc or to college. However, getting through the service underway may take some time as it appears the bus team at the county is understaffed. A shame since buses ought to be a priority in my view.

**Leaflets promoting Conservatives' "one Suffolk" funded by council taxpayers** - The Conservatives who control Suffolk County Council are estimated to have so far spent more than £100,000 of council tax payers' money on selling their proposal for a single Suffolk mega unitary and attacking the district councils' rival proposals for three unitaries. Half of this is estimated to have gone on a social media campaign and the other half through the costs of delivering a leaflet to every household.

Despite requests, the council administration has not said how much it has spent nor how much it intends to spend but at a recent cabinet meeting, the Conservative administration of Suffolk took £1.9m from reserves to put in a pot to fund preparation for unitaries and the Norfolk/Suffolk mayor. The power to decide exactly how much was spent on what was delegated to the council leader Matthew Hicks and the chief executive.

Of the £1.9m they estimated that £550k would be needed to cover the extra staff time needed to get their business case for one unitary for Suffolk before the minister in September. It now appears that much of this spending is on propaganda attacking the vision of their political rivals who run the five districts and borough councils in Suffolk. The Conservative's argument is purely about cost savings, while the districts' is primarily about having local government as close as possible to the people – which can also lead to cost savings.

**Speed limits** - At full council on Thursday 10 July, I seconded a motion, proposed by a LibDem colleague, to make it easier to obtain lower speed limits where the community supports one, but this was rejected by the Conservative administration on the grounds that they were already planning to do this. They said they would produce a report for cabinet's decision "in the autumn". They are focusing on 30mph to 20mph rather than 60mph to lower limits which my group feels should be reviewed as well. I would hope that they are serious about removing hurdles because the administration and Highways' attitude has, up to now, been to put obstacles in the way of communities rather than remove them. For any community wanting lower limits, now would be a good time to let the administration know that you support making the criteria easier. I can provide a template letter asking for this if you are interested.

**£10-£12m Upgrade to Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Great Blakenham** - The Cabinet on Tuesday 15 July, decided to invest £5.9m that they had received from Government, collected from packaging producers, into updating the recycling centre at Great Blakenham so that it can handle more glass and food waste. This covers about half the estimated full cost of £10m to £12m that the site operator Biffa will have to invest. It means that Biffa will charge the county less for each tonne of waste they handle. The county is not investing the full amount, since it has only been given £6.9m from Government for this financial year.

**Preparing for fires** -

- Following the heatwave in summer 2022, Suffolk Fire and Rescue invested in new adapters to help them fight wildfires on farmland. These adapters enable fire engines to connect to a farm's water bowsers and tanks once the onboard water has been used up. The adapters are currently being trialled out of fire stations in Ipswich East, Princes Street Ipswich, Haverhill, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket and Lowestoft.
- The fire service is also keen that people download the What3Words app, as this makes it easy for the control room and crews to locate fires that are in the middle of the countryside with no landmarks or road names. It uses GPS so you don't need to have a mobile phone signal or data for it to work.

Appendix B - Report from District Councillor Leigh Jamieson

**Neighbourhood Plan funding** - Last month's announcement that all funding and support for the development of neighbourhood plans would cease immediately came as a shock to the council. The announcement came from the government following the spending review. While the ending of support was a possibility it was assumed that if it happened, it would be a staggered withdrawal. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Babergh District Council voted unanimously at the recent Council meeting to write to Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner – Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and James Cartledge. The letter is to state their concerns over Government plans to modernise planning committees as part of their current

So approved and signed at the meeting of 20.11.2025

Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Proposals within the bill include a national scheme of delegation for planning decisions, designed to reduce the role of planning committees by restricting the type and numbers of applications heard by committees in future.

This is to remove perceived obstacles to development and housebuilding, increasing the number of decisions made by officers rather than committees – despite only a fraction of planning applications being heard by committee.

**Social Housing improvements** - The councils housing team have turned the tide for tenants, transforming the service they provide and promising further improvements, with the launch of their new ‘repairs pledges.’ The teams have worked tirelessly to address the issues which led the councils having to self-refer to the Social Housing Regulator in 2023. Now, tenant satisfaction is on the rise, with a corresponding drop in complaints, currently putting Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils above last year’s average performance figures for local authority landlords nationwide. The councils have carried out a comprehensive review and transformation of its building services: restructuring its repairs and maintenance service, asset, and compliance service, and reviewing its processes, policies and how they engage with tenants, including the introduction of a new Complaint Task Force and resident liaison officers. Having been satisfied by the changes made and embedded in the service, the Regulator lifted the Regulatory Notice that had been imposed on the councils.

**Leadership Change at Council** - Back in 2023 when the coalition administration was put together, we agreed that the leadership of the council would be rotated. At the recent AGM Independent Councillor John Ward took up the reign for the coming year. As well as on housing, over the last two years the council has worked closely with communities to address new government housebuilding requirements, established a new nature reserve at Sproughton, worked to improve the energy efficiency of listed buildings, and have looked to simplify funding for community groups. However, ensuring the financial stability of the council remains a top priority.

**Funding Pot For improving businesses** - The Rural Business Growth Fund has been set up to offer capital grants of up to £10,000 to projects which focus on sustainability, diversification and improving the local tourism and visitor economy.

In order to receive a grant, projects must meet one of the following priorities:

- Investment in net zero infrastructure
- Investment and diversification at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Farm diversification outside of agriculture
- Visitor economy business expansion

The total value of the fund stands at £178,922 available for businesses in Babergh.

Grants of up to £15,000 can also be agreed for projects which strongly support the net zero infrastructure or farm diversification priorities. The fund intervention funding rate will be 50% of the total project costs up to the maximum grant amount which means the project must be match funded at 50%. Payments are made at the end of the process, so the project will need to be fully funded before any reimbursements are made. Full details of the fund can be found at the Heart Of Suffolk Website.

**Tree For Life** - Once again, the councils ‘tree for life’ scheme is open to parents who have welcomed, or are due to welcome, a child into their families this year. The initiative, which runs every year, gives parents the opportunity to mark their child’s arrival by planting a fruit tree, which can then grow alongside them. There is also the chance for families, who have sadly lost a child to apply for a memory tree as part of the scheme. Since its inception, the councils have given out well over two thousand trees.

**Tour Of Britain** - It has been announced that the second stage of the race will travel through Babergh and Mid Suffolk for the third consecutive year. The stage will start and finish in Stowmarket, travelling through both districts on route. This follows the first stage which takes place in East Suffolk. Having two stages in the county is a first for Suffolk.

**Resident Support** - I have recently had discussions with ‘We Are Group.’ This is an organisation set up by UK Power Networks to deliver a range of free, high-quality advice services to help individuals and families struggling with fuel poverty.

Their support includes:

- Income maximisation and help to reduce household bills.
- Energy use guidance, including time-of-use tariffs.
- Smart meter support
- Scam awareness and protection.
- Debt advice
- Water efficiency guidance
- Free winter warm packs...and more

Everyone who connects with them receives a personalised, one-to-one appointment to tailor the advice specifically to their situation — ensuring practical, compassionate, and actionable help. Everything seems legitimate and genuine, and I will be sharing more info with the Parish Council when I get it.