

Debenham Parish Council
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
Monday 19th January 2026
Dove Cottage, Debenham

Present: Cllr Winrow-Giffin (Chair), Cllr Sweet (Vice-Chair), Cllr Cockerton, Cllr Collins, Cllr Faggionato, Cllr Haddon, Cllr Hammond, Cllr Potter, District Councillor Davies, Parish Clerk Ginny O’Hegarty, Locum Parish Clerk Peter Grogan and 6 members of the public. (County Councillor Hicks arrived 8:10pm.)

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/26/515 To consider Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received from:

- a) Cllr Alexander – Approved
- b) Cllr Grimshaw - Noted

DPC/26/516 Declarations of Interest with regards to items on the agenda: Cllr Sweet expressed interest in DPC/26/524 (1) regarding expenses.

DPC/26/517 Public Participation section:

1. A member of the public asked if the Council could investigate the condition of the footway near the bungalows at Gardeners Road. A resident had suffered a fall and a broken arm due to defective paving and lack of street lighting.
2. An issue was also raised regarding rainwater flowing down at the green into garages and towards Low Road due to lack of drainage. The water freezes in low temperatures which is hazardous for residents with the lack of street lighting.

ACTION: The Council will investigate who has responsibility for the footway and raise the defective paving and absence of a streetlight with Suffolk County Council.

DPC/26/518 Reports:

1. **Mid Suffolk District Council** - The report from MSDC had been circulated and Cllr Davies addressed the meeting emphasising:
 - a. The Pride in Your Place scheme was up and running and Parish Councils could apply for funding.
 - b. The Government was imposing mandatory housing targets on Councils.
2. **Suffolk County Council** - The report from SCC had been circulated and County Cllr Hicks addressed the meeting at 8:10pm. He noted the following:
 - a. **Budget settlement from Government:** This was £6 million less than expected and would need to be covered by reserves and internal changes. Suffolk County



Council have been encouraged to take the maximum council tax increase of 4.99% which is 2.99% council tax, 2% adult social care precept.

- b. **Small fires caused by domestic batteries:** There had been several incidents where small batteries had caused fires in the area. Associated costs include the use of thousands of litres of water to put the fires out. Residents are encouraged to recycle batteries at supermarket collection points.
- c. **Volunteer firefighters:** The fire service is trying to recruit on-call firefighters, including female firefighters. Debenham has an on-call fire station therefore if residents are interested they can sign up. Benefits include an annual retainer for signing up, and an hourly rate when called out and for training. There is a commitment as to how many hours a person could be available if needed.
- d. **EV charging points:** Suffolk County Council received approximately £5 million from Government to roll out EV charging on streets in rural areas. Sackville Street has been selected for 4 charging points. The parking bays will be general bays and not exclusively for electric vehicles.
- e. **Fencing on the High Street:** The total cost to replace the wooden fencing is £8,385.17; County Cllr Hicks has £6,900 left in his highways budget which leaves a shortage of £1,485.17. It was proposed in principle that the Parish Council fund the shortage on the basis of health and safety if Pride in Your Place funding is not available.

Proposed Cllr Collins, **Seconded** Cllr Haddon, **Approved** Unanimous

Questions to Cllr Hicks:

- a. **Flooding on Water Lane:** There was a concern that Water Lane which is a highway continues to flood every year but there are no drains. When there is the slightest bit of rain it floods and is deep which causes issues for residents accessing their homes. Councillors queried whether there is a legal obligation that drainage has to be provided on a highway. County Cllr Hicks is aware this issue has been looked at in the past. He requested Council provide an email laying out the problem and he will liaise with the highways and flooding teams.
- b. **Street lighting and pavement at Gardeners Road** (see item DPC/26/517). Cllr Collins will email the details to County Cllr Hicks after meeting the residents concerned. County Cllr Hicks offered to attend a site visit with Cllr Collins.

DPC/26/519 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2025:

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

DPC/26/520 Action Plan for Outstanding Matters (resolved):

- 1. **Footbridge repairs on Low Road:** Work completed.

DPC/26/521 Action Plan for Outstanding Matters (ongoing):

- 1. **Barleyfields boundary / hedging:** Following an explanation of the issue from Cllr Sweet it was proposed to erect a temporary wire fence and plant 5ft-6ft high blackthorn bushes to prevent further damage and access to the play area and cemetery.

