# MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF PARHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Held on Tuesday 6th May 2025 at 7.20pm after the Annual Parish Meeting

1. **Appoint a Chair**
   Cllr. Cottrell proposed Cllr. Block continue as Chair. This was seconded by Cllr. Patrick and carried unanimously. The Chair signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
2. **Appoint a Vice-Chair**
   Cllr. Gray proposed Cllr. Wood continue as Vice-Chair. This was seconded by Cllr. Cottrell and carried unanimously. The Vice-Chair signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
3. **Apologies**
   Cllr. Stanley sent her apologies for absence (on holiday) and these were accepted.
   County Cllr. Burroughes & District Councillor Langdon-Morris also sent their apologies.

   **Councillors in attendance**

   | | | | |
   |---|---|---|---|
   | Michael Gray | Michael Block | Jonathan Cottrell | John Patrick |
   | James Rogers | Jason Wood | | |

   **Present** Lydia Kindred (Clerk)

4. **Declarations of Interest**
   Councillor Cottrell declared an interest in the payment to the Village Hall to be considered under item 8a, as he is a member of the Village Hall Committee.

5. **Minutes**
   The Minutes of the meeting on 4th March 2025 were approved as a true record
6. **Matters arising**
   None
7. **Appointments**

   The following appointments were made:

   | | |
   |---|---|
   | Responsible Financial Officer | Lydia Kindred |
   | Examining Councillor | Charlotte Stanley |
   | Village Hall Parish Council Representative | Jonathan Cottrell |
   | SALC Representative | Charlotte Stanley |
   | Parish Tree Scheme | Michael Gray & Adam Paul |
   | Footpath Officer | James Rogers |
   | Village Recorder | John Adams |
   | Wildlife Group | Michael Gray, James Rogers, Jason Wood |
   | Webmaster | Lydia Kindred |
   | Community Partnerships Representative | Vacant |

**Public Forum**

The County Councillor's annual report has been shared with Councillors and published on the village website.

8. **Responsible Financial Officer's report**

   **a) The following payments were approved:**

| Reference | Amount | Payee | Details |
|---|---|---|---|
| P01 25-26 | £200.00 | Trevor Brown | Internal Audit |
| P02 25-26 | £181.43 | SALC | Annual Subscription |
| P03 25-26 | £500.00 | Parham Village Hall | Annual Donation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| P04 25-26 | £22.80 | SALC | 6 months payroll provision |
| P05 25-26 | £28.33 | L. Kindred | Share of Microsoft subscription 2025-2026 |

*Cllr. Cottrell left the meeting before payment P03 25-26 was considered and then was asked to return to the meeting.*

**b) Payments & receipts**
The following payment made since the last meeting was noted:
£47.00 ICO (direct debit)
The following receipts were noted:
03/03/25 £7.06 Barclays Interest
30/04/25 £8,350 East Suffolk Council Precept

**c) Bank Balances**
The balances as at 31st March were noted.
Community Account: £2,559.73 (Balance minus approved payments £1,197.46)
Deposit Account: £1,003.60
CCLA Deposit Fund £22,840.59

**d) Bank reconciliation**
The bank reconciliation to 31st March was noted and approved. The reconciliation and statements were signed and dated by Cllr. Patrick as a non-mandate Councillor in absence of the Examining Councillor.

**e) Reserved funds**
Reserved funds were considered. These total £22,385.65 and include £20,618.90 of biodiversity funding.

**f) Bank mandates**
These were confirmed as:
Barclays Accounts Councillors Block, Gray and Rogers
CCLA Account Councillors Cottrell, Rogers, Stanley and Woods
The clerk has service access to the accounts.

**g) Direct debits & standing order annual review**
Direct Debit- ICO £47.00 per annum.
There are no standing orders.

**h) Pay review**
The clerk's confirmed that she would like to waive a scale point increase for another year's service following her pay review in 2023. Payroll is carried out by SALC.

**9. Web domain**
As per paragraph 1.26 of the paragraph 1.26 of the 2025 Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guide, the Council agreed to switch to a gov.uk domain for its parish website and clerk's email address at a cost of £35 for the first year and £65 thereafter.

**10. Internal Auditor's Report**
Councillors considered the Internal Auditor's Report and were pleased to note that no issues of concern had been identified. The recommendations contained within the report were acknowledged. The Council will continue to build the level of general reserves over the next couple of years. The auditor's comments regarding the CCLA Deposit Fund were noted and this has been added to the Financial Risk Assessment.

**11. Procedural**

**a) Internal Control Statement**
The Council's Internal Control Statement was considered and some minor additions were made to it regarding the clerk having service access to the accounts, the payment schedule forming part of the agenda and ensuring any acquired assets are added to the insurance policy if necessary. With the additions, the Council considered the Statement suitable and effective.

