

Draft Notes of the meeting of

Battisford Annual Parish meeting held on 12th May 2026 at Battisford Village Hall 7pm start.

Attendees

From the Parish Council - Councillor Cook, Councillor Card, Councillor Pope, Councillor Newman, Councillor Durrant and Julia Stephens-Row Clerk to the Parish Council. Caroline Burgoyne representing St Mary's Battisford, Alan Burgoyne, Denis Wicking representing the Gardening Club and Richard Prentice representing the Cricket Club.

Apologies

District Cllr Pratt

Dean Williams from Battisford Village Hall Management Committee.

Julia Shawe – Taylor from the 4 Parishes Magazine

Cllr Ben Ince. Received after the meeting

1. Introductions took place

2. Notes of the last meeting held on 20th May 2025.

It was proposed by Cllr Durrant and sentenced by Cllr Card that these should be agreed as a fair and accurate record of the meeting. This was approved unanimously.

3. Chairs report and Parish Council financial summary.

Cllr Cook, as chair of the Parish Council handed out a copy of his report to all those present. A copy of this report is attached to the notes. Cllr Cook introduced his report and highlighted a few key areas, including giving thanks to all those involved in the parish council and in the work of the community, several of whom were present at the meeting. He explained the work that had been undertaken regarding litter picking, cleaning of the play area and the erection of the white gates near the 30mph sign close to the play area to give more emphasis to the speed limit. He particularly gave thanks to Mid Suffolk District Council for the award of the Pride in your place funding which paid for the cost of the white gates; and to County Cllr Oakes for all her support over recent years and fusing awarded most recently the locality grant funding that she had awarded which had enabled the cemetery gates to be realigned. Finally with regard to the finances, the precept had been increased to 7.5 % which exceeds the prevailing inflation rate in line with inflation and that a similar increase would need to take place in future years to meet anticipated expenditure and to avoid having to draw on reserves. The main area of spend identified is to replace / refurbish the play equipment. There were no questions.

4. County Councillor Report

No report had been received.

5. District Councillor Report.

The Clerk summarised this report which had been received prior to the meeting. A copy of the report is attached to the notes. There were no questions.

6. Reports provided by local groups and organisations.

- Denis Wicking, as chair of the Gardening Club, spoke to his report a copy of which is attached to the notes. He referenced that membership is at a good level and described the speakers that they had had and trips undertaken. There were no questions.
- Caroline Burgoyne as warden of St Mary's Church read out her report a copy of which is attached to the notes. She referenced several areas including the number of services taking place each month, and that Christmas Eve Carols by candlelight was very well attended. The church continues to support and encourage wildlife and biodiversity. She thanked the Parish council for paying for the occasional cutting of the grass in the church yard and outside the Parish room. There was a question regarding the impact of the badgers in the graveyard.
- Richard Prentice as the Chair of Battisford and District Cricket Club gave a summary of the progress of the cricket club and how a new treatment plant had been installed with funding from this parish council. He advised that the cricket club is a resource available to the community and has both senior and junior teams who are competing at a good standard. A copy of the report is attached to the notes. There were no questions.
- Alison Card as a member of the Village Hall Management committee introduced the report which had been provided by Dean Williams and is attached to the notes. She gave a summary of the activities which take place at the Village Hall and advised that the regular income from the alternative education provision company would be ceasing in June. She also explained that solar panels are being installed soon. Alongside generating electricity, there will also have a battery backup system to provide emergency power during outages. This would allow the hall to operate as a Warm Hub for residents of Combs, Battisford, Moats Tye and Little Finborough if a prolonged power cut occurs. There were no questions.
- The Clerk gave a short summary from the 4 Parish Magazine who are very keen to promote information across the parishes. A copy of the report is attached to the notes. There were no questions.
- The Clerk gave a short summary on behalf of Suzanne Ottewell who is the Editor of the Community Newsletter and gave thanks to all those volunteers who distribute this. A copy of the report is attached to the notes. There were no questions.

