FINNINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes for the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on
Monday 14th July 2025 in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham, starting at 7:30pm

Present: Cllr Charter, Cllr Saunders, Cllr Davies
In attendance: Miss J. Challis (Clerk), 1 member of the public (Mr Kilbee)

25.150 Chair's welcome and to consider and approve apologies for absence
Cllr Charter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from Cllr Winter and Cllr Black were approved unanimously.

25.151 Visiting speakers
Cllr Mellen's District and County reports can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes. Mr Aiken sent his apologies in advance of the meeting. His Footpath Warden's report can be found as an addendum at the end of the minutes.

25.152 Contribution by Members of the Public
Former Chair Mr Kilbee asked if the council was going to add a plaque to commemorate the lighting of the beacon for VE Day 80. This will be a future agenda item.

25.153 To receive any pecuniary or non-pecuniary declarations of interest from Members and any Gifts of Hospitality.
None.

25.154 To consider requests for dispensations on agenda items
None.

25.155 To approve minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 10th June 2025
Approval proposed by Cllr Davies, seconded by Cllr Saunders and approved unanimously.

25.156 Matters arising from the Annual Parish Council meetings held on 10th June 2025
All covered elsewhere on the agenda.

25.157 Chairman's Report
As we reflect on the month of June, I'd like to share a brief update on council activities and draw attention to a few important items for the coming weeks.
Firstly, I'd like to thank everyone for their continued support and commitment to the work of the Parish Council. Your time, input, and dedication are greatly appreciated and make a real difference to the running of our village.
Key Updates and Reminders

- **FOF Newsletter Contributions:**
  Councillors are kindly reminded to consider content for inclusion in the next issue of the FOF newsletter. Please send any suggestions or draft entries to Jane directly for collation. These will then be reviewed and approved at the August meeting.
- **Neighbourhood Plan – Feedback Requested:**
  Ahead of a future agenda item on the Neighbourhood Plan, please feel free to share any questions or concerns you may have. I will aim to gather any necessary information in advance so we can have a well-informed discussion when it comes before the Council.
- **Coordination with FOF Meetings:**
  It has been noted that FOF also holds their meetings on Mondays. The Parish Council remains committed to ensuring there are no scheduling conflicts and to maintaining open, collaborative communication with FOF. We value our shared interest in supporting the village and will continue to work together constructively.

Acknowledgments
A special thank you to Perry for attending the County Council's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) briefing in Eye last month on behalf of the Parish Council. Your time and representation are much appreciated.

25.158 Clerk's Report

- Mr Kilbee has forwarded a report raised with Suffolk Highways regarding the damage to the road surface on the Green side of the B1113. Highways have responded to say that at this time they will not be taking further action. A new report will be raised and shared with Cllr Mellen and Andy Moore from Highways.
- The cemetery plot review needs to be completed. Cllr Saunders volunteered to help with this.
- Email received on behalf of BMSDCs regarding the local government reorganisation. Full details with agenda item 10 (25.159).

25.159 Devolution and local government reorganisation update
Cllr Saunders attended Suffolk County Council's briefing on the local government reorganisation (LGR), in Eye on 11th June, and provided the following report:
SCC emphasised that no final decisions have been made—this is the beginning of an evaluation process. SCC IS currently quantifying the actual savings they believe could be made by consolidating the existing six councils into one, two, or three unitary authorities. Once actual numbers are available this will allow decisions to be made more clearly on the future shape of Local Government and a broader consultation will take place. The projected saving mentioned are based on initial projections drawn from PwC's work with other councils.
Key Points:

- This restructuring initiative is driven by central government to streamline local governance in areas without unitary authorities. Early adopters are expected to receive the most financial support—SCC sees this as an advantage.
- SCC's **preferred model** is a single unitary authority for the county.
- Local Parish Councils expressed scepticism, particularly regarding accessibility to county councillors. SCC countered by stating that other unitary models have **increased** local representation.
- There is a clear divergence between SCC and local councils on the best path forward—each is now formulating its own proposals.

An email has been received from BMSDCs in support of either two or three unitary authorities under Local Government Reorganisation, in order for the new councils to be big enough to deliver, but still local enough to care.
Motions to this effect have now been submitted for debate at their full council meetings later this month; with similar motions also being debated by West Suffolk Council, East Suffolk Council and Ipswich Borough Council this week. This will allow all the District Councils to determine their preferred option to meet the needs of their communities – in contrast to Suffolk County Council's proposal for a single unitary council.
The geographic area which each council will cover, will form part of the further work required to develop the plans, pending the outcome of July's meetings.
The final proposal will then go to council meetings in September. If approved, it would then be submitted to the Government, which will make a final decision.

25.160 Speeding issues on the B1113 and consideration of expenditure for Suffolk Highways to commission a speed survey
Deferred to next meeting.

25.161 Churchyard Maintenance responsibility update
Ongoing; no further update at present.

25.162 Village green improvements quotations
Ongoing.

25.163 Cemetery fee review
After discussing, and taking into account fees obtained from other local cemeteries, Cllr Charter proposed approval of the following increase, with immediate effect. Seconded by Cllr Davies and approved unanimously.

