

BARHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting for the Parish of Barham held on Monday 19th May 2025, 6.30pm, held in Barham Church Hall.

PRESENT: Chairman Casey Wooltorton, Vice Chair Julie Gregory, Cllr Marilyn Lesley, Cllr Brenda Mitchell, Cllr Paul Fenn, Cllr Ian Woods, Cllr Graham Head & Cllr Bonnie Head, BMSDC Cllr John Whitehead the Clerk and 4 members of the public.

1. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20th May 2024.

These were approved correct, proposed Cllr Mitchell, seconded Cllr Lesley, signed by the Chairman.

2. To receive the Annual Report of the Parish Council Chairman

Firstly I would like to thank everyone for all their hard work this year. Although this is the second year for most of us I would still consider us quite a new parish council. A council that is still learning but also growing into the role that we have chosen to take on.

To re-cap on what we have accomplished in the last year ;

Firstly the Barham picnic site, although the site has been extremely controversial for many years, I am pleased to say that the land is now safely in the hands of the BPSCP charity, insuring its future as recreational land and can no longer be used as a "political football ", a situation that led to the land being left in such a state of disrepair!

Unfortunately, we also found ourselves on the end of a court case after the total mishandling of the site from the previous parish council. A situation that has left the Parish and its residents with very little in the way of financial security, however I believe that all of the problems we, as a new council, were left with are now, successfully, behind us and I think we can look forward to a future where we can start making plans and completing more necessary projects around the parish.

The 2nd national litter pick earlier this year was again, a great success with a number of local residents getting involved, but with a massive amount of support being provided by our very own wombles who, on a completely voluntary basis, keep the parish looking amazing, so again, I would like to thank them sincerely on behalf of the entire parish.

Finally I would like to thank Melanie our Clerk. I know that this last few years have been especially hard for her, guiding us a new councillors through the do's and don'ts of a parish council and more specifically, for sticking with us through the challenges she was forced to endure last year by a few members of the public and for allowing us the opportunity to put measures in place to protect not just her, but all of us, from having to put up with that behaviour .

Again, I would like to thank you all for your hard work and look forward to working with you all for another year.

3. To receive the Annual Finance report from the Parish Clerk for year ending 31st March 2025

The Parish Council precept remained the same as the previous year at £31,249.00. The accounts at the 31st March 2025, Barclays current account £57,449.86 and the Business Account £55,402.10. The accounts hold ring fenced money of £88,630.92 Community Infrastructure Levy and £15,000 grant received from Brett Aggregates. This ringfenced money cannot be used for the day to day running of the Parish Council Accounts. Which means that the Parish Council actually had £9,220.99 in hand at the end of the financial year. Therefore, the precept has had to be increased for the new current financial year so that the Parish Council can recoup sufficient reserves again. The financial loss was due to solicitor fees paid out for a court case relating to the picnic site.

£2,124.44 was received from the district council from the Community Infrastructure Levy and this money is to be spent within the village for the benefit of the community.

As I mentioned £88,630.92 Community Infrastructure money is currently being held and £80,000 is ringfenced for the picnic site.

A one-off grant of £1000 was made to Claydon & Barham Local Community Trust Ltd.

A contribution of £1000 was made to the Barham Picnic Site Charity towards their legal costs of the transfer of the freehold. Along with £15,000 Community Infrastructure Levy money.

The Parish Council could not afford to make any of its annual donations.

The end of year accounts have been audited by the internal auditors Heelis & Lodge and were all found to be in order.

Chairman initials.....

The Parish Council will approve the end of year accounts later on this evening at the AGM, before being sent off to the external auditors PKF Littlejohn.

The accounts will be posted on the village notice boards and website.

Thank you to the Chairman and Councillors for your support in my work, which has paid off to be far more smooth running over the past year.

4. To receive the report of the Suffolk County Councillor – Chris Chambers. No report.

5. To receive the reports of the District Councillors – David Penny and John Whitehead.

Report has been received and forward to all ahead of the meeting (appended to the minutes and available on the PC website).

Cllr Whitehead outlined some key points regarding the proposed Local Government Re-organisation and the introduction of a Mayor. This would create a Unitary Council. Currently there are 403 district and county councillors. This will reduce to 120 should a Unitary Council go ahead. Therefore the workload of those councillors will have to increase.

6. To receive the following reports;

Church Warden read out the report on behalf of the Claydon & Braham PCC.

Chair of the Barham Picnic Site Community Project read out his report on behalf of the charity.

