

Great Blakenham Parish Council Minutes



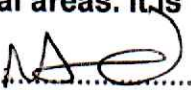
Minutes of Gt Blakenham Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 14th May 2026 at Parish Rooms. Present: Chair Nick Leonard, Cllr Matt Powell, Cllr Karen Wheeler, Karen Grimwood (Parish Clerk), SCC Cllr Asa Downing, MSDC Cllr Adrienne Marriott, 2 representatives from port One and 6 members of the public.

1. To elect Chair of Great Blakenham Parish Council - **Cllr Nick Leonard was re-elected as Chair .**
2. To elect the Deputy Chair of Great Blakenham Parish Council – **Cllr Matt Powell was elected Vice-Chair.**
3. To receive and approve any apologies for absence – **Cllr Debbie Kemp**
4. Declaration of any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests – **None**
 - a. *Councilor's declaration of interest appropriate to any item on the agenda.*
 - b. *To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interest (if any).*
 - c. *To grant any requests for dispensations as appropriate.*
 - d. *Co-option of parish councilor(s) / to sign declaration of acceptance.*
3. Public Forum
 - a. To receive updates from Port One- **Port One representatives Jack Payne and Maxwell Hambry provided an update to the Council. Members noted that roadworks are currently taking place near the entrance and exit of the existing site. It was confirmed that these works are being undertaken by Anglian Water and are not connected to Port One. Port One representatives advised that they have not been informed of the expected duration of the roadworks and are therefore unable to provide a completion date at this time.**

Section 278 - **Representatives advised that the legal agreements relating to the Section 278 works are still being finalised. Once these arrangements have been completed, road space will need to be booked so the works can commence. It is anticipated that the works will be undertaken over a 10–12 week programme.**

Section 106 - **The Section 106 contributions programme has been completed for Little Blakenham Village Hall. Solar panel installations have been completed at all identified locations, with the exception of Barham, where installation is still outstanding. The POLBEF scheme remains up to date; however, there have been no applicants to date. As a result, the application deadline has been extended.**

Community Bus Update -**Representatives advised that they are exploring the purchase of an eight-seater electric community bus for use outside peak commuting times. This follows discussions with another development area that operates a taxi-bus scheme for Rural areas. It is hoped that the bus could be made available for booking by village**

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clubs, the school, community groups and residents for local transport needs. A proposal will need to be submitted to the Local Authority before the scheme can be confirmed. In addition, there are plans to purchase two 15-seater electric buses once the units on the development have been fully occupied. Discussions are still ongoing regarding the potential operation of a shuttle bus service at agreed times to destinations such as the railway station, local shops and other amenities. The details of any such service are yet to be determined.

Gipping Meadow - Representatives advised that a management plan for Gipping Meadow has now been agreed between Port One, Mid Suffolk District Council biodiversity team and parish council. The overall aim is to retain the meadow in its current natural state. The management plan includes the introduction of grazing which would not start for at least 3 years and to create a pond. Works have already commenced, including the removal of old fencing and the felling of dead and dangerous trees. The next stage of the programme will involve cutting the meadow, which is currently awaiting commencement.

New Planning Application - Representatives advised that the new planning application was submitted for validation in November 2025. Following validation, the application entered the statutory consultation period, during which consultees and members of the public were invited to submit comments. The main feedback received related to concerns regarding ecology, landscape impact, transport, and highways, as well as representations from Suffolk wildlife Trust. Port One will review these matters in detail and provide responses as required. It is anticipated that a further new plan will be submitted with another consultation exercise. The current target determination date of September 2026 may be subject to delay.

Biodiversity Net Gain Update - Representatives provided an update regarding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) discussions. It was advised that an area adjacent to Baylham Farm is being considered for designation as a ringfenced nature reserve as part of the wider biodiversity strategy. The proposal includes the creation of a managed ecological area intended to enhance local habitats and biodiversity. The site may be accessible to the public either from Baylham or via the River Gipping. Further discussions are ongoing and no final decisions have yet been made.

Regular Updates – Going forward updates can be accessed via the Port One website

Cycle Crossing - Representatives advised that consideration is being given to a potential cycle route linking Bramford and Blakenham. The proposal is at an early discussion stage and no detailed plans have yet been agreed. No decisions have been made at this time.

- b. *To receive the report from the County Councillor* – No report due to recent local elections and change of councillor. The Council recorded its sincere thanks to Chris Chambers for his support, achievements over the past few years and extends best wishes for his future endeavours.

The Council also welcomed Cllr Asa Downing, who has recently been elected to Suffolk County Council representing the Gipping Valley area.

