

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ONEHOUSE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
MONDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 7.30 P.M. IN TRINITY HALL

Present: Cllrs Copping (Chair), Corker, Crissell, Goodwin, Nutman and Roberts

In attendance: County Cllr Otton (in part), District Cllr Matthissen (in part), Mrs Swansborough, Clerk and 1 member of the public.

1. Apologies for absence. Apologies previously received and accepted for Cllr Boulter.

2. To confirm and approve the minutes of the meetings on 12 January 2026. These were approved.

3. To receive members Declarations of Interest on agenda items and to consider any dispensation requests. There were none.

4. Public comment. There was none.

5. Report from County Cllr Otton:

Local elections in May 2026 postponed: At council on Monday 12 January, a debate was held in the morning about the resource implications of an election in May on the delivery of Local Government Reorganization in Suffolk. The administration unanimously voted down an amendment proposed by another group that the council was in favour of the elections going ahead, although we spoke passionately about the importance of Suffolk voters getting to have their say. A Cabinet meeting was held following the council debate, where the administration voted unanimously to write to the government outlining capacity concerns that might be felt if elections were to go ahead. On 22 January, the government announced that the elections in Suffolk, and in 28 other councils around the country, would not take place in May this year. The elections were postponed already in May 2025, so this second postponement means county councillors will be serving a seven-year term instead of four years. As part of the Local Government Reorganization process, unitary councils are due to be in place in the county from April 2028. We are still waiting to hear from the government how many there will be.

Flooding; once again a problem in many areas, including Combs lane and lower road.

Combs Lane; following numerous emails about the severe pothole work is now again planned

White lines Star House Lane/ Forest Road; have again asked when this will be done.

Forest Road Footpath; apparently this is now with solicitors/ landowner

Council budget 2026-27: At Cabinet on Tuesday 27 January, the budget for the 2026-27 financial year was presented for approval. The council is planning to raise council tax by the maximum 4.99% this year, reflecting the serious financial concerns it is facing. The budget for 2026-27 is forecast to overspend by £5.9m and the council will need to draw that from its reserves to balance the books. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing in adult social care, high-cost social care placements for children and young people and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Regarding SEND, the council holds a 'negative reserve', a debt of education funding under the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that the government allows it to hold until 31 March 2028. There are

also concerns about the amount of money the Local Government Reorganisation will cost the council. This is currently estimated as £47.8m overall, but will be divided between all Suffolk councils.

Net Zero Carbon Report: Also, at Cabinet on Tuesday 27 January was the annual report on the council's efforts to reach net zero carbon by 2030. In view of the Local Government Reorganisation and Suffolk County Council not existing past 2028, the target has been adjusted to a 63% reduction in emissions by 2027-28 and will only include scopes of emissions that the council is in direct control of – that is, excluding things like its supply chain, or staff commuting to work. The work undertaken so far for the net zero programme has saved the council many thousands of pounds, for example changes to the heating controls in Endeavour House should reduce energy costs by £30k each year, and a new car park solar array and battery storage at Beacon House is expect to save more than £50k a year. The council is also involved in a heat network project in Ipswich to heat large buildings using energy from the River Gipping.

Suffolk Roads Rated Red by UK Government: The government recently released RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings for each county based on how effectively they use the government's highways maintenance funding. Suffolk's road maintenance was rated as Red, the worst category. This has struck a chord with residents in the county, who have been clear that they agree and want the quality of Suffolk's roads to improve. Suffolk County Council's administration, however, has denied that the rating is accurate, saying that overall the condition of Suffolk's roads is rated Amber, with the overall Red rating being arrived at because the Department for Transport did not include in its assessment £10m of highways funding that it brought forward from the 2025-26 financial year and invested early in a resurfacing programme in 2024-25. The council has met with the Department for Transport to press for the Suffolk rating to be raised to Amber, pointing out that Department for Transport data shows that only 3% of the county's A roads is in poor condition, which is better than the England average. In addition, in December the council received £2.9m from the Department for Transport's Incentive Fund, which rewards authorities with a record of good performance in highway maintenance.

