

Shimpling Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Council

Monday 9th March 2026, 7:00pm at Shimpling Village Hall

Present:

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

District Councillors: Stephen Plumb, Michael Holt

County Councillors: Richard Kemp

Clerk: Natasha Byford

1.1 **Apologies for absence:** None

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**

Three 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 12th January 2026 were approved.

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

b) The Clerk 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:

Before I get to the business since our last meeting, I would like to say how good it is to see our County Councillor Richard Kemp and to congratulate him on his impending retirement.

Richard has been a friend to Shimpling over many years and has supported us both

financially and with sound advice. We will miss his candid comments and general good humour, whatever the situation. Thank you, Richard.

Whilst I am giving thanks, as you know this will be last meeting as Parish Council Chair, and I would like to say thank you to my fellow councillors, our clerk Natasha and to our other council colleagues, Richard, Mike and Stephen, for your support during my time in the role.

On with business, the main event during the past 6 weeks has been the public consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan. This began on the 17th January and concluded on 3rd March. Although the number of responses was disappointingly lower than expected, it is what it is. A report will be produced on the responses collating the comments received, which I believe were generally positive. The plan has now gone to Babergh and other organisations and their responses to it will be shared as they come in.

The new supplier for the installation of the EV chargers has been in contact and will be looking to do a site survey. They have obviously decided to ignore the work previously done, but that is, of course, down to them.

6. District Councillors report:

Cllr Holt read their report and there were no further questions. There was a small discussion on training on the new waste regulations and Councillors expressed an interest in this. The report is in Appendix A below.

Cllrs Plumb and Holt left the meeting at 7:13pm.

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.

Cllr Kemp left the meeting at 7:44pm

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.

Over the last 2-3 years the successful fundraising events have led to the healthy bank balance which we have been able to maintain and cover general running costs. We now also benefit from the reduction in electricity costs thanks to the solar panels. The recent cost of the repairs to the lighting (failed switch)

was covered by the VH account. However, It is not sufficient to cover large maintenance and repair costs.

Hall Usage

Private Bookings - we have had two bookings for local resident's children's birthday parties since the last report, and the Halifax Trust held one of its biannual meetings.

Alpheton PC (meeting) and Babergh (May Elections) have also booked the hall in 2026

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

Film nights attendance continues to cover the costs of the film licence and film rental; it is valued by the regulars. As attendance was low in January (cold, dark and wet were some of the non-attendance reasons from regulars) the committee decided to hold the Feb and Mar film sessions in afternoons - as matinees.

The Rural Coffee Caravan continues to attract a good attendance, with the charity bringing their van, advice and expertise to the village in 2025/6. A representative from Babergh Customer services has been in attendance helping residents with council related issues.

Other activities

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 Feb half term hall hire was free to encourage families to use it, and we had 4 groups book sessions - an increase on last half term. We will do this at half terms to encourage use.

Future Events

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

Maintenance & Improvement Projects

The 6 monthly check of the Fire Alarm system and safety lights was carried out in Feb and no problems were identified. The certificates have been forwarded to the PC Clerk.

As previously highlighted, the external maintenance and redecoration should ideally be done during the summer.

In the meantime, we have planned to do a VH spring clean on the 5th of March - this will also include the identification of any items no longer needing to be kept by the VH.

We still await confirmation of the installation of the EV car Charger point which will hopefully generate income for the hall.

- b) Cllr Milhench reported to the group that it was too early to get a working party together. May time would be best to do these works.

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	£6,190.25
Business Account	£18,318.31
Including CIL of	£3,061.56
Earmarked Reserves of	£7,000.00
General Reserves of	£8,929.18

9b) To acknowledge payments made outside the meeting

- **Parish Online Subscription** **£48.00**
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Newsletter** **£262.20**
(LGA 1972, s.142)

9c) The following amounts were approved for payment:

- **Clerk's Net salary after Tax** **£523.48**
- **HMRC Tax payment** **£67.80**
- **Employer NI** **£59.28**
- **Clerk's expenses (Fuel)** **£8.55**

LGA 1972 s. 111 (ancillary Powers)

The above payment schedule was approved by members.

