

ALPHETON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting

Held on Thursday 2nd October 2025 at 7.00pm in Alpheton Village Hall

Attendance

Cllrs M Gray (Chair), K Cullimore, J Moore, J Nunn, E Malvisi and T Rix. Also present: Sarah Headland, Parish Clerk

1. Apologies and approval of absences
Apologies were received from Cllr Richard Kemp. Apologies were approved by the Council.
2. To receive any declarations of Interest
Cllr Gray and Cllr Moore declared a non-pecuniary interest in The Maltings Planning application.
3. To approve that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2025 are a true and accurate record.
Proposed by Cllr Moore and Seconded by Cllr Nunn.
Point 9(i) the word 'cars' was changed to 'vehicles'
4. Public Forum – Questions from members of the public for a maximum of three minutes duration per person (total time not exceeding 25 minutes)
No members of the public were present.
5. To receive an update on co-opting a councilor vacancy and to discuss how the council can encourage new applicants.
It was suggested that there could be a mail drop in the village advertising that there is a vacancy. The notice could also be added to the Alpheton village WhatsApp group. Unfortunately, since there is no longer a newsletter, there are not many other ways to advertise. It can also be advertised on the village website; but it is not known at this time how many people in the village use it regularly. Some new residents have recently moved to the village so perhaps they might be interested once they have settled in.
6. To receive the Parish Clerk's report:
 - a. Approval of payments awaiting authorisation – APPROVED

Income				
VAT reclaim			£2,091.53	
Precept 2 of 2			£4,385.00	
		Total income	£6,476.53	
Expenditure (approved and paid)				
Evan Markell - July Cut			£190.00	PHA 1875 s.164
Alpheton garage cost of elec reimbursement			£30.00	PHA 1936, S.234
Clerks Salary			£213.67	LGA 1972 s.111
Clerks tax			£288.60	LGA 1972 s.111
ABC Village gates installation			£3,511.80	HA 1980 s.274A
Clear Councils - Insurance			£589.18	LGA 1972 s.111
Evan Markell - August Cut (prepaid)			£190.00	PHA 1875 s.164
Evan Markell - Sept Cut (prepaid)			£190.00	PHA 1875 s.164
			£5,203.25	
Expenditure to be approved				
Babergh DC - Dog and litter bin emptying			£498.00	Litter Act 1983 s.6
LM Groundcare - SID redeployment			£222.22	RTR Act 1984 s.72(1)
PKF External Audit			£252.00	LGA 1972 s.111
Clerks Salary (quarterly)			£867.98	LGA 1972 s.111
Clerks tax			£217.00	LGA 1972 s.111
Village Hall hire			£20.00	LGA 1972 s.111
			£2,077.20	
		Total expenditure	£7,280.45	

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Date _____

- b. External Auditors report and certificate – this was presented to and reviewed by the council. One minor point was raised by PKF: Two of the 2024-25 AGAR figures for 2025-26 will need to be restated due to some unrepresented cheques not originally being included in the total. Clerk advised PKF have sent an invoice for their external audit which The Council was not expecting. This is a one-off since the council's turnover for 2025-26 should be such that they can be declared exempt from external audit next year.

- 7. To receive District and County Councilors' Reports – these can be found at the end of these minutes

Cllr Malvisi advised that the cost of emptying dog and litter bins is to increase because the District Council's subsidy for this is decreasing.

- 8. To receive status reports and updates on:

- a. SID devices redeployment and ANPR Data Report. The ANPR camera was meant to be deployed on 29th September, but it did not arrive. Cllr Moore will contact the ANPR Officer at Suffolk CC for an updated rota. It is believed that he has been on paternity leave-

Data has been downloaded from both SID's, Cllr Cullimore is going to investigate how this can be analysed and presented to the Council.

- b. Village gates and visibility issues. There has been an issue with the visibility around one of the new gateways. It was reported to Suffolk Highways, but the response was that it would not be dealt with at this time. A MOP has since kindly taken the initiative to cut this themselves. However, the Parish Council is mindful that there are significant risks to doing this without proper safety precautions in the future.

Let it be noted that the speed limit signs have been placed back in exactly the same place as before the gateways were installed.

- c. Police and crime update – Clerk

5 crimes have been reported and investigated May – July. Violent and sexual offences = 2

Burglary = 1. Anti-social behaviour = 1. Possession of a weapon = 1

This brings the rolling total to 10, annually.

- 9. To consider and approve the updated Signage policy - Cllr Moore and Cllr Gray

It was noted that if signs are on poles or posts that are on council-owned land then these may be removed. APC – Posters and Poster Boards Policy DRAFT has been selected as a template and Cllr Gray and the Clerk will formally prepare it for approval at the next meeting.

