

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ONEHOUSE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON  
MONDAY 11 MAY 2026 AT 7.00 P.M. IN TRINITY HALL

Present – Mr Crissell – Acting Vice-Chair Onehouse Parish Council  
Mrs Swansborough – Clerk Onehouse Parish Council  
11 members of the public

**1. To receive apologies for absence.**

These were received from Mrs Copping, Mr Nutman, Rev Jenkins, Mrs Pedge and Ms Smith

**2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held 12 May 2025**

It was proposed, seconded and carried to approve the minutes.

**3. To receive the audited parish accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2025**

During the year a precept of £27,000 was raised. Donations totaling £1,500.00 were given to Suffolk Accident Rescue Service, Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureau, East Anglian Air Ambulance and Ipswich & East Suffolk Headway. The balance of the Income and Expenditure Account as at 31 March 2025 is £2,540.18. Funds held in earmarked reserves total £20,899.36.

**4. Parish Council Report – Mrs J Copping  
Onehouse Parish Council Chairperson's Report 2025/2026;  
Introduction**

As Chair of Onehouse Parish Council, I am pleased to present this report reflecting on the work of the Council over the past year, the issues we have faced on behalf of residents, and our priorities for the year ahead.

**The Council**

The Parish Council has continued to operate with the commitment and voluntary input of its councillors, supported by the Clerk. Councillors balance Council duties alongside work and family responsibilities, and their ongoing dedication to parish matters is greatly appreciated. The Council remains keen to encourage continued engagement and interest in parish governance from across the village.

**Achievements and Ongoing Work**

Throughout the year, the Council has focused on its core responsibilities, including responding to planning consultations, engaging with district and county partners, and representing the views of residents on issues affecting the parish.

Work on the Neighbourhood Plan has progressed during the year and will continue into the coming year. The Council sees this as a key piece of work in shaping the future of Onehouse, ensuring that local views are clearly represented and that the character of the village is protected. Enabling this work to move forward has required careful consideration of the Council's finances.

Alongside this work, the Council has supported and promoted community events that bring residents together and strengthen village life. These activities rely heavily on volunteers and community goodwill, and the Council is grateful to all those who help make them possible.

The Council has continued to manage its finances responsibly, taking care to use public funds wisely, transparently, and in the best interests of the parish.

### **Village Assets**

The Parish Council has continued to maintain and support village assets and facilities for the benefit of residents, ensuring they remain safe, serviceable, and appropriate for community use. This work remains an ongoing responsibility and an important part of the Council's role.

### **Challenges**

As with previous years, the Council has faced a number of ongoing challenges. One area of frustration has been the continued lack of progress on the Forest Road footpath project. Despite sustained engagement and the clear importance of this route for pedestrian safety and accessibility, progress has been slow and disappointing for both councillors and residents. The Parish Council will continue to pursue clarity, press for action, and represent the strength of feeling within the community until this matter is resolved.

The Council also remains aware of ongoing uncertainty regarding the future use of the land behind the Pauper's Graves. Progress in this area has been delayed while Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council and the developer have been working through land allocation matters relating to the SHELF project.

The Parish Council continues to seek updates and will pursue further clarity as information becomes available.

The Council has also continued to monitor broader infrastructure and service issues affecting the parish, raising concerns where appropriate and working within the constraints of its remit and influence.

### **Looking Ahead**

Looking forward to the coming year, the Parish Council will continue work on the Neighbourhood Plan, support community events, and remain focused on addressing the issues that matter most to Onehouse residents. The Council will continue to work constructively with partner authorities, while ensuring that the voice of the parish is clearly heard. We also remain committed to the development of an emergency plan for Onehouse and intend to engage with residents at an appropriate stage in this project.

### **Thanks**

would like to thank my fellow councillors for their time, commitment, and constructive approach throughout the year, our Clerk for her continued support, along with all residents and volunteers who engage with and contribute to parish life.