7. Parishioners Questions Comments and Suggestions.

There were no questions or comments coming from the meeting.

8. Ideas for speakers etc at the next Annual Parish meeting proposed for Wednesday 14th April 2027.

The Clerk explained that the Parish Councillors had considered separating out the annual parish meeting from the Annual Parish Council meeting which would allow more time for the presentations and if residents would find it interesting maybe to also have a speaker. Those present supported this approach and were asked to consider who might be of interest to come along to speak and let the Clerk know. The date of Wednesday 14th of April 2027 at 7pm was agreed.

Councillor Cook thanked everybody for their attendance and their hard work, and the meeting was closed at 7:46 pm.

Parish Council Chair's Report and Financial Summary 2025-26

As ever, much is achieved in this parish thanks to people in our community who volunteer their time, skills and enthusiasm to planning, organising, hosting, and clearing up after all manner of events. I opened my last Annual Report by thanking all who support and promote our community in their different ways; Community and Faith Groups, the Village Hall Committee, the Punchbowl team, local clubs, our County, District, and Parish Councillors, and many unseen individuals who quietly and diligently help to improve the environment and community for us all. So, I find myself again in a position of extending the Parish Council's thanks and appreciation to many people. Thank you!

We have been fortunate to have appointed a very supportive and hard-working Clerk, who administers the functions of the Parish Council and provides guidance to us all. Thanks are due also to all our Parish Councillors who undertake a variety of administration and practical tasks to share the workload. It is gratifying to have welcomed new Councillors, who bring their unique skillsets and vision.

Our litter picks (now coordinated with Combs) have been very well supported, with a record number of volunteers helping out this Spring. A mention must go to residents who routinely litter-pick outside of the organised events.

We have continued with our efforts to improve road safety with the erection of white 'picket fences' on roadside verges by the Village Green to highlight the 30mph limit, and attempt to slow motorists down in the vicinity of the play area. This initiative was paid for largely by grant funding from Mid Suffolk District Council. Some feedback has been received as to the 'appropriateness' of these gates (and the accompanying signage), but I wish to reiterate that the fences' main function is road safety.

We undertook our annual Health and Safety/General Check of Battsford Cemetery in February 2026. This includes a check where headstones are assessed for security; an increased number failed this test. Due to the difficulty previously experienced in contacting relatives to ask them to take remedial action, the Parish Council undertook to reinstate headstones ourselves. This was successfully achieved in March, combined with a general tidy of the cemetery. We have also had the cemetery gates re-aligned, paid for largely by SCC grant funding.

We have recently received the annual playground inspection report and Councillors will shortly be discussing strategies to address the findings. The Parish Council has been conscious for some years of the age of some of the apparatus, and that repair or replacement would be necessary. This is clearly associated with considerable cost.

At our January meeting, Councillors debated the Parish Council Precept and, very conscious of continuing financial pressures on us all, agreed an increase of 7.5%. Whilst this figure exceeds the prevailing inflation rate, it was considered prudent to increase by this amount (with similar increases forecast for 2027/28 and 2028/29) to meet anticipated spending without having to draw on reserves.

The Parish Council's 2025-26 accounts again do not reflect a typical annual expenditure. This was due largely to the cost of the realignment of the cemetery gates and installation of the white fences. Both projects had received grants, greatly offsetting cost to the Parish Council. There was also approved expenditure from the 2024/25 financial year of £3,003 to cover late invoicing/accounting, which was paid early in the accounting period of 25/26.

The budget for 25/26 had been set at	£16,030
The main income for the council- the parish precept	£14,791
Grants received and income from the cemetery etc	£2,973
Accounted expenditure for 2025/26 was	£21,555.95

This was over £13,000 more than for the previous year. However, as reported in the last Annual report, 2024/25 was an exceptionally unusual period as there was no clerk in place for an extended period, and some £3,000 of invoicing carried forward was not included in the 2024/25 final accounts.

