

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ONEHOUSE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 7.30 P.M. IN TRINITY HALL

Present: Cllrs Copping (Chair), Boulter, Corker, Crissell, Nutman and Roberts

In attendance: County Cllr Bentley (in part), District Cllr Matthissen (in part), Mrs V Swansborough, Clerk and 3 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence. Cllr Goodwin was absent.

2. To confirm and approve the minutes of the meetings on 14th September 2026. These were approved.

3. To receive members Declarations of Interest on agenda items and to consider any dispensation requests. There were none.

4. Public comment. A member of the public raised the recent reports of planning permission being granted for 4 new houses in place of the empty bungalows in Harleston. There was some concern raised by Cllr Boulter regarding the disruption the building works could cause to traffic flow which will be monitored.

5. Report from County Cllr Bentley:

Council predicts £7.8m overspend this year: At Cabinet on 17 September, the most recent financial forecasts for the council were discussed, based on the outturn for quarter one of 2026-27. The council is currently predicting that it will overspend by £7.8m by 31 March 2027, and the overspend will need to be funded by the council withdrawing money from its risk reserve. The council is required to hold 5% of its annual revenue budget in unallocated reserves in order to be considered financially resilient, and the £7.8m drawdown means that the unallocated reserves would be £3.7m short of this 5% figure, at 4.6%. If this happens, the council will need to write to the government to inform them. The overspend at the council is in a number of areas, mostly in adult social care (care purchasing), children in care, inclusion (Special Education Needs and Disabilities or SEND), and home to school transport for pupils with SEND. The council needs to save as much money as it can between now and the end of the year to reduce the amount it will take out of its reserves.

The council's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit, which funds education, is predicted to increase by £104.8m by the end of the year, mostly the high needs block which funds SEND education. The government has a statutory override in place for this debt until 31 March 2028, after which date the government is due to take over funding SEND provision from local authorities. The council also expects the government to write off £147.5m of this debt this autumn via High Needs Stability funding. However, the rate at which this debt continues to grow means that the council will still owe many millions to the government by March 2028, as even after the £147.5m is taken off the debt, the council is still predicting a deficit of £121.2m by March 2027. The council will be hoping that the government will provide more funding or write off more of this debt.

Update on Local Government Reorganisation: On 7 September, the government announced that it was withdrawing plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in a number of areas including Suffolk. This means that the plans for three unitary councils for Suffolk are currently off the table and subject to a government review. The announcement follows decisions by several councils, including Suffolk, to mount legal challenges to the government over

LGR decision-making. This means that there will no longer be elections to the unitary councils in May 2027, with the elections for districts and Ipswich Borough going ahead as they would have normally. At the moment, the mayoral election for the new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk is also due to go ahead, with the government announcing no changes to this programme. Councils in Suffolk will need to wait to hear from the government on the outcome of its LGR proposals review, there is currently no confirmation on when this will be completed.

Legal breaches at the council (Section 5A Report) At Cabinet on 17 September, the council's legal breaches over the LGR challenge to the government were discussed, with the council maintaining that the breaches were 'minor and inadvertent'. The council was in breach of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 in two respects in June, when the Leader of the Council made an executive decision to lodge a legal challenge against the government: When an executive decision is made, it should be published as soon as 'reasonably practicable'. In this case, the decision was made on 18 June but not published until 26 June. This meant councillors were not aware of the decision in time to formally challenge it (decisions have to be 'called in' for scrutiny by 4pm on the second working day after the decision was made). This meant the Leader's decision was effectively made behind closed doors and could not be challenged as per the council's constitution

When a member of the council's Scrutiny Committee requested information about the executive decision, they should have received the judicial review information within 10 days of their request, but this deadline was not met

The Cabinet decided that additional training on these processes would be a suitable measure to prevent future breaches. Section 5A reports are very rare and a serious matter for councils, as they are only produced when a council has admitted maladministration or breached the law.