9d) The Clerk noted that the Council have received money from bank interest £9.33 (Jan) and £8.28 (Feb). We have received the tax refund of £2424.91.

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 (5th Jan 25 – 1st March 26), I have worked 2 hours 0 minutes under the given time frame of 5 hours per week, this included organising all the paperwork for the March meeting, agendas, actions from the January meeting, organising payments, as well as general administration.

11. Neighbourhood Plan:

Cllr Dunkley reported that the consultation for the NP was now complete and the need for further environmental assessment work has been screened out.

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
- b. DC/25/05341- Lyndhurst Little Chadacre Shimpling Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP29 4HL- Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/25/02008 – Condition 5 (Cycle Storage and Refuse Bins) - Granted
- c. DC/25/05339 - Stable Barn Thorne Court Shimpling 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 – Granted

Planning Applications:

- d. DC/26/00669 The Winery Mount Farm Vineyard Blooms Hall Lane Shimpling Sudbury Suffolk CO10 9BY- Class R - Change of use from agriculture to flexible use for cafe/restaurant. (7 day response) – Permission is required

13. Playground

The Clerk could only get one quote for the playground works, members discussed this and agreed to go ahead with 3 of the 5 items on the quote, the zipwire, seesaw and multiswing. Then to look at the climber as the quote for that was seen as very expensive.

Action: Clerk to go ahead with the 3/5 items from the quote.

Action: Cllr Rooke and Milhench to look at the climber to see if it is something the PC could do themselves.

14. EV Charger

The Clerk let members know that Believ are ready to begin processing with existing sites and Shimpling is in the first batch of sites.

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

15. Village Defibrillator

Cllr Milhench apologised and said he would bring costs to the May meeting.

Action: Cllr Milhench to bring costs to the May meeting.

16. **Parking Mesh**

Members decided to hold off on this until the ground was dryer and discussed the possibility that the recycling and bottle banks may now go with the new waste regulations coming in, so the potential for this area to be used as parking, instead of the grass.

17. **Greening Group Shimpling**

The greening group gave the PC an update on what they had been up to including ditch clearing, mass native tree planting, working with farmers to manage habitat and biodiversity (a policy in the neighbourhood plan). They hope to plan an activity morning over Easter break where children can create bug habitats and adopt a tree. Their mission is to enhance the beautiful Village of Shimpling. They would like to offer man power for ditch clearing, digging up dead trees and replanting, advise on environmental matters. They would be willing to plant wildflower seeds around the Village. The PC said that they were often notified of funding for these sorts of projects, but didn't have the man power to carry out the projects, so hopefully there could be some collaboration. The Greening Group noted that they were currently working on wildlife corridors which would hope to stretch to Alpheton, Lavenham and then as far as Dedham vale, they are around 30ft wide and include naturalising the areas. The group asked if the PC would consider asking Chris not to cut round the edge of the playing field for a few months so the bee orchids could grow. Cllrs said we would need to know exactly how much grass would be asked not to cut, Charlotte would have a site meeting with Cllr Dunkley to show him. The group also asked about the brambles coming past the hedge on Gents Lane, they would be willing to trim this if the land owner agreed. Cllr Rooke said he would speak to the land owner. The group also asked about the land round the Coal House and were concerned about the old machinery that looks to have been dumped in there. The PC did say they had previously spoken with the owner but not been able to move forward. The group also said they would like land for a community orchard. The greening group would also like to get somewhere to recycle batteries, tablet strips and possibly printer cartridges. They would take responsibility for collecting them monthly or whenever they were full and taking them for disposal. It was suggested that this tie in with the potential waste training at the Village Hall and people could bring their old batteries etc. Mr Nunn did say there was recycling training was on at Long Melford Library tomorrow 10am-1pm.

