

GRUNDISBURGH & CULPHO PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Village Hall, Grundisburgh
on Wednesday 14th May, 2025

NOTICES had been posted according with regulations.

Present: - Messrs. G.Caryer, C. Dow, A. Dunnett, M. Harris, Dr. M. Mason, R. Youngman, Mrs J. Bignell, Mrs.A.Willetts (in the chair), District Councillor C. Hedgley and 45 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence Mr & Mrs. Langdon

2. Parish Council's Annual Report

The Chairman, Mrs. Ann Willetts welcomed parishioners to the Annual Parish /Village Meeting. An opportunity to question councillors and also the various members of our community giving reports.

She congratulated Mr John Dunnett on the awarding of the BEM (British Empire Medal) in the New Year Honours List for services to the Community in Grundisburgh. Mr Dunnett has been a Parish Councillor for 65 years.

The main theme over the last year has been community, once again trying to make Grundisburgh better for all residents. There has been much to celebrate but she had to mention what she considered are the negatives the bad news, particularly where our Local Authorities, East Suffolk and Suffolk County Council are not listening to communities.

There are too many instances where the lived experiences of villagers are being disregarded.

The need for speed limiting measures at Bonds Corner, Grundisburgh Corner and Culpho have been mooted for many years to no avail. but a plus has been the reintroduction of the Grundisburgh Corner gates thanks to the tenacity of Parish Councillor Mike Harris and CIL monies. The Parish Council have been in discussion with Culpho residents who are concerned about the speed of traffic through their village. Again the County Council Highways say no to a 30 mph speed limit but we are working on similar gates as maybe a way of alerting traffic to the group of houses and probable pedestrians. This is work in progress and may, with the help of CIL monies, be achievable.

Common sense seems in very short supply in Suffolk County Council Highways Department. A planning application was submitted for an HGV training centre at Otley College with the access on Charity Lane. Charity Lane is recognised by Highways as Unsuitable for HGV's.

The main access to Otley College, for students and staff, is situated close to the junction of Charity Lane with the B1078 where the Lane divides the college from the staff car park, delivery and drop off area for buses and other vehicles. To add an access to an HGV training centre flies in the face of common sense.

The effect on local residents will be unacceptable and the cumulative impacts on the local road network will be severe, particularly given the recent rise in the number of HGV's noted by parishioners. Any new HGV training centre must have direct access onto an A road not a struggling country lane. A decision on this application is still awaited.

We are also still awaiting a decision on the application from Flagship to build 6 houses on the 2 old garage sites in Cranworth Close. The Parish Council and local residents have made it very clear that 4 houses on the site would be acceptable but to cram 6 in would cause parking problems to spill over into Stoney Road. Parking is difficult in Cranworth Close now but to lose the turning areas the garage fore courts provide and add 6 new properties would cause extreme problems. District Councillor Colin Hedgley has submitted questions to the planners on 4th November 24 and 14th January 25 but as of yesterday received no answers.

Parish Council's Annual Report cont....

You will have seen the Stop the Quarry banners

This is the proposal for Land at Westerfield Road, Westerfield, to be used for the Extraction and Processing of Sand and Gravel, Recycling of inert Materials, and Associated Infrastructure in other words an Industrial site. The Applicant is Tippers R Us, who have a poor record on their existing site in Kesgrave known as sink pits. The Parish Council sent in objections and have contributed to the fund set up to object. The submission of a full planning application is awaited on this site in ancient rolling farmland north east of Westerfield village centre accessed from the eastern side of Westerfield Road directly south of The Fynn Valley Golf Club.

The proposal is to extract and process sand and gravel on this site over a 16 year period and import more material to be processed. This use on a site so close to residential properties is not only totally inappropriate it is downright dangerous due to the significant increased pollution and extreme noise. The surrounding roads B1077, 1078 and 1079 are unsuitable to take the increase in heavy HGV traffic this industrial use would create, over 200 lorry movements per day. As soon as the planning application is submitted the PC will inform residents on google groups and the village facebook page, so that you can make your feelings known, if you have a mind to.

3. District Councillors Report

Looking back over the past 12 months District Councillor Colin Hedgley said he was not sure it gave him grounds for saying the next year is looking better than the last. However, he looked on the bright side. A brief look at last years local news.

