

Shimpling Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Council

Monday 12th January 2026, 7:00pm at Shimpling Village Hall

Present:

Councillors: Gerry Shrimpton, Mark Milhench (Chair), Laurence Rooke, Jen O'Reilly-Turner, Laurence Rooke, Liz Brunwin

District Councillors: Stephen Plumb

Clerk: Natasha Byford

1.1 **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Kemp, Cllr Holt and Cllr Dunkley, these were noted and accepted.

2 **Declarations of Members Interest(s):**

To receive disclosure of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest(s) including gifts of hospitality in excess of £25: None received.

To consider requests for dispensation for the agenda item(s) under discussion: None received.

3 **Public Participation session**

No members of the public (MOP) attended.

4 **Approval of minutes of the previous meeting:**

a) The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 10th November 2025 were approved.

Action: Clerk to publish these on the website and Social Media.

b) The Chair noted that these are discussed in the agenda at different points so didn't require a separate discussion.

5. **Chair's report:**

Cllr Dunkley's sent out the below report from his last couple of months as Chair:

Let me offer my best wishes to everyone for 2026 and hope that you had a pleasant holiday period.

On that theme, the village green Christmas decorations again looked very festive and many thanks to all who made that possible, including the set-up, provision of the tree and the electricity for the lights.

A new supplier has been found to support the installation of the EV chargers and although we were hoping to hear from them before Christmas this did not happen. Hopefully 2026 will be more successful in completing this work.

The installation of InPost storage lockers at the village hall was halted following concerns from some villagers. Although the number was small, they represented those most likely to be affected by the installation. Going forward, obtaining acceptable answers to their genuine concerns will be necessary to enable the project to re-start.

The final draft of the Neighbourhood Plan was issued to the Parish Council at the November meeting and was accepted. The public consultation on the plan will begin on the 17th January kicked off by an open event at the village hall. The consultation continues for 6 weeks, following which the plan, with any changes, goes to Babergh DC for evaluation.

Information of the potential local government reorganisation is still being disseminated but, as yet, no decision has been announced.

6. District Councillors report:

Cllr Plumb read their report and there were no further questions. There was a small discussion on the new bin idea, the increase of parking fees and the warm home Suffolk grants. The report is in Appendix A below.

Cllr Plumb left the meeting at 7:20pm.

7. County Councillors report:

Cllr Kemp sent his report prior to the meeting and there were no further questions. The report is in Appendix B below.

8. Village Hall:

a) Cllrs received the following report on behalf of the VHC;

Finance - we continue to plan and hold events that generate a modest income for the running of village hall.

In 2025 due to such fund-raising events and regular sessions, we just have had sufficient funds to cover regular running cost commitments including those taken on from the Parish Council in 2024, an annual cost of over £3500.

Village Hall Regular Expenses 2025-6

WIFI - 999 networks (direct debit monthly)

Electric - EDF (direct debit monthly)

Water - WAVE (direct debit monthly)
Cleaning - weekly
Fire Alarm Service (6 monthly - to comply with Regulations Aug & Feb)
Fire Extinguisher Service - Annual - Aug
PAT testing (yearly - July)
MPLC Umbrella Licence (annual - Oct)
Bank Charges
Electrical Safety Testing (EICR) (every 5 years) last done 2022
Fire Risk Assessment (yearly - currently done as self-assessment)

With the installation of the solar panels, we have already seen a reduction in the energy bills compared with last years. The export tariff has now started to make an impact; we had no energy expenditure in Sept and Oct and are in credit circa £200.

The hall continues to be used by the Parish Council and the PCC free of charge.

(PC - 12 hours, Neighbourhood Plan - 6 hours and PCC - 18 hours in 2024-5)

Regular Events – The regular classes of Pilates and Zumba will restart in Jan after the Christmas break and the WI continue to use the hall on alternate months for their meeting.

Film nights attendance continues to cover the costs of the film licence and film rental; it is valued by the regulars. Mulled wine and mince pies were served at the Christmas film session on the 16th of December.

