

Minutes of Ufford Parish Council Meeting

Held on 21st April 2026 at 7.00pm
The Parish Hall, Church Lane, Ufford

Present

Cllr. David Findley (Chair)

Cllr. Keith Bennett

Cllr. Nick Crocker

Cllr. Pat Edworthy

Cllr. Rilla Forge

Cllr. Nigel Smith

Cllr. Murray Thomas

Judi Hallett (Clerk)

No members of the public were present

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting

1. Apologies for absence:

- a) To Receive Apologies: Apologies had been received from Cllr. Tim Buxbaum (away), Cllr. Angela Linforth (away), Cllr. Tig Thomas (away) and Cllr. Vincent Smith (away). County Councillor Alexander Nicoll and District Councillor Sally Noble had also sent their apologies.
- b) To Accept Apologies: The apologies of Cllrs. Buxbaum, T. Thomas, Linforth and V Smith were proposed as accepted by Cllr. Forge, seconded by Cllr. Edworthy and all were in agreement.

2. To receive any:

- a) Declarations of Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items
 - None
- b) Declarations of Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items
 - Cllr. Edworthy – Item 13 b) and 14 – Trustee to the Community Hall
 - Cllr. Findley – Item 11 k) xi – Recipient of refund of expenditure
- c) Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items
 - None
- d) Declarations of Gifts or Hospitality received over the value of £50.00
 - None
- e) Notification of Lobbying with reference to any Planning Application to be discussed
 - None

3. Public Session:

- a) Reports or comment from any member of the public (notes only):
 - None

Chair's initials.....

b) Reports or comment from ESC and SCC Councillors (notes only):

- East Suffolk Council - Cllr. Noble had sent her apologies but had indicated she would attend the APM.
- Suffolk County Council – Cllr. Nicoll had sent his apologies but had indicated he would attend the APM. A vote of thanks were recorded for Cllr. Nicoll and for all the support he had given Ufford PC and residents over the past nine years.

4. To sign Minutes of meeting dated 17th March 2026:

The minutes of the Full Council meeting dated 17th March 2026 had been circulated. The minutes were proposed as a true record by Cllr. M Thomas, seconded by Cllr. N Smith and all Councillors, who were in attendance at the meeting, were in agreement that they be signed. The Clerk agreed to publish the minutes on the website.

Action: Clerk

5. Annual Parish Meeting – To discuss the Annual Parish Meeting (28th April 2026 – 6.00pm:

The Clerk confirmed the date and time of the meeting, and the attendees. Cllr. Findley confirmed that Mr Trevor Gill from LDOG would be joining the meeting. It was acknowledged that some participants may wish to leave the meeting by 7.45pm, due to other events in the village that evening. The Clerk agreed to arrange the refreshments, run the presentation slides, and set up the room.

Action: Clerk

6. Ufford Charities – To discuss applications received for Representative Trustee (closing date 30th April 2026)

The Clerk confirmed that, to date, one application had been received. The closing date for applications was 30th April so the appointment could not be made until the May meeting and the matter would be on the May agenda.

Action: Clerk

7. Local Government Review – To receive an update on the structure of the new ‘Central and Eastern Suffolk Council’ and on SCC Elections:

Local Government Review – The Clerk explained that a decision had been made by central government to implement three unitary councils for Suffolk, with Ufford likely to be in Central and East Suffolk Council. The Ward boundaries were still to be agreed and it was likely that the elections would take place in May 2027, with a parallel council run until May 2028.

SCC Elections – These would take place on 7th May 2026, all notices were on the notice boards and had been placed on PUNCHLine.

8. Ufford S19 Flood Investigation report - 6 monthly update – To discuss making a suitable reply:

Receipt of this report was acknowledged. The Clerk was asked to confirm that Ufford did have an Emergency Plan and to send the link to the website page.

