



BATTISFORD PARISH COUNCIL

<http://www.battisford-pc.gov.uk>

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MINUTES of BATTISFORD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held at Battisford Village Hall on 20th January 2026. Meeting started at 7.15 pm

Present:

Cllr J Cook (Chairman)
Cllr Durrant
District Cllr Pratt

Cllr A Card
Cllr Newman

Cllr J Pope Cllr Ince
Cllr Wilson (Vice Chair)

Clerk: Julia Stephens-Row

Apologies
County Cllr Kay Oakes

2026/01 Meeting Administration

- a) Apologies for absence.
Councillors to note any apologies for absence. County Cllr Oakes apologies were unanimously accepted.
- b) To receive Declarations of Interest. The Clerk declared an interest in item 2026/07 c)
- c) To consider requests for dispensations. It was agreed to dispense with the Clerks declaration to enable them to minute the discussion.
- d) To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of the parish council meeting held on 18th November 2025 are a true and correct record and consider any matters arising not on the agenda. It was proposed by Cllr Newman and seconded by Cllr Wilson that the minutes be accepted as a true and correct record, which was agreed unanimously. The Clerk was thanked for a very comprehensive set of minutes.

Matters arising where further action is required were considered as follows:

2025/84 b Cllr Pope updated that when a working party is set up an email can be sent to the Chair to see if any members can help.

Clarification was sought regarding the relocation of the Jubilee bench. Cllr Cook advised that the Jubilee Bench is in poor order and cannot easily be improved. Additionally, it is cemented into a base and removal would be difficult. Cllr Durrant advised that there may be a possibility of another bench being provided by the family. **Action Cllr Durrant**

2025/84 e Re-erection of headstones. As the topple test is taking place on 27th February agreed to leave re-erection of headstones until the warmer weather. Action **Cllr Cook and Cllr Card**

2025/85 ii Changes to policies required by the Internal control statement to be considered at a future meeting. **Action Clerk.**

2025 / 85 iv If the council should provide computers to all councillors for their use on council business. The Clerk advised that she had sought advice from SALC, who indicated that if the proper controls were in place, that Cllrs could use their own computers and as the council already has 2 computers which could be given to Cllrs who did not have their own computer then no further action is required. Combs Parish Council are possibly developing a checklist to assist in implementation of IT policy. **Action Clerk** to liaise with Combs PC.

2025/89 i Encouraging people to pick up dog faeces. County Cllr Oakes had advised that it is

possible to put signs up on the footpath signs. Need to determine how many signs required and location / cost. **Action Cllr Cook and Clerk.**

2025/95 a) Cllr Pope advised that she was still to check that one of the trees marked in the woodland was not a memorial tree. **Action Cllr Pope to advise Cllr Cook.** Cllr Cook advised that he was in the process of repairing the light in one of the defibrillator boxes **Action Cllr Cook.**

2025/96 Draft media policy. Clarification is required regarding the standing orders paragraph 13, the publication scheme and the website disclaimer paragraph 28. **Action Clerk**

2025/99 ix To consider a request to receive a donation of £50 from the Monday teas towards the playground. The Clerk advised that this would not be permissible however the purchase of an item direct would be allowed. **Action Cllr Pope**

2025/100 ii The Fire and Rescue service correspondence following the arson attack on Bures Cricket Club will be brought to the attention of the Village Hall Management Committee at their next meeting by Cllr Card, and that she was aware that the Punch Bowl had completed a fire risk assessment. **Action Cllr Card.**

2026/02 Public participation session (15 minutes) to include Police, District and County Councillors Reports.

District Cllr Pratt presented his report. He encouraged the council to consider the nature recovery grant which was launched recently - £2,000 for small projects or £50,000 for larger projects. Agreed to place on the agenda for the next meeting. **Action Clerk.** Cllr Card advised that the Village Hall had applied for a grant from Mid Suffolk regarding Solar Panels. **Action District Cllr Pratt** to write a letter of support. There were no further questions or comments. A report had been received from County Cllr Oakes which had been circulated, a couple of comments were made regarding the update on how SCC was responding to potholes which was a cause of some concern. A successful application had been made to County Cllr Oakes locality fund for the repair to the cemetery gates and thanks were expressed for her support through this grant.

