

**Minutes of Lessingham and Hempstead with Eccles Annual Parish Meeting held on  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 7pm at Lessingham Village Hall**

**Present:** Peter Peruzzi, Chair  
James Holden, Vice Chair  
Georgina Dunn  
Sue Allen  
Sara Burns, Parish Clerk

**Also present: Cty Cllr Matthew Taylor, Dst Cllr Luke Paterson, two representatives from RSPB and two members of the public.**

**1. Apologies for absence**

Helen Twining sent her apologies.

**2. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

The previous minutes were approved, agreed by all.

**3. Parish Council Reports**

a. Parish Council Chair Report

The Chair Report was presented by Peter Peruzzi. (Appendix 1)

b. Financial Report

The Financial Report was presented by the Clerk (Appendix 2)

It was noted the 2025/26 accounts were returned from the Internal Auditor and would be covered on the agenda in the following Parish Council meeting. The end of year balance is £11,699.07 with almost half set aside in Ear Marked reserves and good General reserves of just under £6000.

**4. Village Organisations and Other Reports**

a. County Councillor

Stalham Wards previous Cty Cllr – Richard Price sent his annual report (Appendix 3)

Cty Cllr Matthew Taylor introduced himself and reported the following:

- Current Dst Cllr for Stalham, Sutton and Catfield for almost five years and also a Stalham Town Cllr for five years.
- Is looking forward to getting involved
- There is no overall control regarding political parties in County Council.
- Will always support policies that will support residents in the local community.

b. District Councillor

Dst Cllr Luke Paterson reported the following:

- Local Government Reorganisation in 2027 there will be elections for the Unitary Authority Councillor. The new Cllr will shadow Luke Paterson for one year before he steps down as District Councillor in 2028. There will be, and already has been, quite a bit of cost to implement this. Once in place, it will be several years before the savings of having three Unitary Authorities start to materialise.
- Spends a majority of his time on the development committee, where there is also a lot of reform to the Town and Country planning act. Encouraged Councillors to get in contact with him directly if there are any planning issues within the Parish, so it can be taken to the committee. After LGR, planning decisions will be down to planning officers without the committee. Currently, officers make approximately 97% of applications, therefore only approximately 3% are presented by the committee, where they perhaps do not fit the box. There will still be a development committee,

however meetings will be reduced to roughly twice a year, opposed to currently meeting monthly.

- He has attended 81% of requirement meetings in the past year, the rest apologies were sent and accepted. No expenses were submitted this year.

c. Police

No police report

d. Other Village Organisations

i. Lessingham Village Hall report was read by Clerk (Appendix 4)

ii. RSPB representatives reported the following:

- Last years Little Tern colony at the end of Eccles going towards Sea Palling was the largest colony in the UK and in the Northern Hemisphere. There were over 200 nests and over 450 chicks which is 30% of the UK population in Eccles. This is down to people avoiding the fenced off areas and keeping dogs on leads around the nests, there haven't been many incidents this year thanks to the RSBP volunteers working and connecting with residents and people visiting the beach. The RSBP thanked local residents for their consideration and for having their hut on the beach as the volunteers have to be there night and day.
- The fencing is all up for this year, the marram grass is growing nearer to the tide line however, which has happened at Winterton where there isn't a fence in place as there is just sea, grass and no area for the birds to nest on. They need sand and pebbles to nest on, and as this area for them reduces, they may move further north. Blakeney and Holkham had good sized colonies last year on shingle, therefore the marram grass is not such a problem there but in Eccles it grows on the sea wall.
- 104 helium balloons were collected last year, as the wind blows north they catch on the fence and are collected throughout the season (May – July)
- There are early bee colonies which are inside the sand also, which are just as welcome as the birds.

**5. General Parish Issues**

None

Meeting Closed at 7.30pm.

**CHAIRMAN**

## **Chair's Report - May 2026 – Appendix 1**

As the current Chair of the Parish Council, I'd like to open my report for the last 12 months by expressing my heartfelt thanks to several people who have moved on during this period.