A14 and Transport Resilience The case for an Ipswich northern route or an alternative crossing over the River Orwell was also discussed at Cabinet on 17 September, with the council agreeing to pay consultants £300k to look again at the options for improving traffic in Ipswich when the Orwell Bridge is closed. The council last looked at options for this a few years ago, with plans for an Ipswich Northern Route scrapped by 2020 due to opposition from the communities where the routes were proposed, and the lack of funding. It is likely that any major infrastructure options, such as a northern bypass, tunnel or second bridge, would cost between £500m to over £1bn. The A14 is a trunk road and the responsibility of National Highways rather than the council, and any major project would need government funding as the council would not be able to afford it. This funding is not guaranteed to become available. The Cabinet report also noted the importance of improving rail routes for the port, such as the long-promised works on junctions at Ely and Haughley. Improving the Ely junction would enable an additional 2,900 rail freight journeys, meaning 98,000 fewer lorry journeys for the port. Fewer lorries on the A14 would be benefit communities all along the length of the A14 which suffer excess traffic when the road is closed.

Impact of Better Recycling My group met recently with officers from the council dealing with waste, who provided us with some data on Better Recycling and how the roll out of waste collection changes had been going in the county since June. While household waste and recycling are collected by district and borough councils, Suffolk County Council is then responsible for processing the waste.

Residual waste, which is waste that cannot be used for something else, dropped from 4,077 tonnes per week in April/May to 3,225 tonnes per week since June. Mostly this is due to food waste being collected separately and processed in anaerobic digestors. Over a year, that would be equate to a reduction of over 40,000 tonnes for all of Suffolk. Due to the engagement work and publicity undertaken by councils about the changes, an increased amount of glass, plastics and cartons are also now being collected since June.

Funding for the Fire Service: The wildfires occurring across the county this summer due to dry weather and extreme heat have highlighted shortfalls in the equipment needed by Suffolk Fire and Rescue. The current budget for equipping fire and rescue workers covers replacing the standard equipment they use, but wildfires such have the one at Dunwich Heath require different and specialist equipment for the fire service to fight them safely and effectively, including off-road fleet for areas their existing vehicles cannot access, clothing and personal equipment (PPE) for firefighters that can protect them for prolonged incidents, and boots with better grip for outdoor terrain. The fire service is still calculating the cost and preparing a debrief on the Dunwich Heath fire, this may mean they require more investment to be adequately prepared for future wildfires, given the hot summers are likely to continue or worsen. It is also possible that they may need more investment for equipment used in flooding incidents, as these are also likely to increase in number and severity. The Fire Brigades Union in Suffolk has written to the government to request increased funding for fire services across the country to deal with the new dangers they are facing.

Care Leavers Winter Ball: Suffolk County Council acts as a 'Corporate Parent' to the children and young people who are taken into its care, and as many young people in care miss out on events like their school prom, the council is holding a Winter Ball for its care leavers on 27 November during National Care Leavers Month. The council is requesting donations of prom dresses, suits/formalwear, shoes and accessories and financial contributions towards the evening, and the Leaving Care service have set up a Go Fund Me so residents and businesses can donate. Donations of clothing, shoes and accessories can be dropped off at the Info Bar, Constantine House, Ipswich, IP1 2DX.

6. Report from District Cllr Matthissen:

Mid Suffolk Council writes to Government over changes to planning reforms:

Mid Suffolk councillors have hit out at Government planning reforms, warning they could leave local communities with less say over new developments. The Mid Suffolk District Council is to write to the Government to raise concerns over changes to Neighbourhood Plans, green spaces and the way planning applications are decided, making most decisions at officer level. District Cllr Matthissen also advised that this reform contained important changes which would mean that the thresholds for plans to go before the Committee would be much higher.

Food Summit on Monday 16 November: The Suffolk Food Summit is returning to the Food Museum in Stowmarket this November, organised by MSDC to celebrate local food and drink production and its impact on the region's economy. The summit follows on from the council's recently published Food and Drink Action Plan which sets out an ambition to strengthen local production, build a resilient local food and drink network, improve food education and support the industry as a key growth sector.

Local housing for local people: Mid Suffolk District Council has recently agreed

to introduce a Parish Connection Priority for new affordable and social rented homes secured through S106 agreements.