Proposed Cllr Sweet, **Seconded** Cllr Winrow-Giffin, **Approved** Unanimously

2. **Parishioner Correspondence Market Green:** It was agreed that Cllr Sweet and the Clerk would look into registering the piece of village green with the Land Registry.
3. **Parking on Green Space Coopers field:** Following the agreed proposal at the December meeting, Cllr Sweet and the Clerk will seek Pride in Your Place funding for 1-2 benches.
4. **Churchyard maintenance and Yew tree reduction:** Cllr Sweet is awaiting a date from the tree specialist to inspect the trees in the village and report on those that need work to be undertaken, including the Yew tree. Matter deferred until the report is available.
5. **Installation of Defibrillator at Dove Cottage:** Cllr Collins will obtain further information and report on it at the next meeting.
6. **Water Lane "No Through Road" Signage:** New signage has been agreed by MSDC and is expected to be installed by them shortly.
7. **Party Wall repairs Churchyard / 43 High Street:** Cllr Sweet had obtained several quotes for the repairs ranging from £1,200 to £3,285. It is unclear who owns the wall. Cllr Faggionato suggested reviewing the plans of the churchyard to identify ownership.
ACTION: The Clerk to approach the PCC for the plans of the churchyard.
If the plans do not identify ownership of the wall, it was proposed that the Council seeks legal advice to establish who is responsible for maintaining it. Clerk to check with SALC if they can signpost a legal adviser who has dealt with similar issues.
Proposed Cllr Winrow-Giffin, **Seconded** Cllr Sweet, **Approved** Unanimously
8. **Water Lane Flooding:** Cllr Cockerton reported that no funding is available for the flooding at Water Lane/Aspall Road or the type of flooding in Kenton Road. Cllr Collins will follow up with Highways and County Cllr Hicks regarding flooding in Water Lane and the lack of drainage. See **DPC/26/518** Questions to Cllr Hicks (a).
9. **Priory Lane Flooding:** Cllr Cockerton had re-reported the flooding via the Highways reporting tool. Cllr Sweet noted that because the bank on one side of the lane near the allotments is lower than the other, when there is high water it floods across the lane. It was suggested to build up the bank using sandbags.
ACTION: Cllr Sweet and Cllr Collins to obtain quotes for sandbags.
10. **Bench Sponsorship Scheme:** Pride in Your Place funding to be applied for together with **DPC/26/521 (3)** Coopers Field.
ACTION: Cllr Sweet and Clerk to investigate the criteria for Pride in Your Place funding.
11. **To consider potential car park location and investment:** All Councillors support the need for car parking in the village, the issues are location and capital cost. It was acknowledged that it would be a long process. It was suggested to:
 - a. Lobby Suffolk County Council.
 - b. Include this in the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
 - c. Ensure it is close to the centre of the village.



A location has been identified. Cllr Collins will communicate with the Clerk to make a formal approach to the landowner by way of an initial investigation.

Proposed Cllr Sweet, **Seconded** Cllr Fagionato, **Approved** Unanimously

12. **Discuss project for development of lower Gardeners Road and additional play equipment:** All Councillors agreed this to be a good idea.

ACTION: Cllr Sweet to obtain quotes for play equipment and a bench.

DPC/26/522 To consider planning applications received from Mid Suffolk District Council

1. **DC/25/05627** and **DC/25/05628** Construction of flood wall at vets practice Cherry Tree Lane. No Objections.
Proposed Cllr Faggionato, **Seconded** Cllr Collins, **Approved** Unanimously
2. **DC/26/00053** Removal of 26 conditions following grant of planning permission. Hill House Barn. Not Supported, 4 in favour, 4 abstentions.

DPC/25/523 To note planning decisions:

1. **DC/25/04720** 1 Water Lane - Granted
2. **DC/25/04008** 48 High Street - Granted
3. **DC/25/05261** Hill House Barn - Granted
4. **Appeal APP/W3520/W/25/3361654** 28 High Street – Appeal Dismissed

DPC/26/524 Finance:

1. **To approve January 2026 payments schedule and note receipts**
Proposed Cllr Winrow-Giffin, **Seconded** Cllr Faggionato, **Approved** Unanimously
2. **Finance Working Group report:**
 - i. **Report on accounts to end December 2025**
 - a) A debt collection agency is collecting £105 a month from the Parish Council for approximately 6 months for business rates for the cemetery.
ACTION: Clerk to write to the District Councillor requesting removal of the rateable value so that the cemetery is no longer rateable.
 - b) Cllr Sweet noted expenses are in line with the budget except for a couple of unexpected expenditure items including £7,000 towards the TRO Project (the balance of the TRO costs will be in next year's budget); and £15,000 contribution towards the Church heating.
 - c) A payment of £27,000 for the Neighbourhood Plan to be added to the budget for 2026/27.
 - d) Income of £3,649 has been recovered for VAT in the previous period.
 - e) All accounts are in good order.
 - ii. **To consider the budget and precept proposal for 2026/27** Council discussed the use of Council reserves, the current level of the precept and the possibility of reducing it. Given the changes in staff, the budget for 2026/27 was not set (contrary to the Council's Financial Regulations) and the finance working group would meet to discuss the draft budget before the next meeting.