New 20mph Policy: At Cabinet on Friday 9 January, a new 20mph speed limit policy was approved with the aim of making the process for communities to apply for a 20mph speed limit easier and more streamlined. 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. My group pointed out that the new requirement to prove majority support for the new speed limit was likely to make the process more onerous for town and parish councils rather than less. The council states that local engagement needs to be carried in the community, for example a survey or consultation of residents living on the roads/in the area. Any new 20mph limits will also still need local funding to be in place, unless the scheme aligns with a council programme as part of the Local Transport Plan. The new policy is based on recording speeds as follows:

Below 28mph – likely to be accepted, with a speed limit sign only, although signs warning that a 20mph zone is ahead may be required

Between 28 - 32mph - unlikely to be acceptable with signing alone. Gateway signing and traffic calming throughout the area may be required

Above 32mph - Unlikely to be acceptable without extensive traffic calming

measures such as road humps, plus night-time lighting. It would also be subject to a Road Safety Audit. County Cllr Otton encouraged Councillors to review this policy.

6. Report from District Cllr Matthissen:

Devolution and local government reform – election cancellation: The County Council elections planned for May 2026 have been cancelled and we can assume there will never be any further County Council elections. So as predicted we have ended up in a position where the biggest change in local government in a generation will all be implemented with virtually no public involvement and with all elections over the period cancelled.

Better Recycling update: A leaflet explaining the changes to waste collection will be delivered to all homes in Mid Suffolk. More items such as tetra-pak, plastic bags and film will be able to be recycled and there will be a weekly food waste collection too. Residents will begin to receive their new bins over the coming months ready for the new collections to start in June 2026.

Local Plan Land Bids Map: Following calls for sites in 2024 and 2025, Mid Suffolk is publishing a map showing all the land put forward by owners for potential development up to 2044. This is part of work on a new Local Plan for Mid Suffolk and Babergh. It is important to understand that these bids will be considered as to suitability and then sieved to allocate more suitable ones, sufficient to provide for the total number required by Government between 2024 and 2044. There will be several rounds of consultation before this is finalised as part of the new Local Plan. All potential sites from the 2024 call have now been identified but the sites proposed from the 2025 call are still being assessed. Details of all suitable sites will be published in the spring.

Proposed Quietway designation and improvement: This proposal to improve the National Cycle Route between Stowmarket and Woolpit has been put forward by the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) with 2 recent public workshops in Onehouse and Woolpit. While the initial suggestions and comments are considered, further views and ideas can be put forward via the website. Unfortunately, the scope cannot be extended to consider the call for other routes such as in Combs at this time.

Community Nature Recovery Grants: The New Community Nature recovery grants were launched earlier this year. Community groups are able to apply for grants up to £50,000 for projects such as expanding wildlife corridors, tree planting, creating wildflower meadow and other environmental initiatives to safeguard natural spaces for future generations. More details of the grants can be found on the website.

Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant: Focussed on river catchments, addressing biodiversity loss, flooding, water quality and community engagement. This grant will support nature-based solutions, land purchases or other activities and projects in support of these goals.

Locality Awards: The Locality Award is an annual grant that allows each District Councillor to support local projects and organisations. The fund is expected to re-open in spring for 2026/27,

Other Council grants: A range of other District Council grants are open for applications, including:

- **Sports Infrastructure Fund** – up to £250,000
- **Town Centre Shop-front fund** – up to £10,000 for projects to improve shop fronts

- **Asset Fund** – up to £100,000 to buy community assets to run as social enterprises

7 Planning Matters

a) To discuss and make recommendation to MSDC on any applications received prior to this meeting. There were none.

b) To receive MSDC decisions on previously considered applications. There were none.

8. Finances

To ratify the following payment:

- a) £677.51- Mrs V Swansborough, January 26 Clerk's Salary
- b) £10.13– NEST, Clerk Jan 26 pension direct debit

These payments were unanimously ratified.

To approve payment of the following invoices.

- c) £341.00– Gipping Press, Jan 26 OHSMag Printing
- d) £459.65 – Scribe. Accounts software annual renewal
- e) £190.00 – Suffolk Cloud, Hosting for 1/2/25-31/1/27 & accessibility report
- f) £114.99- Mrs J Copping. Reimbursement for McAfee renewal 26/27
- g) £13.31-David Nicholson, Fuel for equipment at Paupers Grave

Items c) to g) were unanimously approved.

To approve the following donations

- h) £220.00 Suffolk Accident Rescue Service
- i) £400.00 East Anglian Air Ambulance
- j) £110.00 East Suffolk Headway
- k) £770.00 Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau

Items h) to j) are under Section 137 and item k) under Section 142. All were unanimously approved.

