

Shadingfield, Sotterley, Willingham, and Ellough Joint Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held at Shadingfield Village Hall on 21st January 2026 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillors: Cllr R. Ellis, Cllr A. Thornton, Cllr J. Sheldrake, Cllr A. Chipperfield, Cllr C. Ellis and Cllr D. Drane.

In attendance:

V. Ellis (Clerk)

26.001 Apologies for Absence:

Cllr J. Ward, Cllr R. London, District Councillors A. Speca, T. Hammond, and Suffolk County Councillor J. Cloke.

RESOLVED: that the apologies be accepted.

26.002 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations:

None

26.003 To sign as an accurate record the minutes of the previous meeting:

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2025 be signed as a correct record.
Proposed by Cllr A. Chipperfield, seconded by Cllr C. Ellis.

26.004 Chair's Opening Statement:

The Chair welcomed all councillors and commented on the recent burst water pipe incident on the A145, highlighting the need for the Parish Council to report such incidents directly to official sources. The Chair noted that Cllr C. Ellis reported the incident on 14th January.

Cllr Drane noted that nothing had been reported on official sites for the road closure on either the 16th or 17th January 2026.

The Chair noted that the road closure was documented on the Border Bus website but was not reflected on other official websites or sources. Inadequate traffic management and ineffective implementation of the closure resulted in substantial volumes of traffic, including heavy vehicles, performing U-turns on adjoining roads to the A145, using private access routes and residents' driveways as turning areas, leading to considerable damage to land and verges. Residents have expressed interest in pursuing compensation for these damages. The Chair instructed the Clerk to notify Suffolk County Councillor Cloke regarding this issue, in particular to the absence of timely notifications on official websites of such road closures. As a footnote, a subsequent closure of the A145 on 28th January between Shadingfield and Weston demonstrated the same absence of notifications on official websites and unhelpful signage to road users.

26.005 Public Participation:

None in attendance

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26.006	<p><u>Reports from County and District Councillors:</u></p> <p>The report prepared by County Cllr J. Cloke was distributed to Councillors on 19th January 2026.</p> <p>Cllr C. Ellis referenced the report's section on lithium battery disposal in residential waste and the associated risk of fire in bins and processing plants and requested that this information be incorporated into the proposed Parish spring Newsletter.</p> <p>Cllr A. Thornton suggested that information on financial assistance for heat pumps also be included in the newsletter.</p>
26.007	<p><u>Community:</u></p> <p>(a) <u>Planning :</u></p> <p>DC/25/4214/OUT - Land Located to West of Ellough Road and to East of Oak Lane Beccles Suffolk. The Clerk informed the council that East Suffolk Council would be hosting a meeting to outline this planning application on Thursday 29th February at 5.30 pm at Beccles Town Hall.</p> <p>Cllr A. Chipperfield and Cllr J. Sheldrake advised the council they would be attending this meeting. Cllr C. Ellis stated that she or Cllr R. Ellis would attend.</p> <p>No new planning applications received.</p> <p>(b) <u>Playing Field:</u></p> <p>(1) <u>Draft Lease submitted by the Sotterley Estate:</u></p> <p>The Chair thanked the clerk for obtaining quotes from local law firms for the review of the draft lease.</p> <p>The Chair invited the councillors to share their opinions regarding the viability of an independent legal review of the draft lease for the playing field.</p> <p>Cllr A. Thornton suggested using the allocated budget to secure a long-term lease of the playing field for community use.</p> <p>Cllr C. Ellis stated that the Council should do everything within its power to resolve this matter and secure a long term robust lease for the playing field and the benefit of residents. She proposed that the Council take legal advice from the firm HKB Wiltshire on the basis of their quotation.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed the council's responsibility to keep the playing field open for residents and supported obtaining an independent legal review of the draft lease so that the council could secure external funding to support the maintenance and improvement of the playing field.</p> <p>It was unanimously decided that the draft lease should be reviewed by HKB Wiltshire.</p>

Proposed by Cllr C. Ellis and seconded by Cllr D. Drane.