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- c. To receive the report from the District Councillor - **See attached report**
- d. To receive questions from members of the public – **A resident from Blueleighs raised an issue regarding the new bins on the site, noting that most residents do not require them as they already have business waste arrangements in place. Members advised that residents should contact the Council directly to discuss the matter or request the removal of the bins.**

4.To approve the Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 15th April 2026 – **Approved**

5.To note the Clerk's update from previous meeting.

Awaiting a return call from land agents for Stowmarket Road - **Confirmation has been received from Stearn Farm Limited's solicitor that the cost for preparing the lease will be £1,500 plus VAT.If its agreed that Parish Council will cover this cost, and that the rent will be £200 per annum, to be reviewed after three years. Councillors to discuss in the next meeting.**

6.Planning

- a. To note decision notice – **Noted**

Ref	Location	Proposal	
DC/26/01043	Part Land Adjacent To Units 36 & 37 , Claydon Business Park, Gipping Road, Great Blakenham Ipswich	Proposal & Location of Development: Application under S73 for Removal or Variation of a Condition following grant of Planning Permission DC/24/02130 dated 25/07/2024 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Erection of B2 unit for use as a motor vehicle workshop / garage services and associated works.	Granted

7.Growth, Highways, and Infrastructure

- a. Note update on Neighbourhood Plan funding – **Noted**
- b. Tree planting Opportunity - **Mid Suffolk District Council Mid Suffolk District Council is working to increase tree canopy cover to support biodiversity and the environment. They are asking for help from parishes to identify suitable local areas where trees could be planted. Local knowledge is important to find possible sites and understand community support. There were suggestions for additional tree planting at Hackneys Corner and for hedging along Stowmarket Road.**
- c. Port One Diversity Fund - **It was noted that, despite MSDC extending the application guidance, no funding applications have been received for the current funding window. MSDC has therefore decided to extend the deadline until 30 June. Clerk has also been requested to highlight on social media sites.**

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- d. Speed device - It was noted that the wiring on the speed monitoring device has been interfered with. Ongoing discussions are taking place regarding relocating the device. In the meantime, the wiring will be taped to help prevent further interference

8. Governance

- a. Parish Room Funding- **MSDC is unable to fund replacement defibrillator pads and batteries in the Parish Rooms, as the defibrillator is only accessible when the hall is in use. Councillors approved funding for the replacements at a total cost of £240.**
- b. End of year accounts – **Approved and to be uploaded to website**
- c. CIL Sign Off - **CIL expenditure was approved and signed. Clerk to submit to MSDC.**

9. Finance

To consider approving and making the following payments: - **Approved**

Payee	Method	Description	Amount	Legislation
Suffolk.cloud(Pear Space)	Bacs	Gov.uk domain renewal / Website service renewal	£130.00	LGA 1972 s111
SALC	Bacs	Membership renewal 26/27	£820.07	LGA 1972 s111
Payroll	Bacs	Ending 30.04.2026	£1075.83	LGA 1972 s111
Three	DD	Mobile contracts	£37.98	LGA 1972 s111
Nest Pension	DD	Month 1 -ending 30.04.2026	£53.99	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	Bacs	Street cleaning as per tender - 2861	£1213.33	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	Bacs	Grounds maintenance as per tender - 2862	£758.33	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	Bacs	Bus shelters, notice boards & signs as per tender - 2863	£485.33	LGA 1972 s111
				LGA 1972 s111

Income Received @ 30.04.2026 – **Noted**

13.04.26 – Parish Precept part I - £28941.00

13.04.26 – Neighbourhood CIL April 2026 - £9344.19

09.04.26 – Funeral Fees -£600

Total: £38,885.19

Bank Balances @ 30.04.2026 – **Noted**

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Unity Trust Current Account: £43,799.61

Unity Trust Saver Account: £168,616.58

Total: £212,416.19

10. Reports

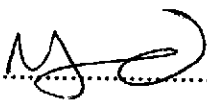
- a. Village Hall – **see attached**

11. Allotments

- a. Anglian Water - It was noted that there has been a very large increase in water expenditure. The Clerk will compare bills from previous years with the Chair and challenge Anglian Water on the costs. If the charges are found to be correct, it was discussed that the water supply may be turned off as the site will be vacated in September.
- b. Clearance - The Clerk was advised by the land agent that all personal items need to be removed from the site for its clearance, and that this should be sufficient.
- c. Thefts - It was noted that there have been some thefts of items from the site. The Clerk has been advised that the gate is sometimes left open. All plot holders are asked to remain vigilant and ensure the gate is kept closed

12. Future Meetings

- a. *To note invitation for items to be considered in the next meeting.*
- b. *To note the date of the next scheduled meeting on **11th June 2026** and any items for the agenda.*

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English Devolution Bill receives Royal Assent

On 29th April, the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill received Royal Assent:

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/4002>

The Act will introduce new measures to expand devolution and empower mayors and local people. A new Community Right to Buy will give local people the first right of refusal for valued community assets such as shops and community centres when they are put up for sale.