Richard Price, who served this area as County Councillor with much diligence for numerous years. His updates on the workings of County Hall were most informative, and his wealth of experience and knowledge helped to solve several local issues.

Catherine Moore, who worked as Clerk for the PC during what was probably its most trying period for a long time. The Council was in quite a state of disarray when she started, and it was only through her tireless efforts and fine attention to detail, that the ship was steadied and brought onto its current path.

Emma Hallums, who served as a Parish Councillor. Emma is sorely missed for her willingness to participate, strong belief in fairness, and dedication to the role of Parish Councillor.

The year has been one of consolidation, trying to be proactive rather than reactive, but also dealing with issues as they arise. The litter bin installed at Duffields Gap has been very successful and survived several storms despite its exposed position, whilst providing a valuable facility for rubbish to be disposed of - including rubbish washed up on the beach, which some thoughtful people remove. The flashing speed sign that we share with East Ruston had proved effective until it had to go back for repair - hopefully it will be back in the near future.

The Parish has seen considerable work completed by the Environment Agency's contractors, who replaced the wooden groynes with rock to improve the sand retention on the beach. The RSPB reported that last year saw a very successful breeding season for the Little Terns and Ringed Plovers in their project at North Gap. In both projects, the PC has retained good lines of communication in order to resolve any issues that arose.

There have been a number of building projects carried out in the Parish last year, some of them contentious, but I believe the PC has viewed them all with impartiality, and commented or acted accordingly. Planning will continue to be an issue for the PC as there are several underdeveloped properties and potential building sites in the Parish.

The Parish Council continues to enjoy good financial security. Unfortunately we had to raise the precept this year in line with inflation, but this will enable the Council to explore new projects in the coming year, whilst retaining its financial integrity.

Future projects currently include improving the signage around Eccles, and hopefully the use of the allocated funds to place at least one more litter bin within the Parish.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate Cllr Matthew Taylor for winning the Stalham division at the recent County Council election, and I'd like to thank all current councillors and the Parish Clerk, for their work and time over the past year. On that note, I would like to point out that the PC still has two vacancies for Councillors should anyone wish to volunteer.

Peter Peruzzi - Chair - 12/05/26

**Lessingham Parish Council**  
**Accounts for year ending 31st March 2026**

	2025/26	<i>Budget</i> 2025/26	2024/25
<b>Income</b>			
Precept	£ 5,301.40	£5,301.40	£ 5,106.00
Grants and Donations	£ -	£0.00	£ -
Misc	£ 40.00	£0.00	£ -
Interest	£ 204.50	£0.00	£ 249.62
VAT Reclaimed	£ 43.76	£0.00	£ 118.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 5,589.66</b>	<b>£ 5,301.40</b>	<b>£ 5,474.38</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>			
Clerk Salary	£ 1,740.56	£2,130.32	£ 2,206.87
HMRC	£ 435.00	£532.58	£ 551.60
Mileage	£ -	£50.00	£ -
Administration	£ 51.98	£50.00	£ 3.69
Working from Home Allowance	£ 60.00	£60.00	£ 65.00
Training	£ 80.00	£200.00	£ 104.00
Subscriptions	£ 47.00	£100.00	£ 147.50
Audit	£ 100.00	£100.00	£ 100.00
Website	£ 175.00	£0.00	£ -
Bank Charges	£ 73.00	£72.00	£ 71.40
Meeting Costs	£ 38.25	£76.50	£ -
Insurance	£ 241.00	£275.00	£ 241.00
SAM2	£ -	£0.00	£ -
S137	£ 300.00	£50.00	£ -
Lessingham Village Hall	£ 89.25	£0.00	£ -
Hempstead PCC	£ -	£300.00	£ -
Litter Bins	£ -	£150.00	£ 218.78
Projects	£ -	£805.00	£ -
Election Costs	£ -	£0.00	£ -
Miscellaneous	£ -	£100.00	£ -
VAT	£ -	£0.00	£ 43.76
Contingency		£250.00	£ -
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 3,431.04</b>	<b>£5,301.40</b>	<b>£ 3,753.60</b>