**5. Matters arising from the previous items on the agenda.** There were none.

### **6. County Councillor's Report – Mrs P Otton.**

Having been the county councillor for 19 years, and with the proposed changes to local government in Suffolk, I decided to not stand for re-election. I hope I have been able to help and make some difference. I hope the Forest Road footpath will happen after such a long time that we have been working so hard to achieve.

**Council Motions:** At council meetings throughout the year, my group passed two motions successfully:

In May 2025, we proposed that the council ban the giving of pets as prizes on council owned land and writes to the government requesting an outright ban on live animals as prizes on both public and private land. The motion referred to animals intended as pets, and excluded farm animals which may be given as prizes by farmers and farming businesses

In March 2026, we proposed that following the revelations in the media about the 'Epstein files' and the indication that there would continue to be a high volume of press coverage on the subject, that the council release a statement of support for victims of sexual harm and exploitation, and launch a social media campaign so that survivors in Suffolk would know where they can access local advice and support via Ipswich charity Survivors in Transition

My group also proposed several other motions throughout the year which were voted down by the councillors in the chamber:

In March 2025, we proposed that Suffolk County Council gain accreditation as a 'Council of Sanctuary' to welcome refugees and displaced people, ensure that services work together to provide support to them, and to establish more 'Schools of Sanctuary' in the county to teach children why people come to the UK and how to treat them with kindness and empathy. Currently there is only one school of sanctuary in Suffolk, whereas Norfolk has thirteen. This was voted down by councillors on the basis that this would create extra cost for the council.

In July 2025, we proposed that the council change its procedures to make it easier and simpler for residents and communities to adopt safer speed limits, including 20mph speed limits. The administration rejected the motion on the grounds that it was preparing a review of this process already (see details below)

In December 2025, my group tabled a motion proposing that the council recognise the Rights of Rivers in Suffolk, including to be protected from pollution, to flow freely, and to recover from environmental harm, and that the council should work with districts, boroughs, local communities and national agencies such as the Environment Agency and water companies to advocate for healthy rivers and improved water quality. The administration voted this down on the basis that rivers flowing freely suggested that flooding should be enabled, which was not really what the motion was proposing.

**Local Government Reorganisation:** This year has seen a number of developments in terms of council structure and plans for the future. Following the announcement of Local Government Reorganisation in December 2024, councils in Suffolk had to submit plans to the government in September 2025 stating how many unitary councils should be set up in Suffolk after county councils, district and borough councils are dissolved in 2028. This means that the services provided by different councils in Suffolk would all be provided by one council for a specific area. Suffolk County Council submitted a proposal to the government for one unitary council for the whole of Suffolk via their 'One Suffolk' campaign. District and borough councils in Suffolk worked together to agree a proposal for three unitary councils in Suffolk: Western Suffolk, Central and Eastern Suffolk and Ipswich and Southern Suffolk, which includes the county town and Felixstowe. At the end of March 2026, the government announced that this was the option they wanted to go forward with. The next step will be for elections to the new councils, which will be

held in May 2027. The new councillors will then 'shadow' existing councillors for a year until the new authorities are 'vested' from 1 April 2028.

**Devolution and the Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Authority:** Concurrently with rearranging the councils is the process of devolution in the region. The government announced in December 2024 that a mayoral authority would be set up for Norfolk and Suffolk, with mayoral elections held in May 2026. The mayor and mayoral authority would have responsibility for strategic planning, transport and economic growth for the region and would include some members from local councils, but with the mayor having the deciding vote on decisions. In December 2024, the government announced that the mayoral elections would be delayed until May 2028. Following the announcement in February 2026 that the county council elections in May 2026 were back on, the leader of Norfolk County Council announced publicly that devolution was 'off' in Norfolk. However, the reinstated county council elections mean it may be a completely different set of politicians in Norfolk and Suffolk taking this forward. Currently, the plan is for the mayor to be elected in May 2028 and everyone in Norfolk and Suffolk will have a chance to vote.