Further written reports have been received from Barham Village Hall Committee, Claydon High School and The Wombles.

All of the village reports are appended to the minutes and are available to see on the PC website.

7. Any Other Business. None

The meeting closed at 6.50pm.

Chairman.....

Date:.....

Appendix 1

Claydon & Barham Parochial Church Council report to the Barham Parish Council 2025

The Church, whilst situated in Barham, is the Parish Church for the people of Claydon and Barham excepting Barham Green which fall in the Ecclesiastical Parish of Henley. Having been without a Rector for 4 years we were very pleased to welcome the Rev Tracey Caswell as our Rector in February 2024 to serve Claydon & Barham as well as Gt Blakenham and Henley

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Rector in promoting within the ecclesiastical Parish of Claydon and Barham the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is a Charity and the vast majority of its income to cover annual costs comes from the giving of those who attend or support the Church. We also engage in fundraising to maintain the beautiful grade 1 listed building. . Like many organisations, it took some time to get back to normal following the pandemic and the lockdown

As well as serving those who wish to attend Church as part of their Christian faith, we are pleased to be involved in serving the wider community. Our three main fundraising events – the Summer Fete, Barham Hall Band Concert and the Christmas Experience, whilst raising money for either the maintenance of the ancient building or other charities, are very much social events for the whole community. Each Friday morning there is a free drop-in session in the Church hall that is open to all. Originally this was created as a warm space in the depth of the energy crisis but it has become established more as a gathering for those who mainly live alone and value the company – a small contribution to tackling social isolation. Every Sunday evening, we organise the Soup Kitchen in Ipswich serving hot soup, tea and coffee, and sandwiches etc to between 20 and 30 people who would otherwise go hungry. Whilst this has been organised by our Church under the overall umbrella of Ipswich Outreach for years, many of the volunteers and supporters come from the wider community here and surrounding villages. Each August we hold a 3-day holiday club which usually attracts around 80 primary school aged children. Whilst there is a small charge of £15 to cover costs, we offer assistance to any family for whom this is unaffordable. The Church is open to visitors from 10am to 4pm every day and houses a branch of the Bacon Road free library with a large selection of books and puzzles.

Part of our responsibility is the maintenance of our two open Churchyards and the closed Churchyard around Claydon Church. This work is carried out by a combination of voluntary work by Church members and the employment of Realise Futures a social business supporting adults with disabilities and/or difficulties. In the year ending December 2024 the PCC spent over £2000 on the Churchyards. As the Churchyards are an asset for the whole community, we have traditionally sought and received a contribution from each of the two Parish Councils for this purpose. Unfortunately, due to its own financial difficulties, Barham Parish Council was unable to give us financial support last year but we are pleased that they have made a grant of £800 in the current year which is much appreciated.

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Appendix 3

Report from Claydon and Barham Village Hall

It feels like a fair time since I last sent Barham PC a report about how things are at Claydon and Barham Village Hall. Now let me see. OK let's run through a few things we have done or planning to do in the hall since we were last in touch. • We have built a permanent extension to the stage. This is a shapely thing with rounded corners and a smooth black surface. It means that we don't have to pull up the previous three heavy flaps and fold down the supporting legs to extend the acting area. It has transformed things for Bar-Clay Music Makers and really looks neat. There are built-in cubby holes (with doors) along the front that can take the speakers for the BMM pantos or used in between times for storage. • While we are near the stage we should mention that we are getting new main curtains (in a nice shade of red) and a new set of 'next row back' curtains (in blue). Getting new curtains is long overdue since nobody can remember quite when they were fitted in the first place. * Down the side of the hall are the toilets. The roof to the toilet block has been completely refurbished - new boards where needed and fresh felt of the highest standard. This should last a good long time. • Moving to the committee room, we are replacing the carpet, which is looking a bit 'tired'. Of the three companies who quoted, Hart's Carpets provided the most detailed response, which we accepted. This involves removing the existing carpet and then disposing of some 'asbestos' tiles beneath and then laying a membrane before putting the new carpet on top. Maintaining an old building sometimes involves some serious stuff. Should be good when done. The job starts on May 14. • Now let's walk into the kitchen. Just three small additions here: a new first aid kit hanging on a hook where it is very visible and hence easy to find, a pull out rack for drying tea towels, and a carbon monoxide monitor next to the boiler (which is working well at the moment). • Looking through the kitchen door window reveals a view of the decidedly unattractive concrete alleyway leading to the stage door. Well that's all going to change because we have there quotes in to tidy it up and lay resin gravel in a shade yet to be decided. • That's concludes the tour of the building. Now what do the bookings look like? I have in front of me printouts of the hall booking calendars for April, May and June. True there are some white gaps but there's a lot of red showing the main hall is being used and some green for the committee room, although not a huge amount of those it is true to say. In red there are the longstanding hirers such as Yoga, Baby Massage (Bendy Beans), Gipping School of Dance, Claydon Brownies, Young Families, Slimming World, Sound Bath, Community Cuppa and First Aid sessions. There haven't been many children's parties lately, maybe because all the children in the area have grown up. We did have a booking under the title 'Painting and Prosecco' (or the other way round). You can imagine what they got up to and the tables were certainly very sticky afterwards. Less frequently we host table tennis sessions and Claydon Parish Council meetings. There is still available capacity but we are keeping our heads above water finance-wise so that's encouraging. • An outstanding use of the hall came in January for the annual BMM panto (which was Beauty and the Beast). Six shows, 480 seats sold out and a free performance on the middle Wednesday for local people with physical or mental disabilities. The hall really does turn into a brilliant little theatre for these shows, as it has done so for more than 50 years.

