

OUSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11th March 2025

Councillors present: John Gale (Chairman), Sylvia Pettitt, Fiona Bills and Geoff Ingham.

Also present: Joanne Kirk (clerk), District Councillor Mike Chester and County Councillor Bobby Bennett.

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Guy Holland Bosworth and Helyn Dudley and the reason for absence accepted.

2. Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda.

No councillors declared an interest in any items on the agenda and no dispensation requests were received.

3. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10th December 2024.

It was resolved that the minutes were correct. The chairman then signed them.

4. Public Session.

No issues were raised.

5. County Councillor's Report.

Bobby Bennett spoke about the following:

- The libraries contract which is being taken back in house.
- Devolution. Suffolk is now on the Government's priority programme. Suffolk County Council supports one unitary Council. An initial business case has to be submitted by 21st March. A full business case will need to be submitted by 25th September. There will be a public consultation after that. She would like to see towns and parish councils have more powers so that the local connection is not lost.

6. District Councillor's Report.

A written report was received and is available on the Parish Council website at <https://ousden.onesuffolk.net/parish-council/meetings/>

Mike Chester spoke about devolution and the need to keep a local connection. The County Council elections have been delayed until 2026.

West Suffolk Council has created a balanced budget. An amendment was put forward to keep parking charges the same to ease the burden on businesses, but this was outvoted.

His new locality budget will be available from the end of March.

7. Police issues.

No issues were raised.

8. Update on list of actions agreed at the last meeting.

There is one outstanding councillor action. The new circular bench needs to be installed. It was resolved that the clerk would email the Village Hall Committee to ask where the new bench could go, if necessary around a new tree. Geoff Ingham and Sylvia Pettitt agreed to source a tree.

9. Finance

a) Approval of any payments and signing of Schedule of Payments.

It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- J P Kirk - expenses - LGA 1972, s111 – **£24.88**
- HMRC - PAYE - LGA 1972, s111 – **£149.60**

Geoffrey Ingham and Sylvia Pettitt signed the Schedule of Payments. The Chairman countersigned it.

b) Approval of payments authorised between meetings.

No payments were authorised between meetings.

c) Statement of receipts and payments made since the last meeting.

It was resolved that the statement of receipts and payments would be approved.

Receipts

09/12/2024	Bank interest received	Lloyds Bank	£5.43
09/01/2025	Bank interest received	Lloyds Bank	£5.36
23/01/2025	Donation to bowls club	Resident	£200.00

Payments

Date	Minute	Description	Supplier	Total
11/12/2024	425/10a	Clerk's expenses	Joanne Kirk	£37.20
11/12/2024	425/10a	One off printer rental fee	Moulton Parish Council	£20.00
11/12/2024	426/14b	Donation	Suffolk West Citizens Advice Bureau	£100.00
11/12/2024	426/14d	Donation	Headway Suffolk	£50.00
Staff costs as per confidential cashbook				

Transfers

13/01/2025	500.00	From Lloyds Bank reserve account	To Lloyds Bank Current Account
11/12/2024	800.00	From Lloyds Bank reserve account	To Lloyds Bank Current Account

d) **Bank balances as of 28th February 2025.**

Lloyds Bank Current Account	£628.67
Lloyds Bank reserve account	£5,792.13
Total in banks	£6,420.80

Sylvia Pettitt verified and signed the bank statements.

e) **Update on the financial checks carried out by a councillor**

Guy Holland Bosworth checked the accounts. No issues were raised.

f) **Review of income and expenditure for 2024/25 against the budget and discuss the level of reserves for general and earmarked expenditure**

Councillors reviewed the receipts and payments for 2024/25 against the budget. The following overspends occurred in 2024/25.

Yearend budget review - details of overspends			
Village Hall Rental			
Budgeted	£100		
Actual	£200	As agreed at May 2024 meeting.	
Difference	-£100		
Other admin payments			
Budgeted	£0		
Actual	£20		
Difference	-£20	One off printer fee	
Hedge cutting			
Budgeted	£100		
Actual	£120		
Difference	-£20	Contract increase	

Reserves

Earmarked reserve	Opening Balance	Transfers	Spend	Receipts	Current Balance
Election costs	£918	£300			£1,218
Emptying of bins	£225				£225
Defibrillator maintenance	-£218	£400			£182

Clerk and councillor training	£124	£20	£144
Maintenance of fixed assets	£200	£200	£400
Village project		£300	£300
Ousden Bowls club		£450	£450
Total earmarked reserves			£2,919

It was resolved that:

- The level of reserves was acceptable.