The Rural Coffee Caravan continues to attract a good attendance, with the charity bringing their van, advice and expertise to the village in 2025. A representative from Babergh Customer services has been in attendance helping residents with council related issues.

Other activities

“Vernon’s Quiz” was held on the 15th of November complete with fish and chip supper and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. It also generated a small profit.

The Christmas Pottery event was held on Saturday 22nd November with a focus on Christmas decorations and 20 people attended from around the area.

We also live streamed the New Wolsey Theatre Pantomime on the 27th of December and again this was great fun for the families who attended.

A full-sized table tennis table with bats and balls is available to hire at short notice if the hall is free. In addition, a pool table and other games have recently been donated by residents. During half term this was free to encourage families to use the hall, and we had 2 groups book sessions. We plan to do this every half term to encourage use.

Other Future Events

The next Arts & Crafts session will be on the 21st March - a Spring Wreath making session.

Maintenance & Improvement Projects

As previously highlighted, the external maintenance and redecoration will need to be done ideally next summer. Our regular cleaner John Sinclair has provided a quote for Parish Council approval to undertake further internal works and we await approval.

We still await confirmation of the installation of the EV car Charger point and the In Post Lockers - both which will generate income for the hall.

- b) Members discussed the options of cladding or rendering the end wall of the Village Hall. The quotations they received were too expensive to consider and it was decided to try and get a working party together to complete the works with just material costs.

Action: Cllr Milhench to try and get a working party together for the works to be done during the summer.

9. Responsible Finance Officer's Finance Report:

- 9a) The Clerk gave a finance report, details of which were circulated to members prior to the meeting. The Clerk stated which invoices (please see below) needed to be paid.

Leaving balances as follows:

Treasurers Account	£4,711.85
Business Account	£18,300.70
Including CIL of	£3,061.56
Earmarked Reserves of	£6,718.60
General Reserves of	£8,929.18

- 9b) To acknowledge payments made outside the meeting

Insurance (Clear Councils) £1,119.67

(LGA 1972, s.111)

Lark Valley Footpath/Hedge Cutting £465.00

(PHA, 1875, s.164)

Lark Valley Footpath/Hedge Cutting £741.60

(PHA, 1875, s.164)

- 9c) The following amounts were approved for payment:

- **Clerk's Net salary before Tax £560.76**
- **HMRC Tax payment £77.20**
- **Clerk's expenses (Fuel, stamps) £8.55**
LGA 1972 s. 111 (ancillary Powers)
- **Renewal of .gov.uk domain and 8 mailboxes £243.50**
(LGA 1972, s.111)

The above payment schedule was approved by members.

- 9d) The Clerk noted that the Council have received money from bank interest £9.62 (Nov) and £8.72 (Dec). We have received £325 for newsletter advertising in 2026.

10. Clerks Report: A full copy of the Clerk's report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The following matters were considered for resolution:

a) Summary of Progress: During the period (3rd Nov 25 – 4th Jan 26), I have worked 4 hours 0 minutes under the given time frame of 5 hours per week, this included organising all the paperwork for the January meeting, agendas, actions from the November meeting, organising payments, as well as general administration.

11. Neighbourhood Plan:

Cllr Dunkley sent over the following report regarding the NP:

Following the NP being approved at the meeting on 10th November, the document has been refined ready for public perusal. No changes to wording or information have been made, just the formatting had been improved ready for publication.

An A3 document, which you will have already seen by now, has been distributed to every house in the Parish. It explains where we are with producing the NP, some key information from the plan and what will happen from here. It also says where a full version of the draft plan can be obtained.

Backing the document will be an event at the village hall on the 17th January where villagers will be able to see more details and have any questions answered. This will be similar in format to the kick-off event held some years ago.

The 17th is the start of a 6-week consultation period. During this time villagers and other interested parties will be able to comment on the plan. When the consultation ends on Mar 2nd the plan will be updated, if necessary, and then sent to Babergh District Council. It is then out of our hands as it is evaluated against the Local Plan and national plans.