Action: Clerk

9. Planning To discuss and agree responses to the following Planning Applications:

a) DC/25/2733/FUL - Full planning application for the construction and operation of a Solar Farm (49.9MW) and Battery Energy Storage Scheme (50MW) - Parcels To Northwest Of Easton And South West Of Letheringham – The following comments were made:

- There are a large number of documents and comments on the ESC Planning Portal, but I don't feel our position has changed
- I feel we should continue in our opposition to this solar farm, and support the local villages.
- The local campaign group have sent suggested wording we might consider using.
- Conclusion: '**Restate objection**' based on our previous letter and add prompts from the Stop Deben Solar Action Group (Prop: Cllr. Findley, Sec: Cllr. Bennett, all in agreement).

Action: Clerk

10. Other Planning Matters:

- a) To acknowledge previous months list of ESC Planning decisions – There were no further comments on the list. The Clerk advised that the application for the development at Dingley Dell along Lower Road may be decided shortly as the planning portal had been amended to 'Pending Decision'.
- b) To discuss establishing a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) – The Clerk reported that no one from Melton had come forward to lead a group specifically tasked with creating a BAP. However there were a number of individuals interested in Biodiversity and the environment. After discussion, it was agreed that there was just not the interested volunteers to engage in such a project but that both Ufford and Melton did have a number of biodiverse projects running constantly.
- c) To discuss request from Ufford resident to purchase small parcel of land at the rear of Nicholls Close – The Clerk recalled the details of the process the Council followed when a small parcel of land was sold from behind 3 Nicholls Close and discussed the proposal put forward by Mr Roper. In conclusion Cllr. M Thomas proposed, Cllr. Bennett seconded and all were in agreement, that an 'Agreement in Principle' be offered to Mr Roper, to sell the land to him subject to...
- i. Planning permission for the new property to be built being obtained
 - ii. Planning consent for the conversion of the land from woodland to private garden
 - iii. A 'letter of comfort' being received from Clark and Simpson regarding the valuation of the land

- iv. The boundary fence being placed directly in line with the fence at the rear of 3 Nicholls Close
- v. The legal fees for Ufford Parish Council being paid (Clerk to obtain an estimate for these)
- vi. The agreed sale price, as per Mr Roper's correspondence of 19th April 2026, being passed to Ufford Parish Council

The Clerk was asked to contact Mr Roper.

- d) To discuss the ESC Call for Sites results and next steps – Members discussed the seven sites put forward in Ufford. It was agreed that no further action should be taken until ESC have launched the official consultation. However, it was agreed that the Clerk should organise a public meeting, once the consultation details were known and produce a list of all planning applications that have ever been put forward for each site.
- e) To receive update on the refurbishment of the Stocks and Whipping Post – The Clerk advised that she was still waiting to hear from Mr Scrimgeour (ESC Heritage and Conservation Officer).
- f) To discuss commissioning a Risk Assessment on the Highways drainage pond on the former Crown Nursery land – The Clerk gave details of the two quotes she had been able to obtain with reference to an independent risk assessment on the drainage pond. It was agreed that the quote from Briskaid was the most suitable. However, it was further agreed that the assessment should not take place until the planning application had been placed on to the ESC Planning Portal, as it could be many months ahead.

Action: Clerk

11. Finance Matters:

- a) To receive and agree End of Year Accounts to 31st March 2026 – The Accounts had been prepared, circulated and independently audited. The Clerk was thanked for producing them so swiftly. It was agreed that the expenditure on the Woods and the Recreation Ground should be separated out for the 2026/27 accounts. The accounts were proposed as accepted by Cllr. Bennett, seconded by Cllr. Edworthy and all were in agreement. The Clerk agreed to publish all year end documents on the website and send the necessary paperwork to PKF Littlejohn LLP.
- b) To receive and accept Internal Auditor's Report for 2025/26 and 'Annual Internal Audit Report' within Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26 – The IA Report and the IA AGAR Page had been received from the Auditor and placed on to the Website. The Clerk was congratulated on such a good report from the auditor. Acceptance of the two documents was proposed by Cllr. N Smith, seconded by Cllr. M Thomas and all were in agreement.