2026/03 To receive updates on ongoing issues

- a) Chairman's report. Cllr Cook advised that there was nothing to report.
- b) Councillor reports
 - i) Cllr Ince advised that he had attended his 2 introductory Cllr training sessions which he found useful. He advised that other councils seemed to be using social media more than Battisford. Also, that he would like to attend training on planning matters. **Action Clerk**
 - ii) Cllr Pope advised that as "Monday Teas" can't donate money direct to the council it maybe that there are sufficient funds to purchase a bench to go in the play area but not fit it. **Action Cllr Pope and Clerk** to look at the cost of purchasing and fitting.
 - iii) Cllr Wilson advised that she had tidied up the notice boards. There is a health and safety concern about accessing the noticeboard by the entrance to the pub because of the mud in front of it makes it difficult to access it safely. The Clerk advised that she had discussed this with one of the directors who indicated that there is no long-term solution to the situation. There was a discussion about relocation maybe onto the fence or elsewhere. **Action Cllr Card** to see if any alternative locations can be identified. **Action Clerk** to place on the next agenda.
 - iv) Cllr Durrant and Cllr Card had nothing to report
 - v) Cllr Newman advised that as the Chair of the employment panel she had facilitated a very successful Performance Appraisal review meeting with the Clerk and Cllr Wilson and Cllr Pope in December. Thanks were given to the Clerk for all that she has done for the Parish Council over the last year.
- c) Clerk report. The street furniture licence was obtained and the White Gates commissioned following the successful application for the Pride of Place Grant to purchase the White Gates. The installation is being considered later on the agenda.

Skinner Building Services had successfully realigned the Cemetery Gates the majority of which was paid for from the Locality Grant awarded by County Cllr Oakes.

- d) Devolution. The Mayoral election has now been postponed. Central Government are now considering the different unitary proposals. There is an opportunity to comment on the possible proposal to postpone the Suffolk County Council elections scheduled for May 26. Cllr Pope made a proposal that the Parish Council should make representations on behalf of the residents that 'to postpone the elections again does not allow local residents the opportunity to exercise their democratic right to vote and elect their County Councillor'. The delay in Mayoral elections should not impact on the local County Council elections which last took place in 2021. To postpone until 2027 is a long time for residents not to be able to exercise their right to vote. This was seconded by Cllr Ince and supported unanimously. **Action Clerk to write**
- e) Norwich to Tilbury pylon installation. Cllr Pope explained that she had been unable to attend the SALC Town and Country Planning Association webinar however she had received the slides. The Clerk had attended and commented that it was aimed at those who were planning to make representations. Hearings commence on 9th February however neither Cllr Pope or the Clerk can attend. **Action Cllr Pope** to contact the lead from Offton and Willisham to see if there is anything that can be done to support them if they are making representations etc.

2026/04 To review and agree changes and updates to any relevant policies. None presented

2026/05 To agree that the following activities need to be carried out.

- a) To consider whether or not to conduct a feasibility study on the provision of a food pantry in the village. Cllr Ince had contacted the Stowmarket food bank to test out if there was any evidence of need however because of data protection, they were unable to provide any information. The Clerk had contacted the CAB and Combs Parish Council who had not got any information which would support the study. It was proposed by Cllr Ince and seconded by Cllr Durrant that there was insufficient evidence to support the feasibility study. This was supported unanimously
- b) To agree a date to review the internal control system. **Action Clerk and Cllr Newman** to fix a date to meet.

2026/06 To consider the following planning applications –

Single storey side extension to Bevants Farm Barn Burnt House Lane Battisford Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 2NE

<https://planning.baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=T8HZLFSH0A200>

This application was supported unanimously.

2026/07 Finance

- a) To receive the Finance Report
- i. Receipts and Payments since last meeting.
- Receipts*
- | | |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| £ 745.50 | Suffolk County Council Locality Grant awarded by County Cllr Oakes |
| £ 1,938.80 | Mid Suffolk District Council Pride of Place Grant for White Gates |
- Payments – approved by Cllrs Cook and Wilson in the absence of a meeting*
- | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| £ 894.60 | Skinner Building Services for repairs to Cemetery Gates |
| £ 381.61 | Clerk pay and expenses |
| £ 91.74 | HMRC |
| £ 20.00 | Bank Charges including stop cheque fee |
| £ 45.00 | MPMIT as cheque authorised on 18 th November was not received |

£ 170.00 Street Furniture Licence

Thanks were expressed to those who had donated the grants and the receipts and payments were noted.

ii) To review 3rd Quarter Accounts 2025/26 and sign bank reconciliation. The Clerk introduced the accounts and explained the reason for the variants. The Parish Council had spent £15,215 against a (year-to-date) forecast spend of approximately £12,000. However, this includes circa £2,800 of commitments and late billing from the 2024/25 financial year, as detailed and accounted for in the 2024/25 Annual Accounts. It also includes an additional spend (cemetery gates repair) that has been largely offset by £745 grant money received. The actual spend is therefore reduced by around £3,500 and is broadly in line with that forecast (£11,700 vs £12,000). The bank reconciliation for the period Oct- Dec 25 was signed in the meeting by Cllr Durrant. Cllr Durrant proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Wilson to agree the third quarter accounts. This was agreed unanimously.

b) To authorise payments as listed below:

i. Clerk Salary and expenses etc	£383.90
ii. Employers HMRC contribution	£ 91.74
iii. To pay for hire of Battsford Village Hall for meetings	£200.00

