

Bildeston Parish Council

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held Monday 2nd February 2026, 7.30pm,
at Chamberlin Hall, Chamberlin Close, Bildeston.

Present:	
Cllr Ray McCann - Chairman	County Cllr Robert Lindsay
Cllr Robin Sidgwick	District Cllr Deborah Saw
Cllr Virginia Tuck	Clerk – Angela Chapman
Cllr Richard Lester	1x resident
Apologies: Cllr Helen Alcoe, Cllr Philip Alcoe Cllr Alex Banks	

C661/25/26 Chairman's Welcome & Apologies

Chairman McCann welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies noted.

C662 /25/26 Vacancy for Parish Councillor/s.

2 vacancies remain.

C663/25/26 Declaration of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. Cllr Richard Lester – Kings Pightle Committee, St. Mary Magdalene church PCC, Sports Field Management Committee/Trustee

C664/25/26 Requests for dispensation in respect of pecuniary interests. None.

C665/25/26 Minutes of Last Meeting held 5th January 2026, approved as a true record of the meeting.

C666/25/26 Public Session – to include County Councillor and District Councillor reports.

Adjourned 1938hrs to receive reports from County and District Councillors and consider any matters raised by local parishioners.

DC Deborah Saw

Full report from Babergh **District Councillor Deborah Saw** can be seen on <https://bildeston.org/parish-council/county-and-district-councillors-report/>

Bildeston Issues

Following up a query from a resident concerning the construction of a ditch on the Ipswich Road site which appeared to be at a higher level than the existing one I contacted Orbit who confirmed that their engineers were trying to achieve the connection at the right level from the roadside, across the ditch within the site.

I have also asked Orbit to increase road cleaning during the current wet spell.

I was alerted to the construction by Orbit of a temporary footpath behind Artiss Close as the footpath down the main road side isn't able to be constructed yet, see above. Unfortunately, residents of Artiss Close had not been informed about this work and they are very concerned about security and safety aspects given the close proximity of the LPG tanks. I am talking with Orbit about this situation.

The temporary footpath from the site into Artiss Close, can be made permanent. The PC agreed this would be a good idea.

Tenants are expected to move into their homes at the end of this month.

Budget

The council received notification of its provisional budget just before Christmas. Although we have a small surplus for 26/27 financial year the council's financial position becomes much more difficult in the two remaining financial years. Looking ahead to 27/28 and 28/29 our position worsens to an £882,000 deficit and then in 28/29 a £2 million deficit.

On one hand, it is good to have the clarity of the government's multi-year settlement but this has not been equitable for rural councils like our own with a lack of recognition of the cost of providing services and need.

Rural councils received 40% less than urban councils and we will receive less from the business rates we levy with central government receiving more. Our budget is still under tremendous pressure and vulnerable to unknown situations with limited reserves available to respond.

We have made savings of £2.5 million for 26/27 but we will have to raise car parking charges from £1 to £1.20 an hour, two hours for £1.20 in a long stay car park. We cannot subsidise these car parks. Our rates bill alone for the car parks is now £380,000 since the government is changing the formula.

Concerns about Sewage Sludge

Residents may have been unaware of the existence of a sewage sludge processing site near Wattisham air base working for Thames Water, although if the wind was in the right direction they may have smelt it. This site was operating without the necessary planning permissions. Thanks to Councillor Robert Lindsay and Councillor Dan Pratt of Mid Suffolk for raising the alarm. I put forward a motion at the last Babergh Council meeting calling for urgent action by the Government to tighten regulations governing the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land, citing serious concerns for public health, farming and the environment. This material contains 'forever chemicals' and microplastics and the testing regime hasn't kept up with the development of these chemicals.

We want the government to prevent chemical producers and companies from offloading commercial effluent into sewage sludge and to increase research into sustainable and safe agricultural alternatives, with Defra warning farmers of the risks of accepting sludge from water company contractors in the meantime.