Action: Cllr Dunkley to meet Charlotte at the playground to look at the area to not mow. Cllr Rooke to ask landowner about the bramble cutting.

18. **SALC Internal Audit:**

Cllrs discussed and confirmed again (as they did in May 2025) to have SALC as the internal auditors for the 2025-2026 year and approved their internal audit letter of engagement.

Action: Clerk to book our internal audit.

19. Laptop:

Clerk updated members that the laptop was struggling and that it was time to purchase a new one. Members received quotes from our IT contact and thought it was better to spend a little more and get a better spec laptop with plenty of memory that would last a good few years for the PC. Councillors agreed up to £1000 spend on a new laptop.

Action: Cllr Milhench to liaise with Clerk on laptops

20. Shimpling Sign

Members discussed the email from SCC saying that they could add us to the list to replace the missing Village sign but it sounded like it would be a few years before anything was done. The other option was to fund it from PC funds. Cllr Kemp kindly offered £500 from his locality budget to get this replaced. Cllrs decided that this needed to be replaced and said we could use the £500 from Cllr Kemp and put up to £500 from Council budget towards it, if required, depending on whether it is just the sign that requires replacing or the sign and the posts.

Action: Cllr Rooke to check the site and see if it requires just a sign or poles and brackets too.

Action: Clerk to find a name place sign.

21. Correspondence Received:

None received

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

Cllr Brunwin reminded Cllrs that the Village little pick was scheduled for Sunday 23rd March at 11am and asked for up to £10 to supply biscuits to the volunteers, this was agreed.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 8:41pm

Appendix A: District Councillors report:

Council agrees 'financially responsible' budget to protect services and promises to communities

Babergh District Council has agreed a budget which protects vital services and unlocks funding to deliver promised community projects.

Pylons project would 'devastate' special Suffolk landscapes, councils warn

National Grid's plan for more pylons in the Suffolk countryside should be halted, leading councillors from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have told a public hearing today.

Council renews pledge to boost biodiversity

Babergh District Council has renewed its commitment to protect, restore, and enhance the district's biodiversity after approving a new action plan.

Tech donation gives new life to old devices and gets rural communities online

A new initiative distributing refurbished laptops will help tackle digital exclusion and isolation in Suffolk.

Wildlife Wise encouraging grant applications to protect wildlife on Suffolk coast

Organisations looking to deliver projects that help to protect vulnerable wildlife and their habitats on the Suffolk coast are being reminded of the grant funding that's available from Wildlife Wise

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>

Local elections in May 2026 Reinstated

At the end of January, the government announced that a number of local elections around the country would be postponed, where councils had written to them saying it would be helpful for delivery of Local Government Reorganization (LGR).

This included Suffolk County Council's elections, which were due to be held on Thursday 7 May 2026. However, following legal challenge, the government has reversed its plans and has now announced that county council elections – as well as those due to be held by Ipswich Borough Council – will take place as originally planned.

New councillors elected in May will hold office until the new unitary authority/ies are vested in 2028, with councillors for the new unitary authority/ies elected in 2027 and 'shadowing' the existing councillors for a year.

The government is due to make an announcement by the end of March on how many unitary councils will be set up in Suffolk.

Changes at the Top

On 13 February, it was announced that Nicola Beach, the Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council, would be leaving her role. Nicola has been Chief Executive since 2018 when she replaced Deborah Cadman, and will be stepping down at the end of March 2026.

The council proposes to appoint two existing directors – Andrew Cook and Mark Ash – into new joint chief executive roles for the remaining two years of the council's existence. As these directors' existing posts would not be recruited into, the number of senior staff at the council will reduce by one, saving up to £92k a year.

This decision must be ratified by councillors at the next meeting of full council on 19 March 2026.

Vehicle Removal Trial for Resurfacing Works

Suffolk Highways have announced that they will trial removing vehicles that have not been removed for planned resurfacing works.