These payments were authorised for electronic payment. **Action Clerk**

The Clerk explained that she anticipated receiving an invoice from Glasdons for White Gates for £2402.02 however this hadn't been received. It was agreed to delegate the agreement of payment of this to Cllr Cook and Cllr Wilson should it be received and need paying prior to the next meeting.

c) To agree to permanently increase the hours of the Clerk and to increase the monthly office allowance in line with HMRC guidance. This was introduced by Cllr Newman who explained that the Clerk had a temporary increase in hours from 6 to 10 a week for 3 months of the last calendar year however the backlog of policies still needs to be worked on and the allocation of hours are insufficient to carry out the role. This would be an increase to the budget of approx. £700. The Clerk is currently claiming £20 a month as an office allowance and the HMRC allowance is £26 a month. Cllr Newman proposed a permanent increase in the Clerk hours from 6 to 8 hours a week with effect from 1st February 2026 and to increase the home working allowance to £26 a month. This was seconded by Cllr Card and unanimously agreed.

d) To Review and Set 1yr Budget 2026/2027 and following 2 years including identifying possible areas of spend for CIL funding which is £699.70. The Clerk introduced the reasoning for the budget being proposed and the importance of setting a budget that could be met from existing income rather than relying on reserves and explained that the proposed budget for 27/28 and 28/29 had been based on a 5% increase. Cllr Ince explained that there is a possibility of the playing fields behind the Free Church being used by a local football team for youngsters and that might enable the grass cutting budget to be reduced if the same company was cutting both. The Clerk explained that the contract for the grass cutting for April – October 26 had already been agreed however this could be explored when the contract is reviewed. The CIL funding was discussed and the opportunity to use it to install the White Gates was identified. Cllr Durrant proposed that the budget for 26/27 and the following two years be agreed, also that the CIL money

be used towards the installation of the White Gates. This was seconded by Cllr Wilson and agreed unanimously.

- e) To Review and Set Precept. The precept paper was introduced by Cllr Cook and the implications of the different % increases. The importance of keeping pace with inflation and considering the impact on future % increase to the budget. Not increasing the precept now would impact significantly on both this year and future years budget. A 7.5% increase in the precept would generate an additional £650.00 which would close the gap in the budget. This would be an increase to residents of approx. £4.50 a year. There will also be the opportunity to access reserves particularly for donations and grants. It was proposed by Cllr Pope and seconded by Cllr Newman that the precept would be increase by 7.5% to £15,947. This was agreed unanimously.

District Cllr Pratt left the meeting during this item.

- f) To agree to Heelis and Lodge should undertake the internal audit at a charge £185 including secure courier. It was proposed by Cllr Durrant and seconded by Cllr Wilson to use Heelis and Lodge for the internal audit at the charge outlined above. This was agreed unanimously.
- g) To consider request for funding from St Elizabeth Hospice. The information presented was discussed, the applicant had not been able to provide information at a very local level. Because of the limited amount of funding available to the council, it was considered that it was important to make sure that any donations are spent as locally as possible and for the benefits of the parish and the information provided did not support this. Consequently, all were in agreement that this application could not be supported.

2026/08 Correspondence for Information

To receive information on the following new correspondence and decide further action where necessary.

- a) Mid Suffolk Community Energy Event 21st Jan 7pm at The Mix. This was taking place the next evening; no Cllrs were available to attend.
- b) To consider responding to the PCC precept. The Council has been invited to respond to the PCC proposal to increase their portion of the Council Tax. There was agreement not to make a response on this occasion.
- c) Code of conduct. SALC provided a code of conduct to cover a process for accepting apologies for absence etc. **Action Clerk** to place on the next agenda.

21.07pm The Chair sought agreement to extend the meeting by 15 minutes. This was agreed.

2026/09 Items for consideration for inclusion on the next agenda.

- i. Review relevant Parish Council Policies
- ii. To agree dates for 2026/27 meetings
- iii. To consider and approve arrangements for Annual Parish Meeting
- iv. To consider the annual playground inspection report and next steps
- v. To discuss whether or not to adopt gender neutral terms in Battisford Parish Council policies and procedures

These were all confirmed as agenda items. **Action Clerk**

2026/10 Date of next meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting which is currently scheduled for 17th February 2026 at 7.15pm. This was confirmed.

2026/11 To agree quote for installation of White Gates

To resolve to exclude members of the public and press under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

- a) To agree that a suitably qualified installer be commissioned to install the two White Gates in Battsford. The Clerk had provided information on a quote and explained that Combs Parish Council had undertaken a similar process with 3 quotes and that they had chosen this contractor so due diligence had been followed. It was proposed by Cllr Durrant and seconded by Cllr Card that Porch builders be asked to undertake the work. This was unanimously agreed.

Planning Link: <https://planning.baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/>

The meeting finished at approx. 9.20 pm