

BLYFORD AND SOTHERTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Minutes of meeting held on 19th May 2025 at 6.45 pm

(Immediately following the Annual Parish Meetings)

In the Meeting Room of Wenhaston Village Hall

Councillors Present: Mr G Walker, Mrs R Parry, Mr B Martin, Mrs L Sharman, Mr RW Bucknell, Mr B Goldbart, Mrs S MacDonald and Mrs A Donnachie (Clerk)

Others In Attendance: None

Public Forum: No matters were raised for discussion.

- 1 **Appointment of Chair for 2025/26:** Cllr Bucknell proposed election of Cllr Walker as Chair, this was seconded by Cllr Sharman with approval of all. Cllr Walker accepted the appointment of Chair and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- 2 The Chair proceeded to welcome everyone to the meeting.
Apologies Received & District Councillors Report: East Suffolk District Councillor Geoff Wakeling unable to attend due to prior commitments but sent his Parish Report with information on 1. Apprenticeship Opportunities in East Suffolk; 2. Government Feedback on Interim Council Proposals (shift towards a unitary council), 3. Mental Health support for young people and 4. Ease the Squeeze project to provide support for households struggling with the rise in the cost of living. Cllr Goldbart gave a short briefing on item 2. **Action: Clerk to post report on our website and Facebook.**
- 3 **Declarations of interest and any dispensations allowed:** None
- 4 **Minutes of previous meeting:** Resolution passed that minutes of Blyford and Sotherton Parish Council held on 17/03/25 approved and signed as a true record with one amendment at item 3.
- 5 **Chair and Clerk's report on progress of actions from last meeting(s):** All actions completed/designated to other Agenda items to follow.
- 6 **Review of Governance Documents:**
 - 6a Standing Orders 2025/26: Updated document reviewed, approved and adopted by council.
 - 6b Financial Regulations 2025/26: An updated version of NALC template used this year. This was reviewed, approved and adopted by Council.
 - 6c Risk Assessment and Management (financial) Action 2025/26: Reviewed by Cllr Goldbart, approved and adopted by Council. **Clerk to upload these documents to our website.**
- 7 **Finance & Preparation of documents for 2024/25 Internal Audit:**
 - 7a The Clerk as RFO presented her Report on Accounts for year ended 31/03/25. Gross income for the financial year was £6,485 of which £2,310 of Latitude receipts to be held in earmarked reserves for activities that benefit the community. Donations were taken from Latitude income included £500 to Blyford Church, £500 to Sotherton Church, £100 to Halesworth CAB; £1,400 for the Community Social event and £206 for planting of spring bulbs along Kings Lane. Total expenditure for the financial year was £7,081 being £593 lower than our total budget. On 31/03/25 the balance on account stood at £3,578 in the Current Account and £3,980 in the Latitude Account. To ensure

there were sufficient funds available to the Parish Council to meet current and future costs, the Parish Council voted unanimously to request a precept for 2025/26 of £3,700 which would reflect a 3.92% change or £1.77p change in the 2025/26 Council Tax bills against the Parish element and equating to a charge of £42.96 for a Band D property. The 2025/26 budget includes an appropriate cash reserve against ongoing and reasonably foreseeable additional expenses and restricted reserves which include Latitude monies. The Parish Council thanked the RFO for her report. No comments raised.

7b The RFO presented the Receipts, Payments & Budget Accounts for Year ending 31/03/25. Approval proposed by Cllr Parry and seconded by Cllr Goldbart with all in favour.

7c Bank Reconciliation of accounts from 13/03/25 to 31/03/2025 (end of financial year) showed balance on the current account of £3,577.66 and on the Latitude/Savings account of £3,422.99 giving a combined total on account of £7,000.65. Reconciliation checked against bank statements approved by Council and signed by Cllr Parry and Cllr Walker.