The annual forecast spend for 25/26 was **£16,030**; the actual spend was **£5,525.95** more, for the reasons detailed above. This increase in expenditure was approved by Councillors as was the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy fund of £699.70 to offset the cost of the installation of the white gates.

VAT reclaim for 2024/25 or 25/26 has not yet been made.

Battisford PC has both Current and Savings Accounts with Unity Trust bank. The year-end balances for 2025/26 and the previous year are shown below:

	Current account	Savings account	Total
2024/25 year-end	£8,769.03	£19,721.04	£28,490.07
2025/26 year end	£977.78	£24,200.77	£25,178.55
Difference	-£7791.25	+ £4,479.73	- £3,311.52

The overall balance is therefore £3,311.52 less than last financial year; this is expected, and in accordance with the £3,003 commitment carried forward from 2024/25

Overall, Battisford Parish Council is considered to have reasonable Reserve funds, but the revenue budget, although realistically set, will require prudent management to ensure minimal deviation from the spend forecast.

Jon Cook
Chair, Battisford Parish Council

May 2026

Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Annual Report (2025/26) for the Annual Parish Meeting

Local Government Reorganisation

Suffolk's councils submitted business cases for their preference on how local authorities will be re-structured in the county. The government has decided that there will be three unitary authorities in Suffolk. While detailed boundaries are being finalised, the three unitary councils, West Suffolk, Central & East Suffolk, and Ipswich and South Suffolk are planned to be in place from April 2028. Parishes within the current Battisford and Ringshall Ward, including Barking, Great Bricett, Offton and Willisham will be located within Central and East Suffolk.

Elections for the new shadow authorities are due in May 2027. Following this there will be a transition period until vesting day on 1st April 2028 when the new unitary authorities will take control. The transition period is to enable detailed work for reorganisation to take place, and services will be delivered as usual throughout the process. We are expecting Mayoral elections to also be held in May 2028.

Budget 2026/27

Mid Suffolk District Council is increasing its share of Council Tax by 2.99%.

For a Band D property, this brings the yearly charge to £180.26—an increase of £5.23 per year (or approximately 10p per week). This follows a year of no increases. It is also important to note that Mid Suffolk receives only about 8% of your total Council Tax bill.

This increase is necessary because the Government now awards future grants based on the assumption that councils have already raised their tax share. Had we not implemented this modest increase now, the council would face a significant funding shortfall in the coming years.

In addition to the day-to-day provision of council services and activities, the 2026/27 budget includes funding for a wide range of programmes, including:

- Implementation of the new food waste collection scheme and waste depot improvements
- Further support for recycling education
- Biodiversity enhancements on council-owned land
- Two new community nature recovery grants
- Cost of living support and a Council Tax Support scheme
- Grants programmes for towns and rural communities outside of Stowmarket
- Investment in the Stowmarket Leisure Centre
- Stowmarket sports facilities delivered through the SHELF Project
- Support for wider Stowmarket regeneration
- Expanded 'Cosy Homes' insulation scheme to help residents obtain solar panels
- Support for active travel including new footpaths and cycle lanes
- Completion of the construction of the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway
- Expansion of temporary accommodation to help homeless residents

Planning and Housing

In 2025 the Government introduced new housing targets increasing the number of dwellings from 535 to 734 per year. The council held a briefing for parishes following the government requirement to increase the number of dwellings in Mid Suffolk.

Work is ongoing to update the existing JLP Part 1 which included the planning policies, and to include new settlement hierarchy and allocated sites.

Officers sent out a 'Call for Sites' and the proposed sites are now being assessed against planning policy, constraints, evidence and deliverability criteria. Inclusion on the list does not grant planning status for a site. Further assessment will be published through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) in Spring 2026. It is important to note that we are carrying out this work to ensure any future development is 'plan-led' and not 'developer led'.

This year MSDC introduced a £20,000 Neighbourhood Development Plan fund to support Parish Councils which seek to allocate sites for housing development. The neighbourhood plan has statutory weight and status in the plan and decision-making process.