**Libraries Brought Back in House:** Following last year's report, the county's library service was brought back in-house at Suffolk County Council from 1 June 2025. Cabinet agreed to put aside £1.8m for the transition period, with the service expected to be back within budget by the second year. As at December 2025 it had spent £0.6m of this fund, with most of the remaining funds already committed. Since taking the service back into SCC, the council has also undertaken a restructure in the libraries 'central team' which has made savings of £340k per annum in staff redundancies. Front line staffing and volunteering numbers remain the same, with most library users stating when surveyed that they had not noticed a difference in the service provided. Library 'Friends' groups continue as normal, with all funds raised by the Friends being used to benefit their local branch. Those working in libraries have had to undertake the annual training modules which all Suffolk County Council employees have to complete, and also learn how to use the council's HR and finance processes, which is a lot of change initially. In addition, although the council initially honoured all terms and conditions of employment, from April 2026 employment terms and pay will be harmonised with council standards and pay scales. The transition was reviewed at Scrutiny Committee in March 2026 and during the meeting the libraries team also laid out their volunteer recruitment plan and governance systems for the new service (how it will be overseen). The library service is now part of the council's Public Health and Communities directorate with oversight from the Suffolk Community Libraries Strategic Group which has members from the council and the libraries service.

**Council Budget 2026-27:** In February 2026, the council set out and voted on its budget for the coming financial year, including its intention to take the maximum 4.99% increase in council tax. Even raising council tax to the maximum, it will still have a budget 'gap' of £5.9m this year which it will have to fund from council reserves. It set a £46.5m target for savings across the council, with more planned in further years to keep the council financially sustainable. The main cost pressures are for social care in adults and children's services, which the council has to

provide by law whatever the cost. Future savings will need to be made to service the council's predicted budget gap for 2027-28, which it estimates will be £23.4m. The council also has an enormous debt for provision of services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities held under the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This is described as a 'negative reserve' as the council is allowed to hold the debt, with the government recently providing an override for it until the end of March 2028 and an agreement to fund 90% of each council's DSG debt later this year. This will still leave the council with many millions of DSG debt though, and it will keep rising until the council is dissolved in 2028. The council predicts that its DSG deficit will be -£356.4m by 31 March 2028. It also spends millions on interest costs for the DSG debt which affects the council's borrowing ability and its financial resilience. The government hopes that the spiralling costs for councils everywhere will be mitigated by the Local Government Reorganisation process. This means that from 2028 there will only be three councils in Suffolk to fund rather than six.

**Net Zero Financial Savings:** In January 2026, the annual Net Zero Carbon Budget report was brought to Cabinet to assess the progress of the council towards its carbon reduction goals. Previously the council had an ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030, although as the council will cease to exist in 2028 it has adjusted its target to 63% of carbon emissions by 2027-28. The Cabinet agreed that any new measures for carbon reduction during the remainder of this term would have to provide in-year financial savings for the council to be considered. The council's Net Zero work has so far provided £4.8m of savings by reducing electricity and gas use, which is incredibly important at a time when the council is struggling to remain financially resilient. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability, which is the UK professional body for accountants in the public sector, judges that a council has healthy financial reserves if the amount in its Unallocated Reserves fund is at least five per cent of the year's net expenditure budget, and if the reserve did drop below this threshold, the finance officer for the council (Section 151 Officer) would require remedial action. For 2026-27, five percent of the council's budget is £42.499m, with the amount in Unallocated Reserves being £44.436m. This means the threshold has been met, but only just: the difference is only £1.937m, which means the £4.8m of savings made by the council's carbon reduction initiatives have been critical for financial survival. In terms of the savings made, these include changes to heating controls in Endeavour House in January and February 2025 where gas use was reduced by over 42% without impacting electricity use, reducing energy costs for the council by £30k each year, and a car park solar array established at Beacon House, comprising three solar canopies with bifacial panels and batteries to capture excess power for use in the building, this is expected to save more than £50k a year.

