

Letheringham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 10th February 2025,
7.00pm in Easton and Letheringham Village Hall

Members of the council present:

Paul Clarke (PC) (Chairman)
Trevor Gill (TG) (Vice Chairman)
Jan McNeill (JM)
Andrew Maskery (AM)
Malcolm Ross (MR)

Also present: Vince Langdon-Morris East Suffolk Councillor (part) and the Clerk Melanie Thurston.

2025.01 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public present

2025.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies

2025.03 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2025.03.01 To declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in items on the agenda

Cllr Malcolm Ross declared an interest in 2025.09.02 as a member of Letheringham Parochial Church Council and Church Warden.

2025.03.02 Consideration of Dispensation Requests – None

2025.04 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 11th NOVEMBER 2024

Cllr McNeill asked for the following sentence to be added at the end of the public forum, “JM supported this opinion with no further views being given by the other councillors” (refer back to previous minutes).

The minutes were then considered as a fair and accurate reflection, and therefore approved and signed by the Chairman. Proposed TG seconded MR.

The minutes of the confidential part of the meeting were also considered as a fair and accurate reflection, and therefore approved and signed by the Chairman. Proposed TG seconded MR.

2025.05 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

2025.05.01 Barclays Online Banking.

The Chairman reported that the Clerk now has viewing access to the Council’s online banking.

2025.06 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES

2025.06.01 Highways & Rights of Way

Although it was agreed at last meeting that Speed Indicator Device (SID) funds in the reserves (£2,325) could be transferred to the Quiet Lanes, JM is still waiting to hear back from Councillor Elaine Bryce to confirm this is acceptable. JM has had a further conversation with Keith Sampson (Community Speed & Safety Engineer), as well as feedback from Chris Taylor (Quiet Lanes Suffolk), who believes that the lanes around Letheringham would meet the general requirements for Quiet Lane designation in terms of character, traffic flow and speed. The cost of Quiet Lane status is to be met by Parish Councils (note Elaine Bryce would contribute, subject to final costings, and if she is still in office, as explained in her e-mail). Before a Council can apply for Quiet Lane status a survey is required to establish volume of traffic and speed. This would either use street furniture

for the siting of a Radar at £390 +VAT, or Tubes on the road (if no suitable street furniture) at £435 +VAT. Any application would also need to show the support of people in the village, so public attendance at Council meeting would be required. Residents would also be written to. A Parish Council has offered to join the County Council trial. However, KS was unsure as to whether they will be taking part. There are five other councils, including Letheringham, which would be interested in undertaking the trial. JM agreed to contact KS at the end of February when it should be known if the trial Parish council has withdrawn.

The value of proceeding with traffic surveys on Pit Rd, Hall Rd and Periwinkle Lane whether or not Letheringham was chosen for the trial was discussed. It was felt that, even if Letheringham is refused Quiet Lane status, the data on traffic levels in 2025 could be useful.

The parish council would wait until the end of February for the outcome of the choice of a parish for the proposed trial. If not chosen, the parish council would proceed with proactive traffic monitoring anyway. Proposed JM seconded TG. **All agreed.**

Action: JM to discuss Quiet Lanes further with Keith Sampson to clarify costings and whether Letheringham could take part in the trial if current candidate council declines.

JM to ask Councillor Elaine Bryce to agree if SID money can be used for Quiet Lanes and if a further financial contribution could be made by her.

JM has reported the following on Highways Reporting tool;

FOOTPATH 009, LETHERINGHAM: Safety concerns for walkers and road users due to culvert collapse and consequent erosion of footpath and road verge

SANCTUARY LANE, LETHERINGHAM: Blocked drains and gullies

EASTON FOOTPATH 001, EASTON: Footpath sign post falling over.

2025.06.02 Website

TG advised that he has checked the accessibility of the website and nothing needs to be done. All Parish Council policies and dates of scheduled meetings in 2025 are now on the website.