Energy Efficiency

In October last year we were able to deliver on our initiative to help listed building owners improve the energy efficiency of their homes by developing a Local Listed Building Consent Order, (LLBCO), so owners could install double and secondary glazing. We are the only council to have achieved this. We are now moving onto giving listed home owners the ability to put solar panels within the curtilage of the property. We are also look at making it easier to install air source heat pumps.

Using oil to heat your home?

This ward has more homes with oil-powered heating than anywhere else in the district but there may be grants available to install energy improvement measures such as ground source heat pumps and extra insulation.

You can call Warm Homes Suffolk on 0345 037 686 to find out more and book a free assessment.

www.warmhomesuffolk.org

You may also be able to bring down the monthly cost of oil through the Community Action Suffolk bulk buying scheme www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

Alternatively, Eastern Savings and Loan Credit Union offer interest-free loans to cover the upfront cost of oil and LPG. To find out more call 03336 000690. Eastern Savings And Loans Credit Union

For further information about help with energy costs visit, visit our website: www.babergh.gov.uk/energy-fuel-and-utilities

Backing the bid

Ipswich is bidding to be the City of Culture in 2029. Babergh supports the bid because we believe it will be a positive initiative for the whole of Suffolk. We have many residents who work in Ipswich, and we can all experience the many cultural events that will take place. It will attract thousands of visitors to Ipswich and the surrounding areas.

The government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport will then longlist up to eight bids, awarding each a grant of £60,000 to support them with developing and strengthening their full application over a three-to-four-month period from February until May/June 2026.

The winning place gets a guaranteed £10 million of Government funding to help deliver its year-long programme of events.

Want a creative career?

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils together with East Suffolk and Menta, the not-for-profit organisation that helps Suffolk's small and micro businesses have launched a new initiative, Careeriosity which has been developed to support young people across the region by providing free access to creative skills development, industry insight, and practical career exploration opportunities.

CC Robert Lindsay

Full report from Suffolk County Councillor Robert Lindsay can be seen on <https://bildeston.org/parish-council/county-and-district-councillors-report/>

Hadleigh to Stowmarket Bus latest

The KonnectBus service between Hadleigh and Stowmarket daily should start 13th April. I have asked for a timetable from the officer but as of yet don't have it. It appears he has left final details in the hands of the bus operator TMS, however, I am assured that it will be at Stowmarket in the morning to meet the first off-peak train to London.

With the £27m of new funding announced to be handed over by the Government to Suffolk over the next three years I am hoping that perhaps some could be found for extra services can be added to the four-a-day Ipswich service from Hitcham and Bildeston, the 111. It will require parishes to request it though.

Discussion ensued about the new bus routes. It was agreed Cllr Virginia Tuck would contact TMJ and Kathryn Davies.

County council elections for May 2026 scrapped

The Government told county councils before Christmas that it would delay county elections if the councils told them they had "resource issues". At county council on Monday 12 January, a debate was held about "the resource implications" of an election in May on the delivery of Local Government Reorganization in Suffolk. The Conservative administration unanimously voted down an amendment proposed by my group to ask for a clear vote "that the council was in favour of the elections going ahead". 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 Government has said that the county elections will not be held at all, since there are shadow unitary elections in May 2027 and the county and district will be dissolved and unitary councils will start in May 2028.

Council budget 2026-27 pennies away from breaching minimum reserve levels

At Cabinet on Tuesday 27 January, the budget for the 2026-27 financial year was presented. The council is planning to raise council tax by the maximum 4.99% this year, reflecting the fact it is struggling to meet its rising costs.

The recommended minimum level of reserves is 5% of the council's total £850m annual spend. In order to keep reserves just within that level (£42.5m), the council's pension fund committee has agreed to give the council a one-year-only £10m reduction in pension contributions for the coming financial year.