**Suffolk Roads Rated Red by UK Government:** As you may have seen in the press, the government recently released RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings each county based on how effectively they use the government's highways maintenance funding and the condition of their roads. Suffolk's road maintenance was rated as Red, the worst category. This has struck a chord with residents in the county, who have been clear that they agree and want the quality of Suffolk's roads to improve. Suffolk County Council's administration, however, has denied that the rating is

accurate, saying that overall the condition of Suffolk's roads are rated Amber, with the overall Red rating being arrived at because the Department for Transport did not include in its assessment £10m of highways funding that it brought forward from the 2025-26 financial year and invested early in a resurfacing programme in 2024-25. The council has met with the Department for Transport to press for the Suffolk rating to be raised to Amber, pointing out that Department for Transport data shows that only 3% of the county's A roads are in poor condition, which is better than the England average. In addition, in December the council received £2.9m from the Department for Transport's Incentive Fund, which rewards authorities with a record of good performance in highway maintenance. The wet weather since Christmas has caused a lot of damage to roads in Suffolk and the council has been active on social media to provide updates to residents and information on how they make their decisions on which potholes and defects they prioritize. The council's Highways Maintenance Operational Plan is published on the SCC website and details the size and depth of potholes and the number of days it will take to repair them, based on size and depth. If the council has repaired a defect in line with its published criteria, then claims made for damage to vehicles are not likely to succeed.

**New 20mph Policy:** You may recall that last summer, my group proposed a motion at council to make it easier and simpler for local communities to reduce speed limits, including 20mph areas. The administration voted down our plans, claiming that they were already planning to review their processes and would bring this back for agreement at a later date. At Cabinet on Friday 9 January, the new 20mph speed limit policy was tabled and approved and is now in place for speed limit change requests. The aim of the new policy is to make the process for communities to apply for a 20mph speed limit easier and more streamlined. From now on, any application for a new 20mph limit in an area where recorded average traffic speeds are 28mph and under is likely to be approved by the council. The local county councillor must also be in favour of the change, and there should be majority support from residents. My group pointed out that the new requirement to prove majority support for the new speed limit was likely to make the process more onerous for town and parish councils rather than less, as the new process states that local engagement should be carried out to gauge support, for example a survey or consultation of residents living in the area or along the stretch of road where on the change is proposed. Any new 20mph limits will also still need local funding to be in place, unless the scheme aligns with a council programme as part of the Local Transport Plan. The new policy is based on recording speeds as follows:

- Below 28mph – likely to be accepted, with a speed limit sign only, although signs warning that a 20mph zone is ahead may be required
- Between 28 - 32mph - unlikely to be acceptable with signing alone. Gateway signing and traffic calming throughout the area may be required
- Above 32mph - Unlikely to be acceptable without extensive traffic calming measures such as road humps, plus night-time lighting. It would also be subject to a Road Safety Audit

**Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan:** In December 2025, preparation arrangements were agreed at Cabinet for the county's updated Minerals and Waste Plan, which is now five years old and due for renewal. The plan looks at the county's needs and decides what planning measures need to be taken to meet them – for example, aggregates such as sand and gravel which are necessary for housebuilding. As the government has announced high targets for housing in Suffolk, the county will need more of these materials in future. As the Local Government Reorganisation process means that Suffolk County Council will likely not exist by the time the plan is due to be adopted, the decision made by Cabinet was to undertake all the preparatory work for the new plan and gather evidence for it, so that the new authority/ies who have to publish the plan will be well-placed to put it in place later.

**Local Nature Recovery Strategy Approved:** In September 2025, the council's Cabinet voted to approve the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was produced following a public consultation on the draft strategy between April and June 2025. The strategy is a new requirement for the council, and sets out priority species and habitats for nature conservation in the county, giving 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 habitat improvement mandatory, but the officers who have produced the strategy will now work with farmers and landowners to support them and work to find investment for the measures outlined in the strategy.

Landowners can use areas mapped in the strategy to produce 'units' of biodiversity for purchase by developers, as developers will be required to meet the government's new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which state that all development should be increase biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. The units of biodiversity do not need to be on the site of or near the development.