- c) To agree and complete Section 1 of Part 3 of the AGAR 2025/26 – The Clerk read aloud each statement of Section 1 of Part 3 of the AGAR and the Councillors answered in the affirmative to each. The document was proposed as accepted by Cllr. Bennett, seconded by Cllr. Edworthy and all were in agreement.
- d) To agree and complete Section 2 of Part 3 of the AGAR 2025/26 – The Clerk had circulated the draft Section 2 of Part 3 of the AGAR 2025/26 and confirmed that the figures matched those in the IA report. The document was proposed as agreed by Cllr. Findley, seconded by Cllr. M Thomas and all were in agreement.
- e) To agree the CIL Report as at 31st March 2026 – The CIL report had been drafted and the Clerk advised that the figures had been verified by ESC. The Clerk advised that she had allocated all the expenditure she could to CIL, as these funds would need to be returned if unspent after five years. The document was proposed as accepted by Cllr. Crocker, seconded by Cllr. Forge and all were in agreement.
- f) To agree the Reserve Allocations as at 1st April 2026 – The following Reserve Allocations were agreed as of 1st April 2026:

Election Costs	£1,200.00
Insurance Excess Reserve	£1,000.00
Legal Fees	£3,000.00
NP Revision Fund	£1,000.00
Play Park Refurbishment	£4,500.00
Car Park Refurbishment	£4,100.00

These were proposed as agreed by Cllr. Bennett, seconded by Cllr. Forge and all were in agreement.

- g) To agree the Internal Control Statement for year ending 31st March 2026 – The draft ICS had been circulated and there were no suggested amendments. The document was proposed as accepted by Cllr. N Smith, seconded by Cllr. Crocker and all were in agreement.
- h) To receive update on the CCLA Account – It was agreed to defer this matter until the May meeting, when the first half of the Precept would have been received and a calculation of what funds could be moved to CCLA could be drafted.
- i) To discuss bank and CCLA signatories – After discussion it was agreed that the CCLA and Bank signatories should remain as Cllrs. Findley, Bennett, Edworthy, Linforth and V Smith.
- j) To receive details of VAT overcharge by SCC Street Light Team – The Clerk explained that SCC had accidentally overcharged VAT on the UPC Streetlight invoice for 2025/26. Once acknowledged, they had confirmed that the figure would be corrected in the 2026/27 invoice (due March 2027). Having sought advice from the Auditor, he had suggested the correction should be as soon as possible, and that the correct amount of VAT should be reclaimed from HMRC. The Clerk was asked to write to SCC.

k) <u>To authorise the following Invoices for Payment:</u>	
i. J Hallett (Salary and Expenses)	£980.85
ii. SCC Pension Fund (Clerk's Pension)	£196.52
iii. HMRC Cumbernauld (Clerk's PAYE and NI)	£221.78
iv. Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd (Consumables for Wood Group)	£48.60
v. Suffolk Cloud (Web Hosting, Web Domain, Accessibility Check and Mailbox storage)	£370.00
vi. St Mary's PCC (Grants Church Flowers and Grass)	£1,200.00
vii. Ufford Players (Grant)	£250.00
viii. East Suffolk Services (Quarterly payment for BMX Refuse Bin)	£50.51
ix. Coastal Building Supplies (Wood for BMX Benches & Sundries)	£83.81
x. SALC (Annual Subscription)	£411.14
xi. D Findley (Water Testing Consumables)	£36.97
xii. T Brown (Internal Audit)	£290.00

The above payments were proposed by Cllr. M Thomas, seconded by Cllr. Bennett with Councillors voting in favour that the payments be paid (Cllr. Findley abstained). Cllrs. Bennett and Edworthy agreed to authorise the online payments and inspected the invoices.

d) <u>To note Payments made since last meeting:</u>	
i. Suffolk County Council (Street Lighting)	£564.53
e) <u>To note Payments received since last meeting:</u>	
i. Ufford Charities (Grant for CCTV)	£1,250.00
ii. Woodbridge Town FC (Annual Ground Rent)	£250.00
iii. Alford Storage (Clothes Bank)	£20.00
iv. Ufford Community Hall (Annual Ground Rent)	£790.00
v. Lloyds Bank Plc (Interest)	£2.01

The Clerk was asked to write to thank the Ufford Charities for the grant towards the CCTV.

Action: Clerk

12. Highways:

- a) Ufford Hole Breach and PRow – To receive update on the breach and possible grant application via Thriving Communities scheme – Cllr. Findley gave an update on the collapse of the weir at Hawkeswade Bridge and the damage it had caused. It was affecting the flow of the river and the surrounding countryside. It was also a major problem for the local farmer whose abstraction license relied on access to water at the Ufford Level Crossing.