This will either lead to acceptance, in which 'great', or rejection. The latter could be for a number of reasons, most likely around making some changes to the plan. However, it is unlikely the whole plan will be rejected.

Following the event on the 17th a report on the day will be provided to the council.

It was noted the some of the Village seemed to be missing off the plan but this query would be taken to the event on the 17th.

12. Planning:

Planning Decisions:

- a. DC/24/04287 - Rectory Cottage, Old Rectory Lane, Shimpling, Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP29 4HQ - Full Planning Application - Erection of 1No replacement dwelling including enhancement of 5 acre horse paddock (existing dwelling to become Bat Habitat) – Awaiting decision

Planning Applications:

- b. DC/25/05339 - Stable Barn, Thorne Court, Cockfield, Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP30 0JN - Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Change of Use of Buildings on Agricultural Units and former Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses (Class C3), which may include extension of the building and/or building operations reasonably necessary for the conversion The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q - Conversion of Stable Barn to 1no. dwellinghouse

13. Playground

In November members discussed the playground inspection report and it was agreed to try and get a quotation to complete the medium risk items. The Clerk has not managed to get quotations from anyone to do any work. It was suggested to ask other Parishes, SALC or the Clerk forum to ask who they get to do playground remedial work.

Action: Clerk to find companies/people to ask and then get together quotations for playground remedials.

14. EV Charger

The Clerk let members know that currently this was on hold due to connect kerb having new suppliers to install these EV chargers.

Action: Clerk to keep Cllrs informed of any progress on this.

15. Village Defibrillator

Cllr Milhench updated members that he would bring costings for the renting of the 2 defibs (one at The Bush and one at the Village Hall) to the March meeting.

Action: Cllr Milhench to look into firm costings for the renting of two defibrillators for the Village.

16. Parking Mesh

Members approved up to £500 (ex VAT) spend on 20m x 4m grass matting to the verge from the bottle banks to the 30mph repeater sign, near the Bush, used as an overflow carpark. It was thought the PC should ask The Bush for a contribution towards this.

Action: Clerk to send round draft wording for an email to the pub and Cllr Milhench to look into firm costings for this.

17. Remembrance

Members discussed this further and it was agreed that there was already a war memorial at the Church, that we did not need to duplicate this, but instead encourage individuals to go to the Church to see the memorial.

18. Chair:

Members discussed that Cllr Dunkley planned on stepping down at the end of the PC year in May. They noted what a wonderful job Chair Dunkley does. Members said they would consider what might happen going forwards, with Cllr Milhench discussing the role with Cllr Dunkley.

19. InPost Lockers:

Clerk noted that she received email correspondence to say that Shimpling is likely not viable for a location.

20. Correspondence Received:

Email regarding the missing Shimpling Village sign at Aveley Lane, near Aveley House. Clerk will report this to Highways.

Action: Clerk to report the missing sign to Highways.

21. Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the council:

Cllr O'Reilly-Turner noted that there were 200 trees planted today at the top of borders field and the PC wanted to say thank you for all the hard work to all that were involved. The PC would like to invite the Environmental group to attend March's PC meeting to give an update of what they have been up to.

Cllr O'Reilly-Turner noted that the heat survey would be going ahead at the end of January and that it tied in with the warm home and insulation grants. She would send round information to the Village.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 8:35pm

Appendix A: District Councillors report:

Council leaders back 'Suffolk to the Power of Three' option as part of local government reorganisation consultation

Suffolk residents, businesses and local organisations are being urged to take part in a once in a generation opportunity to shape how council services are delivered for their local communities.

The Government's statutory consultation on LGR is now open, but people only have until 11 January to respond, so we would be grateful for your help in ensuring that your communities are aware.

The consultation seeks views on the two proposals submitted for Suffolk: the Three Councils for Suffolk case submitted jointly by the district and borough councils, and One Suffolk, submitted by Suffolk County Council.

