

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held at 7.30pm On Wednesday 4 June 2025 in the Village Hall

Present: Jane Cryer - Clerk (JC)
John Curran - Vice Chairman (JDC)
Will Dunn (WD)
Sue Keeble (SK)
Steve Laing - Chairman (SL)
Sheila Roberts (SR)
Julie Thickpenny (JT)

In attendance : John Ward, Babergh DC (JW)

Apologies: Gillie Cranfield (GC)
Georgia Hall, Suffolk CC (GH)

25.6.1 APOLOGIES

See above. Apologies were accepted from GC.

25.6.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

25.6.3 PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

25.6.4 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

25.6.4.1 District Council

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. SL congratulated JW on being appointed Leader. Speaking about the planned local government reorganisation and devolution, JW said elections for the new unitary authority(ies) would be held in 2027, with the new council(s) taking over in May 2028. He emphasised the importance of ensuring a robust financial position and said it was possible that further savings of around £2 million might have to be made in the next financial year. Suffolk districts and boroughs disagreed with the county council's preferred option of a single unitary authority for the county, believing that it would be better to have at least two councils, and preferably three. SL said he fully supported Babergh's preferred option. He felt it would be important to retain the community right to challenge although, in response to his question, JW said there was unlikely to be any more money for parish councils to deliver services; this could mean parish councils having to increase their precepts in the future. JW explained that the structure in Suffolk and Norfolk needed to be the same, as the Mayor would preside over a combined authority; elections for a Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk would take place in 2026. In response to a question from WD, JW confirmed that the successor councils would take over the districts' and boroughs' assets, including CIFCO. In response to a question raised by JDC at the last meeting, JW said parish councils with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan received a higher percentage of CIL as an incentive to produce a plan (*he later confirmed that this was set out in the CIL Regulations Legislation, 2013 Amendment, Regulation 59A, and was therefore a nationwide regulation*).

25.6.4.2 County Council

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. SL was concerned that PwC, who had produced a national report on the costs of creating more than one new council, had recently been fined for audit errors; he therefore questioned the accuracy of their figures. GH had said Richard Rout, SCC's Cabinet Member for Devolution, would be inviting parish council chairs to a meeting; JC would ask her for more information.

25.6.5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by SR and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the AGM held on Wednesday 14 May should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

25.6.6 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Most of the actions were either ongoing or were on the agenda. There were updates on the following:

25.6.6.1 Sign for top of Mill Lane - no vehicular access to Lower Layham

JC had once again chased a response from Highways. Apparently the paperwork had been mislaid, but the PC's request would now be reinstated.

25.6.6.2 Neighbourhood Plans

WD would bring a draft paper to the July meeting outlining the pros and cons of producing a Neighbourhood Plan and inviting parishioners' views.

25.6.7 FINANCIAL MATTERS

25.6.7.1 RFO's report

It was proposed by SL, seconded by SK and agreed unanimously that the finance report for 4.6.25 should be approved and payments of £584.28 authorised.

25.6.7.2 Certificate of Exemption

It had been agreed at the March meeting to certify Layham Parish Council as exempt from external audit for 2024-25. This was reconfirmed following the approval of the year end accounts.

25.6.7.3 Section 1 of the 2024-25 AGAR

It was proposed by WD, seconded by JDC and agreed unanimously to approve the Governance Statement.

25.6.7.4 Section 2 of the 2024-25 AGAR

It was proposed by SK, seconded by WD and agreed unanimously to approve the Accounting Statements.

JC would bring the recommendations from the Internal Audit Report to the July meeting.

25.6.8 PLANNING

25.6.8.1 DC/24/01681 - The Barn, Popes Green Lane

Councillors noted the refusal / approval of various discharge of conditions.

25.6.9 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by SK and agreed unanimously to amend paragraph 5.15 (threshold for approval of expenditure), to correct an anomaly. JC would ensure the updated document was on the website.

25.6.10 STANDING ORDERS

It was proposed by SK, seconded by JDC and approved unanimously to delete paragraph 17(d) from the Standing Orders. JC would ensure the updated document was on the website.

25.6.11 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

25.6.11.1 Speed Indication Devices

As JDC had reported at the last meeting, the SIDs had been returned to ElanCity who had agreed there was a problem with downloading data, and arranged for this to be corrected. However, the courier returning the devices had delivered them to the wrong address and they had still not been traced.

Following several email exchanges which had failed to resolve the problem, it was agreed to write formally to the company giving them one working week to either return the SIDs to the PC, or provide new ones if they could not be found.

25.6.11.2 Gravel Pit

WD said Brett Aggregates had started to carry out some work at the gravel pit. He would contact site manager and pass on JC's contact details, so the PC could be kept informed of developments.

25.6.11.3 Planning application DC/25/01519 - Uplands House, Upper Street

Councillors noted that planning permission had been granted for the variation of condition 2, to facilitate a new secure driveway and entrance area (*the letter had been received after the agenda for this meeting had been circulated*).

25.6.12 CLERK'S REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING

None.

25.6.13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.30pm on Wednesday 23 July 2025, in the Village Hall.

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