It was further reported that the land owner, local farmers, the Internal Drainage Board, SCC PRow team, Environment Agency and both local MPs were involved in trying to find a solution and the funds to resolve the issue.

It was concluded that Ufford PC should support the efforts to resolve the issue but that they were not responsible and therefore should act in a supportive and 'signposting' capacity and nothing further. Any applications for grants should not be in the name of the Parish Council. It was also agreed that Mr Fleming (the land owner) should be at the centre of all discussions.

Cllr. N Smith reported that he had some old maps that may assist in identifying when the weir was built.

- b) Pot Holes – To discuss how we can encourage residents to report Potholes to SCC
– It was agreed that the Clerk would promote details of how residents could report any highway issue to SCC, using the Report It tool.

Action: Clerk

13. Recreation Ground/Woodlands:

- a) To receive an update on Woodlands Management (report from Cllr. Forge) – Cllr. Forge reported on the following items:
- The woods had 'come alive' in the past few weeks with 25 bird species and 15 wild flower species being identified
 - The Saturday work parties had been paused over the summer, to return in September, but that 446 'person hours worked' had been recorded in 2026 alone.
 - Less cutting was underway but sycamores continue to be removed.
 - Contact from Tim Clarkson is still awaited
 - Work around the BMX track has made great improvements to safety and has been appreciated by the young people, with some of them helping with the work (it was agreed that the next PUNCH report would include an article on the track and annual costs).
 - New benches had been installed at the track and stolen wood was returned after an appeal on PUNCHLine.
- b) To review the Ground Rent charges for the Tennis Club and Ufford Community Hall (wef 1st April 2027) – The Clerk reported that the following rents are charged at present:
- UCH - £790.00 (fixed since 2020 due to 6 years payment up front)
 - Ufford Tennis Club - £350.00 (since 2023)

It was agreed that the Clerk should review the license agreements for each group, to see if there were any clauses relating to rental increases and calculate the RPI inflation rate over the past 3 years.

- c) To discuss request from Ufford Tennis Club for Pickleball courts to be painted on the Tennis Court – After discussion it was agreed this would be a splendid idea and was fully supported. The permission was proposed by Cllr. Bennett, seconded by Cllr. Crocker and all were in agreement.

- d) To discuss recent break in at the Storage Shed and Container – Cllrs. Findley and Forge gave details of damage to the tin shed and container. It was agreed to dismantle the shed in the autumn. Cllr. Forge indicated she may have an old shed that could replace the tin one, but a larger concrete base would be needed. The Clerk suggested the old CCTV cupboard could be used for storing some tools and it was agreed that she and Cllr. Forge would explore this.

Action: Clerk and Cllr. Forge

14. Community Hall - To receive monthly update on management of the Hall:

Cllr. Edworthy reported that the doors were not yet finished, a closing device was still awaited. A new key safe had been installed (code available from the Clerk). A request for a fenced area to the side of the hall had been received from one user; however, it was felt that this would be a barrier to escaping the hall, should there be an emergency.

Action: Clerk

15. Documentation – To approve the Web Site Accessibility Statement April 2026 – amended following Internal Audit Review -

The Clerk explained that the accessibility Statement had been slightly amended, following advice from the internal auditor and a report on its status. The statement was proposed as accepted by Cllr. M Thomas, seconded by Cllr. Forge and all were in agreement

Action: Clerk

Cllr. Findley proposed that Standing Order 3. X) be suspended to allow the business of the meeting to conclude. This was seconded by Cllr. Forge and all were in agreement.

16. To receive reports on meetings attended on behalf of the Council:

- None

17. To receive agenda items for next meeting and agree date of Next Meeting (19th May 2026):

It was agreed to include the following items on the agenda of the May meeting:

- Statutory Annual Meeting items
- Review of Areas of Responsibility

Action: Clerk

The meeting was closed at 9.04pm

Signed:.....
Cllr. David Findley - Chair

Date:

Judi Hallett
Clerk to Ufford Parish Council

Chair's initials.....