The council plans to make sure that residents are made aware at least two weeks in advance of any works, with cards placed under windscreens and put through residents' doors. Two days before the works are due to begin, cones will be put out along with signage to say when the works are due to be begin. If there are still cars parked on the road on the day works are due to start, officers will knock on doors to try and find the owner to move it, but as a last resort, vehicles will be moved, ideally nearby where they are still in sight, but if this is not possible, they may be moved to a facility in Bury St Edmunds with a £70 fine issued.

As with other Penalty Charge Notices, the amount payable is halved if the fine is paid promptly. Although it has long had the power to remove vehicles for planned works, until now Suffolk County Council has not exercised it – compared to Essex County Council, for example, who have been doing this for about a decade.

This approach will be adopted by the council for a period between March to June 2026 initially, with a report prepared on the trial and making recommendations for the future.

Energy, Water, Transport, Commercial and Adaptive Infrastructure Policy

At Cabinet on Tuesday 24 February, revisions to the council's Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy were approved, including a change in the name of the policy to the Energy, Water, Transport, Commercial and Adaptive Infrastructure Policy.

This policy details how the council will respond to large developments such as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), solar farms and data centres that may be attached to them, and changes to road systems in the county that may be needed following the projects. Suffolk County Council is a consultee on NSIP proposals, but it is not the decision-maker, and the policy sets out how the council will respond to such consultations, such as protecting best and most versatile agricultural land for food production, wellbeing of local communities where projects are disruptive and especially where there is cumulative impact of multiple projects, such as the coastal area around Sizewell C.

The policy notes that solar farms may soon have data centres attached, so the council needs to have an agreed approach for developments that are large scale and energy-intensive. The policy also sets out that Suffolk County Council expects developers proposing projects to fund Planning Performance Agreements – this means that responding to the all the proposals for these developments does not come out of the council's budget.

Suffolk Sustainability Initiatives Nominated for Awards

Suffolk County Council has been nominated for a national award for its work on energy and sustainability. Only 24 local authorities in the UK have been shortlisted for the first APSE Energy Awards, which are held in partnership with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The awards celebrate innovation and the role local authorities play in responding to the challenges of energy transition, climate change and long-term sustainability. The 'Accessing & Managing Finance' category recognises Suffolk County Council's Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme (administered by Lendology CIC), and the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group's Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Scheme (administered by Reed In Partnership).

The loan scheme offers an interest-free loan to make energy efficient improvements, such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps. Through countywide Sustainable Suffolk initiatives, the county is also up for a second award, in the 'Working in Collaboration' category which involves a range of projects such as a study into supporting taxi drivers to move to electric vehicles, and launching the Suffolk Sustainable Schools Network.

You can find out more about these initiatives here: <https://sustainablesuffolk.org.uk/>

Joint Chief Executives recommended for appointment

Suffolk County Council will be asked to approve the appointment of two of its existing executive directors to new joint chief executive roles which will save the council money.

Mark Ash, the council's executive director of organisational change and local government reorganisation, and Andrew Cook, executive director of growth highways and infrastructure, would become Suffolk County Council's first joint chief executives. They will be charged with leading the council through the challenges of delivering local government reorganisation, devolution, maintaining essential public services and financial sustainability in the next two years.

Specifically, Mark would be responsible for local government reorganisation, devolution, transformation and change programmes. Andrew will be responsible for delivering safe, high-quality and reliable services to residents, robust financial controls and ensuring the council meets all its statutory duties and requirements following independent inspections. The joint chief executives would each lead on their own areas of responsibility but work together to ensure focus is maintained across the council's duties and priorities.

The decision, which will be taken formally by all county councillors when they meet on 19 March, follows a recommendation from the council's Staff Appointments Committee which met earlier today. The county council's chief executive of eight years, Nicola Beach, is to leave her post at the end of March 2026, with Mark and Andrew set to take on their new roles from 1 April 2026 following a structured handover.