7d Bank reconciliation from 01/04/25 to 13/05/25 showed balance on current account of £7,267.66 and on the Latitude/Savings account of £4,868.14 with a combined total on account of £12,135.80. Receipts were mainly due to Precept of £3,700 and Latitude ticket sales of £1,445. Total Payments of £691 presented for approval. Payments over £100 were Clerk Salary and Allowances and SALC annual subscription of £128.21. Payments approved, reconciliation checked against bank statements, approved by Council and signed by Cllr Parry and Cllr Walker.

7e-g 2024/25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Section 2 to 31/03/25:

Page 6: The Accounting Statements 2024/25 signed by the Clerk/RFO prior to approval by the Parish Council and signed by Chair.

Page 3: As the Parish Council's gross income/expenditure for 2024/25 did not exceed £25,000 they would wish to certify themselves as exempt from a limited assurance review under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities Regulations 2015. Certificate of Exemption was approved and signed by Chair and Clerk/RFO. **Action: Clerk/RFO to forward this to external auditors.**

Page 5: The Annual Governance Statement. The Parish Council and Clerk/RFO confirmed to the best of their knowledge and belief that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for preparation of this statement for year 2024/25. Approved by Council and signed by Chair and Clerk/RFO.

7h The following documents were presented for approval by the Clerk/RFO:

Explanation of variances 2024/25: Opening balance in 2023/24 was 41% higher due to significantly lower annual spend on (donations and events) than in 2024/25.20 Total receipts increased by 290% as a result of reimbursement of purchases on behalf of Latitude restricted funds.

Asset Register & Supporting Statement: There were no asset purchases in 2024/25. Annual Inspection of Assets was carried out in 17/03/25. Total Asset value at 31/03/25 was £2,986.39. Verified, approved by Council and signed by Chair.

Reserves Policy: Revised May 2025 – Earmarked Reserves at Latitude £4,868 and elections £2,354. General Reserves at £1,600. Target Total being £8,822.£4 approved by Parish Council and signed by Chair.

7i Requests for Donations:

Donation of £250 to East Anglian Air Ambulance Service – proposed by Cllr Martin and seconded by Cllr Sharman with all in favour.

Donation of £100 to Halesworth & District Museum – proposed by Cllr Goldbart and seconded by Cllr Bucknell with all in favour.

- 8 **Planning Applications** Public Access Link: <https://publicaccess.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications>.
- 8a **New Applications:** None received.
- 8b **Update on Previous Applications:** None outstanding.
- 8c **East Suffolk Council – updated Local Development Scheme and addendum to the Waveney Local Plan 5-year Review Assessment:** Distributed to Parish Councillors and duly noted.
- 9 **Matters Arising since last meeting:** Community Orchard at the Queens Head Pub – Cllr Bucknell report that there was a delay in the delivery of two trees and he will update us on progress later in the year.
- 10 **Footpaths:** The Blyford Estate has now been sold. Proposed we look to contact the new landowner later in the year.
- 11 **Highways/Speeding issues – Police Community Speedwatch Scheme Update:** Cllr Goldbart continues to chase Police for some sort of signs between village and pub bends. Cllr MacDonald raised concerns regarding Police vehicles speeding along Southwold Road, Blyford without blue lights. *Actions: Cllr Goldart will contact the Police about this. Clerk to contact highways department regarding what sort of signage we can put up on the verges and Cllr Goldbart suggested that we invite them to a Council meeting.* All in favour.
- 12 **Defibrillator at Blyford:** Ongoing. To go on July Agenda.
- 13 **Latitude Festival 2025:** All tickets sold with a deadline for payments of 31/05/25 and waiting list for returns.
- 14 **Correspondence received:** Correspondence received was distributed to the Parish Council with items of public information posted to our website/noticeboards and no further action required.
- 15 **Parish Residents Summer Get Together:** Cllr Bucknell proposed having an event at the Herham Hall Pizza Barn on Wednesday 3rd September. The majority of the council were in favour. Cllr Bucknell to confirm availability and cost and to go on the July Agenda for final decision.
- 16 **Any Items of Information/Reports from Parish Councillors:** None.
17. **Meetings held bi-monthly at 6.30 pm, in Wenhaston Village Hall on:**
21st July; 15th September and 17th November.

The meeting ended at 8 pm