**b) Accounts**
The Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025 were accepted.
**c) AGAR**
**Section One** (Annual Governance Statement) and **Section Two** (Accounting Statements) of the Local Councils' Annual Return for year ending 31st March 2025 were read out by the Chair, approved by the Council and signed by the Chair and the clerk.
**d) Audit Exemption**
The Council resolved to opt out of an External Audit as an exempt Council. The Certificate of Exemption was completed and signed by the Chair and the RFO.
**ACTION** Clerk to submit this to the external auditor & publish the Notice re Public Rights within the required time period.
**e) Significant Variances**
The clerk went through the Statement of Significant Variances and this was accepted.

**12. The following policies were reviewed:**
**a) Standing Orders** *Amendments made to items 14 and 18 as per NALC recommendations.*
**b) Assets Register** *It was agreed to remove the Speedwatch equipment.*
**c) Financial Regulations** *Amendments made to items 5.4, 5.7 and 5.11 as per NALC recommendations.*
**d) Physical Assets Risk Assessment** *No changes were required.*
**e) Financial Risk Assessment** *The risk concerning the CCLA Fund not being covered by the FSCS was added.*
**f) Data Protection Policy** *No changes required.* Councillors were reminded to ensure all devices with Council documents and emails on are password protected, and to ensure that emails and documents that are no longer needed are deleted regularly.
**g) Data Publication Scheme** *No changes required.*
**h) Insurance policy** *This was still considered fit for the Council's needs.*
**i) Website Accessibility Statement** *The website providers have provided a policy which is compliant with WCAG 2.2.*

**13. Internal Auditor**
It was agreed that the Council would seek to re-appoint Trevor Brown as Internal Auditor for the financial year ending 31st March 2026, subject to his agreement to continue in the role.
The clerk expressed thanks to Mr Brown for his support throughout the audit process, including his willingness to meet on a Bank Holiday to handover the Council's records.

**14. Code of Conduct**
Councillors agreed to re-adopt the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct.

**15. Community Infrastructure Report**
This was considered, approved and will be sent to East Suffolk Council

**16. Risk Management Policy**
It was noted that this is a new requirement from NALC's model Financial Regulations. This will be deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

**17. Flood Mitigation**
Cllr. Patrick provided an update on behalf of the Working Group. It was agreed to combine three smaller schemes into a single funding application and to submit a second application for two larger schemes at a later stage. He is currently liaising with the Internal Drainage Board, who will carry out the necessary design work and assessments.
There are four remaining funding rounds available and it is hoped that the Parham schemes can be submitted for the next two rounds, scheduled for May and November 2025.
Cllr. Patrick also volunteered to update residents affected by flooding during Storm Babet on the group's actions and to outline the riparian responsibilities being carried out in the village, to help offer reassurance and show that progress is being made.
With regard to maintenance and repair:
- The damaged culvert will be repaired by Suffolk County Council.

- Clearing works at the Gull have been commissioned and will be completed later this year.
- UK Power Networks is due to remove trees from the ditch near Brook Lane.

These actions will help to improve the flow of the river through the village.

**18. Community Action River Day**

Following discussions with an insurance advisor, Cllr. Patrick reported that there would likely be serious health and safety concerns associated with opening this event to the wider public. It was suggested that it may be more appropriate to designate the event as a Parish Council-only activity to ensure adequate risk management. Cllr. Patrick and Cllr. Block will discuss the matter further.

**19. Correspondence**

Rural Payments Agency Countryside Stewardship- the claim form has been completed and the RPA has acknowledged safe receipt.

East Suffolk Council Community Governance Review letter – it was agreed that Councillor numbers at Parham did not need reviewing.

SCC Devolution information session 2nd June – Councilllors Block and Wood and the clerk will attend this.

SALC 75th Birthday event 1st July at Bury St Edmunds – The Chair will attend this for Parham.

**20. Councillor reports**

Cllr. Patrick reported that he has joined the East Suffolk Planning Alliance as a Committee Member.

Cllr. Gray advised the Council that on Saturday 24th May, approximately 500 ramblers will be passing through Parham during the night as part of a 24-hour, 100-mile walk/run from Ipswich. The 40-mile checkpoint will be located at Moat Farm, Parham. This national event is held in a different county each year.

It was noted that new steps and safety railings have been installed on the public footpath opposite the bus shelter at the Pound, significantly improving pedestrian safety. The Clerk will write to thank the Rights of Way team for their work.

Cllr Wood reported difficulty in finding a contractor to repair the North Green noticeboard. Cllr Rogers offered to inspect the warped lock, assess any additional repairs required and will report back.

**21. Matters to be raised at the next meeting**

Risk Management Policy

Update on flood prevention project

Consider making donations to other village organisations and charities

**22. The next meeting was confirmed as being at 7.15pm on 1st July.**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9pm.

**Signed** ……………………………….. 
**Chair of the Council**

**Date** ……………………………….