RESOLVED: the Clerk will initiate the review of the lease with HKB Wiltshire

(2) Playground inspection:

The Clerk mentioned the playground inspection fees and asked Cllr J. Shel Drake if he would continue his regular visual inspections of the play equipment.

Cllr J. Shel Drake confirmed that he would continue with the regular visual inspections.

Cllr A. Thornton stated that East Suffolk Council should be instructed to perform the annual inspection of the play equipment.

Cllr D. Drane recommended that East Suffolk Council conduct an annual inspection and a full inspection every five years.

Proposed by Chair, Cllr R. Ellis, seconded by Cllr A. Thornton.

RESOLVED: East Suffolk Council will conduct the annual playground inspection. Cllr J. Shel Drake will continue to undertake regular visual inspections.

(c) Spring Park:

Cllr C. Ellis noted that the Clerk could not access crime reports or incident data for Spring Park.

The Clerk stated the efforts made to obtain this information and noted that a police community support officer could attend a meeting if needed.

Cllr D. Drane stated that the quantity of crimes visible from the available data has increased in the area.

The Chair reported that East Suffolk Council Planning Enforcement is currently addressing the unauthorised expansion of the site. The Parish Council will keep this issue under review until it is fully resolved and remains committed to supporting the community until enforcement action has been completed.

The Chair asked the Clerk to contact East Suffolk Council Planning Enforcement for updates.

26.008

Communication:

WhatsApp:

Cllr D. Drane noted that WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature is ineffective for recording and tracking certain parish matters, as some issues require more than 90 days to resolve.

Cllr A. Thornton noted that, by law, matters must be discussed in meetings. WhatsApp can be used for confidential information sharing within the Parish Council, but communication should be limited and topics brought to meetings for discussion.

A majority vote to use the disappearing messages setting from now on.

Proposed by Cllr D. Drane, seconded by Cllr A. Thornton.

RESOLVED: the setting on the Parish Council WhatsApp group will be set to messages to disappear after 90 days.

26.009

Council Operations:

(a) To note the financial situation and bank reconciliation as at 30th November & 31st December 2025:

Proposed by Cllr R. Ellis, seconded by Cllr A, Thornton, and RESOLVED that the reports dated 30th November & 31st December 2025 and attached to these minutes be accepted.

(b) Payment of outstanding invoices:

Proposed by Cllr C. Ellis , seconded by Cllr A. Chipperfield and RESOLVED: That the payments listed in Appendix 1 be authorised.

(c) Budget:

The Chair stated that the budget produced by the Clerk looked sustainable and the figures were reliable estimates.

The Chair reviewed the budget and pointed out that, besides maintaining the grounds, the playing field, fence, and goal nets all need replacement. Funds will also be necessary to fix the JPC noticeboards and pay for the expenses for the picnic in the playing field. It is recommended that £1,500.00 be set aside for the goal nets and playground maintenance, and £500.00 allocated specifically for the picnic.

The Chair recommended funding the Clerk's CiLCA training and including fees in the budget.

Proposed by Cllr R. Ellis, seconded by Cllr. C. Ellis.

It was unanimously agreed to support the Clerk's completion of the training.

Cllr D. Drane explained that certain expenditures are not recurring annually, especially those relating to the playing field, so it is necessary to reserve funds for them.

Cllr A. Thornton addressed the allocation of funds designated for grants and donations, recommending that this amount could be decreased.

Cllr C. Ellis mentioned that grants and donation funds have been properly used in recent years and will continue to be necessary in the future.

Cllr C. Ellis suggested funds within the budget be considered for the purchase of speed indicator devices.

Cllr A. Thornton said he would not back funding for speed indicator devices for the coming year budget and requested an estimated cost from Cllr C. Ellis.

Cllr C. Ellis explained the cost would be around £6,000.

