Semer Parish Council Annual Council Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held at Semer Village Hall on Thursday 28th May 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. Election of Chair – to elect a Chair for the year 2026-2027 and to receive the signed Declaration of Acceptance of Office – having accepted his nomination, the meeting resolved to elect Cllr. Nuttall as the Chair for the coming year.

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

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

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 applicable interests declared.
   ii. To receive notification of gifts or hospitality exceeding £50 – there were no gifts or hospitality to declare.

5. Minutes of meetings:
   i. To approve the minutes of the following meetings and to give authority to the Chair to sign the minutes in accordance with legislation:
      - 19th March 2026

      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.**

6. 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:
      - New ward – increase in size, population of around 9,000; 21 parish councils (30+ hamlets).
      - Results of County Council elections.
      - Spokesperson for Highways and Transport
      - Potential JR being launched against the government's decision to impose three unitary councils in Suffolk.
      - Strategic powers to be given to the mayor to drive the government's programme of growth.

- Connect 51 Bus – daily service between Hadleigh and Stowmarket – 2 stops in Semer - 1 at the Bridge and the other at Semer Lodge.
- Closure of Bildeston High Street – agreement has been reached for the use of the hard ground of the old garage to the south of the village for those that wish to park up and walk up to the High Street for business, Doctors Surgery; Primary School.
- Aware that previously, the council had pushed for a lower speed limit along Lower Ash Street – 20mph as opposed to 30mph.

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:

- New bin system commences 1st June 2026
- Box Vale will be the new ward for the elections in 2027.
- New unitary for Semer – West Suffolk - 65 councillors – council office assumed to be Bury St Edmunds
- Car Park charges at the Babergh Scrutiny Committee Meeting the question was asked as to whether businesses could reimburse their customers for their car park charges. This will be considered further by the District Council.
- Housing stock – still a priority for the district.
- Out of special measures in terms of housing renovations etc.
- NDP – some funding for those who want to proceed with a NDP - £20k per plan whether signally and as a group of parishes.
- Listed Building consent order now in place
- CIL – developers requirement to pay the levy
- Corks Lane – independent review being undertaken into the funding for the development.

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

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

8. Statutory Business:
   i. Co-option of Councillor – to note that Councillor Ross had signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. All were advised that Councillor Ross has signed his declaration of acceptance of office prior to the meeting.
   ii. To agree the annual subscriptions for the year ending 31st March 2026: County Association membership fee and data protection fee – all agreed that the two subscriptions should be approved and payment made once they became due.

9. Planning:
   i. review and consider the following planning applications as submitted by Babergh District Council: none were received at the time of serving.

ii. To note the determination by Babergh District Council of the following planning application:
- DC/26/00693 – Discharge of conditions for DC/25/04820 – condition 4 (Wildlife Enhancement Strategy). Location Brett Cottage, Ash Street.
- DC/25/03742 – Planning permission for the erection of 4 no. detached dwellings together with demolition of a derelict barn, creation of a new access, and realignment of the A1141 boundary, following extant permission B/89/01868. Location 1 – 4 Gate Farm Cottages, Sayers Green.
- DC/26/01836 – Non-material amendment relating to DC/25/04820 – approval for changes to the rear and side fenestrations that were indicated to be painted timber are proposed to instead be critical style aluminium units. Also, inclusion of a small canopy torof over the external door leading into the utility/boot room. Location: Brett Cottage, Ash Street.

10. Financial Report:
    i. To consider and approve the following items for payment: it was resolved that the following
        - Clerk's Hours to date – £390.15
        - SALC – Membership Fee - £107.58
        - Trevor Brown – Audit Fee - £200.00
    ii. To approve the following retrospective payments:
        - HMRC – PAYE due to 5th April 2026 £179.80
        - ICO – Data Controller Fee - £47.00
    iii. To note the receipt of the following items:
        - Parish Precept – 2026-2027 – Part 1 - £2,250.00
    iv. To note the bank balances to date and consider the financial position as at 28th May 2025 - reconciled £4,641.93.
    v. To review and approve the renewal insurance for the year 2025-2026 in the sum of £215.20 – having review the documentation received, council **resolved that the premium was acceptable and that the insurance should be renewed with the current provider**.