New double Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in Stowmarket: Plans for a new multi-use games area at Stowmarket High School have been given the go-ahead after MSDC agreed to fund the stalled project.

The multi-use games area (MUGA) will provide a space for sports including tennis, netball, basketball and football as part of wider efforts to improve access to sports facilities in the town. A new 3G pitch and athletics track for community use have already been completed.

Community projects receive cash injection: A community-run arts centre, recycling centre and village hall projects are all set to receive a share of more than £110k following the latest Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) awards by Mid Suffolk District Council.

Councillors e-bike partnership receives national recognition: A partnership between MSDC and e-bike provider Eezybike has been shortlisted for two national awards, recognising the innovative work done in the districts to create active and sustainable travel options.

Free classes for older people improve their balance: Older people in Suffolk are being encouraged to take part in free exercise classes to help improve balance, fitness and flexibility. The 12-week Strength and Balance programme aims to improve the balance, co-ordination, flexibility and confidence of residents aged 65 or over who have had a recent fall or feel unsteady on their feet.

7. Planning Matters

a) To discuss and make recommendation to MSDC on any applications received prior to this meeting:

DC/26/03708 – Full planning application for erection of 1 detached dwelling including amendments to access & parking at 2 Star House Cottages, Union Road, Onehouse, IP14 3EJ. It was resolved that no comment would be made.

b) To receive MSDC decisions on previously considered applications:

DC/25/04044 – Outline planning permission for erection of 1 detached dwelling & garage at 2 Star House Cottages, Union Road, Onehouse, IP14 3EJ.

The decision was received by Cllrs.

8. Finances

To ratify the following payments

- a) £687.99 – Mrs V Swansborough, September 26 salary
- b) £9.62 – NEST, pension direct debit
- c) £3.00 – Lloyds Purchasing Card, monthly fee
- d) £750.00 – Stephen Barker Garden Machinery Ltd, Paupers mower, battery & charger
- e) £518.78 – Zurich Insurance, annual insurance premium

To approve payment of the following invoices.

- f) £23.76 – HMRC, PAYE
- g) 49.06 – Viking Office Equipment, printer paper
- h) £129.60 – SALC, payroll services, 1/4/26 – 31/3/27
- i) £18.70 – Mrs V Swansborough, travel expenses July 26-Sept 26
- j) £58.97 – NJ Servicing, Paupers mower repairs
- k) £64.77 – Ray Taylor, Paupers cement, fixings & padlocks
- l) Any additional invoices received since agenda produced.
- m) £260.00 – OHS Village Hall & Playing Field Trust, garage hire.

Items a) to e) were unanimously ratified and items f) to k) and item m) were unanimously approved. To receive monthly financial report from the Clerk: Current account balance at 30th September was £10,203.50cr and the savings account balance was £59,616.91cr, giving total funds of £69,820.41cr. These balances include the £8,000 grant received towards the Neighbourhood Plan, credit interest on the savings account of £211.82 and a donation of £50 towards the continued good work and maintenance of the Paupers Graves. The NEST pension direct debit of £9.62 has since been deducted and payments this month total £604.86. The Clerk advised a transfer to the savings account had also been set up for £7,000. This leaves corrected balances of £2,589.02cr on the current account and £66,616.91cr on the savings account, total funds of £69,205.93cr.

OHSMag invoices up to 30th September have all been issued with just one outstanding invoice of £50. This is for a regular very late payer who, despite regular reminders, has not responded or paid. Adverts for this business were removed from the October edition onwards and Cllrs agreed that, while the debt would remain, it was not cost effective for the Clerk to continue to chase. Invoices up to 31st March will be issued soon and the total income from those will be £1728. Earmarked reserves balances had been emailed to all Cllrs in advance of the meeting and the Clerk had undertaken a review of the budget to actuals at 30th September with no significant overspends to report. Due to the November meeting being moved to 23rd November, the Clerk requested approval for the PAYE due of £78.83 to be made to HMRC to avoid late payment charges and then ratified at the November meeting. This was approved.