Waste and Recycling

Mid Suffolk District Council will start its Better Recycling scheme in June 2026. New bins have been delivered to all homes to help separate waste more effectively. Waste and recycling services include:

- Weekly food waste collection – use new kitchen caddy and larger outdoor food bin for all food scraps.
- Blue-lidded recycling bin – now for glass (bottles and jars), cartons (Tetra Paks), plastic bottles, bags, and wraps and metal cans.
- Green-lidded bin – used exclusively for paper and card to keep them clean and dry for better recycling.

More information can be found at www.suffolkrecycles.org.uk

Nature Recovery

Following our successful launch event at The Mix in Stowmarket, Mid Suffolk District Council announced the new £525,000 Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant. This fund supports ambitious, collaborative projects (£50k–£200k) focused on river restoration and habitat connectivity.

Our Community Nature Recovery Grant was launched in January, offering up to £50,000 for grassroots biodiversity projects. We have currently had many enquires and 7 applications – the outcomes of which will be announced following the pre-election period. There will be two more application windows for 2026.

These funds are part of a landmark £1.8 million commitment to our new Biodiversity Action Plan (2025–2030).

2025/2026 Achievements:

- Meadow management - we reached a milestone of 114,341m² of managed meadows, a 38% increase in the area of council-owned land under meadow management in 2024.
- Nearly 400 residents applied for our 'Tree for Life' scheme to mark for babies born or adopted in 2025/26
- Secured an eight-acre riverside habitat in Stowmarket for permanent conservation and public access
- Two Assistant Ecologists are now in post to support our planning team with the delivery and monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain

Mid Suffolk District Council was also a partner and collaborator in the production of the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This groundbreaking work which was launched in November 2025. It is a blueprint for nature recovery across Suffolk and provides evidence-based maps that indicate where resources should be focused.

Supporting the community

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending of £918,000 was allocated by to communities across the district from the last round in 2025. Barking Village Hall received a Community Development Grant to install solar PV and battery system. Battsford Village Hall has also been offered £5,000 towards the costs of a solar installation scheme and a CIL grant is in the process of being considered totalling £13,965.77

In the Battsford and Ringshall ward, the following organisations and projects were supported from the Locality Budget:

- Barking Village Hall – contribution towards solar photovoltaic panels and battery storage
- Punchbowl Inn CIC – support towards the refurbishment of men's toilets
- Upper Gipping Farm Cluster – costs covered for new website design
- Orchard Barn CIC – first aid training for volunteers
- River Gipping Trust – contribution towards costs of river path improvement works
- Great Bricett – support towards the Community Woodland project
- Wattisham Army Cadet Group – signage replacement
- Ringshall Parochial Church Council – support towards restoration of church organ

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone **0300 123 4000**

I would like to thank the Parish Council for all their work done throughout the year.

Dr Dan Pratt

Ward Member for Battisford and Ringshall

Mid Suffolk District Council

Email: daniel.pratt@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Telephone: 07775389193

Gardening Club report to the annual parish meeting on 12th May 2026

Another good year for the Club, with membership hovering around 50, mostly from Battisford, Combs, Needham Market and Stowmarket. The members' ages range from 50 to 90, and the six Autumn, Winter and Spring talks at the Battisford and Combs Village Hall attract an average of 30 people. In the Summer we organise a couple of trips out to gardens that are often private and only open as part of the National Garden Scheme giving insights into how others do it.

This year we successfully experimented with holding our Xmas quiz and a January lunchtime talk at the Cricket Club. Both were very well attended.

The Xmas Wreath making is always popular and is now at the highest number of attendees ever.

Our next meeting is a trip to a private garden in Hadleigh on Monday 11th May.

Thanks

Denis Chair of Battisford Gardening Club

St Marys Church Report to Battisford Parish Council meeting 12th May 2026

(For calendar year 2025)

We have maintained our service pattern of Morning Prayer on the first Sunday of the month and Holy Communion with Dan on the second Sunday. As ever our congregations are small (sometimes very small) but we continue to ensure that Battisford has an ever-open village church to provide for its spiritual needs whenever required.