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 31st March 2026 – the report was received and the commentary noted. Council **resolved to adopt the report and thanks were given to the Clerk for the work undertaken to achieve the result.**
    ii. To consider and decide the actions to be taken following the recommendations arising from the Internal Annual Report – there were none raised and as such a formal action plan was not required.
    iii. To receive and approve the Payments and Receipts Accounts for the year to 31st March 2026 – it was **resolved to accept the accounts for the year ending 31st March 2026** which were summarised as follows:

Opening Balance 01.04.25	£7,729.15
Receipts	£7,206.60
Expenditure	£12,317.02
Closing Balance 31.03.26	£2,618.73

iv. To receive the Bank Reconciliation of the year ending 31st March 2026 – the closing bank balance of £2,618.73 was verified against the bank statement and cashbook for the same date.
v. To consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-2026 as per Section 1 of the AGAR - the meeting **resolved that having reviewed the statements, all could be answered in the affirmative.** The Chair and Clerk were given approval to sign Section 1.
vi. To consider and approve the Accounting Statement for 2025-2026 as per Section 2 of the AGAR – the accounting statements were received with Council **resolving to accept them as reflecting the council's overall financial position.** The Chair was given approval to sign Section 2 of the AGAR.
vii. 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.
viii. Should Agenda Item 11vii be so approved, to delegate authority to the Chair to sign the Certificate of Exemption for 2025-2026 - 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 1st July.
ix. 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 31st March 2026 –the meeting noted the dates set by the RFO which were confirmed as Wednesday 3rd June until Tuesday 14th July 2026.

12. Councillor Reports:
    i. To receive urgent matters of concern – there were none forthcoming.

13. Correspondence:
    i. To note the Cycle Club Sudbury Hill Climb event, Watsons Hill – Sunday 4th October – council to consider whether it has any comments on the proposal to close the road for the event – yes whether dependent and a donation would be appreciated.
    ii. BMSDC – Town and Parish Updates – all confirmed receipt of the monthly reports for March through to May 2026.
    iii. BMSDC – NSIP and large-scale energy projects – all confirmed receipt of the updates from BMSDC.

iv. Local Government Reorganisation – all noted the latest communications on this matter
v. SALC – it was confirmed that all weekly bulletins were 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. Letter from resident requesting permission to run the clear waste wate from a septic tank into the ditch next to Church Meadow – it was agreed that permission could be granted if this was to be from a sewage treatment plant. Discussion followed as to how this would be achieved as the ditch was across the road. It was stated that it would be pipe under the road and that work had already begun on this project.
vii. To receive matters of interest not requiring a direct response – there were none to be brought to the council's attention.

14. Date of next meeting: all agreed the following dates for futures meetings: 6th August; 26th November; 21st January 2027 and 11th March 2027.

15. Closure of Meeting: there being no further business to transact, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.33pm.

Appendix A – County Councillor Report

County Election and the new Cosford - I am pleased to have been re-elected as your county councillor for Cosford. The division has now become larger. I had been representing 18 villages, but four villages to the East were taken out of it, while seven other villages, including Boxford, Little Waldingfield and Alpheton, have been added, making a total of 21.From the northermost hamlet, Cross Green in Cockfield, to the southernmost, Hagmore Green, Boxford, the new division is about 15 miles long and 10 miles wide at its widest part. I think I'd better say from the outset that given the large number of parish councils, attendance at every one of them will be impossible, especially given that many meetings occur at the same time. I do aim to focus on meeting the parish councillors of the seven villages that are new to me to start with so that we can get to know and trust each other in the two short years the county council has left of its existence.
The new county council - The elections cut the Conservative councillor numbers down from 55 to just nine with Reform winning 41 out of 70 seats, enough to form an administration on their own. Greens increased seats from nine to 13 – making us the official opposition - while LibDem and Labour seat numbers were roughly halved. Reform 41; Green 13; Conservative 9; LD 2; Labour 2; Independent 2
At this stage it is not clear what Reform's policies are on county council matters. There are press reports that the chairman of Ipswich Reform Party has banned its new councillors in Ipswich from talking to the press. Michael Hadwen, Reform councillor for Felixstowe was elected leader of the group and of the council at our first full council meeting on Thursday 21st May.
I and my fellow Green councillors will do our best to hold the Reform administration to account for its two year term. I have been made opposition spokesperson for Highways and Transport. At the first meeting, in response to a Labour motion calling for the building of an Ipswich northern bypass, the administration agreed to refer a review of all possible actions to tackling Ipswich congestion to the cabinet.