- l) Any additional invoices received since agenda produced:
 - £180.00 – LR Chaplin T/a Greener Gardens, Playing field ground maintenance
 - £39.60 SALC, Councillor Training D Roberts

Items under l) were unanimously approved.

- m) To receive monthly financial report from the Clerk, including review of bank account statements:

At the end of January, the current account was £1,812.46cr and the instant access savings account was £32,549.73cr, giving a total of £34,362.19cr. OHSMag advertising receipts of £241.00 and receipt of crowd funding balance of £175.46 have been received since, and the direct debit to NEST for the Clerks pension of £10.13 has been paid out. Leaving £2,218.75cr in the current account. Payments for this month total £2,838.55. A transfer of £2,500 from the instant access savings account to the current account has been set up leaving corrected balances of £1,880.20cr on the current account and £30,049.73cr on the savings account – total funds £31,929.93cr.

OHSMag advertising invoices are now all paid except one which is for £110. Clerk continues to chase.

Councillor Crissell reviewed the end of January bank reconciliation and bank account statements and confirmed all was in order.

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9. To appoint an independent internal auditor for accounts at year end 31 March 2026. The clerk had obtained 2 quotes. One from last year's auditor of

£245.00 plus carrier charges of £40 and one from a more local auditor (Tania Jones) who charges £70.00 per hour. Whilst this could be more expensive it is likely to be a similar and is more local removing the need for carrier costs. It was proposed, seconded and carried that Tania Jones be appointed.

Action: Clerk

10. To discuss bank savings accounts, consider opening an additional account, and take any necessary action. The interest rate on the instant access savings account will reduce to 1.95% from 23/3/26. As the precept is increased for 2025/26 and the Council will therefore be holding higher balances at some points of the year the Clerk advised that a 30-day notice savings account with a current interest rate of 2.25% or a 32-day notice savings account with a current interest rate of 2.70% were available through Unity Trust Bank. As most larger expenses will be planned and the notice period could be complied with it was proposed, seconded and carried that the Clerk arrange for an additional 32-day savings account be opened to maximise interest income.

Action: Clerk

11. To review and adopt the Model Code of Conduct, the updated Data Protection Policy, the Privacy Notice for staff/volunteers and the general Privacy Notice, and take any necessary action. These were reviewed and unanimously adopted.

12. To review and adopt the Internal Control Statement, and appoint a councillor to carry out the review. The statement was unanimously adopted. It was then proposed, seconded and carried that Cllr Crissell be appointed to carry out the review with the Clerk as he is not a current signatory on the bank accounts.

Action: Cllr Crissell & Clerk

13. To receive an update on the Accessibility Statement, including considering quotes for updating the website, and take any necessary action. Suffolk Cloud have carried out a review of the website and produced an accessibility report which identifies errors and warnings which require correcting. The cost to correct errors is £50 and to correct warnings is £100. The total cost of £150 was unanimously approved and the Clerk will arrange for the work to be carried out before the financial year end.

Action: Clerk

14. To discuss the purchase of gazebo's and take any necessary action. The Chair advised that Harleston are willing to purchase the larger 6mx3m gazebo and requested agreement to Onehouse purchasing two smaller gazebos (3mx3m) at a cost of £379 each. Cllr Goodwin recommended also purchasing connecting gutters x4 costing £10 each. Total cost of £798 to be paid from the Events earmarked reserve. Collaborating with Harleston so that all gazebos could be available for events in both parishes was discussed and agreed. The possibility of making the gazebos available for hire was also discussed. Clerk to check the price and order.

Action: Clerk

15. To discuss the purchase of a laptop or tablet for community use and take any necessary action. The feasibility and need for this resource were discussed and it was unanimously agreed that investigations would be carried out and further discussed at the March meeting.

Action: Chair & Clerk

16. To receive an update on the additional dog waste bin required and take any necessary action. The new bin on Mill Grove has now been installed and collections of the bin at Moore Road reduced back to once per week.

17. To receive an update on the Rural Caravan and take any necessary action. The February event took place on 9th February and there were 6 attendees. This is a lower number than previously but it was recognised that the weather was poor. How to encourage more residents to attend was discussed.

18. To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Plan and take any necessary action. The first community event will take place on 28th March from 10am until 3pm with all resident's welcome. Details will be placed in the March OHSMag, on the website and Facebook. A zoom meeting is arranged for members of the steering group on 17th February 2026 at 7pm. All councillors are encouraged to attend.