"Budget and precept 4.1 Before setting a precept, the Council must calculate its council tax requirement for each financial year by preparing



and approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.”

The Council proposed the Precept at £90,933. The parish council element for a Band D household will be £101.46 per annum a decrease from £101.69 which equates to £0.23 less per annum per Band D household, a decrease of -0.22%.

Proposed Cllr Sweet, **Seconded** Cllr Cockerton, **Approved** 1 against

3. **Update on refund of Debenham Angel unused grant** Cllr Sweet confirmed that the Debenham Angel Group was in the process of winding up its finances and that the grant money of £2,600 was expected to be repaid in full.

DPC/26/525 Administration:

1. **Allotment field lettings and use as a flood defence:** The Council had received an enquiry regarding a potential 3-year tenancy of two fields. Cllr Hammond suggested writing to Suffolk County Council as the freeholder about using the fields to mitigate flooding.
2. **Councillor/Employee expenses policy:** Cllr Cockerton requested this be deferred to the next meeting.
3. **Venue for uniformed groups:** Cllr Winrow-Giffin requested this be deferred to the next meeting.
4. **Warm hub management:** Cllr Sweet asked for volunteers to attend the warm hub meetings for an hour or so to represent the Council and be available to residents. Cllrs Collins and Potter volunteered.

Committees, Working Groups and Representatives reports

DPC/26/526 Neighbourhood Plan: Cllr Sweet noted there were no further developments since the last meeting. There is a meeting booked for February to plan the exhibition for March.

DPC/26/527 Allotments: Cllr Sweet has reorganised the directory of plot holders. All allotment rents are up to date. The allotment monies need to be ringfenced; they amount to £2,200 from 2024/25 and £2,500 from 2025/26. There is a need to use some of the money to install posts and wire fencing to identify boundaries within split plots. Due to the number of new plots created it has resulted in a lot of rubbish therefore a skip may be requested in February to be available for Easter.

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

DPC/26/528 Flooding:

1. **Clarification from Environment Agency on future management of erosion boards and residents' riparian obligations:** No update has been received from the Environment Agency.
ACTION: Clerk to write again to the Environment Agency for an update and seek clarification on the erosion boards and residents' riparian responsibilities, and the fees involved for residents to deal with their riparian obligations.

DPC/26/529 General Maintenance topics

1. **Millenium Gates refurbishment:** Cllr Sweet had received a quote of £15 per hour to clean and paint the gates when the weather is dry.

DPC/26/530 Highways:

1. **Update on parking enforcement at High Street / Cross Green pavement:** Cllr Winrow-Giffin has been advised that 4 notices have been issued. Highways said the TRO had been withdrawn by Suffolk County Council. Cllr Winrow-Giffin will follow this up as she has a copy of the TRO.
2. **Chancery Lane road safety signage:** Highways had said there was no signage which is the reason for the lack of enforcement. Cllr Winrow-Giffin took photographs of the signage and provided it to them.
3. **Update on proposed TRO:** In progress. Another meeting in person was suggested to take place before the February meeting.
4. **Repairs to High Street railings:** See item **DPC/26/518 2 (e)**. In progress.
5. **Bid for pavement repairs:** Cllr Hammond had compiled a list of footways in need of repair and possible funding sources which other Councillors should add to if they see something is missing. A full bid will need to be made for funding from Suffolk County Council's maintenance budget or capital programme.

DPC/26/531 Correspondence received:

1. Trees on the Butts: Email from resident requesting overhanging trees be cut back.
ACTION: Clerk to write to homeowner / report via reporting tool


DPC/26/532 Requests from Councillors for additions to a future Agenda.

1. **Cllr Winrow-Giffin:** Budget for 2026/27
2. **Cllr Winrow-Giffin:** River focus event in May or June with talks, themed carnival/exhibition, engagement with schools, fun activities, displays, discussion around results of water sampling on the Deben. Cllr Potter volunteered to participate in the river focus planning group.

DPC/26/533 Date of next Parish Meeting: Monday 16th February 2026, 7pm Dove Cottage, High Street, Debenham.

The meeting was closed to the public and press to consider a contractual matter.

Meeting closed 8:15pm

Signed: 
Chairman

Date: 16th Feb 2026