9. To receive the External Audit Report and take any necessary action. The report had been circulated to all Cllrs and the contents noted. No actions were required as a result.

10. To consider amounts and recipients of any donations under s137, and take any necessary action. It was agreed to split the donation budget of £1500 between the Citizens Advice Bureau (S.142, £770), Suffolk Headway (S.137, £110), East Anglian Air Ambulance (S.137, £400) & Suffolk Accident Rescue Service (S.137, £220). Payments to be made by the end of the financial year. It was resolved that the recent approval of a donation towards the church path of £500 (S.137) would be in addition to these amounts this year. **Action: Clerk**

11. To discuss potential upcoming projects and purchases to be considered during budget and precept setting. It was agreed that the following projects would be allowed for in the initial budget and precept calculations: Neighbourhood Plan, Elections, 3 new benches, Paupers Graves maintenance and tree work and some support for new play equipment. In addition, donations under S.137 & S.142 (£2,000). The Clerk will bring the draft budget to the November meeting. **Action: Clerk**

12. To receive an update on potential site for additional dog waste bin near to the golf club on Lower Road, and take any necessary action. Cllr Crissell advised that he has not yet been able to meet with the Golf Club to agree the exact site but that the Golf Club agree to the erection of a bin. Cllr Crissell will arrange the meeting. **Action: Cllr Crissell**

13. To receive an update on the damaged dog waste bin on Forest Road and consider repairs or purchase of a replacement bin, and take any necessary action. Cllr Boulter advised that he has been able to repair the broken bin but requested that a new bin be ordered so that the bin or its parts are available for use as needed in the future. This was approved. The clerk will purchase an additional 25L bin when ordering the new bin for the Golf Club, as per item 12.

Action: Cllr Crissell & Clerk

14. To further discuss a Community Emergency Plan, including appointment to any working group agreed, and take any necessary action. Cllrs agreed that this plan is still required. The Chair advised that there was an upcoming webinar arranged by BMSDC which a maximum of 2 representatives could attend. It was agreed that it would be useful for 2 Cllrs to attend and feedback at the November meeting. Cllrs Boulter and Roberts volunteered to attend. Clerk to advise the organisers.

Action: Clerk

15. To discuss reported difficulties of access for emergency services to Northfield Woods and take any necessary action. Cllrs were made aware at the September meeting that the emergency services had been called to Northfield Woods on 4 occasions recently. The resident advised that they had been told that there were difficulties accessing the woods due to the gate being locked. The resident had already contacted the Woodland Trust who advised that there are not key holders locally but that, in their experience, the emergency service vehicles would not be able to drive much further into the woods, as they are not suitable for off road, and that the quickest way to access is for the bolt or chain to be cut to gain access if necessary. A Freedom of Information request to the East Anglian Ambulance Service has been made to request information about any recorded concerns, reports, incidents, risk assessments, correspondence or operational observations regarding emergency vehicle access to Northfield Wood. The response received confirmed that they 'have no information held which suggests any concerns or issues affecting emergency response access at Northfield Wood in Onehouse as described'. It was therefore unanimously resolved that no further action be taken at this time.

16. To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Plan, including further consideration of site allocation, and take any necessary action. A meeting was held on 5th October to discuss the design code and results of the household survey. Cllrs and consultants were advised that the £8,000 grant received was 'conditional upon the Plan allocating sufficient sites to make an agreed contribution to meeting district-wide housing needs'. Cllrs were advised by the consultants that to allocate sites would be likely to incur additional site survey costs in excess of £10,000. As this is more than the grant received, it was resolved that specific site allocations would not be made in the Plan. The condition was discussed with Cllr Matthissen who would seek clarification. It was further resolved that, if necessary, the grant would be returned to BMSDC. Cllr Crissell is working on providing further information and photos to the consultants on characteristics. Date of the next meeting to be confirmed.

Action Cllr Crissell

17. To receive any update on purchase of weights for the gazebos and take any necessary action. In Cllr Goodwin's absence there was no update.