Balance B/f	£ 9,540.45	£ 7,819.67
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Income	£ 5,589.66	£ 5,474.38
Expenditure	£ 3,431.04	£ 3,753.60
<b>Balance c/f</b>	<b>£ 11,699.07</b>	<b>£ 9,540.45</b>

Represented by		
Unity Current	£ 2,354.74	£ 400.62
Unity Deposit	£ 9,344.33	£ 9,139.83
Unpresented Cheques	£ -	£ -
	<b>£ 11,699.07</b>	<b>£ 9,540.45</b>

## Norfolk County Council – Annual Parish Report 2025-26 – Appendix 3

<b>Our Promises</b>	<b>What Was Delivered</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Libraries &amp; Culture</b>	Built new libraries, invested <b>£3m+</b> , and transformed <b>Norwich Castle</b> into a world-class attraction	Stronger cultural offer and a major boost for tourism
<b>Better Care</b>	Invested <b>£40m+</b> in care homes and supported living	More residents able to live independently for longer
<b>Backing Our Children</b>	<b>GOOD-rated services, £2.5m+</b> for care leavers, <b>£5m</b> for jobs, and <b>600+ opportunities created</b>	Better life chances and stronger futures for young people
<b>Better Roads</b>	Major infrastructure projects completed and <b>£10m extra</b> invested in maintenance	One of the <b>best-performing highways services</b> in the country
<b>Improved Buses</b>	<b>£50m+ invested</b> , more electric buses, and <b>26% growth in passenger numbers</b>	Cleaner travel and better public transport access
<b>Protecting the Environment</b>	<b>850,000+ trees planted</b> and emissions cut by <b>50%</b>	Protecting Norfolk's countryside and tackling climate change
<b>Growing the Economy</b>	Investment in high streets, improved connectivity, and <b>hundreds of new homes built</b>	Stronger local economy and thriving communities

Norfolk County Council, under a Conservative administration, has a strong record of delivering on its promises and investing in the county's future. From new libraries and major road schemes to over £40 million in care and significant improvements in children's services, we have focused on the priorities that matter most to residents. We have strengthened local transport, supported businesses and high streets, expanded opportunities for young people, and taken meaningful action to protect Norfolk's environment. This is a council that combines experience with action backing communities, improving services, and driving sustainable growth, while continuing to stand up for Norfolk and secure the investment it deserves.

## **Norfolk County Council delivers a balanced and responsible budget for 2026–27**

Norfolk County Council approved a balanced £613.8m budget for 2026–27, demonstrating strong financial leadership and prudent management in what remains one of the toughest funding climates in decades.

The administration has once again delivered stability and certainty for residents, setting a balanced financial position while identifying £42.3 million in savings and efficiencies and committing £76.3 million in targeted investment to protect vital services and strengthen Norfolk's economy.

Despite significant national financial pressures and ongoing constraints in central government funding, we have ensured the county remains on a firm financial footing, without resorting to emergency measures. This stands in stark contrast to a growing number of upper-tier authorities across the country that have issued Section 114 notices or are facing effective bankruptcy.

The budget enables the council to continue:

- Protecting frontline services
- Investing heavily in adults and children's services
- Delivering new libraries and modern learning hubs in key towns
- Supporting for heritage, culture, and tourism
- Driving transformative reforms to improve efficiency and outcomes
- Backing economic growth and infrastructure
- Maintaining long-term financial sustainability

In line with national funding assumptions a 4.998% increase in council tax was implemented due to the government's continued reliance on placing the burden on local taxpayers to safeguard core services. This decision reflects the financial realities facing councils nationwide, while ensuring essential services remain protected for Norfolk residents.

This budget reinforces Norfolk's Conservative administration's commitment to careful stewardship of taxpayers' money, strong local services, and a resilient future for the county.

## **Norfolk County Council invests in community led highway improvements across the county**

Norfolk County Council has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting local communities with the approval of 99 new highway improvement schemes for 2026-27, delivered in partnership with town and parish councils across Norfolk.