Beyond making changes for communities and high streets, the Act introduces 'Strategic Authorities' into law, to make it quicker to devolve powers out from Whitehall. Strategic Authorities with elected Mayors will receive more devolved powers over transport, planning, housing, and economic regeneration.

The Act also establishes Local Scrutiny Committees for mayoral authorities, which will provide scrutiny of local public spending and decision making.

Further measures in the Act include:

- Mandating Mayoral Strategic Authorities to develop local growth plans, aligning regional economic strategies with national policy
- A new bespoke duty for Mayors and Strategic Authorities to ensure they formally consider local health improvement and health inequalities when making policy decisions
- New powers for Mayors to intervene in planning applications of potential strategic importance, make mayoral

development orders and charge a mayoral community infrastructure levy on developers

- The establishment of the Local Audit Office to help manage council finances, ensuring auditing is carried out more efficiently and transparently

Publication of the 'Improving Energy Efficiency of Socially Rented Homes in England' Government Response and Impact Assessment

On 1st April, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the government response and impact assessment to the 'Improving energy efficiency of socially rented homes in England' consultation, which ran from 2 July to 12 September 2025. It sets out the ambition to give tenants warmer, safer homes that are damp and mould free.

The response also sets out the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard for the social rented sector (SRS MEES), which will form part of criterion D of the updated Decent Homes Standard.

The government response builds on the information announced in January in the Decent Homes Standard policy statement, in particular saying more about how the £10,000 spend exemption will work.

Further guidance will be published about Social Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard and the wider Decent Homes Standard to support implementation. As a first step, the government would like to gather questions to inform development. Questions can be sent to decenthomesreview@communities.gov.uk.

Changes to local planning applications

From 1 April 2026, the government are introducing changes to the planning appeal process

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/simpler-faster-planning-appeals-are-coming>

Under the new process, the majority of written representation appeals will accept only the evidence put before the local planning authority during application. This will not only speed up appeals but will also, importantly, encourage a full body of evidence to be provided at application stage, giving local planning authorities the information they need to make decisions – aligning with universal planning principles of keeping decisions local.

Appellants will be able to indicate which procedure they consider most appropriate, along with their reasoning, during the appeal process.

The procedure (written representation, hearing or inquiry) that an appeal follows, is decided by the Planning Inspectorate using the same criteria as before.

For further details about the process, there is a new procedural guide:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-appeals-procedural-guide-for-appeals-relating-to-applications-dated-on-or-after-1-april-2026>

As this only applies to applications made from 1 April 2026, both the current and updated procedures guides will be maintained until the current guidance is no longer relevant.

Reminder: Waste Crime Action Plan launched

On 20 March, the government announced a package of measures targeting illegal dumping.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-cracks-down-on-waste-crime-to-clean-up-streets-and-restore-pride-in-communities>

The new Waste Crime Action Plan

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/waste-crime-action-plan>

sets out a zero-tolerance approach, with action to prevent waste crime at its source by closing loopholes and equipping regulators with the tools they need to stop waste criminals.

Under the plans, the government will expand enforcement activity to punish offenders committing waste crime, backed by £45 million of government funding over the next three years.

Right to Buy: guide for councils updated

On 8th April, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) updated the Right to Buy guide for councils:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-buy-a-guide-for-local-authorities>

Maximum cash discounts are now £16,000 to £38,000. The level of the maximum discount available depends on where a tenant lives. This can be set against the situation for applications received before 21 November 2024 where maximum discounts were £102,400 across England.

This guide is intended to provide practitioners with information and good practice, advice and tips on the operation of the Right to Buy scheme. It sets out the Right to Buy legislation as a guide. It is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of legislation.

Reminder: Guidance to support councils tackle litter

On 3 March, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs published updated guidance giving councils clear direction and stronger legal powers to clamp down on serious and persistent litter louts.

Under the rules, councils have the power to issue on-the-spot fines of up to £500 for littering, including when litter is thrown from a vehicle. Unpaid fines double after 28 days, and if the offender can't be identified, the owner of the vehicle will be held to account. The new statutory litter enforcement guidance will help ensure all councils apply the same rules:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-enforcement-powers-when-and-how-to-use-them>

The government has already given councils further powers to clean up Britain's streets, with new guidance on how to seize vehicles used to dump waste also published recently.