	Current fee	New approved fee
First interment in a single/double depth grave	£160.00	£215.00

Re-open for Second interment	£60.00	£110.00
Memorial fee (subject to consent of the Council)	£30.00	£40.00
Further inscription fee	£15.00	£40.00
First interment of ashes	£55.00	£120.00
Re-open for second interment of ashes	£35.00	£80.00
Reserved burial plots (50 years) /Grant of Right	£100.00	£100.00 (increase approved at 10th June 2025 meeting)

ACTION – Clerk to update and publish.

25.164 **To consider additional VAS devices and approval of expenditure**
There are currently two VAS devices in the village, one fixed and the other rotated between the three remaining approved sites. A third VAS device has been ordered, kindly funded by Cllr Mellen. Councillors discussed the purchase of a fourth device in order to permanently site one on each of the approved locations. In addition, councillors discussed the purchase of a solar panel as only one of the current devices has one. A quotation of £2,250.00 plus VAT has been provided by ElanCity, who have supplied the current two devices, and the one being funded by Cllr Mellen, to ensure aesthetical continuity and compatibility of the solar panel. Cllr Charter proposed proceeding with the quotation for £2,250.00 plus VAT for one VAS device and one solar panel from ElanCity. Seconded by Cllr Saunders and approved unanimously.
ACTION – Clerk to arrange purchase as above.

25.165 **To consider donation request from Bacton Primary School**
A donation request has been received from Bacton Primary School for funding towards a residential trip to Dover. The Clerk has requested further information as no cost details, or figures regarding the number of pupils who attend the school from Finningham, have been provided. After discussing councillors agreed to defer the request until the information requested has been received.
ACTION – Clerk as above.

25.166 **To consider request for an additional village noticeboard**
At the previous meeting, the Chair of Friends of Finningham made a request for the council to consider purchasing an additional noticeboard to be positioned by the old school as you enter the village from the direction of the A143. There was a noticeboard in this location previously but it fell into disrepair and was removed. Councillors discussed the request raising concerns regarding public safety of a board in this location, and whether there is sufficient need taking into account the number of properties at this end of the parish. After further discussion, it was agreed unanimously not to approve the request for an additional noticeboard. Councillors also discussed the location of the current noticeboard which is located just off the crossroads in the centre of the village, noting that it is very close the main road. This will be discussed further at a future meeting.
ACTION – Clerk to add position of current noticeboard as a future agenda item.

25.167 **Correspondence received**
None.

25.168 **Finance**
a. RFO's report (bank balance, receipts, and payments)

Balances as of 30th May 2025
Community Bank Account: £3,783.01
Deposit Account: £10,492.74

b. Requests for payment

Clerk admin payment July	£538.56
Clerk June expenses (mileage & sight test/glasses for VDU)	£122.37
HMRC PAYE/NIC July	£134.64

Cllr Charter proposed authorisation of the above payments, seconded by Cllr Saunders and approved unanimously.
ACTION – Cllr Davies and either Cllr Winter or Cllr Trew to pay approved payments above, online, (dual authorisation).

25.169 Planning

To consider applications:

- **DC/25/02814** - Notification of works to trees in a Conservation Area - T1 Oak tree, reduce the canopy of the tree to previous pruning point by approx. 1.5-2m, remove low branch on west side of stem that is encroaching onto the main road to maintain size and shape of tree next to remove encroachment onto the carriage way. Martins, Church Lane, Finningham, IP14 4JB – councillors agreed unanimously that they have no objection to this application.
- **DC/25/02877** - Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - T1 ash-pollard due to suspected poor health to prevent branches dropping on power lines. The Old Bakery, Gislingham Road, Finningham, IP14 4HZ – councillors agreed unanimously that they have no objection to this application.
- **DC/25/02974** - Application to determine if Prior Approval is required for a proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses (C3) and for building operations reasonably necessary for conversion. Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q - Change of use of 3 no. agricultural buildings and land within their curtilage to 3 no. dwellinghouses, together with the building operations reasonably necessary to convert the buildings to dwellinghouses. Chapel Farm, Walsham Road, Finningham, IP14 4JG – after discussing councillors agreed that whilst they do not object to conversion of the buildings to dwellings, they have concerns with the application in its current form. The design of the proposed dwellings does not differentiate them from their current agricultural use, and is not in keeping with residential dwelling houses in this location.
  ACTION – Clerk to add responses to MSDC Planning Portal as above.

Decisions and to consider planning matters coming forth:

- **DC/25/02190** - Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for an Existing Use or Operation or Activity including those in breach of a Planning Condition. Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) – For existing use of static caravan come lodge annex as this has been used since the 1990s to date as you will see from past planning records and addresses to an old council tax record. Caravan at Green Lane Farm, green Lane, Finningham, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4TJ - **AWAITING DECISION.**
- **DC/25/00949** - Householder Application – Conversion of the existing garage roof space to ancillary accommodation serving the host dwelling. Construction of external staircase and insertion of roof lights and fenestration. 4 Highbank Meadow, Finningham, IP14 4TY – **GRANTED.**

25.170 To discuss date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday 11th August 2025, at 7:30pm in St. Bartholomew's Church, Finningham.

25.171 Items to be discussed at the next meeting and included in the August agenda.

As per agenda.
Security of the Green to avoid vehicles trespassing – as requested by Cllr Saunders.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8:15pm.