In March, country-wide, church bells were rung for the "Covid Day of Reflection", remembering loved ones who died and the impact of the pandemic, on the 5th anniversary.

In May I gave an account of our previous year's activities to the Parish Council's Annual Parish Meeting.

For the September "Ride and Stride" event we welcomed not only cyclists, but a group of runners covering a marathon distance while visiting churches.

A good amount of groceries was gratefully received by the Stowmarket Food Bank from our Harvest offerings in October.

As usual we joined with Ringshall for a Remembrance Day Service at the British/American Memorial, where wreaths were laid, and the names of those lost in conflict were read out by village representatives.

We held our Christmas Fayre at the Punch Bowl in early December and were made very welcome by our community pub for this annual fund-raiser and social get-together. We joined the Free Church, Stowmarket Silver bandsmen and villagers there a few days later for an evening of carols.

On Christmas Eve we welcomed over 100 villagers and friends to sing the Christmas story by candlelight at our 5.00p.m. carol service.

I would like to thank the Parish Council for keeping the orchard mown and arranging our annual churchyard cut.

As an Eco-church, our wildlife-friendly churchyard supports badgers, moles, rabbits, Roe deer, Muntjac, grey squirrels, hares, Tawny owls, jackdaws, a variety of songbirds and a wild bee colony. The flora is varied and increases annually in species with our one August meadow-style mowing.

Caroline Burgoyne

Church Warden

Battisford and District Cricket Club Annual Parish meeting report

The cricket season started in the middle of April and despite the wet weather earlier in the year the ground is remarkably dry and playing very well. Performances so far are very positive.

The senior men's teams performed well last year, and the ladies team won their division. We also have a number of junior teams and Friday night junior coaching is exceptionally well attended. Overall, we have about 75 senior and junior playing members, in addition we have many parents, social members and vice presidents who support the club, many of whom live locally.

The cricket club is well used throughout the year. With the bar being open 2/3 nights a week and more when there are games being played. There were a number of functions held last year including wakes and birthday parties and the club continues to host the regular gatherings of the darts team and the gardening club used the premises on a couple of occasions. Combs Parish Council continue to hold their monthly meetings at the club and the number of businesses advertising around the ground by way of sponsorship boards remains high.

The club has organised several social events in the closed season including a race night, bingo and a quiz which were all well supported.

The club's charitable sponsorship activities have continued last year during which we supported the Motor Neurone Disease charity; an initiative that remains very well received with contributions to the collection bucket made by many clubs visiting us for their away games and was very well supported by the Vice Presidents raffle and end of season do heads and tails. Overall raising almost £1000. This year our chosen charity is Alzheimers.

Aside from a limited amount of coaching which is remunerated, all those involved in the club remain volunteers and we are always looking to recruit people in a range of capacities be it assisting with coaching, helping with events, administrative functions, helping with the bar or ground maintenance etc etc

Last year, the main project was the installation of a new treatment plant with significant funding from Mid Suffolk District Council using Community Infrastructure Levy. Funding was also received from the County Councillor, a District Councillor and Parish Council. Our next project is to explore the refurbishment or re-siting of the nets. Although we now have an urgent need to raise funds for the replacement of an 80-year-old roller – and even a second hand one is in the region of £10,000.

There have been several highlights including watching a significant number of the junior members rise through the ranks to become valued members of each of the ladies' and mens' teams.

Overall, the support that the club receives on Friday nights and when games are being played is amazing. Certainly, when the sun is shining there is no better place to be.

We are at heart; a family friendly club and we want to inspire youngsters to take up the game and it's great to see so many people enjoying the facilities.

Richard Prentice BDCC Chair

May 2026

Battisford Village Hall Chairperson's Report.