The new strategy should also help Suffolk County Council to improve the land it owns in the county, for example County Farms, and local planning authorities will have to take account of the new 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.

Following Cabinet approval, the strategy was shared with neighbouring authorities, Natural England and local partners like district and borough councils and the Broads Authority for their feedback.

**New Funding for Buses and Sustainable Travel:** In June 2025 we heard that the council had been given a grant of £8m from the Department for Transport for improving bus travel in the county during 2025-26, of which £2.8m was for service improvements and £5.2m of capital funding for improving bus stops, priority measures for buses on busy streets or upgrades to vehicles. In December 2025 we heard that Suffolk had been awarded £27m of funding for bus services from the government's Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG), this can be used for routes, ticketing or improving infrastructure like bus stops and shelters. Previously known as the Bus Services Improvement Grant, communities and parish councils in Suffolk will be able to suggest improvements in their area and 'bid' for funding via the Suffolk on Board website. The council has also been awarded just over £12m from Active Travel England to promote sustainable travel in the county. This can be

used to invest in footpaths, cycle lanes and other infrastructure. Examples of how this funding has been used recently include pedestrian crossings in Bridge Street and College Road by Ipswich waterfront, and improved cycle routes including from Ipswich Hospital to the waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and within Woodbridge as part of the town's current active travel project.

## **7. District Councillor's Report – Mr J Matthissen.**

**Recycling update:** The new recycling regime is due to start in June 2026.

Mid Suffolk currently only recycles 42% of waste and is not in the top 150 Councils in the UK. Aim is to exceed 60%. The bins are:

- Food waste
- Green recycling bin – paper and card
- Blue recycling bin – glass, plastics, tetrapaks i.e. non-paper
- Black bin – refuse bin

**Planning system:** Mid Suffolk's housing target has increased from 535 per annum to 734 (an increase of 37%). If you include a 5% buffer this amounts to a requirement of 15,414 for the period from 2024 to 2044, although 5,475 of these are in the current identified supply.

Owing to the change in government housing targets it is vital to create a development plan that meets government targets or we end up with a planning free for all which is what happened 5 or 6 years ago. As part of this process the Council carried out a call for sites. The published **map** of all sites submitted during the Call for Sites exercises.

Note: This is not a list of preferred development locations. Publication promotes transparency and ensures communities have early visibility of what has been suggested. No planning status is granted by submission. Sites do not benefit from any presumption of development. Submissions will now be assessed against planning policy, constraints, evidence and deliverability criteria.

**Council Housing:** Mid Suffolk has c.15% of Council Houses that do not meet the Decent Homes standard. We are planning to invest £19m in our Council Housing stock this year alone. Mid Suffolk was successful in obtaining a £1.5m government grant to supplement the £2m already committed by the council to install energy saving measures in social housing. This work not only helps lower income households by delivering warm and energy efficient homes, but also lifts tenants out of fuel poverty by helping to save money on energy bills.

Work is well underway to tackle the 100 council properties with the lowest EPC (energy performance certificate) ratings by adding a range of improvements, including cavity and loft insulation, new windows, PV panels and air source heat pumps. The Council has also built about 250 new Council houses in the past 3 years.

**Stowmarket Innovation Gateway:** Construction work on a state-of-the-art skills and innovation centre at Gateway 14 in Stowmarket has now been completed. New clients will be moving in from July 2026 and a programme of training courses is about to be launched. The purpose of the centre is address the skills gap in the district and to encourage high tech companies to locate here.

**New fund for sports facilities in rural areas:** A £1.5m fund for Sports provision outside of Stowmarket has been established.

The aim is to develop sports infrastructure in a rural area of Mid Suffolk, outside of Stowmarket, by exploring upgrading or extending existing sites, as well as opportunities for new sports provision or facilities.

**Temporary accommodation:** Demand for temporary housing in Mid Suffolk rose by over 100% since 2020 and there are currently over 60 households in temporary accommodation in Mid Suffolk. MSDC propose to increase the acquisition of temporary accommodation by up to 30 units. This is to provide better standard accommodation and save the Council money on temporary accommodation.