Question mark over unitaries - As you probably know, the Government decided recently to opt for creating three new unitary councils across Suffolk in May 2028, to replace the existing district and county councils. I felt this was the best outcome of the two options available, as councils are better able to serve their residents if they are nearer to them. Reform's new leader has said he does not like this decision and will seek a judicial review. My feeling is that the Government have followed due process in making their decision – whether or not one likes the outcome. I would have preferred it if the new county administration was prepared to work with the district councils towards preparing for three unitaries as so that they are as effective as possible for residents when they start in two years' time. Residents will not be best served by more uncertainty.

Two more elections in next two years - 2027, 2028 - If the Government does stick to its plan, in a year's time, in May 2027, there will be elections of "shadow" unitary councillors – in our area for the new unitary of West Suffolk. Those elected will not actually be representing residents until the unitaries are legally created with full staff in May 2028. Alongside this, the Government is creating the office of a Norfolk and Suffolk Mayor, elected by all the voters in the two counties. That election is scheduled to happen in May 2028 and the mayor will take office straight away. Again, nobody knows at this stage whether the new administrations at Norfolk and Suffolk will co-operate with Government on this or try to stymie the plan for a Mayor.

51 bus Hadleigh to Stowmarket - I'm delighted that the new bus 51 is up and running after two years pushing for it. It is a "hail a ride" licence so residents from Semer can hail it on the main road. The detailed stops on Konect's website have one at Semer Lodge and one at Semer Bridge. I'd be grateful if this could be publicised in the village. The only thing that will guarantee its continued subsidy, is continued use. I will send a pdf timetable in the email that this report is attached to.

Lower speed limits on A1141 - I am pleased that the 60mph to 40mph change got implemented before the end of my term of office. I appreciate the work done by Semer and Kersey parish councils to draw together community contributions alongside the contribution from my locality budget to this important safety measure for residents of both parishes.

Five month closure Bildeston High Street -Unfortunately, the replacement of the water main on Bildeston High Street will mean its closure of different stretches over the five months between start in mid-June to end in mid-November. Anglian Water are held an open day to explain the scheme and answer questions on April 14th. The surgery will still be accessible by car throughout, from one direction or another at any one time. And all businesses will be open to pedestrian access. Parking has been arranged at the former Taylors Garage site at the south part of the village. Konect, the county council and Anglian Water are in talks about what they will do about the 51 bus route during this closure, because the necessary diversions will mess up the timetable. Anglian Water can be contacted about this closure on 03457 919 155 or email MLcustomers@anglianwater.co.uk

Climate emergency Zero Carbon - Financial Savings - In January 2026, the annual Net Zero Carbon Budget report was brought to Cabinet to assess the progress of the council towards its carbon reduction goals. The work has so far provided £4.8m of savings by reducing electricity and gas use, which has been crucial for the council's financial survival. Savings include changes to heating controls in Endeavour House in January and February 2025 where gas use was reduced by over 42% without impacting electricity use, reducing energy costs for the council by £30k each year, and a car park solar array established at Beacon House with batteries to capture excess power for use in the building, this is expected to save more than £50k a year.

New 20mph Policy - In January the former Conservative administration approved a new policy to make it a bit easier to get 20mph speed limits. From now on, any application for a new 20mph limit in an area where recorded average traffic speeds are 28mph and under is likely to be approved by the council. The local county councillor must also be in favour of the change, and there should be majority support from residents. However the county is still not providing any funding for the changes, which require expensive consultation. In April, they approved in principal 20mph limits on the three roads that surround Great Green, Cockfield, purely from surveys they did that showed the average speed was fractionally below 28mph. So, it appears they are sticking to their policy. However, the policy of the new Reform administration is yet to be clarified.

Appendix B – District Councillor Report

Simpler Recycling - Following on from the last Conservative government's decision to pass legislation for a weekly food waste collection and extra recycling collections, the waste collection process will change next week. The three weekly collection cycle has general waste collected one week and then two weeks of recycling collection. Food waste will be collected every week.

· a weekly food waste collection
· a three-weekly refuse (general rubbish) collection
· a three-weekly paper and card collection
· a three-weekly recycling collection for glass, plastics, metal, and cartons

The new green lidded bins and the food waste bins are being distributed, and you should have received them by now, along with documentation detailing what goes in what bin and the cycle of collection in this area.

Below is an example of the new three-weekly collection schedule:

Collection	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Food Waste			
Refuse general rubbish			
Paper and Card			
Recycling glass, plastics, metal and cartons			

If anyone is still missing bins call 0300 1234 000 (Option 4) in the first place. If that proves unsuccessful, please let me know.