Westerfield Quarry. No further news.

Suffolk beaches Voted some of the best in the country.

Car Parking We can now park using any number of on-line parking apps. (But the cost of parking has gone up). East Suffolk Council is investing £1 million in modernising our car parks including contactless payments.

Fly tipping Still a problem but there is a hot line for reporting a case. 0333 016 2000.

Deben River There are plans to regenerate the river.

Tax Fraud The East Suffolk Council tax fraud team are always at work and last year took a woman to court where she was given a suspended prison sentence and fined £1200.

Well Bus A “Well Bus” drove around East Suffolk where the public you could walk on board for blood tests, blood pressure tests, and Heart Rate checks. The bus visited various towns and villages in East Suffolk.

Operation Camouflage This Annual event took place during the school summer holidays. This action packed activity taking place at Sutton Heath, near Woodbridge is available to children and young people aged 8 – 16 years old, that live in or go to school in East Suffolk.

Elections Voters elected two new East Suffolk councillors one in Rushmere St Andrew and Woodbridge by-elections. The Rushmere St Andrew seat was won by Conservative candidate Robert Cawley. The Woodbridge seat was won by Liberal Democrat candidate Ruth Leach.

Chapel Field Development After what can only be described as a couple of tumultuous years the Chapel Field Development is now nearly complete and the new homes have new families. Mr. Hedgley hoped the new residents will come to love the extraordinary and friendly village that is Grundisburgh and feel they are most welcome. As one of the new residents said to him, echoing the famous lines from Spartacus, “I am Grundisburgh”.

District Councillors Report cont....

This year

Devolution. This government (as was the previous) is intent on pushing forward with its devolution plans. The aim will be to have a Unitary Authority for Suffolk, so in effect making the District Councils redundant. This will obviously mean increasing the number of County Councillors, probably doubling from 75 to nearly 150.

Also, there will be one mayor to cover Norfolk and Suffolk. (Responsible for Transport, Major Investment, and Business among other things). Therefore, the County Council Elections due May this year have been cancelled.

The unitary Council Elections will probably be held in 2027.

More information can be found on the Suffolk County Council website and the Local Government Association website.

Devolution District Councils answer.....

Joint press release issued on behalf of the Suffolk District and Borough Councils

Suffolk Councils deliver report to Government: Best for democracy, delivery of services and meeting diverse demands of county

In a report submitted to government, Suffolk's five district and borough councils have united to present an interim plan which would revitalise local government and put the needs of local communities first.

A clear message is being sent to Government that multi-unitary authorities are vital in Suffolk, for services to work and for residents to be heard, in a county with a range of rural, coastal, industrial, agricultural and urban demands. The Councils are clear: a one size fits all 'mega-council' covering a vast geographical area could not possibly focus on the competing needs of three-quarters of a million people as effectively as two or three unitary authorities.

Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and West Suffolk Council have each signed off the report following a series of council, cabinet and executive meetings where councillors from across the county examined and helped shape the proposals. In a joint statement the leaders of Suffolk's borough and district councils said: "Multiple unitary authorities, will produce services designed with residents in mind to meet local need, drive improved outcomes, create value and save money in a sustainable way.

Our joint proposal argues that a one size fits all mega authority will not solve the existing issue of large countywide services that will continue to drain money, requirement improvement and potentially lead to further cost cutting. Crucially, more than one unitary authority is the best way to meet these issues and would ensure strong democratic representation as one would be too remote for residents to be heard.

It is the best solution to ensure decision makers, and the communities they represent would be as close together as possible. This ensures that services are designed and delivered in a tailored way built on local knowledge to meet the unique need of an area, its residents and businesses. A structure able to deliver both value for money and better outcomes.

This is a generational change to the way local government and services are delivered and something we should seize. It is a real opportunity to think holistically about how services such as leisure, housing and social care could help residents to thrive. This is about starting with a blank page and not simply bolting council services together. Our collective solution is the best way to deliver services, value for money and make sure the 'local' stays in Local Government for Suffolk."