Appendix 4

Report Claydon High School

Remain a very popular school, it is the 6th year in a row that we have had over 300 applications for 149 spaces in year 7. We have numerous applications for students wanting to move 'in year' to us. • We continue to work with Claydon Primary School to move to an all through school. This is an incredibly exciting and groundbreaking piece of work in Suffolk. • Between us and the primary school we have begun work on an exciting project to create an allotment/orchard/garden for our students. We have had 15 fruit trees donated by the Woodland Trust, one of our students won a competition for a Polyeco dome greenhouse and we have been successful in a bid from Suffolk County Council. Any support with this project would be amazing. • In school we continue to support our students through excellent teaching and learning as well as an array of trips and visits. • As always if anyone would like to learn more then please contact my PA to book a meeting or a tour.

Appendix 5

Report Wombles of Barham and Claydon

The Wombles continue to be busy around the two villages.

Before Covid we used to meet regularly as a group, but since then we have continued to look after our own patches. Every two weeks Margaret Harrison picks in Pesthouse Lane, Lower Crescent and along the A 14 Crescent footpath.

Anne Douglas picks along Sandy Lane often up as far as the Hemingstone boundary.

And regularly along the Old Norwich Road from the Sorrell Horse down to Wade's Windows.

Clare Thomas and friend clear up around Barham Green.

Sheila Weston and Daphne MacGregor work around Claydon and Station Road in Claydon.

Gill Chapman works in Claydon and Barham and last year took over the Old Norwich Road for Anne while she was recovering from foot surgery.

Jenny Moxon has recently been able to offer her help as a Womble again and we welcome her back.

Other members such as Mark MaCalmont and Elizabeth Paton and Sharon Edmonds help when they can depending on work commitments.

Louise Newson is a new Womble from Claydon but offers to help in Barham too. She has a friend who helps.

Paula is no longer able to be a Womble. We are grateful for her hard work in the past.

We took part in the big British clean up. We promised 10 bags. Two councillors Bonnie and Graham along with Margaret did a wonderful job of cleaning up the Old Norwich Road from the Sorrel Horse to the Woodyard. They collected several bags of rubbish.

As many of us are older retired people we hope younger and more able people will become Wombles in the future. Once the house building is finished, Anne suggests leafletting the residents for help.

The Mid Suffolk Realm officer Sarah and her colleagues regularly supply us with bags and pickers.

We have recently received funding from Barham Parish Council for hoops.

Appendix 6

Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Annual Report (2024/25) For Barham Annual Parish Meeting 2025

- **New devolution and local government reform affecting Mid Suffolk**

Following on from the election of the new Labour government in July 2024, the new government has proposed widescale changes across the UK regarding devolution and council re-organisation. This includes two proposals affecting Suffolk as a whole, including Mid Suffolk District Council, which may lead to its eventual abolition.

The first proposal is a strategic authority covering both Norfolk and Suffolk, which is likely to have a directly elected Mayor for both counties, and an increase in local powers for Suffolk. The election for this Mayor is currently scheduled to take place in May 2026.