Papers highlight how the Parish Partnership Programme, now entering its fifteenth year, gave local communities a voice in shaping the highways enhancements that matter most to them, whether that's improving pedestrian safety, slowing vehicle speeds, or making it easier to walk, cycle or access local services.

This year's programme represented a total investment of £769,034, made possible through the longstanding 50/50 funding model. Town and parish councils will collectively contribute £384,517, matched by £384,517 from Norfolk County Council, enabling more than twice as many small-scale schemes to be delivered than could be funded by the council alone.

In total local councils submitted 99 bids for 2026/27 and all were approved as viable schemes after being carefully assessed against value for money, community outcomes, safety benefits and compliance.

## **Norfolk's bus service improvements deliver record growth and faster journeys**

Norfolk County Council's ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has transformed public transport across the county, driving a 26% increase in passenger numbers since 2022 and making Norfolk a leading national example for sustainable travel.

A paper discussed at the council's Infrastructure and Development Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> January highlighted what has been delivered thanks to the £65.45 million secured for Norfolk from the Department for Transport. That includes;

- New and enhanced bus services on more than 44 routes across Norfolk, including more evening and Sunday services
- Affordable fares: capped single fares in key towns and multi-operator ticketing
- Greener fleet: 75 zero-emission buses in Norwich and 24 more electric buses coming in 2026
- Improved passenger experience: real-time information, safer waiting areas, next-stop announcements and real-time information on more buses.

Not only are we seeing record-setting and increasing numbers of passengers, but customer satisfaction has also risen to 87%, bucking national trends and reinforcing Norfolk's approach to improvements in bus travel across the county.

## **Norfolk gritting vehicles headed out over the winter season**

Norfolk County Council's winter gritting got underway during the recent winter, with gritters active on A/B roads, key bus routes, and village access roads, using new tech for efficiency. The first runs of the recent winter season (late 2025/early 2026) started as temperatures dropped, utilizing the 58-strong fleet with automated salting to cover 2,200 miles of routes, supported by stocked salt barns and public grit bins.

## **Norfolk County Council took first place in the Eastern region in annual Highways and Transport Satisfaction Survey**

Norfolk County Council has once again demonstrated strong performance in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey, taking the top spot in the Eastern region for overall satisfaction and second out of 29 county councils across England.

The annual survey, which gathers public views on highways and transport services, saw Norfolk achieve an overall satisfaction score of 48%, well above the national average of 40%.

This marks the 15th consecutive year Norfolk has participated in the survey, and the 7th year in a row that we have come either first or second overall.

Key highlights from this year's results include:

- Top Regional Performer: Norfolk ranked 1st in the Eastern Region for overall satisfaction.
- Some of the best above average score were in our bus services thanks to improvements that have been made as part of our Bus Service Improvement Plan. The 'local bus services' overall category we were 10% above the group average with sub indicators as follows:
  - Public Transport Information (11% above group average)
  - Frequency of bus services (9% above group average)
  - Ease of access to school / work (6% above group average)
- Condition of highways (8% above group average)

## **Norfolk County Council's Deep Disappointment at Government Decision to Halt Mayoral Election and Slash Devolution Funding**

Norfolk County Council expressed serious concern following the Labour Government's announcement that the planned 2026 mayoral election for the Norfolk & Suffolk Combined County Authority will be deferred until 2028. The sudden decision meant that Norfolk would now receive only around one-third of the investment previously promised under the devolution programme.

## **Norfolk County Councils astonishment at the Government's decision to create 3 Unitaries for Norfolk under Local Government Reorganisation**

Norfolk County Council made a robust bid for a Single Unitary council for Norfolk under the proposals for LGR. This bid was based on sound financial information with the primary purpose of protecting front line services, whilst ensuring value for money. NCC already deliver 85% of local services in Norfolk, a single unitary was the easiest to implement, would ultimately save money for taxpayers and was the most obvious choice for the county. It was also backed by key stakeholders like the NHS and the Police. None of the other proposals, which would split services and cost more to implement and run, stacked up. It is therefore disappointing that despite the 3 unitary proposal not meeting the government's own criteria, that this is the option chosen. This may be more a political decision than a practical one and seems irrational. The council will consider the details of the decision and may choose to challenge this.