Even then, and combined with planned savings of £46.5m, the council will be taking £5.9m from reserves to cover the remaining budget gap.

Budget gaps are forecast to rise above £20m in the following two years, requiring more cost cutting measures. One of the biggest cost pressures is SEND. The Government, aware that it is not providing enough money, has been making councils borrow to fund this with the promise that it will take on responsibility for SEND funding by April 2028. But a promised white paper has yet to materialise. The council is in the meantime having to pay interest on the debt. This will be £5m in the year about to end, rising to £8.9m in the 2026/27 year and then a forecast £11m plus in the year thereafter.

There are also concerns about the amount of money the Local Government Reorganisation will cost the council. This is currently estimated as £48m overall but will be divided between all Suffolk councils.

Net Zero Carbon Report

Also at cabinet was the annual report on the council's efforts to reach net zero carbon by 2030. The council has cut its energy bills by £4.8m a year thanks to this initiative which reduced gas and electricity consumption from 2019. Measures included improving heating controls in the councils offices and a car park solar array. It reckons it will have cut emissions (from purely its own footprint – not those of customers or staff commuting) by 63% by 2027/2028, and is not producing a forecast thereafter because the council will cease to exist.

Suffolk Roads Rated Red by UK Government.

The government has rated Suffolk's road maintenance 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 are 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.

New 20mph Policy

At Cabinet on Friday 9 January, a new 20mph speed limit policy was approved which the administration said would make it easier for communities to apply for a 20mph speed limit.

A series of hurdles such as accident injury record have been scrapped and the decision will be based on average speeds being below certain thresholds and a demonstration of support from residents. Obviously too late for us in Bildeston but it does perhaps signal a slightly improved attitude to improving life for pedestrians in villages.

Resident – the resident asked a question to DC Deborah Saw regarding the purchase of the Orbit built houses on Ipswich Rd. DC Saw confirmed Babergh DC do not currently have any intention to buy up any unsold properties. Orbit are marketing the shared ownership properties.

15minute period for discussion on Environmental Improvement project.

The Council viewed and discussed the photos of locations in the village, supplied by Cllrs Ray McCann and Richard Lester. An initial list will be made of improvements to be made around the village and distributed to Cllrs.

Reconvened 2026hrs.

C667/25/26 Planning Applications

Planning Appendix A - Items for comment

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION - DC/26/00120

Proposal: Householder Application - The installation of Painted Wood Bi fold Doors to (Southern elevation) Rear of kitchen replacing large pane and Single Door

Location: Tudor House, 7 Chapel Street, Bildeston, Ipswich Suffolk IP7 7EP

Comments: No objections.

APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT - DC/26/00239

Proposal: Application for Listed Building Consent - Installation of painted wood bi fold doors to (Southern elevation) rear of kitchen replacing large pane and single door

Location: Tudor House, 7 Chapel Street, Bildeston, Ipswich Suffolk IP7 7EP

Comments: No objections.

Planning Appendix B – Items determined by Babergh District Council

DISCHARGE OF CONDITION(S)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Proposal: Discharge of Conditions Application for B/15/01433 - Condition 22 (Illumination)

Location: Land East Of Artiss Close And, Rotheram Road, Bildeston, Suffolk

Babergh District Council hereby gives notice that the details submitted in pursuance to the conditions referred to above have been determined as summarised below in relation to each relevant condition together with any appropriate comments, limitations or advice.

APPROVED CONDITION(S):

22. SPECIFIC RESTRICTION OF DEVELOPMENT: ILLUMINATION RESTRICTION

No external lighting shall be provided on the application site unless details thereof have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - In the interests of amenity to reduce the impact of nighttime illumination on the character of the area and in the interests of biodiversity.

C668/25/26 Clerks Report

I have been liaising with Ashtons Legal solicitors, including attending a Court hearing, remotely. The Vesting Order has now been granted for the land which is Chamberlin Close. We are now awaiting the Deed of Grant and the land to be registered to the Parish Council at Land Registry.