2025.06.03 SALC

The Chairman informed that he had attended the recent SALC East Area online forum. The impact which Sizewell C is creating is a great concern – competition for labour and accommodation as well as increased traffic around associated work sites and night trains.

The Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the Suffolk Community Foundation in the village hall. £2 million funding is available annually to the surrounding villages to mitigate some of the adverse impacts of the development. There will be two application rounds each year. ELVH had been awarded money towards the cost of new light fittings. It might be possible to apply for funding towards quiet lanes or traffic survey.

The Chairman had made contact with (Ms) Charlie Smith who had started in the new post of Resilience Co-ordinator at ESC. She had offered to come out to talk to the parish council about emergency planning and resilience. This would take about 45 minutes. TG highlighted that it is evident that Letheringham could get marooned in the event of a storm, therefore an emergency plan should be considered. It was agreed to try to get a briefer talk.

Action: PC to invite the Resilience Co-ordinator to the next parish council meeting to give a short talk about emergency planning.

The Chairman advised that 3 members of the Easton & Letheringham Village Hall committee had resigned and new members were sought to join the committee. It was hoped that interested volunteers would come forward and be co-opted then to have open election at the AGM in April. The chairman felt it would be good to have a Letheringham resident involved in the management of the hall as AM used to be.

Action: AM said he would speak with a member of the ELVH committee.

2025.06.04 Community/Neighbourhood Watch

AM reported that he has now set up the administration for Letheringham Neighbourhood Watch. The next step is to draft an email and then to send out to Letheringham residents inviting them to join the scheme. Every property in Letheringham is included in the neighbourhood watch area, which AM has mapped out. AM informed that neighbourhood watch signs can be purchased and displayed around the village as a deterrent, cost £6.00 each.

The parish council agrees to commit £50 towards the signs. Proposed PC seconded MR.

Action: TG will help AM to write a draft email and will forward to the parish council members in the first instance for approval.

JM will post literature on the village noticeboard.

AM will order signs.

AM will continue to do what he can with Neighbourhood Watch.

Litter Pick agreed to carry this out on Saturday 1st March, 10am.

Action: AM will contact the district council to order the tools and TG will collect them from the council offices.

At 8.20pm Vince Langdon-Morris East Suffolk Councillor arrived.

District Councillor Vince Langdon Morris reported that the town council has sent a response to the Suffolk County Council S19 flooding report and has a template which the parish council can use for its own response when the Letheringham report is published. He will forward the template to councillors.

He encouraged applications for the SCC flooding grants, up to £5,000 per household, ends 30th April 2025.

Flood Resilience Officer is happy to attend parish council meetings to give advice on flooding.

JM would like an update on sluice gate management. Cllr Landon-Morris will ask the resilience officer to investigate this.

Happy to advise that water quality is improving in the River Deben (reporting from David Findley's monthly testing).

PC asked what Cllr L-M could tell us about the proposals for devolution. Cllr L-M said it would create a Unitary Council of the district and county councils.

JM said that SCllr Elaine Bryce has been supportive of Quiet Lanes and has offered to give the parish council some funding. Cllr Landon-Morris said he also supports Quiet Lanes and that he will give the parish council £1,400 from his Locality Funding.

At 8.45pm Cllr Vince Langdon-Morris left the meeting. Chairman thanked him for his support.

2025.07 INSURANCE RENEWAL

The Chairman had received the renewal quote from the current provider (Business Services at CAS Ltd) for the year to 06/03/2026 and circulated it to all councillors ahead of the meeting. The renewal cost was 29% higher than the current year. In view of the increase, it was agreed to try to negotiate a reduction but to renew at the quoted price if this was the best CAS could offer.

Proposed by the Chairman, seconded TG. **All agreed**

2025.08 FINANCIAL REPORT

2025.08.01 Current Financial Statement – Bank Reconciliation at 31st October 2024.

Community Account	£2,230.23
Business Premium Account	£7,298.63
Total	£9,528.86(includes £1,000.00 grant money for signs)

PC signed the bank reconciliation.