- g) **To review the register of fixed assets and insurance values and check that the level of insurance cover is adequate.**

Asset Description	Purchase Value	Insurance Value/current value
Municipal Infrastructure		
Brackets for VAS	£250	£318
BT phone box	£1	£3,177
Bus shelter	£2,500	£5,082
Circular oak seat	Disposed off	
Defibrillator and cabinet	£1,920	£2,541
Dog bin	£113	£153
Dog bin	£113	£153
Evolis Radar speed sign	£1,989	£2,420
Fireproof safe	£199	£318
Litter bin	£152	£194
Lychgate		£25,410
Noticeboard	£550	£700
Noticeboard	£230	£383
Noticeboard	£69	£383
Noticeboard	£70	£382
Queen's Green Canopy plaque	£129	£157
Recycled plastic circular bench	£1,350	£1,485
Village sign	£2,200	£3,812
All risk Items		
Speed sign components including batteries, charger and mounting bar.	£481	£605
Laptop and hard drive	Disposed off	
Total	£12,314	£47,671

No new assets were purchased in 2024 -25.

The Parish Council's current asset value is **£12,314**. The insurance value is **£47,671**. The insurance value is higher because the asset value includes the Lychgate which Ousden Parish Council does not own but which it insures.

It was resolved that the insurance value of the Council's insurance would be increased by 5% at renewal.

- h) **Review of the Council's risk assessment.**

It was resolved that the risk assessment would be approved.

- i) **To check that the levels of liability insurance are adequate.**

The levels of liability cover under the new Ansvar Policy are as follows:

All Risks (unspecified items)	Public Liability	Fidelity Guarantee (Dishonesty)	Personal Accident	Employers' Liability
£1k	£10m	£25k	£10k	£10m

It was resolved that the levels of liability cover were adequate.

j) **Review of confidential cashbook and deductions by a councillor.**

Guy Holland Bosworth has reviewed the clerk's Confidential Cashbook and confirmed that the PAYE details and tax code were correct.

k) **To nominate a councillor to inspect the Council's property for damage or defects by 30th April 2025 and complete the inspection checklist.**

It was resolved that John Gale would inspect the Council's property.

l) **Warranty extension for VAS.**

Hargrave Parish Council suggested extending the warranty for the VAS for 3 years and splitting the cost 50:50 with them. The cost for each council is £298.50 for the 3 years. It was resolved that Ousden Parish Council would pay 50% of the cost.

m) **Changes to Lloyds bank account for information only.**

Ousden Parish Council has received a letter from Lloyds Bank notifying them that bank charges of £4.25 a month will be introduced in March 2025.

n) **Email from Ousden churchwarden about future repairs to St Barnabas Chapel and repairs to the war memorial.**

It was resolved that this would be discussed at the next budget setting meeting in December 2025. Prior to this, an article will be included in the newsletter detailing requests for money received and asking for residents' views about using the precept to fund them. Any funding will be dependent on costings being provided and other financial commitments at the time.

o) **Increase in One Suffolk website hosting fee for information only.**

The fee will increase from 1st April 2025 to £66 a year.

p) **Increase in Data protection fee.**

The annual data protection fee paid to the Information Commissioner's Office has increased from £35 to £47 (normally £52 but Ousden Parish Council will get a £5 reduction for paying by direct debit).

10. **To discuss the any planning issues.**

a) **Planning applications received between meetings.**

07/01/2025	DC/25/0008/HH	Linnet House, Dunstall Green Road	a. front porch b. removal of dormer window and replacement with two windows to front of dwelling c. two storey rear extension d. removal of windows to south east elevation and replacement door e. installation of roof lights to rear of dwelling f. installation of solar panels.
------------	---------------	---	--

A Response of 'no objections' was submitted using the clerk's delegated powers as neighbours were consulted and had no concerns.=

b) **West Suffolk Council's Local Plan Main Modifications Consultation – for information only**

11. **To discuss any highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issues.**

No issues were raised.

12. **To discuss any village issues.**

No issues were raised.

13. **Update on employment training on 3rd December 2024 and approval of a Sexual and General Harassment Policy.**

The clerk attended some online training about recent changes in employment law. If an employer can show that it has taken all reasonable steps to tackle harassment it would not be liable at a tribunal, therefore having a robust policy in place is vital. This also includes making sure that all councillors and employees are aware of the policy and sign to say that they have read it or be willing to attend training.

It was resolved that the Sexual and General Harassment Policy, based on the SALC template, would be approved.

14. To confirm the dates of meetings in 2025/26.

- Tuesday 13th May 2025 - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm
- Tuesday 9th September 2025
- Tuesday 9th December 2025
- Tuesday 10th March 2026

15. To agree the procedure and possible items for the Annual Parish Meeting.

It was resolved that the same format would be used as last year, with the Annual Parish Meeting taking place at 8pm after the Council's Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will start at 7pm.

16. To discuss any correspondence.

- a) Email from One Suffolk about a reduction in the price of a gov.uk domain name to £25 a year and £2 a month for a gov.uk email address.**

It was resolved that the Parish Council would sign up for a gov.uk domain name at a cost of £25 a year and £24 a year for a gov.uk email address for the Parish Council.

- b) SALC area forum for the Western Area Tuesday 25th March online 7-8.30pm to discuss devolution.**

No councillors wished to attend.

17. Any other business for noting or including on the agenda of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 6pm and the Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm.

The following things are for including on the next agenda

- Email from Ousden Village Hall Management Committee requesting an increase in financial support from the Parish Council.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7pm.

Signed (Chairman) Dated