The interim report says multi unitary authorities will provide:

- Cost effective and high-quality services for Suffolk residents
- Long term financial sustainability
- Economic growth and support to local industry
- Stronger democratic representation, community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment
- Governance and support systems which can adapt to future aspirations and sustainable growth
- Ambitions to drive progress, innovation, and long-term success
- Structures to support and enable thriving communities and economies.

District Councillors Report cont....

District Councillors Report cont....

It also supports a more balanced solution for the governance of the Mayoral Combined Authority which is being set up next year for Norfolk and Suffolk. This interim report does not constitute a final decision, and councils will have further time to develop options to redesign and reinvigorate Local Government for the future.

Critically, the views of local communities will be at the heart of this work.

In response to the Government's English Devolution White Paper Suffolk Borough and District Councils have worked together to look at the best unitary solution for the county, while taking into account Government guidance.

Road Repairs

Orwell Bridge repairs will be carried out starting in mid to late June for about 7 weeks. A Contraflow system will be in force but there may be the odd nighttime full closure.

Snape area roadworks will be carried out starting 22 May for 6 weeks as part of the East Anglia 2 project.

Reducing litter beside East Suffolk's major roads

As part of an ongoing program of work to reduce roadside litter and improve the appearance of the district for residents and visitors, litter picking will take place alongside the A14 later this month.

During week commencing 28th April, Highways Assurance will remove litter from the verges beside the A14 on behalf of East Suffolk Council.

This clearance will require overnight lane closures to allow contractors to work safely will be carried out over several nights, covering the roadside from Seven Hills to Dockspur roundabout, including any slip roads.

East Suffolk Services Limited, who carry out litter picking on the Council's behalf, is currently reviewing safety procedures for working beside major roads, including the A14, A47, A12 and A146 to ensure future litter picking and other maintenance can be carried out as safely as possible. The roads themselves are managed by National Highways and Suffolk Highways (part of Suffolk County Council) respectively - however East Suffolk Council is responsible for litter clearance beside these roads. Once the safety review is complete, it is expected that the Council will permanently adopt twice-yearly litter picks beside these main roads, as well as a regular schedule of litter picking and emptying of bins within laybys. This new approach will maintain a litter free network of laybys and help reduce the risk of littering in future.

4. County Councillors Report No report.

5. Success Stories

5.1 Maintenance Group – Grundforce Mr. Chris Dow reported that Grundforce is a group of village volunteers willing to give up some spare time to “Spruce-up” our lovely village carrying out tasks such as:

- Clearing pathways
- Painting fences and railings
- Minor repairs to bus shelters and benches
- Painting flowers and bulbs
- Cutting and tidying hedges
- Cleaning and repairing road signs

Spruce-ups have been held on the Village Green, Lyttleton Meadow, Bus Shelters and next on the list is the much loved but slightly shabby Playing Field Pavilion.

This Spruce-up is part of a long-term plan to redevelop this village asset so that it can be used more widely by the community. Ultimately, it will be an addition too, and not in competition with, our Village Hall. The Village Hall is an amazing success and is largely booked-out year-round, so there is a definite need for additional space.

The aim of two weekend Spruce-ups is to clean and paint the exterior brickwork and woodwork, tidy up the paving, edge the grass verges, paint and freshen up the interior. The plan is to have a refurbished and revitalised Pavilion ready for the Village Show on Saturday 12th July.

Success Stories – Grundforce cont...

Grundforce is always looking for things to do and welcome input from villagers. Future tasks include.....

- Clearing and planting at Ablitts Meadow long Stoney Road and other areas
- Stream cleaning and flood mitigation
- Grundisburgh Primary School
- Road Sign cleaning and replacement

The work of Grundforce is funded by the Parish Council.

5.2 Old Forge Stores Forecourt Mrs. Ann Willetts reported that the resurfacing of the stores forecourt has been one of the most important improvement made to the village centre in years. Its condition had long been a problem and was in a very dangerous condition. Constant patching provided only short term relief.

A huge amount of research was carried out to establish the ownership of the forecourt which was inconclusive but because of the danger posed to walkers in the area the forecourt desperately needed to be made safe.

The Parish Council decided to act and secured a quotation from County Council Highways Department to resurface the area from the shop to the road and the area in front of the cottages to the Green of £3,689.62 which it accepted,

This work was carried out at the same time as the road was being resurfaced blending in to the new road surface vastly improving the safety and appearance of this most attractive part of the village.