Tens of thousands of pounds would be saved because Mark and Andrew's existing posts would not be recruited into. The number of the most senior staff would therefore reduce by one and save up to £92,000 a year. Recruiting internally will therefore save time, money on salaries and recruitment, and make use of existing, well-developed relationships with partner organisations and knowledge of Suffolk.

The council's constitution requires it to have a designated head of paid service, responsible for leading the council's employees as they deliver services to residents. Significant uncertainty in the local authority chief executive recruitment market has led to many county councils, including Leicestershire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Essex and Hampshire all making internal appointments in recent months, having advertised the roles externally.

New SEND school and centre of excellence to be built in Bury St Edmunds

A new special school for Bury St Edmunds has been given the go-ahead. Run by Eastern Education Group and funded by the Department for Education, the school in Glastonbury Road will provide 90 places for students aged 14 to 19-years-old with special educational needs and disabilities. In a first for Suffolk, the new school will also become a centre of excellence and hub for SEND guidance, offering expertise to mainstream schools. Examples of this approach include providing outreach staff to work with mainstream schools and offering specialist expertise and training opportunities.

This hub model is increasingly encouraged by the Department for Education and is reflected in guidance from Ofsted around inclusive practice and system leadership. It launches Suffolk County Council's ambition to implement this model across the county with a number of other education settings. This news comes just a week after it was announced that Suffolk County Council and Unity Schools Partnership will open a new SEND school in Saxmundham for 126 students with severe learning difficulties.

Both new provisions have been agreed by Suffolk County Council in line with its SEND sufficiency plans, which outline how specialist provision should be delivered across the county.

This new special school in Bury St Edmunds will share a site with Chalk Hill School special school which is due to open in Easter 2026. Chalk Hill will occupy the former Horringer Middle School building, while the second school will be built by the Department for Education on a field on the site. Eastern Education Group will run both schools.

£500,000 Culture Project Fund backs 37 creative and community projects across Suffolk

Thirty-seven arts organisations, museums and community groups across Suffolk have been awarded funding through Suffolk County Council's £500,000 Culture Project Fund, now in its second year.

The fund was created to boost cultural activity, widen participation and support creativity across the county. This year's successful projects span festivals, youth arts programmes, heritage initiatives, wellbeing-focused activities and community-led creative work, with grants ranging from £2,000 to £20,000. Among the projects funded are:

- Frame the Future at DanceEast an eight-week creative intervention using hip hop dance and film to support young people at risk of exclusion in Ipswich. Delivered in partnership with schools and specialist artists, it aims to build confidence, skills and wellbeing through co-creation.
- The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Museum has secured funding to refurbish its accessible railway carriage, maintaining inclusive access for wheelchair users, families and visitors with additional needs, while supporting volunteer-led heritage restoration skills.

- The Bloom Community Engagement Programme, delivered by Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds, offers year-round participatory theatre and workshops across West Suffolk, including youth theatre, SEND provision, over-55s sessions and an annual Bloom Festival to strengthen community connections.

The Culture Project Fund continues to support both established organisations and grassroots groups, strengthening Suffolk's cultural landscape. Last year's programme delivered meaningful outcomes, from improving wellbeing and confidence to widening access to heritage and cultural experiences.

One example was Status Creative CIC's Creative Connections in Lowestoft, which brought together people with lived experience of domestic abuse through creative writing, poetry and music workshops in a safe, supportive space. Participants reported improved wellbeing, stronger social connections and renewed confidence.

Another was Woodbridge Tide Mill Charitable Trust's Tide Mill Museum 3D Tour, which created an immersive online experience featuring 42 learning points, videos and audio content, enabling people worldwide, including those unable to travel to explore the historic mill year-round.

This year's funded projects build on that growing legacy, ensuring culture continues to inspire, connect and enrich communities across Suffolk for years to come.

The full list of organisation receiving funding can be found here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund>