Great Waldingfield Parish Council Meeting
Monday 12 October 2026 at 2.00pm Great Waldingfield Village Hall
Minutes

Present: Cllrs John Evans (Chair), Gail Baxter (GB) (Vice Chair), Jan Spackman (JS). County Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton (P F-M) District Cllr Margaret Maybury. Four members of the public. Clerk: Mark Freeman and Assistant Clerk Deshune Morrison.

Apologies: Cllr S Ambrose; Cllr P Berry; and District Cllr P Clover (overseas).

01 Welcome and Apologies
The Chair opened the meeting at 2.00pm[i] and welcomed councillors, residents and guests. Apologies were accepted from Cllrs S Ambrose and P Berry, and District Cllr P Clover.

02 Declarations of Interests and Dispensations
No new declarations were made. The Council remains quorate[ii] for decisions.

03 Minutes of Meeting – 14 Sep 2026
The draft minutes (prepared by Tony Evans) were considered. Members noted they were more detailed than usual but acceptable. Minutes of 14 Sep 2026 approved. No matters arising beyond items already listed on this agenda.

04 Public Forum
Residents raised concerns regarding litter accumulation near the shop and post office. Key points raised:
- Litter (cans, bottles, sweet wrappers) regularly accumulates on the green.
- Existing bins often overflow; dog waste bins are being misused for general waste.
- Residents suggested installing an additional bin near the shop frontage.
- Discussion covered land ownership, siting constraints, and collection arrangements.
- Parish Support Services to be asked to increase vigilance.
- Chair will include a note in the Nov village magazine encouraging residents to take litter home.

Resolved. Clerk to investigate costs, permissions, land ownership, and collection cycles for: (a) a new bin near the shop/post office; (b) larger-capacity bins on Greenacre; Report to Nov meeting.

Residents were thanked for their contribution and encouraged to remain for the meeting.

05 County & District Councillors' Written Reports

05.01 Suffolk County Council (SCC)
Cllr P Faircloth-Mutton (P F-M) provided an extensive update on progress from the new council, five months in:
- Potholes: 15,259 repaired since May 2026 (20% increase on 2025) with only 350 outstanding. Efficiency improvements include repairing multiple potholes in one visit rather than by date order. JCB Pothole Pro trial ongoing; may be retained in some areas.
- Devolution: Discussions with Norfolk continue; Suffolk seeking safeguards to ensure balanced infrastructure spending. Mayoral election: Expected May 2028.
- Asylum seeker referendum: SCC exploring legality of holding a county-wide advisory referendum in May 2027.

Members asked questions regarding reporting systems, infrastructure balance, and implications for district planning powers.

05.02 Babergh District Council (BDC)
Cllr Maybury reported:
- Kingfisher Leisure Centre closure due to safety concerns; investigations ongoing.
- Updates on NPPF[1] changes, including removal of councillor call-ins for planning.
- Bus service reliability concerns acknowledged; SCC to be pressed for action.
- Cllr Maybury thanked residents for litter-picking efforts.

06 Councillor Matters – Vacancies
Three vacancies remain. The Chair encouraged residents to consider co-option and noted that May 2027 parish elections will automatically appoint candidates if fewer than eight stand.

07 Devolution & Local Government Reform (LGR)
No new items. The Chair reiterated GWPC's interest in exploring collaborative working models with neighbouring parishes.

08 Traffic – ANPR, Speeding, Sign Competition
Key points:
- Residents raised concerns about speeding throughout the village.
- Discussion on SID[2]s and ANPR[3] camera calibration, including reports of warnings being triggered before vehicles reach the 30mph zone.
- Clerk to verify SID calibration and request confirmation from SCC regarding ANPR camera accuracy.
- Discussion on hospitality-based speed-limit transitions (60→40→30).
- Traffic Group liaison deferred to Nov due to Cllr P Clover's absence.

09 Parking. No items.

10 Correspondence –
- Bus Services & Bus Stop (Lavenham Road) Significant concerns raised:
    - Konnectbus reliability issues: missed services leaving elderly residents and college students stranded.
    - Lack of clear timetables at Sudbury Bus Station.
    - Google Maps more accurate than operator apps.
    - Request for reinstatement of a bus stop near Bantocks Road /Valley Road.
    - Resolved: Clerk to raise issues formally with the Suffolk Enhanced Bus Partnership Passenger Group, including: (a) reliability failures; (b) risks to students; (c) reinstatement of a bus stop; (d) timetable clarity.
- EV Chargers on Bantocks Road. Clerk to follow up with Cllr P F-M.
- Nuisance behind Chip Shop. Clerk to follow up with Cllr M Maybury.