- 10. To receive an update on the defibrillator that has gone missing from The Bus Shelter at Tye Green - Cllr Gray

On 10th September, it was discovered that the Tye Green defibrillator was missing. Cllr Nunn gave the Chair contact details of Sudbury Defibrillators who have kindly provided a defibrillator on loan to replace this, temporarily. The ambulance service is checking to see if it was removed by them and if so, by whom. If not, it can only be assumed that it has been stolen. In which case the police will need to be notified ahead of making an insurance claim. The cost of purchasing a new defibrillator is approx. £1,250 + VAT.

In addition, the village hall defibrillator is showing an error message - 'not emergency ready' and is therefore out of service. Cllr Malvisi and Cllr Nunn have both kindly offered £250 each towards the purchase of new batteries.

- 11. To receive an update on the Community Governance Review.

Councillor Malvisi advised that she is a member of the Community Governance Review (CGR) Working Group. It was confirmed that the mayoral election will take place in 2026. In 2027, district councillors may be re-elected for a one-year term to enable a 'shadow' period. A further full election would then follow in 2028. Although 2027 is expected to be an election year, this will depend on final boundary decisions, which remain uncertain until it is confirmed whether there will be one or three unitary authorities.

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Date _____

At the last meeting, a possible merger with another parish council was discussed. However, until devolution is fully implemented and boundaries are established, no firm decisions can be made regarding the CGR. Grouping with neighbouring parishes—rather than a full merger—is being considered as a potentially preferable option, but again, this cannot progress without clarity on the boundaries.

It is strongly predicted that devolution will result in more responsibilities being passed down to Parish Councils.

12. To receive an update on Devolution (see above point 11).
13. To consider moving towards using a '. gov.uk' domain for the Alpheton website and clerks email address following new guidance from NALC - *Assertion 10 - Digital and data*.
It was noted that an acceptable alternative to use is .org.uk – this would be less expensive and there are no added costs for extra email addresses. For a .gov.uk the domain would be £25 per year and £24 per email address, per year. Cllr Rix will contact One Suffolk to find out about hosting our own website using a '.org.uk' and the costs involved. Update to follow at the next meeting.
14. To consider implementing an IT policy
The Council reviewed the draft IT policy. It was noted that guidance on 'Bringing your own devices' to meetings needed to be added. The Clerk will update the policy and bring it to the next meeting for approval.
15. To receive an update on the issue of heating problems at Alpheton Village Hall and resolve if a reimbursement of hire costs should be accepted
The Village Hall has addressed the heating concerns. Having taken a second opinion from a different heating contractor, it has been decided that the heating will be kept on at 21° all day during the winter months. The parish council unanimously resolved that the hire costs did not need to be reimbursed but thank the Village Hall for their kind offer.
16. To consider any new planning matters and report on any decisions (up to and including any new applications received after 26th Sept):
For information:
Decision Notice - DC/25/03582 - Elms Farm, Old Bury Road, Alpheton - Part discharge for the front elevation only – GRANTED.
DC/25/02888 and DC/25/02889 Tye Green Cottage Tye Green, Alpheton - Awaiting decision.
DC/25/03412 - Woodhall, Bury Road , Alpheton – GRANTED
DC/25/02958 and DC/25/02959 Alpheton Mill, Bridge Street - Awaiting decision.

New applications:
DC/25/03918 & DC/25/039189 - New Maltings, Alpheton
The Parish Council discussed this application and have decided on a neutral response.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Review: Publication of the Draft Babergh and Mid Suffolk Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Forthcoming Call for Sites.
- Land North of Old Bury Road, Alpheton – 9 units. The main concern about this site is the busy road that these additional dwellings would put added pressure on to.
17. To confirm the date of the next meeting – scheduled for 27th November 2025.

Meeting closed at 21:08

Signed _____

Date _____

Parish Report October 2025

Councillor

Richard Kemp

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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-safety-advice-in-the-community/preparing-for-flooding>

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

One Suffolk Business Case approved at Council Meeting

On 16th September Suffolk County Council held an Extraordinary (additional) meeting to debate the business case produced by the council that one unitary council would be best for Suffolk after the two-tier system (County and District/Borough councils) is abolished. Unitary councils run services for a local area, and the government is planning for all remaining two-tier areas in the country to change to this model.