Cllr J. Sheldrake referred to the possibility of asking neighbouring parishes to loan a speed indicator device to us.

RESOLVED: No allocation of funds for SIDS is to be added to the budget for the coming year.

The Chair mentioned that no funds have been designated for improving the playing field, indicating that future funding will be needed in this area.

Councillor D. Drane noted that a significant allocation of funds would be required for the improvement and maintenance of the playing field. The amount of £6,000 was proposed for this purpose.

Proposed by Cllr D. Drane and seconded by Cllr R. Ellis, received unanimous approval from the council.

RESOLVED: £6,000 is to be allocated within the budget for the future improvement and ongoing maintenance of the playing field.

The budget is accepted subject to the amendments made at this meeting. Proposed by Cllr A. Thornton, seconded by Cllr A. Chipperfield.

(d) Precept 2026/2027:

The Chair stated that the precept should be raised by 20 %.

Cllr A. Thornton commented that the precept should ideally be increased by 20% each year to ensure sufficient funds.

The Chair proposed a precept amount of £12,000 be requested.

The decision to approve the precept request of £12,000 was made unanimously.

Proposed by Cllr A. Thornton, seconded by Cllr R. Ellis.

RESOLVED: £12,000 will be the precept requested.

(e) CIL Funds:

Cllr A. Thornton referred to the CIL funds held by the council, stating that the CIL funds should be allocated in the coming years.

The Chair said the topic of CIL allocation should be discussed in detail as an agenda item at the next meeting.

	<p>RESOLVED: deferred until the February meeting.</p> <p>(d) <u>Parish Online:</u></p> <p>The Chair referenced the supplementary information submitted by the Clerk, noting that the Parish Online subscription is for mapping software that was initially utilised to support the development of the neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>Cllr A. Chipperfield noted that, since the service had been utilised for the preparation of the neighbourhood plan, there would currently be no further need for it.</p> <p>The Clerk informed the council that the original subscription had been provided as a free service for three years and asked whether the Council wished to renew it for a fee.</p> <p>It has been unanimously decided that this service will no longer be needed in the future.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr D. Drane, seconded by Cllr A. Thornton.</p> <p>RESOLVED: not to uptake the service offered by Parish Online.</p>
26.010	<p><u>Other items for discussion:</u></p> <p>Cllr A. Chipperfield proposed organising a community litter pick on 29th March 2026. Notices regarding this event can be arranged for display by Sotterley Estate.</p> <p>The Chair expressed support for the litter pick and proposed that information about the event be shared with the community through WhatsApp, The Sheaf, and the website.</p> <p>The Chair inquired whether the council should consider drafting a Spring newsletter and noted that discussions regarding the picnic arrangements should commence. The Clerk will add this subject to next month's agenda.</p> <p>The Clerk informed the council of the status regarding the Bridleway at Ellough, noting that Suffolk County Councillor Cloke will arrange for the Public Rights of Way Officer to contact the Clerk to address ongoing concerns. The Clerk will continue to update the council as necessary.</p> <p>Cllr D. Drane reported on his participation in the Sotterley Chapel Preservation Trust meeting, noting that he had communicated the Parish Council's decisions concerning the planning permission for the WC within the cemetery to the SCPT.</p> <p>The Clerk informed the council that Suffolk County Councillor Cloke has confirmed the replacement of the village gateway sign has been authorised and the installation will commence ASAP.</p>
26.011	<p>The meeting closed at 9.00 pm</p> <p>Date of next meeting: Wednesday 18th February 2026</p>

Appendix 1 – Payments Authorised

	To	For	Net	VAT	Gross
	V. Ellis	Salary December	422.75		422.75
	Vertas	Playing Field Maintenance	338.70	67.74	406.44
	V. Ellis	Salary January	422.75		422.75
	V. Ellis	WFH Allowance	100.00		100.00
	V. Ellis	Printer Ink	9.99	2.00	11.99
	HMRC	P30 Q3	228.51		228.51

Chair _____ Date _____