11 Planning & Development
11.01 In-tray. Updates received on current applications:
- DC/26/03233 – Dyers Green Farm. Babergh has refused the application. Reasons include non-compliance with LP02, concerns about curtilage, design, landscape impact, and flood risk.

[1] National Planning Policy Framework
[2] Speed Indicator Devices
[3] Automatic Number Plate Recognition

- DC/26/04130 – Mouse Hall, Lavenham Rd. Proposed garage conversion and roof height increase. No objection, but GWPC to raise concerns regarding potential light loss to neighbouring properties and adherence to bat/hedgerow guidance.
- DC/26/03303 & 03302 – Watergate Lodge, Clay Hall Lane. Replacement of garage buildings and workshop extension. Ecology report noted proximity to pond; GWPC to request strict adherence to wildlife protections (bats, amphibians, nesting birds).
- New PA. Wickham Elms, Rector Rd. Application to remove a large larch tree. No objection due to limited wildlife value locally, though members expressed regret at tree loss.

GWPC expressed their gratitude for Cllr Baxter's efforts with planning.

12 Financial Matters

12.01 The Assistant Clerk presented: Income & Expenditure – Sep Duplicate payment to Prettys identified; refund being processed.

12.02 Bank Reconciliation – Sep Current balance: £16,674.53. Total bank position: £249,256.02

12.03 Oct MTD expenditure (£9,215).

12.04. AGAR report. The comments from PKF were described and discussed. To be covered further in the FC meeting.

12.05 Lloyds Bank mandate. Resolution to approve the proposed changes was approved.

12.06 VH Transfer of money. Resolution to accept money from VHMC was approved.

12.07. Pinboards for bus shelters. Budget of £150 was approved for more substantial pin boards. Proposed: Cllr JS; 2nd: Cllr GB

12.08 Laptop. The budget increase to £1,000 was approved. Proposed: Cllr GB; 2nd: Cllr JS. As part of the same discussion, it was proposed and approved to purchase a desk and have it assembled in the office for a budget of £400. Proposed: Cllr GB; 2nd: Cllr JS

12.09 A donation of £200 to RBL[4] was proposed to RBL. Proposed: Cllr JS; 2nd: Cllr GB

Discussion included:

- Employee cost forecast and need to reallocate budget from unused project funds.
- Finance Committee meeting set for 10am Mon 26 Oct 2026. Agenda to include AGAR section 3 report, Asset Register and CIL money.

13 Urgent Financial Matters. None.

14 Strategic Plan (SP) & Action Plan. SP and AP items noted. "No-mow area" and recreational field to be added to the SP. Discussions about funding deferred to Finance Committee.

15 PC Assets / Land

15.01 Pavilion / Wellbeing & Café Centre / Playing Field

The Chair summarised the recent difficulties with SCC negotiations regarding land, fencing and easements. Clerk to write formally to SCC (Cllr P F-M) seeking alternative land options within the village.

15.02 Play Equipment. Nil.

15.03 Greenacre – Project Plan

Working Group (Baxter, Freeman, Ambrose) to progress:

- Village sign refurbishment
- Brick plinth repairs
- Lighting upgrades
- Memory Tree installation
- WW1 "Tommy" silhouette base

Target completion: 31 Jan 2027.

[4] Royal British Legion

15.04 Village Hall – Various Items discussed:

- CCTV options were discussed and a smaller, village hall appropriate solution, sought. A budget of £2,000 was agreed. Proposed: Cllr JS; 2nd: Cllr GB).
- PAT testing to be undertaken by qualified contractor. Cllr GB to initiate.
- Fire alarm testing to be added to cleaner's routine (monthly). Cllr JE to initiate.
- Electrical installation inspection required. Clerk to contact RDK
- Booking system replacement to be explored (UK village hall platform).
- Hedge front trim required.

15.05 QDJG – Outline ToR & Mulch
Deferred pending return of lead volunteer.

16 Footpaths & Hedgerows. FP11 access project progress noted and forecast to be completed end of 27 Nov 2026.

17 Environment. Litter pick scheduled for 17 Oct 2026.

18 Intentionally Blank

19 HR & Complaints – Assistant Clerk. Council reaffirmed need to recruit an Assistant Clerk. Job description and salary benchmarking to be prepared for Nov meeting. Discussion included potential future shared-service model with neighbouring parishes.