You can find out more on the Three Councils for Suffolk website, including the benefits of our case for businesses, residents, town and parish councils and for the voluntary and community sector.

In addition to our case in full, there are also Q&As which may help you respond to queries from residents. The site also includes a link to the One Suffolk website to ensure awareness of both cases.

Suffolk residents urged to apply quickly for free home energy upgrades

Suffolk residents living in properties which are not energy efficient, could be eligible for funding to make their homes warmer and reduce their energy bills, thanks to Warm Homes Suffolk.

Upcoming grant deadline

The application window for the Community Development Fund will close on 18 January 2026. Up to £10,000 can be applied for to help deliver capital, revenue or pre-project activities. All the information you need can be found on our community funding page.

Starting 2026 with fully funded training to strengthen local organisations

Community Action Suffolk is offering four fully funded training courses designed to strengthen the capacity of local organisations and build strength for the future. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have supported this training by making use of the Shared Prosperity Fund. Find all the training sessions on the Community Action Suffolk website.

Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan progress overview

Sustainable Suffolk has shared the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan progress overview, giving an insight into the work done since the plan was published in 2021.

Included within the document is a breakdown of lots of work carried out by partner organisations, which includes our council.

Visit the Sustainable Suffolk website to find out more, or read the progress overview document.

Appendix B: County Councillors report:

Information Updates

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safetyadvice-in-the-community/preparing-for-flooding>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

Winter weather conditions

Welcome to 2026! We are now in the heart of UK Winter, this means we may face challenging weather conditions including snow and ice, these are a few tips to help everyone stay safe:

Check on neighbours and elderly, see if they have enough heat or if they need and shopping. Check garages and sheds in case any domestic animals have crept in for warmth and found themselves locked inside

When leaving home on foot or driving:

Before You Leave

- ✓ Check weather and road conditions and delay travel if storms are severe.
- ✓ Dress in layers and bring warm clothing, gloves, a hat, and waterproof footwear.
- ✓ Prepare a winter emergency kit:
 - o Blanket or sleeping bag
 - o Water and high-energy snacks
 - o Flashlight
 - o Phone charger / power bank
 - o Ice scraper and snow brush
- ✓ Make sure your vehicle is winter-ready:
 - o Proper tire tread (winter tires if possible)
 - o Full fuel tank
 - o Working brakes, lights, and heater

Walking in Snow & Ice

- ✓ Wear shoes with good traction.
- ✓ Take short, careful steps and keep hands free for balance.
- ✓ Walk on cleared, treated paths when possible.

Most Important Rule If conditions feel unsafe, don't push it. Turning back or waiting it out can prevent serious injury.

Review of SEND progress

On Thursday 4 December, the council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee convened to scrutinise progress on the action plan for improvement to Suffolk's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services.

The action plan was developed following a poor inspection report from Ofsted and CQC in November 2023. Council officers and Cabinet members for children's services joined the meeting and acknowledged that although progress had been made to clear the backlog of EHCPs and improve the waiting times to produce them and review them annually, many families had not yet felt the benefit of improvements the council and health partners were trying to embed. The Cabinet member for Education and SEND apologised at the meeting for this. It was noted that some issues, like the shortage of speech and language therapists, were a national issue rather than specific to Suffolk.

The council is also working closely with the Department for Education and in partnership with Bedford Borough Council on best practice and support with strategy. The government's Schools white paper, which is expected to include an overhaul of the SEND system nationally, is expected soon in 2026. Members of the committee included education professionals and parents of children with special educational needs who expressed their concern that the council was still not providing a good enough service to Suffolk families.

Warm Homes in Suffolk

At the end of November 2025, Suffolk County Council secured £1.38 million from the government's Warm Homes Local Grant Fund, which means Suffolk residents living in properties which are not energy efficient could be eligible for funding to make their homes warmer and reduce their energy bills. Residents and landlords are urged to apply quickly, as the funding must be allocated by the end of March 2026.