Local Government Review - The final decision on Unitary structure was agreed by the government in March when the government confirmed that they want to go ahead with the three unitary proposal. This will mean that from 2028 the services in Suffolk will be run by three separate councils, one covering Eastern Suffolk, one covering the Western side and the third covering Ipswich and Southern Suffolk.

Semer will be in the Western Suffolk unitary. A provisional warding map has now been produced and is visible here. Semer will come under a ward called Box Vale along with Chelsworth, Kersey, Edwardstone, Groton, Milden, Lindsey, Monks Eleigh, Brent Eleigh, and Newton, among others.

Details of what each Unitary will consist of are - Central and East Suffolk Council will have 65 councillors and 51 wards (the 14 largest wards will be served by 2 councillors)

Ipswich and South Suffolk will have 64 councillors and 40 wards (the 24 largest wards will be served by 2 councillors)

West Suffolk Council will have 66 councillors and 50 wards (the 16 largest wards will be served by 2 councillors).

Housing improvements - Since 2023 improving our housing stock has been a priority. Huge steps have been taken to get on top of the problems our tenants face and it was a great relief this year when the council came out of special measures. The government is now happy that we are meeting the required compliance targets, although there is still a lot of work to do elsewhere. In addition to this success the council has now completed over 80% of its stock check, which was something that the cabinet pushed for from day one. The state of our homes had always been assumed, and we insisted that a quality check would be needed urgently to understand what needs to be done. It has also been reiterated, by the leader of the council that improving our council housing stock is still one of the key priorities for the last two years of the council.

Car Parking Charges - Unfortunately, it was agreed that car parking charges across the district would need to increase by 20%. An independent report was commissioned by the council to review the effects of the car park charges implemented last year. The report, completed by the University of Suffolk, identified that while car park usage had declined, footfall and dwell time had remained fairly consistent, while spend had increased.

Income from the car parks for the first year was £888.622, £11,072 ahead of the model predictions. However, due to the councils ongoing financial difficulties and with the data showing that charges have had little to no effect on visiting numbers the cabinet have agreed to raise charges.

At last week's Overview & Scrutiny meeting a scheme was suggested where local shops could refund the parking charge when a customer buys something in their shop. Whether this is viable or not is

unknown, but the council will investigate the possibility with local businesses. The increases came into effect w/c 18th May.

Neighbourhood Plans - Until last year, local community groups developing a plan could access financial and technical support from the government, with basic grant payments of £10,000. However, in June last year the government withdrew this facility, and many parishes had to abandon their plans.
Now Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have agreed alternative funding of up to £20,000 to support groups preparing Neighbourhood Plans which help to meet housing need in the area. The grants will support plans which seek to allocate sites for housing development, which make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing needs.

Listed Building Window improvements - In the Autumn Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils finally made a small step towards helping owners with listed buildings. Improving the energy efficiency of listed properties was a key council policy dating back to May 2023. Previously homeowners had to submit a planning application to the councils for Listed Building Consent to make upgrades to windows. This could be time consuming and was not always successful. The Councils were finally successful, last year, in introducing 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.

Failure to pay community levy could cost developer - Babergh District Council took court action after TTV Industrial Ltd failed to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on a housing development in Old London Road, Copdock. As mentioned above CIL money is invested in helping local facilities keep pace with housing growth. TTV Industrial Ltd, based in Old London Road, Copdock, had planning permission to build seven homes on the site, and work on the first three of these started in 2020. As a result, the business was served a Liability Notice for the required CIL payment relating to the three homes. It later argued, however, that this notice had not been served, while also claiming the homes were exempt because they were self-build. Babergh District Council's attempts to resolve the matter were unsuccessful, and the business incorrectly maintained no CIL payments were due. As a result, the council applied to magistrates' court for a Liability Order under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. After a hearing at Norwich Magistrates' Court, District Judge Bone has ordered TTV Industrial Ltd to pay the total CIL liability of £105,475, statutory late payment interest of £31,623, and the council's legal costs of £9,880.

Charity donation - Throughout the past year the council Chair has hosted a number of events to raise money for the charity Compassion which provides support to victims of domestic abuse, both current and historic. Thanks to the generosity of those who attended the events, £4,125 was raised for the charity and the Chair recently presented a cheque to the charity.

Citizens Advice Funding - Through the councils' Community Development Fund, Sudbury & South Suffolk Citizens Advice has been awarded £103,000, while Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice has received £129,265. These local Citizens Advice branches are recognised as key strategic partners of the councils and, by receiving these crucial funds, they can continue to provide residents with free and essential guidance on everything from housing and debt to benefits and wellbeing support.