20 Matters Arising to the Chair. Invertor for VH at next meeting.

21 Next Meeting. Mon 9 Nov 2026 at 2.00pm[iii], subject to confirmation of standing orders regarding meeting times.

22 Exclusion of Public and Press. Council resolved to exclude the public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and LGA 1972 ss100 & 102.

23 Thank You to the Public for Attending. The Chair thanked Deshune Morrison for his assistance and the attendees for attending the meeting.

24 Confidential Session. (Recorded separately)

ACTION LOG – From Minutes of 12 October 2026

Clerk (MF)

- Investigate bin provision near shop/post office; review Greenacre bin capacity; report Nov.
- Include litter-awareness note in November magazine.
- Verify SID calibration; request SCC confirmation on ANPR accuracy.
- Raise bus reliability and bus stop reinstatement with Suffolk Enhanced Bus Partnership.
- Submit planning comments for Mouse Hall, Watergate Lodge, Wickham Elms.
- Prepare Finance Committee papers for 26 Oct.
- Write to SCC (Cllr Faircloth-Mutton) regarding alternative land options.
- Progress Greenacre project plan with Working Group.
- Arrange fire alarm testing routine with cleaner; obtain fire alarm, emergency lighting and extinguisher maintenance quotes.
- Initiate electrical installation inspection.
- Begin scoping new booking system.
- Draft Assistant Clerk job description and salary proposal.
- Contact Anglian Water regarding ditch clearance reimbursement.
- Write EV charger plinth obstruction letter to SCC.
- Approach airfield fence landowner.
- Purchase pin boards

Cllr Baxter (GB)

- Lead on planning comments (ecology, wildlife protections).
- Support Greenacre Working Group.

Cllr Spackman (JS)

- Support bus correspondence and bin review.
- Lead on Village Hall items.

Cllr Evans (JE)

- Prepare magazine note on litter.
- Oversee Assistant Clerk recruitment framework.
- Transfer money from VHMC to GWPC. Close down VHMC savings account. Keep VHMC current account open for a few more months.

Cllr Ambrose (SA)

- Support Greenacre Working Group (sign, lighting, Tommy base).

Cllr Berry (PB)

- Confirm Memory Tree installation arrangements; liaise on Tommy silhouette base.

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[i] A parish council (PC) meeting (mtg) may be held at any hour the council chooses, but the law sets one default and several practical constraints.

The key point is this: If the PC does not set a specific time, the statutory default is 6:00pm.

The full, structured explanation of what time a PC mtg should be held — and why. The legal position (LGA 1972). Ordinary PC meetings: The council may determine any day and any hour; No statutory earliest/latest time is imposed.

Venue restriction: Mtgs cannot be held in premises licensed for the supply of alcohol unless no suitable alternative exists.

Why evenings are standard practice
Although councils *may* choose any hour, most PCs meet in the early evening (typically 7–8pm). This is supported by sector guidance:

- "Mtgs will normally be held weekday evenings… long mtgs can inconvenience councillors and discourage public attendance."

The reasons are practical rather than legal:

- Accessibility for working councillors. Evenings allow those with daytime jobs to attend.
- Public participation. Residents are more likely to attend after work.
- Consistency. A regular evening slot helps build predictable attendance.
- Avoiding late finishes. Starting around 7pm keeps mtgs within the recommended 1–2-hour window.

Recommended timing for best practice
For a parish like GWPC, the optimal time usually balances legal compliance, public accessibility, and councillor availability:

- Start between 7:00pm and 7:30pm: Late enough for working residents; Early enough to finish by 9pm; and Aligns with sector norms
- Avoid Fridays and weekends. Attendance drops; guidance notes weekend mtgs are uncommon.
- Keep mtgs to 1–2 hours. Longer mtgs reduce public engagement and councillor concentration.

[ii] **The statutory quorum rule**
A meeting may conduct business only if:

- At least one-third of the whole number of councillors are present, and
- Never fewer than three councillors.

This applies to full council meetings. Committees may have different quorums if set by standing orders but cannot transact business if fewer than three members are present unless the committee itself legally consists of fewer than three.
Examples:

[iii] A parish council meeting may be held at any hour the council chooses, but the law sets one default and several practical constraints.