Welcome pack is in draft form.

The Asset Register has been updated.

Please note the Scribe subscription has increased from £331 to £444, due to a 3-year review and an increase in the precept.

I suggest the PC writes to Smith of Derby, who carried out the work on the automation of the clock, pointing out the problems of slowness and stopping; that the engineer has been out several times, and the PC should like an extended guarantee on the work.

Assertion 10 – this is a new digital and date compliance that the PC needs to adhere to. It will appear on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return AGAR 2025-26. I have been provided with a very useful check list by the internal auditor, Trevor Brown, which I will work my way through. The PC will need to adopt an IT policy to make sure all compliance is met. Also, review Website Accessibility Statement; adopt Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) Publication Scheme, Freedom of Information Act Model Publication Scheme Version 1.2 (2015-10-23) on March 2026; update and review GDPR Policy and Data Protection Act 2018

Finances

The P3 precept form has been returned to Babergh DC.

£20,000 has been transferred to the deposit account to increase the interest income.

Next meeting

The next meeting is due 6th April which is Easter Monday, so the meeting will be held on Tuesday 7th April.

C669/25/26 Projects and Progress Reports

- a. Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Philip Alcoe not in attendance, no update.
- b. Orbit Housing, Weavers Grove – new footpath – see C666/25/26 above.
- c. Welcome Pack – Cllr Virginia Tuck to work with the Clerk to finalise.
- d. Clock Tower clock – there have been time keeping problems with the new automation. PC agreed to write to the supplier.
- e. Village tidy up – Environmental Improvement project – see C666/25/26 above.
- f. Welcome pack – see Clerks report
- g. Playground monthly report – on SharePoint. Nothing to report.
- h. update on village amenities
 - Norman Ruffell’s memorial bench ‘opened’ by the family and friends of Norman.
 - Hole in fence between the Crown and Chamberlin Close play area to be repaired. Clerk to organise.
 - Brooks footpath – Cllr Robin Sidgwick confirmed the pre-application has been sent to Babergh and SCC.
 - SID – speed indicators – SCC have confirmed the posts will be installed by mid May 2026.
 - Sports field – have requested the football pitch is cut shorter. Clerk to forward contractor’s details to Sports Field committee.

C670/25/26 Administrative, Finance and Governance Reports

- a. Payments for approval – authorised by Cllrs Tuck and Sidgwick.

Payee	Description	Net of VAT
O2	Mobile phone	15.08
ICCM	Subscription	26.00
Ashtons Legal	Legal fees	1,886.67
Starboard Systems Ltd	Annual subscription	444.00
An Accounting Gem	Accountancy fees	31.25
Ryman Stationery	Stationery	10.82
Viking Office Depot	Stationery	74.99

Unity Trust Bank	Bank charges	6.00
A Chapman	Clerks expenses/ admin	39.00
Parish Council Websites	Website maintenance	60.00
SMS	Microsoft 365 subs	44.38
Nedging Hall Estate	Gate	500.00
A Chapman	Clerks salary	0.0
HMRC	PAYE & NIC	274.71

- b. Approval and signing Scribe of monthly accounting reports – checked and signed.
- c. Appoint an internal auditor for yr 2025/26. Trevor Brown approved.
- d. Clerks report – continuation approved.
- e. Review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Reviewed and adopted.
- f. Review Asset Register. Add 2 benches on Church Rd; Market Place land is historical ownership not gifted. All land under custodian trusteeship. Then adopted.

C671/25/26 Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

Agenda to be published on website.

C672/25/26 Items for next agenda

Neighbourhood Plan

SID

Welcome pack

Village environmental improvements

Playground report

Parish Councillor vacancies

Meeting closed 2119hrs.

Date of next meeting: Monday 2nd March 2026 7.30pm, at Chamberlin Hall, Bildeston.

Village website: www.bildeston.org