## **Norwich Castle Keep reopens following £27m redevelopment**

Norwich Castle Keep reopened to visitors following a comprehensive five-year redevelopment project that introduced new accessibility features alongside new galleries and interpretive displays.

Funded by £12 million from Norfolk County Council and over £13 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, all five floors of the newly named People's Palace were opened to the public for the first time ever.

The Grade I listed castle, originally commissioned by William the Conqueror 900 years ago and completed by his son Henry I in 1121, retained its historic significance while embracing modern improvements.

A new light-filled atrium adjacent to the Keep was unveiled in the first phase of the redevelopment in July 2024. Visitors also benefited from a new café, gift shop, and additional toilet facilities to enhance the visitor experience.

Importantly, a lift was installed to provide full wheelchair accessibility throughout the Keep, allowing access from the basement all the way up to the battlements, where visitors could enjoy panoramic views across Norwich.

### **Nationally recognised 'AI programme to be rolled out across Norfolk to prevent falls**

A new, nationally recognised proactive intervention scheme is rolled out across the whole of Norfolk. The initiative was delivered in collaboration with local partners including Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE), city, district and borough Councils and NHS organisations, aims to reduce falls in vulnerable and older adults.

Following a successful pilot with 1250 residents, the programme, which uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify residents at risk of escalating needs, enhances the safety and wellbeing of those at risk of falls. The latest Artificial Intelligence technology, natural language processing is used to 'read' case notes and automatically extract meaningful insight about our residents. This technology enables the council to identify and prioritise individuals in Norfolk most at risk of falling, allows for proactive intervention before they fall.

AI is a rapidly developing technology with the potential to improve the delivery of services. The council is using AI to benefit the people of Norfolk in a safe, ethical and transparent way.

Falls are a major concern, particularly among older or vulnerable adults, and can lead to severe injuries and a decline in quality of life. Through this programme, the council will be able to predict people who are at higher risk and offer timely and targeted interventions to support them.

For more information about preventing falls visit [Preventing and dealing with falls](#).

### **Norfolk County Council Approved £500k Community Fund to Boost Local Projects**

Norfolk County Council approved the launch of a new £500k Norfolk Community Fund for 2025/26, aimed at supporting grassroots projects that strengthen communities and improve local wellbeing.

The fund will empower local voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) groups to apply for grants between £200 and £2,500 to deliver small-scale initiatives that bring people together, promote inclusion, and enhance quality of life. Each of the county's 84

councillors will be allocated £5,000 to distribute within their divisions, ensuring funding reaches every corner of Norfolk

Report on Lessingham Village Hall. 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – Appendix 4

The hall is generally in good order and repair but we have had quite a few incidental expenses over the last year such as replacing:

- the water heater in the kitchen
- two light fittings in the main hall
- a heater element in the main hall
- an electricity coin meter.

The hall is not used as often as we would like. We have only the Bowls Club and All Saint's School using the hall regularly. We do have occasional bookings for parties etc together with bike race/polling station use.

We would therefore like to upgrade the hall facilities with an aim to increase village/local use of this asset - specifically the main toilet facilities. We are competing with modern halls such as Wenn Evans, Ingham, Hickling etc.

The flooring in the toilets needs replacing as it's impossible to clean well. The urinals need removing as they use an inordinate amount of water as they function continually and are proving far too expensive. If we can obtain a grant we would like to replace the porcelain too.

At the moment our outgoings exceed our income. We are therefore currently investigating the funding available for village halls. If you receive any information about grants etc we would be most grateful if you could forward it to us. In a similar vein if we make an application would the Parish Council give us a reference if required.

We also need to find new committee members as we only have six now which constitutionally should number seven.

Yours sincerely

Ros Stannard

Chairman - Lessingham with Hempstead & Eccles Village Hall

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