5.3 East Suffolk Planning Alliance (ESPA) Mr. Rupert Herries reported that the East Suffolk Planning Alliance (ESPA) is an alliance of Parish/ Town Councils and resident groups throughout East Suffolk, that have recognised the irreversible negative impacts that the current Local Plan inflicts on our rural communities in East Suffolk.

We are a non -political advocacy group with absolute independence from any existing authorities or organisations.

Our main objective is to provide a new bridge of communication between the council planners and the communities they represent.

The Alliance was born out of a realisation that many other communities must have had similar painful experiences, in opposing inappropriate developments in their village so the Parish Council called a meeting in the Playingfield Pavilion inviting representatives from nearby town/parish councils and resident groups to join us in sharing our thoughts and issues.

We were amazed at the number of people who turned up, and the conclusion of what turned out to be a very lively and constructive meeting was the formation of ESPA

It is very important at this point to say that we are not anti-new housing, we welcome all new residents into the village, just as we were welcomed when we moved here 43 years ago.

I would like to thank our Parish Council for their superb support throughout the first year of our work, without which we could not have progressed so quickly, and of course our District Councillor Colin Hedgley.

The first thing we did was to put a steering committee together of 8 experienced people who were prepared to work with us on an entirely voluntary basis.

We wrote to the Council CEO Chris Bally announcing our formation and stating our aims through a mission statement derived out of communities experiencing problems with planning process.

Our next step was to begin inviting Town/Parish councils and resident groups to affiliate with ESPA. To date we now have 60 affiliations from the north of Ipswich right up to Lowestoft, with more joining all the time.

After our first year we held a well-attended conference here in this hall with a distinguished panel of professional experts to take questions from the floor.

Next was to agree a Community Engagement Group with the East Suffolk Council which we have succeeded in doing. We had a meeting last year to agree the terms of reference for this group and the next meeting was earlier this year to begin the process of bringing the issues, questions and concerns of our affiliates directly to the council at senior level. We have agreed to hold 3 meetings per year with our steering committee, the council CEO, planning officers and councillors all in attendance, chaired by the Council CEO Chris Bally.

Success Stories - East Suffolk Planning Alliance (ESPA) cont...

We hold regular affiliate meetings, all of which are well attended, very lively and constructive - chaired by District Councillors. one recently in Framlingham, another later this month in Yoxford, and another next July in Trimly St Martin

This is a first as far as we know, nothing quite like this has happened in the UK before and it all began here in Grundisburgh.

5.4 Village Hall Mr. Bryan Laxton – Chairman of Trustees reported that the Hall, opened in 2022, is thriving with over 1,300 events taking place in the year. Some days as many as seven events are booked and, apart from the week end, the hall is usually fully booked.

Financially it is very secure. Last year average monthly income was £2,860 per calendar month creating a surplus of income over expenditure of £17,946 enabling the establishment of a Community fund which supported 8 village organisations.

Solar Panels, an Air Source Heat Pump plus very efficient insulation and underfloor heating made the hall a very comfortable venue. The Solar Panels saved approximately £3,000 in 2024 resulting in a net electricity cost of only £180.

5.5 Tour of Britain Cycle Race

Mrs. Willetts reported that on Sunday 8th September 2024 the atmosphere on our Village Green was wonderful, everyone enjoying themselves grinning from ear to ear.

Yes everything was FREE, even the cow bells.

A big thank you firstly to John Ager for suggesting to me that we should apply for the grant offered by East Suffolk Council if the Parish Council were willing to do something for the Tour of Britain Cycle Race.

The Scouts very willingly agreed to do a Bar BQ.

The Parish Council paid for all the food with our grant. Hot Dogs, 6 varieties of cake. Tea Coffee and soft drinks.

Thanks to the Parish Counsellors who volunteered to help. Geoff Caryer, Mike Harris and Mark Mason.

We managed to put up the church large Gazebo under the instruction of Robert Fletcher on Saturday and were very pleased when it was still there when we returned on Sunday morning.

Thanks to Iain Langdon we had a power supply for the Urns. Thanks to Heather Langdon and Chris Garnham we had cakes.

