

OUSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 9th December 2025.

Councillors present: John Gale (Chairman), Fiona Bills, Jo Wright, Sylvia Pettitt, Jess Pettitt and Edward Page Turner.

Also present: Joanne Kirk (clerk) and District Councillor Mike Chester.

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from parish councillors Guy Holland Bosworth. County Councillor Bobby Bennett also sent her apologies.

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 the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th September 2025, the extraordinary meeting held on Thursday 9th October 2025 and the planning meeting held on Tuesday 4th November 2025.

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

5. Public Session.

No issues were raised.

6. County Councillor's Report.

No report was received.

7. District Councillor's Report.

District Councillor Mike Chester agreed to send through a report after the next full council meeting on 16th December 2025.

8. Crime update and any other Police issues.

a) Crime update from Haverhill Community Policing Team.

From 10th August – 11th October there was a burglary dwelling and a report of a dangerous dog which bit someone when off the lead. As of 13th October, this was still being investigated.

There have been a number of burglaries of outbuildings, residential homes and farms in the area and residents should remain vigilant.

Poachers have been in action in and around Ousden and Lidgate. There have also been oil thefts. Any suspicious activity should be reported to police, if urgent by dialling 999, or for less urgent issues by ringing 101 or online using the link suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/report-something

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

There was one outstanding councillor action.

10. Finance

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

It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- J P Kirk – expenses – LGA 1972, s111 - **£56.78.**
- HMRC – PAYE - LGA 1972, s111 - **£142.40.**
- Ashtons Legal – first registration of Ousden Village Hall, searches and land registry fee - LGA 1972, s111 - **£1,291 + VAT (total £1,418.20).**

John Gale and Sylvia Pettitt signed the Schedule of Payments.

b) Approval of payments authorised between meetings.

No payments were authorised between meetings.

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

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

Receipts

Date	Description	Supplier	Total
09/09/2025	Bank interest received	Lloyds Bank	£6.27
09/10/2025	Bank interest received	Lloyds Bank	£5.00
10/11/2025	Bank interest received	Lloyds Bank	£4.94

Payments

Date	Minute	Description	Supplier	Total
16/09/2025	436/10a	Clerk's expenses	Joanne Kirk	£16.20
16/09/2025	436/10a	Microsoft Office 1/6	Joanne Kirk	£20.00
16/09/2025	436/10a	Phone costs	Risby Parish Council	£26.78
16/09/2025	436/10a	Scribe accounting software	Starboard Systems Ltd	£165.60
16/09/2025	436/10a	Insurance	Business Services at CAS Ltd	£449.77
16/09/2025	436/10a	Grass cutting	McGregor Services	£84.00
16/09/2025	436/10a	Grass cutting	McGregor Services	£120.00
18/09/2025	439/15b	Donation	Suffolk Accident Rescue Service	£50.00
21/09/2025	431/9m	Bank charges	Lloyds Bank	£4.25
14/10/2025	410/9f	Grass cutting	McGregor Services	£84.00
21/10/2025	431/9m	Bank charges	Lloyds Bank	£4.25
28/10/2025	425/10f	Website hosting fee	Community Action Suffolk	£66.00
28/10/2025	439/14a	New litter bin	Glasdon UK Ltd	£141.33
03/11/2025	410/9f	Grass cutting	McGregor Services	£84.00
13/11/2025	438/10g	Poppy wreath and donation	Royal British Legion	£50.00
Staff costs as per confidential cashbook				

d) Bank balances as of 1st December 2025 and confirmation of bank reconciliation.

Lloyds Bank Current Account	£556.19
Lloyds Bank reserve account	£8,848.11
Total in Banks	£9,404.30

Sylvia Pettitt verified and signed the bank statements.

e) Email from Scribe Support giving details of an increase in the subscription cost in April 2026. For information only.

The cost in 2026/27 will **£193.20 + VAT**.

f) Subscription update from SALC.

The SALC subscription will increase will by 3% and the NALC element by 3.6%.

g) Budget 2026/27, reserves balance and precept request.

The following larger amounts have been allocated in the budget:

- Ousden Village Hall - £5,000
- Village project/legal fees - £1,000.
- Maintenance of fixed assets - £200.
- Defibrillator maintenance - £200.

With the budget allocations, the earmarked reserves balance in 2026/27 will be **£5,817**,

	Current balance	Budget allocations 2026-27	Reserve balance 2026/27
Earmarked			
Election costs	£1,518		£1,518
Emptying of bins	£225		£225
Defibrillator maintenance	£260	£200	£460
Clerk and councillor training	£164		£164
Maintenance of fixed assets	£800	£200	£1,000
Village project/legal fees	£1,000	£1,000	£2,000
Ousden Bowls club	£450		£450
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVES			£5,817

It was resolved that the precept request would be **£12,627**. The parish council element for a band D household will be **£92.43** per annum an increase from **£81.20** which equates to **£11.23** per annum per band D household, an increase of **13.83%**.

h) **Approval of regular payments for 2026/27.**

It was resolved that the following regular payments would be approved for 2026 -27:

Payment	2025/26 - Amount ex VAT	2026/27 - Amount ex VAT
Admin costs		
Village Hall rental.	£200	£200
Community Action Suffolk - Insurance	£450	£480
SALC subscription	£180	£190
Internal audit fee	£80	£85
Scribe accounting software	£193	£200
Risby Parish Council - phone costs	£27	£30
Stationery (print cartridges - shared cost)	£20	£20
CAS Ltd - website hosting fee	£55	£60
ICO - data protection fee	£47	£50
Maintenance costs		
Grass cutting	£800	£800
Hedge cutting	£150	£150
Ongoing authorisations (as and when required)		
Consumables for defibrillator	£200	£200
Maintenance of fixed assets	£200	£200
Maintenance of VAS	£200	£200
Staff costs (salaries, pension and PAYE)		

i) **To approve the Internal Control Statement for the year ended 31st March 2026.**