Action: MR to carry out a 6 month internal check of the finance.

2025.08.02 Receipts & Payments Schedules for November, December & January.

	Total Payments	Total Receipts
November	£94.29	£100.00
December	£507.10	£24.33
January	£0.00	£0.00

PC signed the schedules.

2025.08.03 Approval of Outstanding Invoices. None

2025.08.04 Clerk's Expenses 12th November 2024 to 10th February 2025

Total expenses of £34.00. Approval proposed Chairman seconded AM. **All agreed.**

2025.08.05 To approve Heelis & Lodge to carry out the Internal Audit for the financial year April 2024 to March 2025.

Proposed MR seconded JM. **All agreed.**

Action: The Clerk to complete the end of year accounts and to deliver to Heelis & Lodge to carry out the internal audit in April. End of year accounts to be approved by the parish council at the Parish Council Annual Meeting in May.

2025.08.06 To approve the allocation of the council's reserves.

Further to the allocation of reserves in March 2024, it had been agreed at the previous meeting to reallocate them to address current priorities.

The Chairman presented his proposed allocation of the 31.01.2025 total bank balance of £9,528.86. **See Appendix 1.**

Proposed PC, seconded TG. **All agreed.**

2025.09 PLANNING & LICENSING APPLICATIONS

2025.09.01 To receive an update on application DC/24/4202/FUL Abbey Farm, Pit Road, Letheringham - conversion of 3 no barns to dwellings.

TG reported that the proposed window which would potentially overlook the churchyard will be installed higher and will be triple glazed.

2025.09.02 To consider application DC/24/0820/FUL St Marys Church, Pit Road, Letheringham - Wheelchair accessible W.C within the church yard of Letheringham Church.

TG reported that he has asked the applicant's architect for more detail regarding this application, in particular the drainage and was awaiting hearing back.

The Chairman asked MR to kindly give more information on this application to the parish council.

MR advised that water supply is to come from the well of a neighbouring property and sewage will be sent along a channel leading into the graveyard. Impact on trees is to be considered

Following discussion, the parish council does have concerns with this application and would like further information before sending a response to the district council. Once this has happened a position will be progressed between councillors via email communication and sent to the district council.

Action: MR to arrange for architect to communicate with the parish council. Chairman to advise the district council of the decision of the parish council.

2025.09.03 East Suffolk Council Planning Meeting.

TG reported that he has recently attended a meeting for representatives of parish councils at the district council, which was very informative. ESC is to double the targets for new housing in the district.

2025.10 THE ROLE OF CLERK – TO CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF THE ROLE WHEN THE CURRENT ONE YEAR CONTRACT ENDS ON APRIL 14TH 2025.

The Chairman explained that the precept would still need to rise by a further 50% in order to fund the current expenditure including the clerk's present salary. In 2024/25 a contribution of £1,000 from reserves had been budgeted to cover all expenditure. In this context, he did not believe that the difference made by having a clerk represented good value for money for residents. He suggested that the parish council should try going back to not having a Clerk and instead for the councillors to help with the administration tasks needed.

The current Clerk would like a constant 10 hours work a month. However, since reducing the parish council meetings from 6 down to 4 a year, there is not enough work for the Clerk to justify the contracted 10 hours every month.

JM is happy that reducing the meetings from 6 down to 4 a year has been better for the council and helps to save costs. It has been possible to progress actions from previous meetings and would therefore not want to change back to 6 meetings a year. The £2,000 salary could go towards quiet lanes, flooding and neighbourhood watch.

TG advised that when the Clerk first started there was a lot of work for her in bringing the parish council up to date. Now the workload is all in hand thanks to what the Clerk has done.

MR is happy that by reducing the meetings down to 4 a year and sharing the administration between the councillors rather than employing a Clerk, is the most cost-effective way.

AM agrees that 4 meetings a year instead of 6 is working, however he is conscious that his participation in helping with the administration is unlikely to be as great as the other councillors due to his work commitments.