Furthermore, as the gazebos will not be in use over the winter months, it was resolved to postpone any further discussion of this item until the March 27 meeting.

18. To receive an update on OHSMag and consider the need to purchase domain names. The new editor has successfully produced the October edition with very good feedback from residents in Harleston and Onehouse. Harleston have advised that they have arranged for the magazine to be emailed to some residents. The link to the online editions is on the Onehouse website and also posted on social media. Cllrs were advised that the new editor has some good ideas to improve the OHSMag and these would be brought before the Council in due course.

19. To review and adopt the following policies: Code of Conduct, Data Protection Policy and IT & Email Policy. These were unanimously approved.

20. To receive an update on a meeting with the Paupers Graves volunteers regarding governance and future working arrangements, consider signage and timber costs to construct composting areas, and take any necessary action. The Chair advised that the meeting had not yet been scheduled as the risk assessment is required to be drawn up first. Cllr Roberts confirmed that the risk assessment was almost complete. The recent incident of fireworks being let off in the area, plus the risks of bonfires in the area were discussed and it was resolved that the volunteers would be advised that bonfires are not permitted. The Chair is to email the volunteers to confirm this is the Council policy. Alternative solutions for disposal of leaves and grass cuttings was discussed with composting bays and natural composting suggested. It was agreed that this would be discussed further with the volunteers when the meeting was arranged. Volunteers were reminded that the Council are owners of the area and as such responsible for the upkeep and insurance and should, therefore, always be consulted in advance of any proposed change to the area, including fencing, or commitment to spend. The Clerk advised that there had been a request for £25 to cover the cost of winter pansies and compost to go in the tin bath. This was unanimously approved. Volunteers have also advised that servicing of all the equipment is due in November but they are unable to confirm the cost. In view of this being a potential safety concern if equipment is not serviced, it was unanimously agreed that the servicing could be commissioned with the cost to be paid by the Council but that any additional repairs required would need to be costed and presented to the Council in advance of any work being undertaken. This enables the Council to budget and to ensure best use of available funds is being made.

Action: Chair

21. To receive an update on the provision of storage facilities at Paupers Grave and take any necessary action. The Chair advised that she had been made aware of a meeting between District Cllr Matthissen and one of the Paupers volunteers to discuss a potential site for storage facilities. District Cllr Mathissen advised that the District Council Land Registry department had been able to locate contact details for the owners of the adjacent field. It was agreed that District Cllr Matthissen write to the owners to request the donation of a corner of the field to the Parish Council to be used to site suitable storage. It was also requested that the Parish Council be included in any future meetings as

owners of the Paupers Graves area. It was noted that any storage facility would need planning permission and that the cost of this, any legal fees, storage facility and required landscaping would need to be budgeted for.

22. To receive an update on the Paupers Graves and take any necessary action. Cllr Corker advised that the volunteers are being kept busy clearing leaves and tidying. Cllrs were also advised that the water in the pond has still not returned and the volunteers have taken the opportunity to carry out clearance work and increase the size of the area. The Chair asked if the grass could be left a little longer in the area for the benefit of the wildlife, which the volunteers agreed.

Action: Cllr Roberts

23. To receive an update on the potential donated projector for use at Council meetings and take any necessary action. The Chair demonstrated the projector and Cllrs were happy that the quality of the projection was sufficient and the projector would be useful when the Council wish to view documents as a group. The Chair confirmed they were happy to donate the projector to the Council and it was therefore resolved to accept the donation with thanks and not purchase a new projector.

24. To receive an update on Onehouse Meadow, and take any necessary action. District Cllr Matthissen advised that there had been no progress due to the sale of houses on the adjacent new development slowing down and the appropriate 'trigger' point for this project to progress not being met. It was also advised that the Director of the District Council is negotiating with the developers on this matter.

At 9.33pm it was agreed to continue to complete all items.

25. To consider a request for a telephone box style community book library, and funding towards, and take any necessary action. Cllrs were supportive of this idea and possible locations were discussed, including near both noticeboards. As the Council do not own any suitable land for a book library to be situated it was resolved that the Chair would contact District Cllr Matthissen to enquire if the District Council would agree for one to be sited on its land.