Councils will also work more closely with the police to identify, seize and crush vehicles – utilising new technology, such as drones and mobile CCTV cameras, to ensure cars and vans belonging to fly-tippers are identified and destroyed.

Public health update

UKHSA tick awareness campaign 2026

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has launched its annual tick awareness campaign for 2026. The campaign runs throughout the

spring and summer months when ticks are most active and more of us spend time outdoors.

The campaign aims to increase awareness of where ticks are found and how to remove them safely and quickly, as some tick bites can result in infections such as Lyme disease.

To support stakeholders promote tick awareness this year, UKHSA has updated its campaign communications toolkit.

It contains background information, key messages of the campaign, key behaviours for the public to follow, social media materials, suggested social media copy and links to useful information.

UK launches first bird flu vaccine trial

On April 22nd, the National Institute for Health and Care Research announced the first UK does in a new trial using a vaccine to protect against influenza pandemics such as bird flu:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/bird-flu-vaccine-trial-launches-prepare-potential-pandemic>

The phase three trial will involve around 4,000 adults, including 3,000 in the UK. It will test the safety of the vaccine and how well it protects against flu viruses.

This work will help the UK prepare for future pandemics.

*Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
05/05/26*

Great Blakenham Village Hall and Field report 2025-26

For use of the Great Blakenham Parish Council at the annual meeting

Charity No. **304753**

2025 – 26 has been a very challenging year. Building on the success of the previous years committee we have been focusing on the basics to ensure processes, risk assessments and management is kept as streamlined as possible, less work means we're able to spend more time on the pressing projects. We believe these foundations are now firmly in place to support continued success for the future of the Village Hall.

Changes to the committee have given us greater focus but we've also lost some good assets. Last year was possibly the best year working with Cycle Speedway but alas their hall representative has stood down, and it has been a major step backwards, the World Championships were a great financial success for the hall but all committee members found the day extremely exhausting.

We have a new member that is fully focused on the advertising and arrangement of events, this has seen a substantial increase in bookings. Our Friday night community evenings have become a big success, residents love the idea of popping to the hall for a drink, and the children love playing on the field. Add a regular food evening and sun and it becomes a perfect night, so much so that we must ensure enough support from the committee to keep up with demand. Purchases made to support this are; Pool Table, Air Hockey, Table Football, Darts and we were donated a Table Tennis table. We have also installed five nice picnic tables, more have been asked for, Greene King kindly donated parasols for the tables, and feedback from residents has been extremely positive.

Our new website www.gbvillagehall.co.uk have been well received as have our new email addresses

Due to insurance policies being demanding on business properties our number one priority was to have new Fire and Intruder alarms installed, to ensure we are insurance compliant. A big thanks to the Parish Council, County & District Councillors for the sponsorship to have these installed in a very quick timeframe.

On the downside, during the installation of the Intruder alarm system, a major leak was discovered in the outside kitchen. This required an insurance claim. The kitchen is expected to be back in use by mid-June 26.

To expand storage, a planning application was submitted for a concrete base and container, this process is still ongoing, we are continually frustrated by MSDC planning process; to put it in perspective the application documentation is identical to what Port One submit on each of their applications, I feel we should have just done it and kept quiet.

Behind all of this, strong finance is paramount and since 2024 the yearly finance reports to the charities commission have been submitted on time and are showing very strong growth. Our treasurer is dogged in ensuring everything is completed at great personal use of her time. Finances for 2025-26 are accurate and ensures any bids or scrutiny are completely satisfied, we are proud of the tight financial controls that we have in place.

We continue to reinvest at every opportunity and our spend for 24-25 was £38,466 (including any contributions). We have some more projects in the pipeline but again need large amounts of capital.

Our solar panels and batteries have been installed (big thanks to Port One), a few teething problems are being ironed out but its clearly helps with our service charges. Every effort is made to ensure that the likes of heating or air conditioning are always off when not required and hirers have a simple guide to using the facilities which is sent to all.

As with this type of venue, volunteers are always required to help, the more successful we are the more time is contributed by the committee members. If you can promote our need, we would be grateful, possibly another promo in the In Touch magazine.

For me it's been an absolute joy working with this committee, seeing like-minded people focused on getting things done is satisfying. We all hope to continue in this manner in the future. If you don't know us, pop along on a Friday night, I might be one of the volunteers pulling you pint or pouring your wine.....,

Regards

Steve Plume (chair of the charity committee **304753**)