**Pylons:** MSDC have told the public hearing that National Grid's plan for more pylons in the Suffolk countryside should be halted. National Grid proposes 159km of new overhead lines between Norwich to Tilbury, with the route cutting through the Suffolk countryside.

MSDC has called for a delay to the project so other options can be considered and costed – such as an undersea route or undergrounding of the entire length of the project. They cite serious concerns about the impact on the environment, communities and businesses. This is consistent with the position taken as under previous governments.

**Nature recovery budget:** Mid Suffolk District Council has allocated a budget of £1.8m to support nature recovery. This covers:

- Grant funding for communities
- Grant funding for river catchment and landscape
- Habitat creation, management and monitoring on new sites
- recovery
- Pond creation and restoration
- Tree planting
- Meadow management
- Public engagement and awareness / Schools programme

**Stowmarket high street investment:** Mid Suffolk District Council launched a dedicated £1.5m fund, and associated framework, to support a thriving Stowmarket high street and town centre area. Funding has been recently agreed for £615k towards the John Peel Centre and £125k for the Community Darts Venue including a darts retail area.

**Cosy Homes:** Cosy Homes is an energy efficiency initiative dedicated to making private sector homes in Mid Suffolk warmer, more economical to heat and more environmentally friendly. Residents need to meet certain criteria but any works are carried out for free. The initiative aims to help residents in the district improve the energy efficiency of their home - which will help them save on energy usage and reduce their carbon footprint. The Cosy Homes scheme has been extended to include solar panels as well as insulation measures.

**Solar for Business:** Businesses can reduce their carbon emissions and save money on energy bills by signing up to have solar panels provided and installed on their premises, for free. Electricity generated by the panels is then sold to the business at a rate lower than their current tariff, helping to slash energy bills and

improve their bottom line. Solar for Business has been running successfully in West Suffolk for nine years – helping more than a hundred companies to save a total of around £700,000 and 2,000 tons in harmful CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year.

The initiative has now been extended, with businesses across Babergh and Mid Suffolk also able to sign up to the scheme.

**New REACT team now live:** The two-person "respond, enforce and clean team" - or REACT – has been set up to patrol litter hotspot areas in the Mid Suffolk District Council area. It will be funded by £360,000 from the council-owned Gateway 14 development. Introducing REACT operatives means reaction to incidents, such as fly tipping, and our scheduled works, aren't competing for resource and time. In the area of Mid Suffolk District Council there were 399 reported incidents, with the majority of them being on highways.

**Food Museum in Stowmarket receives £3.9m from the Heritage Lottery Fund:** The Food Museum is now able to start a £5.5 million project thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Mid Suffolk District Council. The ambitious scope covers conserving and developing three historic buildings - the barn, the factory and the house and linking them together to create a coherent visitor experience.

A good museum significantly benefits a town by boosting tourism, enhancing the local economy, fostering community development, and contributing to cultural enrichment.

**Mid Suffolk Magazine:** A regular magazine released in September and February has been introduced to keep residents informed of what is going on in the district.

## **8. To receive reports from Local Organisations**

**Onehouse Tree and Footpath Warden:** All local footpaths have been walked at least twice during the year. Most on many more occasions.

All local footpaths are in generally good repair. There are no current concerns about any trees on the footpath network.

Paths on the Harleston boundary have had work by UK Power Networks where trees and branches have been trimmed back from overhead lines. All felled timber and branches have been neatly laid alongside paths. The entrance to the path opposite Charisma Hair on Forest Road has been repaired and is holding up well. The new footpath connecting Union Road with Lower Road, between the new housing complexes opposite the old Stow Union Workhouse remains incomplete as building work on new houses on the Hopkins Homes Estate continues to block the mid-section, from mid-way down Moore Road.

Footpath signage is in generally poor condition. Many signs and posts are missing or damaged, mostly from age and exposure. I am happy to conduct a survey of damaged and missing signs for submission to the council, for them to replace.