Action: Chair

26. To discuss ongoing concerns regarding water leaks on Forest Road, and take any necessary action. There are not currently any leaks in Onehouse, although it was noted that there are leaks further up Forest Road in Harleston. There was no update on any potential preventative works by Anglian Water.

27. To discuss any action necessary regarding the Forest Road to Chilton Leys Footpath. County Cllr Bentley advised that he has kept in touch with the case handler for this project and could confirm that Suffolk Highways are still in negotiations with the landowners to try to gain agreement and get the original plan through. In addition, they are working on an alternative plan where the path would be created under S.26 which would not need agreement from the landowner. This would be for a bridle path. Design work on this is progressing as some of the original design work detail would be able to be used. Landowner agreement is still the preferred route but it was confirmed that if not received,

S.26 would be used. County Cllr Bentley was not able to advise of any timeframe.

District Cllr Matthissen advised that the payment of S.106 monies for this project is subject to 2 trigger points on the new developments but, due to slowing house sales, the 2nd trigger point has not yet been met. Cabinet have therefore been asked to advance the S.106 monies for this project.

28. To receive an update on the Rural Caravan and take any necessary action. The latest meeting was 12th October and was quiet with 5 attendees. It was confirmed that the Council would continue to cover the cost of hall hire as this will be required for the remaining dates booked up to the end of 2026. Cllr Crissell advised that he had attended and discussed with the owners whether the caravan would be willing to continue after December. Cllrs were advised that they would be happy to continue for a further 6 months and decide whether there is enough support to continue beyond then. The next meeting will be 9th November.

29. To receive an update on any events and take any necessary action. There are currently no events planned.

30. To discuss Onehouse website and Facebook page and take any necessary action. The website continues to be kept up to date and now has an OHSMag page with links to the online editions. The Facebook page continues to grow with 556 followers. The Chair asked for any ideas of content to be forwarded to them.

31. To receive an update on a Onehouse Instagram account and take any necessary action. The Chair advised that the new Instagram account had been created and linked to the Facebook page to enable posting on both platforms. The Instagram account already has 38 followers.

32. To receive correspondence/communications and to deal with any matters. The following items have been circulated to Cllrs: **BMSDC:** Community Emergency Plan Letter 16/9, Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk 21/9, Onehouse to Woolpit Quietway update 23/9, Town & Parish Liaison Meeting 28/9, Town & Parish Update October 26 2/10, Important Planning Changes 2/10. **SALC:** Planning Briefing invite 15/9, News Bulletin 21/9, 28/9. **SCC:** NSIPS Bulletin 29/9. **CAB:** Update on work by CAB 5/10. **Newquest:** Media Request: Antisocial Behaviour at Paupers Graves.

The Clerk advised that emails of thanks had been received from the Reverend and Warden of the Church following Council approval of a donation towards the Church path. An email had also been received from a resident who attended the September meeting, expressing dissatisfaction of Cllrs responses to items raised under the public comment item.

33. To receive reports:

a) Report from the Clerk: The Clerk advised that they had been notified that the defibrillator sited at the Lakehouse Café had recently been accessed under direction from the emergency services and was therefore out of service for a couple of days. The Clerk confirmed that the defibrillator had not been needed in the end as the emergency services had arrived in time. It has now been returned to available status again. The Clerk has attended and booked several training or

information sessions including Scribefest, Preparing for Audit – The Practitioners Guide, Highways Flooding & Drainage, Planning and the digital AGAR. An introductory webinar on the CiLCA qualification had also been attended and Cllrs were advised the total cost of this qualification would be in the region of £1,000. The Clerk will soon be issuing the next 6 months of OHSMag invoices and is working on the budget and precept calculations.

34. Questions to the Chair. There were none.

35. Items for next agenda. Budget & Precept, Policies, Community Emergency Plan, Jubilee Players request.

36. To confirm date and time of the next Parish Council Meeting as Monday 23rd November 2026 at 7.30pm. This was confirmed.

The meeting closed at 9.57pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....