Thanks go to Mike Harris, and family, Chris and Richard Garnham, Charlotte Ramsey, and Mark Mason, who served the very grateful public. Thanks to Alison Banham and the Scouts for super-Hot Dogs

Then very importantly thanks to all who stayed or returned to make sure we left the Village Green, just as we had found it, in almost pristine condition, just waiting for one more weekend of work from Chris and Allan's Gang. Thank you Grundisburgh we were on TV !!

5.6 Storm Babet

Mr. Paul Franklin reported that since his last report at last year's Annual Meeting in which he outlined some of the causes of Storm Babet flooding in Grundisburgh in October 2023 he had concentrated on clearing the whole area around 5 trees/stumps blocking the Gull stream adjoining to the Town Lane Bridleway. He was helped considerably by the gardeners at Basts and occasionally by village volunteers.

By November 2024 it was revealed that the scope of the problem was much worse than expected but this allowed three different contractors to survey and provide fixed price quotes. At the Parish Council Meeting of the 10th March Westrup /contracting were chosen as the most experienced and best value. .

This year Mr. Franklin has been following the progress of Framlingham and Debenham flood activities via Council Meeting Minutes and letters in the EADT. All the relevant authorities are expecting the others to do something with the result that little has been achieved which goes to show if we want things done, we have to do it ourselves.

Although previously cleared areas are now re-growing rampantly Mr. Franklin has been instructed by the Parish Council's Chair to stop clearance work at Basts. He fears that if the clearance work is not maintained it will be back to "square one" within 6 months.

Success Stories - Storm Babet cont...

Mrs. Willetts said that on the 16th May she met Mrs. Kaye Adams, the owner of Basts, to discuss the proposed work on the trees affecting the Gull adjacent to the pedestrian bridge on the Bridle Way.

The Parish Council had obtained 2 quotes from tree surgeons Tree Frog and Westrup Contracting for work recommended by Paul Franklin after his work on the land after storm Babet.

The previous owners of the land had done very little work on the water course over the years, and there had been no one living in the house for some time.

The new owners, moved in on Christmas Eve 2024 giving permission for Mr Franklin to carry on his work.

They have now taken over responsibility for the work of renovation of the whole site, improving the boundaries to make the site more secure, and improving drainage.

The owners have copies of the 2 quotes to work on the trees, and intend to get further advice from Tom Roberts as soon as possible.

5.7 New Scout HQ Scout Leader Stuart Ross reported that in 2026 the Scout Group celebrates 70 years of continuous Scouting in the Village and having a modern Headquarters for the future years is vital. "To focus and drive this strategy forward we have called it 'Project Platinum' and hope that our Members, Parents, Supporters and the Community can endorse this development".

A 14 acre plot of land accessed from Stoney Road just outside the village boundary on which to accommodate a new Headquarters has been purchased..

The Plans include two halls. The main hall. Long and high enough for an Indoor Archery Range • long enough so the Hall can be split into two segments for two meetings at one time and a Meeting Room. Kitchen, toilets, disabled facilities, storage areas. The building will be designed to accommodate multiple users, including outside events, at the same time.

The HQ will provide a home for Grundisburgh's Cubs, Scouts, Explorers, /Brownies and Guides as well as other Scouting organisations. The facilities will also be available for hire by other organisations..

The Group has submitted Designs for a Planning Permission to East Suffolk Council, via the Parish Council, and these have been available to view online via East Suffolk Council's web site with 28 Public Letters/Emails of Support. Approval is being frustratingly delayed until the following issues are settled.

- Ecology and Landscape Planning Officers have caused a lot of delay as they questioned many items, this is now hopefully resolved.
- Suffolk County Council Highways has put a 'Holding Objection' onto the application until a Road Safety Audit for the Pedestrian Path and Crossing is completed, plus Highway Boundaries shown on Plans.
- Road Safety Audit completed in January and paid for by the Parish Council
- A Highways Engineer has created a detailed plan of the materials layout of the Proposed Footpath. This has been submitted.
- All Legal matters for the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Board of Finance Restrictive Covenant to build on the land has been sorted and awaits Planning Permission before we pay them £10,000 plus Legal Fees!

6 The Year in Pictures - Grundisburgh & District News Peter Kendall presented a slide show of village events throughout the year before a buffet supper was served.