The accompanied walks have proved popular, with eight permanent families of walkers using the 'Onehouse Walk and Talk' WhatsApp group, with several more occasional attendees on each occasion. Six accompanied walks were held on alternate Tuesday afternoons in the late summer and Autumn on of 2025 before the winter weather closed in. Numbers of attendees varied from seven to two.

Unfortunately, my work has kept me travelling for much of the Spring and early Summer of this year. I look forward to re-launching the walks again from late June.

## **Annual OHSMag Report**

As Chair of Onehouse Parish Council, I am pleased to present this annual report for the OHSMag, our community magazine serving the parishes of Onehouse, Harleston and Shelland.

Over many years, OHSMag has played a valued role in bringing our communities together. Delivered free to every household, it has kept residents informed about parish matters, local events, clubs, services and the everyday moments that make village life what it is. It remains one of the few shared points of connection across all three parishes, and its contribution to community cohesion should not be underestimated.

### **A Changing Position**

During the past year, the number of properties across the parishes has continued to grow. While this reflects the changing shape of our communities, it has also had a direct impact on the cost of producing and distributing a printed magazine. Printing and editorial costs have now outstripped the income generated through advertising.

Despite the continued and much-appreciated support of local advertisers, the printed magazine in its current form is no longer financially sustainable. The Parishes have a responsibility to manage public funds carefully, and we must ensure that OHSMag can continue in a way that is responsible, affordable and future-proof.

We are aware that some Parishes have lost their magazines completely and this is something we are fighting hard to avoid.

### **Transition to an Online Magazine**

For these reasons, the decision has been taken to begin the transition of OHSMag to an online format. Work is currently underway to review the accessibility of a digital magazine, with careful consideration being given to readability, ease of access and inclusion.

We are very aware that not all residents have access to the internet or feel confident using digital services. Reassurance is therefore important: **no one will be left behind**. As part of the review, we are actively considering how residents without internet access will continue to receive key information. This may include alternative printed summaries, use of community noticeboards and other local communication routes.

The intention is for this review to be completed in time for a full transition by the October edition.

### **Editorial Changes**

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our current editor, who has indicated that they plan to step down from the role this summer. Editing OHSMag requires considerable time, care and commitment, and the contribution made by the editor in maintaining the quality and continuity of the magazine is sincerely appreciated.

Onehouse Parish Council is currently seeking a replacement editor and will be sharing further information about the role. This period of transition presents an opportunity to consider how the editorship can evolve alongside the move to an online format, while retaining the community-focused spirit that has always defined OHSMag.

## Looking Ahead

OHSMag has always been shaped by the people it serves, and that will remain true as we move forward. The Parishes and contributors are committed to ensuring that the magazine remains welcoming, informative and representative of our villages.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to OHSMag this year — editor, contributors, distributors and advertisers — for their time, care and commitment. Your involvement has sustained the magazine through another year of change, and it will be just as important as we take this next step.

OHSMag has long been a reflection of our shared community life. By embracing change responsibly and sustainably, we aim to ensure that it continues to be so for many more years to come.

**Onehouse Parish Church:** Our benefice of seven parishes had another busy and fruitful year in 2025, and there is much to give thanks to God for throughout all our communities.

Across our ministry team, we were joined by Revd. Andy Little who was ordained as a Deacon at the cathedral in Bury St Edmunds at the end of June. Andy was previously one of our Lay Elders and it was a joyful day to see him ordained by Bishop Graeme. Revd. Andy will serve as a curate within our benefice for a minimum of 3 years as he continues with his training. We give thanks that our Readers and our Elders continued with their ministries – pastoral care, prayer and the leading of services – enabling us to continue to offer two services every month to each church and also on zoom for those unable to get to church. Sadly, at the beginning of April 2025 the Revd. Canon Barbara Bilston died. Barbara had been a huge support to the ministry team and myself and was still ministering up to the last few weeks of her life. She is much missed across our benefice, the deanery and the wider diocese.

