

Debenham Parish Council
DRAFT Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
Monday 16th March 2026
Dove Cottage, Debenham

Present: Cllr Sweet (Chair), Cllr Alexander, Cllr Cockerton, Cllr Collins, Cllr Faggionato (arrived 7.02pm), Cllr Grimshaw, Cllr Haddon, Cllr Hammond, County Councillor Hicks (arrived 8.18pm), Parish Clerk/RFO Ginny O’Hegarty, and 7 members of the public.

Chair’s Announcement: Welcome to this meeting of Debenham Parish Council, The Council, members of the public and the press may record / film this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded. Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Parish Clerk. Please switch all mobile phones to silent. May I remind all those present to be courteous and not to have private conversations whilst the meeting is in progress.

DPC/26/553: To consider Apologies for Absence. Cllrs Winrow-Giffin and Potter (apologies approved).

DPC/26/554: Declarations of Interest with regards to items on the Agenda. Cllr Sweet expressed interest in DPC/26/563.1 regarding expenses. Cllr Faggionato declared an interest in DPC/26/563.2xi. Cllr Hammond declared a non-pecuniary interest in DPC/26/563.2xi and had been advised by SALC that he could participate and vote if he wished to do so.

DPC/26/556: Public Participation section (meeting open for 10 minutes)

- 1) A representative from a local charity spoke about the organisation’s work and how the requested grant funding would support a new project if approved by the Parish Council. The matter was covered later in the Agenda under item **DPC/26/563.2x**.
- 2) A member of the public had received notification from SCC Highways that due to budgetary constraints they would be unable to fund new street lighting installations. The matter was covered later in the Agenda under item **DPC/26/560.6**.
- 3) A representative from a local organisation outlined the community benefits of a planned project and provided an update on other secured funding sources. The matter was covered later in the Agenda under item **DPC/26/563.2xi**.

DPC/26/557: Reports

1. **District Councillor’s report:** The District Councillor was not present at the meeting.
2. **County Cllr Hicks addressed the meeting.**
 - a. The first Open Floor Hearing on the Norwich to Tilbury pylon scheme has taken place. Suffolk County Council opposes the current proposal, citing unresolved objections, insufficient information, and concerns about environmental damage, impacts on national landscapes, and residents’ wellbeing. A joint study by Suffolk, Norfolk, and Essex County Councils suggests that delaying the project by five years could make an offshore alternative similarly cost-effective.

- b. Suffolk County Council is launching a trial to remove vehicles that obstruct scheduled road resurfacing works after repeated issues despite advance warnings. Owners will receive a £70 fine (reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days) and may need to collect their vehicle from a secure compound if it cannot be relocated nearby.
- c. Following the recent resignation of the Chief Executive, two existing directors will jointly fill the post for the next 18-24 months.
- d. A £500,000 Culture Project Fund is supporting 37 creative and community projects across Suffolk, with grants between £2,000 and £20,000.

DPC/26/558: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2026

The Minutes were agreed and signed.

Proposed Cllr Collins, **Seconded** Cllr Cockerton, **Approved** Unanimously

DPC/26/559: Action Plan of Outstanding Matters (Resolved)

- 1. Barleyfields boundary / hedging. In progress. Additional hedging has been purchased.
- 2. Churchyard maintenance and Yew tree reduction. The village tree survey is scheduled for 7th April 2026.
- 3. Benches for Coopers field and Gardeners Road. An application has been submitted for Pride in Your Place funding and the Clerk is verifying whether street furniture licences are required.
- 4. Purchase of posts and chicken wire to create new allotment plots/boundaries. Completed.
- 5. Request for grit/salt bins to be located on the Greensleeves estate. In progress. The bin will be purchased and installed once the road has been adopted.

DPC/26/560: Action Plan of Outstanding Matters (Ongoing)

- 1. **Installation of Defibrillator at Dove Cottage:** Deferred to April meeting pending receipt of a third quote.
- 2. **Second opinion regarding the site of the Proposed Flood Management Initiative:** Deferred until later in the project.
- 3. **Parishioner Correspondence Market Green:** Due to the complexity involved with registering the piece of land with the Land Registry, Council agreed to instruct a solicitor.
ACTION: Clerk to obtain quotes.
Proposed Cllr Collins, **Seconded** Cllr Grimshaw, **Approved** Unanimously
- 4. **Water Lane “No Through Road” Signage:** See DPC/26/563.2v
- 5. **Party Wall repairs Churchyard / 43 High Street:** Council noted that following a report provided to the Parish Council in September 2016, it was recommended and approved at its meeting on 19 September 2016 that the Parish Council would take responsibility for maintaining the churchyard. Cllr Sweet and the Clerk will progress the works.
- 6. **Priory Lane flooding and Highways site visit:** Deferred to April.