The Management committee meets monthly to discuss the hall and review finances, events, policies, groups, and maintenance. The committee consists of seven volunteers from Battisford and Combs who have been serving on the committee for several years and devote their time voluntarily.

Events

Over the past year, it's been a pleasure to see the hall continuing to bring our local community together. We're grateful that private hire bookings have grown, and we sincerely appreciate the lovely feedback from those who have used the space.

We have held fewer fundraising events than in recent years due to limited volunteer availability. However, we have continued to run Toastie Tuesdays, a free community event where people can meet and socialise over a hot drink and light food. We will be looking to put on more fundraising events into 2026.

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped us raise funds for the hall. We're also grateful to all our volunteers, committee members and event helpers alike. Your time and support make these events possible.

Groups / Clubs

The hall is regularly used by the Snooker Club, Yoga and Zumba classes, and the Gardening and History Club.

We have seen an increase in private hire bookings, as well as other local fundraising events held outside the village hall.

The hall is also used for local elections and by a local business for team meetings.

We remain committed to supporting all clubs and groups and will accommodate their needs wherever we can. Thank you to each group for your cooperation and shared support, which helps keep the hall welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.

In addition to these clubs, we welcomed Lapwings in January 2025. Lapwings is a therapeutic education provider offering tailored alternative provision for young people aged 4–25 with complex additional needs across East Anglia. The organisation helps students develop academic, personal, emotional and life skills to support them in everyday life and future work.

The group meets at the hall three times a week and has made good use of the facilities, providing a guaranteed regular source of income. We have recently been informed that, although the hall suits their needs, their September 2026 intake will be travelling from farther afield, so Lapwings has decided to relocate. As a result, their sessions at the hall will end on Monday 29 June 2026.

Policies

We review our policies annually, including safeguarding, risk management, health and safety, finance, equal opportunities and environmental policies. This includes risk assessments, PAT testing and fire alarm checks.

Finances

We are currently in a stable financial position. We continually review our expenditures to identify potential cost savings through negotiations with our suppliers.

We have benefited from regular income from Lapwings, but as the group finishes in June this will significantly affect our revenue. We will actively promote the hall to fill these available slots.

We are very grateful to the Parish Council and local councillors for their continued support in recent years. Your help has enabled us to buy new equipment and run the events we have organised.

Improvements

Our latest project to make Battsford Village Hall more sustainable and resilient is underway. The Management Committee has secured funding to install solar panels. Alongside generating electricity, we will also have a battery backup system to provide emergency power during outages. This would allow the hall to operate as a Warm Hub for residents of Combs, Battsford, Moats Tye and Little Finborough if a prolonged power cut occurs.

We are also in the process of reviewing the front outside area, to redevelop this space during 2026.

We continue to review the condition of the hall and carry out remedial action where required.

Many Thanks,
Dean Williams.
Chairperson.

Four parishes magazine

The Four Parishes NewsLink Magazine is very grateful to the Parish Council for their generous support each year. Without the support of all the Parish Councils it would not be possible for us to continue in the same way. The editors would like to urge all groups and activities in all the villages involved and the those surrounding to advertise their activities in the parish magazine. Please contact Helen Nunn with news and activities helen.nunn1@gmail.com all articles are included free of charge And Julia Shawe-Taylor to advertise in the magazine Julia.shawetaylor@btinternet.com, advertisements are charged annually depending on size.

Julia Shawe-Taylor

Community Newsletter

Over the past year, we have continued to publish and distribute the Community Newsletter, which has received very positive feedback. Readers appreciate the diverse range of articles, the local events featured, and the diary on the last page.

We continue to enjoy strong support from local business advertisers, who contribute a small fee towards the printing costs, with any shortfall covered by Battsford and Combs Parish Councils.

We sincerely thank all the wonderful volunteers who dedicate their time to distributing the newsletter throughout our villages. It reaches around 600 households in Combs, Moats Tye, and Battsford.

Suggestions, new ideas, photos, and articles are always appreciated and welcome.

Suzanne Ottewell

Editor