19. To receive an update on crowd funding contribution for the new defibrillator and take any necessary action. The amount raised of £175.46 has now been received.

20. To receive an update on any events take any necessary action. There are none planned.

21. To receive an update on changes to the entrance to Paupers Grave to improve accessibility and take any necessary action. Locality funding to cover the purchase of the new gate and cementing has now been received (£697.30). It was agreed that the gate should now be ordered for installation when the weather improves.

Action: Clerk

22. To discuss the provision of storage facilities, first aid equipment and PPE for volunteers at Paupers Grave and take any necessary action. The Chair and Cllr Roberts had met with the group and advised that there was a need to provide storage on site for the equipment used. To prevent the storage being able to be damaged, a shipping container was considered most appropriate. A member of the working group is investigating cost and will report back to the Council. Cllr Goodwin advised that he also has contacts and will investigate as well. Cllr Goodwin advised that an additional suitable container for the fuel used for the equipment will also be required. The Chair advised that an updated first aid box, first aid/accident book and pen will be required. Councillors unanimously agreed to provide these. In addition, it was noted that PPE will be required for those volunteers who use the power tools. A member of the group will provide the Council with details of what is required. This volunteer will also be liaising with Cllr Roberts to ensure an up to date risk assessment is in place and provide emergency contact details for all volunteers.

The Chair and Cllr Roberts had also carried out an equipment check which was passed to the Clerk so the asset register can be updated, and they advised there is no longer a chain saw in use. It was noted that 2 new signs should also be provided. One to display when work is taking place in the area and the other to be displayed where there is access to the pond.

Action: Cllrs Goodwin & Roberts

23. To receive an update on the Paupers Graves and take any necessary action. There was no update as the group have not met since the January meeting.

At 9.30pm it was resolved to continue and complete all items.

24. To discuss any action necessary regarding the Forest Road to Chilton Leys Footpath. This is reported to still be with the legal team and landowners. Councillors expressed frustration with the delays, length of time it is taking and the lack of comprehensive updates together with concern for the safety of members of the public needing to walk on the road. There was a discussion about whether action could be taken to publicise the issues and it was agreed to wait for an update at the March meeting and discuss the matter again then.

25. To receive an update on the replacement of the Onehouse sign. There was no update. The Chair will contact again. **Action: Chair**

26. Environmental issues. Discuss and take any necessary action. Cllr Roberts reported that at a recent litter pick had taken place and a lot of waste, in particular bottles, had been collected.

27. To receive an update on email migration and discuss the Onehouse website, and take any necessary action. Cllr Goodwin has set up the new .gov email but is having difficulty logging in. Cllr Crissell is supporting and will contact Suffolk Cloud for advice. The Clerk reminded the Council that it has a responsibility to be compliant with Assertion 10 requirements and that Cllr Goodwin's council email address will be the only email address used for him for Council business with effect from the next meeting on 9th March. The Onehouse website review continues as noted under item 13.

Action: Cllrs Crissell & Goodwin

28. To discuss OHSMag, Onehouse website and Facebook page and take any necessary action. Following the last meeting when the Chair advised she would be stepping down from the OHSMag working group, the Chair advised she had been approached by the editor and requested that she stay on a temporary basis. The Chair agreed to do so but confirmed it was still the intention to step down. Moving the OHSMag to online only was discussed and the Chair advised she would report back to the council following a meeting with the OHSMag working group on 10th February. All Councillors were invited to the meeting. It was noted that the Facebook page continues to grow.

29. To receive correspondence/communications and to deal with any matters. The following items have been circulated to Cllrs:

SALC: News Bulletins 13/1, 23/1, 26/1, 2/2. Training Bulletins 13/1. **SCC:** Notice of closure of Combs Lane 14/1, Notice of Avian Influenza Outbreak 20/1, Update on Pothole repairs, Combs Lane 25/1, Notice of Road Closure Combs Lane 31/1. **BMSDC:** Norwich to Tilbury drop in surgery 2/2, Town & Parish Update 2/2, NSIP & Large Scale Energy Development Update 2/1.

30. To receive reports: a) Report from the Clerk. Nothing to report.

31. Questions to the Chair. There were none.

32. Items for next agenda.

Accessibility Statement

IT Policy

Footpath

Laptop/Tablet

Neighbourhood Plan

33. To confirm date and time of the next Parish Council Meeting as Monday 9th March 2026 at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 9.58pm

Signed.....

Dated.....