The second is the re-organisation of the current two-tier system within Suffolk into either a single or multiple Unitary Authorities, where all of the council's general services are run by one coherent entity. Should this proposal go ahead, it will likely result in the abolition of MSDC in the late 2020s. Suffolk has applied to be on the fast-track for this scheme, which has resulted in the postponement of the Suffolk CC elections that were due to take place in May 2025. The election for any new authorities is currently unclear but is likely to be held after the Mayor election, in May 2027.

Talks for both are currently an ongoing matter, although new information will likely be updated frequently throughout the year.

- **Budget**

For 2024/25, net expenditure on services was budgeted at £18.5 million with a 2% increase in council tax. Council home rents increased by 7% and sheltered housing service charges also increased. This had been done to ensure the Council could afford the repairs and maintenance that are needed. All these increases were due to inflation, costs of energy and other cost increases.

The Council has reserves of over £28 million as at the end of the financial year plus an expected dividend from the Gateway 14 business park. Plans for this are on a variety of work including new foot/cycle paths, land for biodiversity and green spaces, regeneration of Stowmarket town centre, improved sports provision in the district and enabling community-led housing.

Approval was also given to increasing council tax on empty homes in 2024/25 and implementing increased council tax on second homes in 2025/26.

For the 2025/26 budget, recently agreed in the February council meeting, the administration committed to a capital programme of £36m for the district, which is partially funded by the council's reserves. This includes investment in health facilities, primarily including the ongoing SHELF project, investment into new skills and innovation within the district, and an increase in funding for the communities across Mid Suffolk's smaller towns and villages. In addition to these spending plans, there was also no planned increase in council tax, which was frozen at its current rate of £175.03 for a Band D property. Finally, the council is additionally estimated to have a surplus of £2.4m at the end of the financial year.

- **Thriving towns and villages**

As part of Mid Suffolk's Rural Transport Grant Scheme, two new community transport routes were launched, utilising the council's new Taxi Bus scheme, connecting Stowmarket with the surrounding villages and communities across Mid Suffolk. Initially, there were the two routes looping around villages of Mid Suffolk, beginning in Stowmarket, the first of these goes via Thurston, the second via Bacton, with further communities eventually being added, including Eye and Debenham. These have allowed for further connectivity between the villages across Mid Suffolk and Stowmarket in the heart of the District.

- **Environmental sustainability**

Mid Suffolk District Council previously launched their Cosy Homes scheme for Winter 2024, which included plans to improve insulation and energy efficiency within private homes across Mid Suffolk. This is a readily available scheme for residents and has made great progress in improving energy efficiency and sustainability across homes.

- **Planning and Housing**

Over the last year, Part 1 of Mid Suffolk and Babergh's Joint Local Plan (JLP), which was first created back in November 2023, had its first year of full operation. The purpose of the plan was to provide essential clarity for communities about how the district was to develop until 2037, and assisted in allowing for a structured response to housing and planning targets, of which Mid Suffolk had always excelled at, and delivered Mid Suffolk's aim of 535 new houses annually. In January 2025, the plan has since come under review, as a result of new housing targets set out by national government. Whilst MSDC have previously exceeded with housebuilding targets, there is a possibility that the new national housebuilding guidelines take priority over the JLP if the council cannot prove there is a 5-year land supply for housing.

- **Supporting the community**

We support local events and community groups where we can and particularly link local groups with external fundraising via the Mid Suffolk community team. Almost £550,000 was allocated by Mid Suffolk District Council Direct to communities across the district from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

- **Locality Budget spends in the Claydon and Barham ward**

To provide some idea of how Cllr John Whitehead and Cllr David Penny localities can be used, during the last financial year we have shared our budgets equally on the projects below:

Project	Amount allocated (each)
2 picnic benches for Coddendam Recreation Ground The Coddendam Centre	£510
Contribution towards Musical Journeys project Orchestras Live	£250
Provision of outside bench and cycle rack for Henley Community Centre Henley Parish Council	£1,165
Support towards 3R's community events Coddendam Parish Council	£250
Support towards upgrade of alarm/CCTV system Coddendam Community Shop Ltd	£500
Support towards "Community Cuppa" Claydon & Barham Good Neighbour Scheme	£150
Support towards Country Club improvements Coddendam Country Club	£2255.37
Stage matting for Henley Community Centre Henley Community Centre Ltd	£705.93
New double sink for Hemingstone Hut Hemingstone Hut	£370
Replacement sleepers for Broom Hill Coddendam Parish Council	£192.07
Volunteer equipment Save the Gipping	£995
Total	£7343.37

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