

## BLYFORD AND SOTHERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 6.30 pm

In the Committee Room of Wenhaston Village Hall

**Councillors Present:** Cllr G Walker (Chair), Cllr R Parry, Cllr B Martin, Cllr L Sharman,  
Cllr B Goldbart, Cllr S MacDonald and Mrs A Donnachie (Clerk)

**Others In Attendance:** 1 member of the public

Our thanks to a resident for attending our meeting to report damage to a stile on Blyford Lane. Some of the infrastructure of the stile (planks etc) are now missing making it difficult, if not impossible, for people to use. It drops down from the road side so, in addition, could do with a handrail. **Action: Cllr Goldbart will report the problem to Suffolk Highways.**

- 1 **Welcome, apologies and receipt of absences:** The Chair welcomed everyone and started the meeting. Apologies received from Cllr Bucknell due to work commitments abroad and accepted by the Parish Council.
- 2 **Declarations of interest and any dispensations allowed:** None
- 3 **District and County Councillors Reports:** No reports received.
- 4 **Minutes of previous meeting:** Resolution passed that minutes of Blyford and Sotherton Parish Council meeting on 17/11/25 were a true record. Proposal to approve Cllr Martin, seconded by Cllr Parry with all in favour. **Action: Clerk to publish on our website.**
- 5 **Chair and Clerk's report on progress of actions from last meeting(s):** All actions completed or designated to other Agenda items to follow.  
**Item 14 (15/09/25) Dangerous tree hazard Blyford:** Cllr Goldbart has ascertained that the tree is located within the East Suffolk Council owned car park off Southwold Road. Concerns had previously been raised by Cllr Sharman to the District Council and a reply still awaited. Cllr Wakeling had offered at our November meeting to look into this matter but unfortunately was not in attendance at this meeting. **Action: Cllr Goldbart will contact District Cllr Wakeling**  
**Item 15 (15/09/25) Move to .gov.uk website and mailbox (for Clerk):** The website is now up and running along with the mailbox. The Clerk is working with our website provider to resolve some issues with email formatting and updating information on our website. Cllr Goldbart proposed that the Council thank the Clerk for her work on this project, which was agreed with all in favour.
- 6 **Finance:**
- 6a **Bank Reconciliation from 13/11/25 to 12/12/25:** The balance on the Current Account as at 13/11/25 was £5,454.17 there were no receipts, expenditure was -£750.26 with account balance as at 12/12/25 being £4,703.91. Payments over £100 included Clerk salary and webhosting at £120. The balance on the Latitude Account as at 13/11/25 was £2,643.50 with receipts totalling £10.22 with no expenses, the account balance as at 12/12/25 was £2,655.72. Figures were verified against invoices and bank statements. Acceptance of accounts proposed by Cllr Martin, seconded by Cllr Parry with all in favour.
- 6b **Approval of Online Payments:** Clerk/RFO's salary/home office allowance/Expenses; HMRC PAYE; Suffolk Cloud Registration subscription fee of £30 for setting up .gov.uk mailbox ; Village Hall hire £27. Payments checked against invoices and approved. **Action: Clerk to make online payments.**
- 6c **Presentation of 2026/27 Budget and setting of Precept:** To ensure that the Parish Council is aware of its responsibilities and commitments and the need for forward planning and retaining adequate reserves, the Clerk as RFO presented the 2026/27 budget to the Parish Council for final approval. Although there will be increases in areas such as salaries, subscription charges and insurance, spending in other areas of the budget have been reduced to ensure adequate reserves are available to secure viability beyond the immediate future. The 2025/26 budget spend was -£7,674 with the reduced 2026/27 budget spend set at -£5,646.

**Setting of the 2026/27 Precept:** To ensure we have sufficient funds available to meet future costs, it was proposed that we request a precept of £4,100 which would show as a 10.81% change in the 2026/27 Council Tax bills against the Parish element and equating to a charge of £49.53 for a Band D property. Acceptance of setting the Precept at £4,100 was proposed by Cllr Martin and seconded by Cllr MacDonald with all in favour.  
**Action: Clerk to publish 2026/27 budget and submit Precept Request to the District Council.**

**6d Consideration of 2026/27 Parish Council Insurance Policy:** Cllr Walker proposed and Cllr Goldbart seconded renewal with our current provider who provided a comprehensive 1-year policy at a cost of £278.45.  
**Action: Clerk to contact insurers with policy due to begin on 01/03/26**

**7a&b Planning:** There were no new or outstanding planning applications to consider.

**7c East Suffolk Planning Forum 09/02/26:** The Clerk will attend this forum and report back to the Parish Council at March meeting.

**7d Local Planning Consultation from East Suffolk Council:** Consultation on how people can be involved in local planning. The draft Statement of Community Involvement can be view at <https://eastsuffolk.inconsult.uk/SCIJAN2026/consultationHome>. Submissions by 5pm Tuesday 24/02/26.  
**Action: Clerk to upload poster to our noticeboard and website.**

**8 Footpaths:** The Parish Council wrote to the Blyford Estate Manager regarding the restoring of historic footpaths and introducing permissive paths in both Blyford and Sotherton and asking if this could be raised at their next Estates meeting in December. However, at the present time they are not in a position to give any feedback concerning footpaths but this subject will form part of a wider strategic view of the estate going forward.

**9 Highways/speeding/VAR and SID signage:** Traffic speed monitoring continues on Southwold Road. Cllr Goldbart confirmed that Suffolk Highways will no longer maintain VAS signage. The Blyford VAS unit is working intermittently and may require cleaning of the solar panel or replacement batteries; Cllr Goldbart will aim to have a look at the unit. Permission asked to fix our SID unit to this post so that our one SID unit can be rotated between the 2 posts at each end of the village. If this is not feasible a request has been made to Highways to provide a second SID post. We are still awaiting a response from our Suffolk County Cllr Annette Dunning regarding painting slow warnings on Southwold Road to help reduce speeding.  
**Action: Cllr Goldbart.**

**10 Any General Correspondence Received:** Correspondence received was distributed to the Parish Council with items of public information posted to our website/noticeboards with no comments raised and no further action required.

**11 Governance Documents:** Clerk presented revised Grievance Policy and Disciplinary Policy documents for discussion and approval. Acceptance proposed by Cllr Walker and seconded by Cllr Sharman with all in favour of adoption of these policies.

**12 Any Items of Information/Reports from Parish Councillors:**

**12a** The clerk has received the December 2025 Electoral Register and reported that there had been an increase of 14 residents for Blyford and increase of 1 on for Sotherton.

**13 Dates set for 2026 meetings:**

Meetings to take place at 6.30 pm on 3rd Monday of every other month in Wenhaston Village Hall on:

16<sup>th</sup> March

18<sup>th</sup> May – Annual Parish Meeting followed by Annual General Meeting

20<sup>th</sup> July

28<sup>th</sup> September (delayed by 1 week)

16<sup>th</sup> November

**Meeting closed at 7.20 pm**