7. **Update on street lighting and drainage at Gardeners Road:** Deferred to April pending Council's receipt of correspondence received by a resident from SCC Highways.
8. **Action to be taken to repair damaged railings at recreation ground:** Cllrs Collins and Sweet will inspect the damaged railings. It was also noted that there is a missing down post in the Urn Garden.
ACTION: Cllrs Collins and Sweet will inspect the damaged railings and missing down post.
9. **Potential signage for Priory Lane to prevent access for HGVs:** Cllr Alexander will conduct an inspection and consult with residents.

DPC/26/561: To consider planning applications received from Mid Suffolk District Council

1. **DC/26/00929** Works to trees in a conservation area at Dairy Cottage, 50 Aspall Road. No objections.
Proposed Cllr Hammond, **Seconded** Cllr Alexander, **Supported** Unanimously
2. **DC/26/00558** Erection of first floor extension and addition of new bathroom to upper level at 11 Moores Close. No objections.
Proposed Cllr Collins, **Seconded** Cllr Hammond, **Supported** Unanimously

DPC/26/562: Council noted the following planning decision:

1. **DC/26/00437** Works to trees at 19 High Street. Mid Suffolk District Council does not wish to object.

DPC/26/563: Finance

1. To approve March 2026 payments schedule and note receipts
Proposed Cllr Grimshaw, **Seconded** Cllr Faggionato, **Approved** Unanimously
2. **Finance Working Group report:**
 - i. Report including accounts to end February 2026
The RFO reported total bank balances as £295,883. These are made up as follows:

- Current Account	£8,627
- Deposit Account	£278,430
- Woodlands Current Account	£1,089
- Woodlands Deposit Account	£7,737
 - ii. CIL Funding report update -The RFO reported the total CIL balance as £92,015.19.
 - iii. The refund of £2,600 unused grant from Debenham Angel Community Ltd had been received.
 - iv. Update on the process for removal of the rateable value of the cemetery: The Clerk was asked to consult with other Parish Councils regarding the rateable value of cemeteries they are responsible for. Council will also investigate whether small business rates relief could be applied for.
 - v. To approve £533.95 estimated costs re sign enhancements at Priory Lane
Proposed Cllr Collins, **Seconded** Cllr Grimshaw, **Approved** 6 in favour, 2 abstentions

- vi. To approve payment of £648 for Rialtas financial year-end service.
Proposed Cllr Alexander, **Seconded** Cllr Haddon, **Approved** Unanimously
- vii. To approve a 2.5% increase in cemetery fees with effect from 1 April 2026.
Proposed Cllr Cockerton, **Seconded** Cllr Collins, **Approved** Unanimously
- viii. To approve updating the Council's Funding Policy to:
 - a. Ensure funding awards are used only for their intended purpose;
 - b. Introduce a standard letter to successful applicants confirming the award and that payment will be made at the point of use, or upon receipt of other satisfactory evidence;
 - c. Agree that approved funding is allocated from the relevant budget heading and held as an earmarked reserve until claimed or returned to the originating budget.
 - d. Introduce a time limit for claiming approved funding awards, after which the offer will lapse.
A two-year time limit was considered appropriate to be reviewed on a case by case basis.**Proposed** Cllr Collins, **Seconded** Cllr Alexander, **Approved** Unanimously
ACTION: Cllr Faggionato and the Clerk to update the current Policy for adoption at a future meeting.
- ix. Approval of request for funding from the Royal British Legion Debenham Branch of £100 towards a new box for remembrance crosses
Proposed Cllr Faggionato, **Seconded** Cllr Collins, **Approved** Unanimously
- x. Approval of request for funding from The Debenham Project of £10,000 towards their respite scheme. If CIL cannot be used to fund the expenditure, Council agreed to make an exception to provide the funding by way of a Grant.
Proposed Cllr Alexander, **Seconded** Cllr Hammond, **Approved** Unanimously
- xi. Approval of request for funding from Debenham Village Hall and Playing Field Trust of £20,000 towards a 3G Pitch.
Proposed Cllr Haddon, **Seconded** Cllr Cockerton, **Approved** 7 in favour, 1 abstention

DPC/26/564: Administration

1. To consider registration of Parish Council .gov.uk domain name and email addresses, and whether to establish a separate Parish Council website. Due to the contractual nature this item was moved to **DPC/26/575**.
2. Council supported having a stall in the Church on Saturday, 6th June 2026, 09:00-12:00, as part of the River Focus event, with Cllrs Haddon and Alexander volunteering to staff it.
ACTION: Cllr Haddon to liaise with District Councillor Davis regarding the possibility of sharing the stall.
3. To approve suggested response to Mid Suffolk's Sustainability Appraisal Report.
Proposed Cllr Sweet, **Seconded** Cllr Hammond, **Approved** Unanimously

Committees, Working Groups and Representatives Reports:

DPC/26/565: Neighbourhood Plan

1. **Preparation of a survey for circulation following the March event.**
ACTION: Cllr Hammond to collaborate with the Clerk to organise a 1–1.5 hour Neighbourhood Plan working group meeting, where Councillors and volunteers will develop questions in small groups for the Parish Council to consider.