It was resolved that the Internal Control Statement would be approved.

j) **To appoint a councillor (a non-signatory) to carry out internal control checks and complete the Internal Control Report.**

It was resolved that John Gale would be asked to carry out the internal control checks and complete the Internal Control Report.

k) **To review the effectiveness of the internal audit.**

Councillors reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit. It was resolved that the document would be approved.

l) **Appointment of an internal auditor.**

It was resolved the Mrs Cathy Whitaker would act as Internal Auditor again this year and a fee of £85 paid.

m) **To review any contracts.**

The cutting contract runs with McGregor Services was renewed for a further three years in March 2025.

11. **To discuss the any planning issues.**a) **West Suffolk Council's consultation on validation requirements for planning applications.**

This details what documentation would need to be provided when a planning application is submitted. It was resolved that no response would be submitted.

b) **DC/25/1903/VAR – Keeper's Cottage - variation of condition 4 of N/69/320/C to remove agricultural occupancy restriction for gamekeeper's house.**

Ousden Parish Council was not notified about this application as it is a variation of an existing application.

12. **To discuss any highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issues.**a) **Damage to byways.**

Every weekend motorbike scramblers are using the byways causing a lot of damage as the ground is so wet.

13. **To discuss the following IT issues:**a) **Approval of Ousden Parish Council's new IT policy.**

It was resolved that the IT Policy would be approved.

14. **To discuss any village issues.**a) **Update on the progress of the Village Hall's application for a National Lottery Grant and registering the land with the land registry.**

The Village Hall Trustees are waiting to find out if their application for a National Lottery Grant has been successful. The application is at stage 2 which could take up to 6 months before a final decision is made.

As Custodian Trustee, Ousden Parish Council will be required to be party to the legal charge deed if a grant is awarded. Ousden Parish Council will need to sign the grant agreement and the legal charge. It was resolved that the clerk would be authorised to sign these documents on behalf of the Parish Council.

Claire Barritt at Ashtons Legal LLP has begun the process of registering the title of the land and the documents are now with the land registry.

The Village Hall Trustees have started the process of applying for Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status which means it will be able to hold property in its own name.

15. To discuss the following correspondence:

a) Email from Suffolk County Council about the Government's consultation on the Local Government Review which ends on 11th January 2026.

It was resolved that Ousden Parish Council would submit a response in support of three unitary councils as councillors believe that this would help maintain a more local connection, and because being part of single unitary council would lead to an unfair distribution of funding with Ipswich being prioritised. Councillors were also concerned that, based on past history, smaller parishes would be ignored and have no voice despite promises that this would not be the case.

b) Email from West Suffolk Council about their next Community Governance Review.

The next CGR process will formally start in December 2025. Parish and town councils can put forward any issues that they wish to be considered and resolved as part of the review process. It was resolved that no issues would be put forward as Ousden Parish Council is not aware of any anomalies.

c) Email from West Suffolk Council about postal vote reapplications – for information only.

Residents who applied for their postal vote on or before 31 January 2024 and wish to continue with this arrangement will need to reapply for their postal vote before 31 January 2026.

d) Email from West Suffolk Council about their consultation on Proposed Changes to the West Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026 to 2027.

It was resolved that no response would be submitted.

e) Urgent dental care.

Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board have shared the following information: Urgent care dental appointments are available across Suffolk within 1 to 7 days by contacting NHS 111. Adults and children experiencing dental pain, infection and other urgent issues can access NHS care seven days a week, including in the evenings. Go online at 111.nhs.uk or call 111 for an appointment.

f) Letter from Headway Suffolk requesting a donation.

It was resolved that a donation of £100 would be made.

g) Email from West Suffolk Council about the opening of small electrical points across West Suffolk.

Residents can locate their nearest recycling point via <https://maps.westsuffolk.gov.uk/>

The new collection points can be filled with small electricals including mobile phones, tablets, cables, kettles, toasters and kids' toys, anything smaller than a standard sized microwave.

The nearest locations to Ousden are:

Bury St Edmunds

- Moreton Hall Community Centre, Symonds Rd, IP32 7EE
- Southgate Community Centre Car Park, Heron Road, IP33 2QA
- Ram Meadow Car Park, Cotton Lane, IP33 1XP
- Parkway Surface Car Park, Parkway North, IP33 3BA
- Vinery Road Car Park, Vinery Road, IP33 2JP

Newmarket

- The Guineas Car Park, (rear of Crown Walk), CB8 9EG
- All Saints Car Park, CB8 8ET
- The Centre, Brickfields Avenue, CB8 7RX

Haverhill

- Strasbourg Square, Millfields Way, CB9 0HR

- Car Park, Lower Downs Slade, CB9 9LL
- Queensway/Blair Parade, CB9 9BW
- Leiston Road, CB9 8JJ
- Ehringshausen Way Car Park, CB9 0BB

15. Any other business for noting or including on the agenda of the next meeting on Tuesday 10th March 2026.

The following items are for including on the next agenda:

- Replacing the 30mph signs and repeaters in Ousden.
- Registering from Suffolk County Council's Community Self Help scheme.
- Email from Citizen's Advice West Suffolk requesting a donation.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.16pm.

Signed (Chairman) Dated