The Clerk will remain in her post until 14th April 2025. The parish council thanked the Clerk for all the work she has done over the past year.

The Chairman proposed that the parish council revert back to the system it had before it employed a Clerk and that TG would take on the role of Clerk and that PC and TG would do their best with the administration. Seconded MR. **All agreed.**

2025.10 DATES OF 2025 SCHEDULED MEETINGS

May 12th - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, September 8th, December 8th.

The meeting closed at 9.38pm

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT

Letheringham Parish Council Reserves

February 2025

Background:

At the meeting on 11.11.24 the council agreed a budget of £3,230.55 and a precept of £2,000 for 2025/26 with the intention of funding the net deficit (after interest and VAT receipts) of £1,035.39 from reserves.

Extract from JPAG Practitioner's Guide March 2024

Reserves:

1 *As with any financial entity, it is essential that authorities have sufficient reserves (general and earmarked) to finance both their day-to-day operations and future plans.*

2 *Smaller authorities have no specific right to accumulate funds via the precept. All reserves should be reviewed and justified regularly (i.e. at least annually). It is good practice to transparently publish both the level and rationale of all reserves.*

General reserves:

1 *The general reserve of an authority comprises its cash flow and contingency funds to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances.*

2 *The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure.*

3 *The reason for the wide range is to cater for the large variation in activity level between individual authorities. The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards 3 months equivalent general reserve.*

4 *In all of this it is important that each authority adopt, as a general reserve policy, the level appropriate to their size, situation, risks and plan their budget so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained. Consideration of the minimum level of reserves requires not only consideration of level of income and expenditure but also the risks to that income.*

5 *Authorities with significant self-generated income (other than the precept or levy) should take into account situations that may lead to a loss in revenue as well as increased costs and adapt their general reserve accordingly.*

Earmarked and other reserves:

1 *None of the above in any way affects the level of earmarked and/or capital receipts reserves that an authority may or should hold.*

2 *There is, in practice, no upper or lower limit to EMR/CRRs save only that they must be held for genuine and identifiable purposes and projects, and their level should be subject to regular review and justification (at least annually and at budget setting), and should be separately identified and enumerated. Significant levels of EMRs in particular may give rise to enquiries from internal and/or external auditors.*

Proposed Allocation of LPC Reserves at 10.02.2025:

General	2,000.00
Guidance recommends holding 25-100% of annual income in case income not received so that council can continue to function for a significant period.	
Quiet Lane Signage and Implementation	2,500.00
This money includes £2,325.43 originally received as grants for speed reduction measures on B1078. Subject to approval of the grant-awarding bodies (SCC & ESC (as SCDC)), it is available for Quiet Lanes.	
Election Expenses	500.00
If Letheringham has a situation where an election or poll is required, the cost in 2023 would have been c. £650. It is good practice to have a sum set aside to cover a significant part of this.	
Deficit 2025/26	1,050.00
The council has voted to spend part of the reserve to finance expenditure in 2025/26 rather than increase the precept.	
Deficit 2026/27	1,000.00
It is likely the council will also need to spend some money from reserves in 2026/27 to finance current activity while keeping council tax rises down.	
Churchyard Maintenance 2025/26	200.00
The council has agreed in principle to contribute to the cost of fuel and consumables for churchyard maintenance but no cost has been shown in the 2025/26 budget. The offer has not been taken up in 2024/25 but some provision seems wise.	
Advice & Support to address drainage & flooding	500.00
The council intends to press for improvements in drainage and reduction in flooding of properties and roads. This may require engagement of specialist advice and guidance.	
Asset Maintenance Repair & Renewal	500.00
A fund which is paid into each year from the budget and ensures funds are available as repairs and replacements are needed.	
ESC ECB Grant received August 2024	1,000.00
Awarded for signage subsequently funded directly by SC Councillor. Use subject to agreement of ES Councillors. River water testing and Quiet Lane potentially suitable uses.	
Unallocated	278.86
Total:	9,528.86
(balance at bank at 31.01.2025)	9,528.86