2. **To consider whether to arrange a virtual meeting with Ian Poole** following the recent publication by the District Council of the latest sites submitted as part of the “call for sites”. Deferred pending review of the professional support proposal received in connection with the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
3. **To consider seeking an independent hydrologist’s report** for Debenham. DPC/26/565.3 and DPC/26/565.4 were deferred pending consultation with Ian Poole.
4. **To consider and agree suggested terms of reference/outcomes** required from Flooding and Landscape consultants. See DPC/26/565.3.

DPC/26/566: Allotments

1. Cllr Sweet confirmed a skip had been booked for the allotments for the Easter weekend.

DPC/26/567: Flooding

1. The Environment Agency had written to the Parish Council to advise that the erosion boards do not fall with the scope of the Environment Agency’s duty to repair or maintain and that they would be withdrawing routine maintenance from those structures. The Agency had sent information packs to affected residents notifying them of the change.

DPC/26/568: General Maintenance topics

1. Council accepted an offer from the Green team to tidy up areas around the village and/or undertake general gardening work
Proposed Cllr Faggionato, **Seconded** Cllr Collins, **Approved** Unanimously
ACTION: The Clerk will investigate whether a risk assessment is required before any works commence.
2. Action to be taken in response to recent play area inspection: Cllr Sweet volunteered to order a new cradle seat swing and tighten the loose fixings.
Proposed Cllr Collins, **Seconded** Cllr Faggionato, **Approved** Unanimously

DPC/26/569: Highways

1. **Update on parking enforcement at High Street/Cross Green pavement.** Deferred to April.
2. **Update on Chancery Lane road safety signage:** Awaiting clarification whether there is a TRO in place.
3. **Clarification re ownership of car parking area on corner of Chancery Lane:** Deferred to April.
4. **To agree parking limit as part of the proposed Traffic Regulation Order:** Deferred pending public consultation.
5. **Pavement Concerns Bid document for repairs via central funding budget:** Reports regarding pavement concerns should be submitted via Highways’ reporting tool.
6. **Update on Water Lane flooding and lack of drainage:** Deferred pending a site inspection by Highways which is being arranged by County Cllr Hicks.
7. **Update regarding potential car park location and investment:** Item withdrawn.
8. **To consider appointing a councillor to submit a response to Suffolk Highways survey:** Cllr Faggionato volunteered to complete the survey.
9. **To consider whether to register the Council with the Community Self Help Scheme:** Cllrs Collins and Sweet volunteered to undertake the training and Council will advertise the scheme more widely.

DPC/26/570: Dedicated Space for Uniformed and Youth Groups

1. Update regarding exploring the possibility of a dedicated space within the village for uniformed and youth groups to use. Deferred to April.

DPC/26/571: Repurposing Green Areas

1. Update regarding the feasibility of repurposing some green areas within the village. Deferred to April.

DPC/26/572: Correspondence received

1. Request for action about the parking on and damage to the grass at Lock Close. Deferred to April; this item is to be combined with DPC/26/571.1.
2. Request to join forces with other local communities regarding increased offsite flood risks from new developments: Council is considering employing a flooding consultant as part of the Neighbourhood Plan review.
3. Request for an Allotment Representative to write to allotment holders regarding vehicles being parked in Water Lane for extended periods, which is causing obstructions and forcing other vehicles to mount the verges, resulting in damage. Cllr Collins volunteered to place an appropriate notice on the noticeboard.

DPC/26/573: To receive any report from Councillors/requests for addition to a future Agenda (no decision can be made unless exempt or under delegated power)

Storage of the village bier (Cllr Collins / Cllr Cockerton)

DPC/26/574: Date of next Parish Council meeting – Monday 20th April 2026, 7pm at Dove Cottage, High Street, Debenham

DPC/26/575: Pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission at meetings) Act 1960 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

1. Council approved instructing Suffolk Cloud to register and set up a Council owned .gov.uk domain name, email addresses, and website.

Meeting closed at 8.59pm.