

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the meeting of the Council held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 25 March 2026 in the Village Hall

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

In attendance: John Ward, Babergh DC (JW)
Parishioner

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

26.3.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were accepted from GC and JT.

26.3.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

SL declared an interest in items 26.3.9.1 and 26.3.10.

26.3.3 PUBLIC FORUM

The parishioner present raised an ongoing issue with a neighbouring property. The owner had erected a bin store which meant the parishioner's view was obstructed when exiting his drive. Following a visit from Babergh the structure had been reduced in height; however, the view was still obstructed. JW would look into this, and would ensure that Highways were aware as the obstructed view was a safety hazard when pulling out onto the main road.

Concern had been raised by Charles Spicer, Project Director at Benton End, about the excess speed of passing traffic. SK noted the lack of parking at Benton End, which could cause problems with cars parking on the road when the attraction opened in summer 2026.

Several parishioners had raised concerns about the retrospective planning application from the Marquis concerning the Orangery, which had been built without permission (see 26.3.9.1, below).

26.3.4 ADJOURNMENT TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

26.3.4.1 District Council

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. The decision on local government reorganisation in Suffolk had been announced; there would be three new Unitary Authorities. JW explained the timetable - county council elections would go ahead on 7 May 2026; unitary elections would be held in 2027; the handover to the unitaries was scheduled for 1 April 2028. After this, the usual four year cycle would resume. Referring to the recent Call for Sites to support BMSDC's new Joint Local Plan, WD said a potential site in Upper Layham had been put forward for consideration. In response to a question about legal fees, JW said Babergh used in-house expertise wherever possible.

26.3.4.2 County Council

A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes; SL commented on the informative and positive report. With regard to the 2026-27 budget, JDC queried the reference to reduced pension contributions; JC would ask GH for clarification.

26.3.5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by SR and agreed unanimously that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 February 2026 should be accepted as an accurate record, and signed accordingly.

26.3.6 ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

26.3.6.1 Bramford-Twinstead Community Benefit Fund

JC had been in touch with Elma Glasgow, SALC's newly appointed NSIPs Engagement Coordinator, who would find out more about the application process and report back.

26.3.6.2 Benton Street

Following the last meeting, JC had contacted SCC Councillor Mick Fraser about the road closures in Benton Street, and the lack of coordination. Cllr Fraser had responded with some of the reasons for recent closures and explained that collaborative working was not always possible - eg safety issues with combining water and electrical works. In cases of emergencies or urgent work, utility companies were allowed to start work before the County Council was aware.

26.3.6.3 Speeding - "Twenty's Plenty" signs

Pupils from Stratford St Mary School had entered a competition to design a sign, as part of a parish council initiative; the signs were printed thanks to sponsorship from a local estate agent. JC would approach Chapman Stickels to ask if they might consider sponsoring a similar initiative in Layham.

26.3.7 FINANCIAL MATTERS

26.3.7.1 RFO's report

It was proposed by SL, seconded by SK and agreed unanimously that the finance report for 25.3.26 should be approved and payments of £2448.11 authorised. JC said she would show CIL funding separately on future reports.

26.3.7.2 Future banking arrangements

JC had been trying to set up online banking with Barclays - unfortunately Barclays appeared unable to implement the process efficiently, despite several long conversations and email exchanges. Following a survey of parish and town clerks, it seemed the majority of parish councils had started out with Barclays, but over the years many of them had moved away as the service declined. Many parishes had moved to **Unity Trust Bank** and clerks were happy with the service. It was proposed by SL, seconded by SK and agreed unanimously to move to UTB as soon as possible after year end.

26.3.8 AUDIT 2025/26

26.3.8.1 Internal audit - Letter of Engagement

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by WD and agreed unanimously to accept SALC's Letter of Engagement concerning the forthcoming internal audit.

26.3.8.2 Exemption from external audit

It was proposed by JDC, seconded by SK and agreed unanimously to certify Layham PC as exempt from external audit for 2025/26, as neither gross annual income or expenditure exceeded £25,000.

26.3.8.3 Assertion 10

JC explained that Assertion 10 was a new Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) requirement for all English parish and town councils, which required councils to have an official domain and email gov.uk address for all official correspondence. The council's website was required to comply with accessibility regulations and be readable for users with disabilities; as part of the process, the PC was required to have an accessibility audit and statement. Councils must have started the process by 31.3.26, in order to meet audit requirements. Suffolk Cloud had

already changed the website address to www.layhamparishcouncil.gov.uk; visitors were automatically redirected to the site. The action being taken was noted.

26.3.9 PLANNING

26.3.9.1 DC/24/00557 - Marquis of Cornwallis

SL left the room and JDC took the chair for this item. Babergh had requested several alterations to the Orangery including the removal of the roof lanterns, to be replaced by flat rooflight, a simplified design and a change of colour from green to grey. Several parishioners had expressed concern in the past about the lighting being too bright and it was hoped that these changes would address the problem; the PC would be monitoring this.

26.3.9.2 DC/25/02333 - Pump Cottage

It was noted that permission had been granted for the erection of a rear extension and sub-dividing the garage to form an office, with a new rear window and door.

26.3.10 ALLOTMENTS

Councillors considered a quotation for fencing. A decision was deferred to the May meeting; in the meantime WD would explore alternatives, including the cost of refurbishing the damaged plot.

26.3.11 SCC HIGHWAYS TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL SURVEY

It was agreed that the PC should respond to the survey; Councillors would send their input to JC by Thursday 9 April and she would coordinate the response.

26.3.12 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL

The draft agenda was approved. JC would invite PC Niall Johnson, and also ask the external village organisations to give reports.

26.3.13 CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

26.3.13.1 Rands Lane

Residents of Rands Lane had contacted SCC to request that the byway / bridleway running alongside Rands Farm be restricted to agricultural vehicle use only, following a spate of incidents involving antisocial behaviour and speeding, during which people had been injured. The PC had asked to be kept informed; JC would contact PC Niall Johnson for comment.

26.3.13.2 Brett River Festival 2027

Hadleigh Environmental Action Team (HEAT) was planning a Brett River Festival for summer 2027 and had asked whether the PC would like to be involved. JC had asked to be kept informed.

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

None.

26.3.15 NEXT MEETINGS

APM - 7.30pm on Wednesday 29 April 2026, in the Village Hall
AGM - 7.30pm on Wednesday 13 May 2026, in the Village Hall

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