Suffolk is part of the devolution priority programme, which means it will be one of the first counties to do so. The reorganization will also see the creation of a Mayor Authority and a Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk. The business case for one Suffolk was endorsed by the Conservative majority in the council meeting and was immediately afterwards tabled at a Cabinet meeting where the Council's Cabinet voted to formally approve it. It will now be submitted to Government by the end of September.

An alternative proposal for three unitary councils for Suffolk has been developed by the district and borough councils and will also be submitted to Government, who have said they will make a decision on the reorganization by March 2025 – this may be delayed, as other parts of the process have been so far.

The One Suffolk business case can be found here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/one-suffolk-business-case.pdf>

The three Councils for Suffolk business case can be found here;

<https://threecouncilsforsuffolk.org/wp-content/uploads/Three-Councils-For-Suffolk-Case-for-Change.pdf>

Local Nature Recovery Strategy Approved

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Date _____

On 9th September the council's Cabinet voted to approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was produced following a public consultation on the draft strategy between April and June this year. The strategy sets out priority species and habitats for nature conservation in the county, and gives advice on how different habitats can be improved by landowners to protect and encourage nature.

Most of the area mapped out for Suffolk's nature priorities is private farmland, and the strategy does not make improvement mandatory, but the officers who have produced the strategy will now work with landowners to support them and work to find investment for measures in the strategy. Landowners can use areas mapped in the strategy to produce 'units' of biodiversity for purchase by developers, as they will be required to meet the Government's new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which state that all development should be increasing biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. The units of biodiversity do not need to be onsite or near the development.

The new strategy should also help Suffolk County Council to improve the land it owns in the County, and local planning authorities will have to take account of the strategy when development is considered. In the future, mayoral authorities like the one currently planned for Norfolk and Suffolk will be in charge of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their area.

The strategy will now be shared with neighbouring authorities, Natural England and local partners like district and borough councils and the Broads Authority for their feedback.

Financial Forecast at Quarter 1 of 2025-26 Financial Year

Cabinet on 9 September also considered the most recent financial reporting from the council, which aimed to give a better forecast of how the council's spending might look for 2025-26. The council is predicting that it will overspend by £13.3m by the end of the year, which it will balance by taking £13.3m from its Risk Reserve. This is extremely worrying, as is the prediction that the council's Designated Schools Grant debt will rise over the year by £63.3m to a total of £161.2m deficit.

Currently the government has agreed councils can hold this debt until March 2028, but a long term plan needs to be made as many councils are now carrying a level of debt related to SEND costs which would bankrupt them if it was called in by the government. Other cost pressures for the council include placements for children in care, care purchasing and mental health services in adult social care.

The council has also received £1.2m less than expected from dividends from Suffolk Group Holdings (companies owned by the council like Concertus and Vertas) and had to pay nearly a million than budgeted for its annual staff pay award.

Solar Together Scheme for 2025

The Solar Together Suffolk scheme, which has so far installed 32,000 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households, is now open for registration for 2025. Registering is free and there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation. The scheme also includes battery storage and EV charge points, and customer who have already invested in solar panels can get quotes for these too.

The scheme requires householders to register online, and pre-approved solar PV suppliers then take part in a 'reverse auction' to bid for the work. After this, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which they can choose to accept or not. Telephone and email helpdesks are available to support residents in making an informed decision. The scheme is run by Suffolk's councils in partnership with iChoosr, who have been working with UK councils on the Solar Together scheme since 2015.

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For more information and to register, visit <https://solartogether.co.uk/suffolk/home>

Apply Now for a School Place for September 2026

Parents and carers can now apply for a place in the normal year of entry at a primary, infant or junior school and a secondary school for September 2026. The deadline for applications to secure a place at a secondary school is Friday 31 October 2025 and for primary school places, including infant and junior schools, the deadline is Thursday 15 January 2026. All applications received by the relevant closing date are processed at the same time using the schools' oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications if necessary. Applications received late are processed after all of the applications received on time.

Last year, 94% of applicants received offers for their first preference school, and 98.4% of applicants received an offer for one of their top three preferred schools. The council is keen that parents take into account how their child will travel to school when applying, as the nearest school for school transport purposes may not be the catchment area school.