Huge thanks go to our churchwardens, treasurers, PCC secretaries and PCC members, and our parish safeguarding officers for their time, support and energy as we continue to serve our communities and enable our church buildings and churchyards to be welcoming to everyone. And thanks also to all who volunteer whether doing the flowers, bell ringing, reading the lesson, assisting at Holy Communion, offering hospitality after services and at fundraising events, and a multitude of other tasks that regularly arise in our church communities. Without all of your help, support and prayers our benefice would not be in the place of strength and stability that it is and we thank you for everything you do for our churches and church communities.

Throughout 2025 we continued to build on the progress made in previous years and here are a few high points from ministry across the benefice:

Our Messy Church events continued to take place throughout 2025 celebrating Easter, Pentecost, Harvest and Christmas - the number of families attending is growing with each session

We continue to offer regular ministry in the form of services of Holy Communion, prayer meetings and Remembrance services to the care homes in Great Finborough and Onehouse

Throughout 2025 Revd Canon Pauline has been working through the THRIVE programme with the ministry team and our PCCs. THRIVE is aimed at helping multi-parish benefices to grow and support each other and the programme will continue throughout 2026

Our school's ministry to Trinity CEVAP School in Combs, Combs Ford Community Primary School in Combs and Great Finborough CEVCP School in Great Finborough has continued to thrive. Revd Andy has joined Revd Canon Pauline in delivering collective worship to Great Finborough Primary School and Revd Sarah continues to support both Trinity and Combs Ford Primary Schools

A second benefice quiet day was held in August at the church hall in Stowupland on the theme of 'The Road to Emmaus'. This day was well attended and we will continue to have an annual quiet day with a different theme each year

The annual confirmation service at the cathedral was held in May and there was 1 candidate from Combs

In June a launch event for the Friends of St Mary's, Combs was held in church. A musical evening supported by local church historian, Roy Tricker, was very well attended

In July a special service was held at the site of the Onehouse Paupers' Graves to commemorate those who had been buried there with just a number to identify them. This was the second year a service had been held at this site and it will become an annual event. Our thanks go to the Paupers' Graves team who work tirelessly to maintain this important place for all to enjoy

All this is in addition to our regular pattern of services, many fundraising events, baptisms, weddings and funerals, and regular events such as Meet Up Monday in Combs, the village coffee morning in Onehouse and the continuing visits of the Rural Coffee Caravan to Combs, Buxhall and Harleston.

So, you can see 2025 was another busy year of ministry in the life of our benefice. Of course, I haven't been able to mention everything that happened but I do hope you'll be able to see how the importance of ministering together as a team, to both the people who attend our churches and everyone in the wider community, is key to our roles as Christians. By living a Christian life and spreading the good news of the Gospel we become the light of Christ in our communities.

**OHS Women's Guild:** We have had a very good year. Our membership is 33 plus 4 honorary members. These are members who have served many years on the committee, who are now well into their 80's and are very unwell but still wish to be in contact with the Guild.

The committee has been very busy planning our programme up to 2027.

We have our 60th. Anniversary next year in April which is going to take a lot of organising.

Meeting in the afternoon is working out very well.

Our programme and Insurance certificates are displayed on our lovely new notice board. We also report in the OSMAG. Our AGM will take place on 21st. May 2026.

**9. Any other business:** Members of the public raised an issue regarding a lack of dog waste bins on walks near to the golf course and driving range causing dog

waste bags to be left on paths and in ditches. It was agreed that this would be further discussed at the next Parish Council Meeting in June.

The future of the OHSMag was raised and disappointment expressed over the move to an online publication. The reasons were discussed and attending residents suggested all residents be asked via OHSMag if they would be happy to pay for the magazine. This suggestion would be discussed by the Parish Council. Residents of Lower Road raised issues regarding flooding on the road near to the Buxhall turning and the golf club and driving range. Several minor and more serious accidents have been witnessed. The residents advised that they have reported the problems and Highways have attended but have advised there is 'no money' to improve the drainage. Residents requested support from the Parish Council and it was agreed this would be discussed further at the June meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed..... Dated.....