The fund aims to provide free energy saving improvements to energy inefficient homes if residents are on a low income, receive certain benefits or live in a certain postcode area. This could be wall and loft insulation, solar panels or air source heat pumps. To be eligible, Suffolk homes must be privately owned (either by you or your landlord) and have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of D, E, F or G (you can find this out when you apply). Household income must usually be £36,000 a year or less - but if you earn more than that, you might still be eligible if either:

- you live in a certain postcode area (certain areas of Beccles, Felixstowe, Ipswich, Lowestoft and Stowmarket)
- someone in your household is getting certain benefits
- you have a severe or long-term health condition, which is adversely affected by living in a cold home

Once these conditions have been approved, an assessment of your home will identify which measures are best suited to your property. These will then be installed by trusted contactors, for free. You can find out more and apply using this link: <https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/>

In addition, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk council have teamed up to provide Winter Warmth Packs to help vulnerable residents stay warm and healthy at home even if they are struggling with rising living costs. Referrals are via community groups, food banks, GP surgeries or hospitals and each pack includes items such as thermal hats, gloves, blankets and gilets, tailored as necessary – for example, children's winter coats can be included. Although the Warm Homes Healthy People programme is delivered by East Suffolk Council, it is a county-wide programme.

Protecting Suffolk's Rivers

At council on Thursday 11 December, my group proposed a motion to strengthen protection for rivers in the county via the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers which include the right to flow naturally, be free from pollution or contamination and the right to recover from environmental harm. Councillors in the group and those from other groups at the council spoke passionately about rivers and the harm being done to them by sewage and agricultural and highways run off.

Unfortunately, the Conservative group opted to vote against the motion and it was not carried. Other motions tabled at the meeting including writing to the government to protest the recent budget announcements, a motion criticising the council's record on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the importance of local Post Offices.

Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan

At Cabinet on Tuesday 2 December, preparation arrangements were agreed for the county's Minerals and Waste plan, which is now five years old and due for renewal.

The plan looks at the county's needs and decides what planning measures need to be taken to meet them – for example, aggregates such as sand and gravel which are necessary for housebuilding. As the government has announced high targets for housing in Suffolk, the amount of these materials needed will be higher than before.

As the Local Government Reorganisation process means that Suffolk County Council will likely not exist by the time the plan is due to be adopted, the decision made by Cabinet was to undertake all the prep work and gather evidence for it so that the new authority/ies who have to publish the plan will be well-placed to do so once established.

New Funding for Buses and Sustainable Travel

Suffolk has been awarded £27m of funding for bus services from the government's Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG), this can be used for routes, ticketing or improving infrastructure like bus stops and shelters. Previously known as the Bus Services Improvement Grant, communities in Suffolk will be able to suggest improvements in their area and 'bid' for funding via the Suffolk on Board website: <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/>

The council has also been awarded just over £12m from Active Travel England to promote sustainable travel in the county. This can be used to invest in footpaths, cycle lanes and other infrastructure. Examples of how this funding has been used recently include pedestrian crossings in Bridge Street and College Road by Ipswich waterfront and improved cycle routes including from Ipswich Hospital to the waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and within Woodbridge as part of the town's current active travel project. Cllr Chris Chambers, the Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy at the council, said it was important for the council to develop a network of measures to encourage people out of the car wherever possible in order to reduce congestion and pollution.

Helping Older Drivers Stay Safe

Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service are holding workshops at fire stations around the county to advise older people on how they can stay safe while driving. Nationally, one in four car drivers killed on the roads last year were aged 70 or over, and as a rural county, many residents are reliant on cars to stay independent. The sessions are planned at the following venues for 11am-1pm:

- Tuesday 13 January – Woodbridge Fire and Police Station
- Wednesday 14 January – Stradbroke Fire Station
- Tuesday 27 January – Wrentham Fire and Police Station
- Wednesday 28 January – Ixworth Fire Station
- Tuesday 10 February – Holbrook Fire Station

To book a free place, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/suffolk-fire-rescue-service-road-safety86298781223?msocid=1b58e35a30906c973b40f56031016d19>