They can check this by entering their postcode here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-places/school-catchment-areas/nearest-school-checker>

Parents and carers can apply online for a school place here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-places>

Signed _____

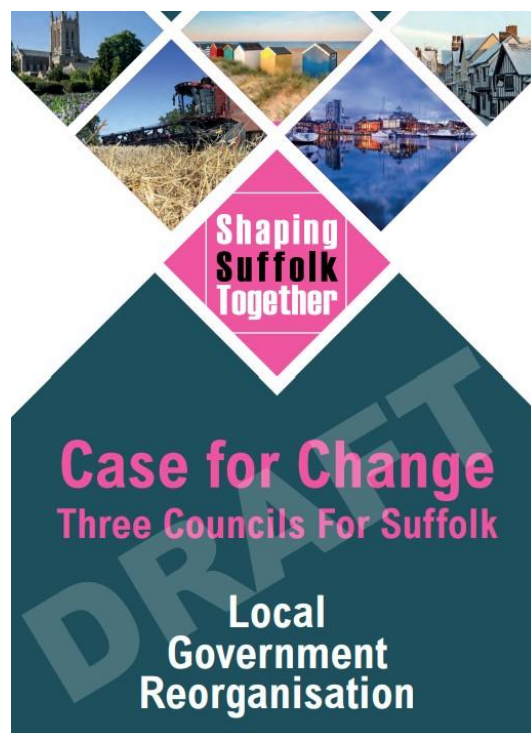
Date _____

Babergh District Councillors report (Oct)

Three Councils for Suffolk

Three Councils for Suffolk case is published
Suffolk's district and borough councils - including Babergh and Mid Suffolk - have published proposals this week for the future of local government in the county.

It sets out a case to create three new unitary councils to revolutionise council services and deliver real improvements for local communities.



This will be discussed at full council meetings next week, before a final submission is made to the Government.

During the SLT Q&A session on Monday, Arthur took us through a summary of the business case for three new unitary councils, as well as answered some additional questions. If you missed the meeting, you can [catch up by watching the recording](#).

Then, in the afternoon, Arthur sent [a message to all staff outlining the next steps on local government reorganisation](#).

In the meantime, our LGR public engagement events across the districts continued, with meetings in Stowmarket (*pictured*) and Eye having taken place in the last week.

Former councillor passes away

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Date _____



Former Babergh councillor, David Grutchfield, passed away on 4 September, aged 87.

David represented the Hadleigh ward from 1986 until 2014, appearing on multiple committees during his 28-year tenure.

He also served twice as the mayor of Hadleigh from 1992 to 1993 and again from 2004 to 2005, as well as being a member at Suffolk County Council for 24 years.

His funeral will be held at Hadleigh United Reformed Church on **Tuesday 30 September** at 2:30pm.

32,000 solar panels and counting for Solar Together Suffolk project 11/09/25

The successful Solar Together Suffolk scheme is now open for registration for 2025. The group-buying programme enables Suffolk residents to buy solar panels and battery storage, helping to save money on their energy bills and cut carbon emissions. It is backed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, along with the other district and borough councils, and Suffolk County Council. Solar Together Suffolk has been running for seven years, and in that time, has:

- installed 32,024 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households
- installed 1,768 battery storage systems
- reduced 1,900 tonnes of carbon emissions across the county

It's free to register with Solar Together Suffolk and receive an installation quote - there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation. The project helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers, and increases their independence from the national grid. The scheme not only offers solar panels, but also battery storage and EV charge points.

Customers who have already invested in solar panels can also get quotes for battery storage, to get more from the renewable energy they generate. Marie-Louise Abretti, Solar Together UK Business Manager, said:

“With energy prices continuing to fluctuate, residents of Suffolk are looking for opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions, save on energy bills, and increase their independence from the grid. “The Solar Together Suffolk group-buying scheme offers a straightforward way to make an informed decision and to access a competitive offer from a trusted, vetted provider.”

How does Solar Together Suffolk work?

• Householders can register online to become part of the group for free and without obligation. Pre-approved UK solar PV suppliers participate in a reverse auction. They are able to offer competitive pricing as the volume and geographic concentration makes it possible for them to realise greater efficiencies, which they pass on with lower prices for installations.

- After the auction, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which is specific to the details they submitted in their registration.
- If they choose to accept their recommendation, the specifics of their installation will be confirmed with a technical survey after which a date can be set for the installation of their solar PV system.
- Telephone and email help desks are on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

Signed _____

Date _____

Suffolk's councils are working in partnership with iChoosr, experts in sustainable energy transition, to make the shift to clean energy as cost-effective and hassle-free as possible.

iChoosr has been collaborating with UK councils since 2015 on its Solar Together scheme, and with local authorities in five countries aiming to accelerate the energy transition. The initiative aims to encourage residents to partake in the collective purchase of solar PV and battery storage systems.

Learning and development updates



Congratulations to our housing repairs and maintenance managers who have successfully completed their bespoke management development programme.

During their course, the team were praised for their enthusiasm and commitment to growth.

Signed _____

Date _____