

## Surlingham Parish Council

### Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026 in The Village Hall, Surlingham (Subject to amendment until signed by the Chair at the next meeting)

<b>Parish Councillors present</b>	Martin White (Chair), Pat Scowen, Dave Swinborne, Tim Mack, Gary Harris
<b>District Councillor</b>	Vic Thomson –
<b>Also in attendance</b>	Charlotte Rust, Clerk
<b>Members of the public (MOP)</b>	Six

#### **26.55 Welcome from the Chair.**

Councillor White opened the meeting at 19:28pm and welcomed all those in attendance.

#### **26.56 To receive and approve apologies for absence.**

Councillor Mummery sent his apologies.

#### **26.57 To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th April 2025.**

Councillor Swinborne proposed for Councillor White to sign the approved minutes, seconded by Councillor Harris.

#### **26.58 Annual reports:**

##### **26.58.01 Chair of the Parish Council – read by Councillor White.**

I was re-elected as Chair this year and have been ably supported by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Pam Wilson. Sadly, Councillor Wilson has decided to step down from the Council, and we are currently going through the process of finding a new councillor.

Earlier in the year, Councillor Richard Atkins stepped down from the Council after a number of years' service. He has been particularly active in maintaining the pond, representing the Council on all footpath issues and also those relating to the upkeep of the Staithe and will therefore be greatly missed. Richard has kindly agreed to continue his work around maintaining the pond. Councillor Howard Mummery was co-opted as his replacement in October.

**Play Area** - The Play Area continues to be regularly monitored for Health and Safety and routine maintenance issues. The Council has agreed to the refurbishment of the playground and has begun a consultation to seek the opinions of the community on how this should be achieved.

**Village Hall** - The organisation of the storage area has been improved by the purchase of 'scaffolding' to segregate the property of the different parties who use the hall. Further improvements have taken place to ensure that the village hall is fully compliant with current legislation and more accessible for disabled users.

The Council continues to work closely with the school as the main hirer of the Village Hall. A number of matters have been discussed, and issues addressed.

The **SAMs machine** is moved around the village according to the memorandum of understanding. Data from the machine is placed on the website. There are currently 14 sites on the MOU. Unfortunately, there have been a few problems with its functioning, but these have now been resolved.

**Wig Wag signs and Village Gates** – After protracted discussions with NCC Highways, contractors, and landowners, these have both now been installed after what was a longer process than should have been necessary. There were a few teething problems with one set of wig wag signs, but these have been resolved.

**Staithe** – Discussions around the dredging of the dykes and the removal of the fallen willow tree have taken place. Councillor Scowen met with Ben Goldsborough MP and the Internal Drainage Board on this and has managed to achieve some success in moving this issue forward. And I would like to thank her for her work on this. Councillor Mack has agreed to remove the part of the tree that obstructs the staithe and the dredging of the dykes is currently in the hands of the RSPB.

**Flooding/Drainage Problems** – Problems of flooding at the bottom of the Green and on the Covey continue. Ditches have been cleared but this issue is likely to be one that comes back to the Council's attention in the future.

**Footpaths** – Councillor Atkins represented the Council on all our dealings over Wherryman's Way and its associated footpaths. This has been very challenging again this year with the condition of a number of paths being unacceptable. The County Council have been contacted frequently regarding this. Councillor Atkins organised another successful litter pick along the footpaths by the River. Thank you to all who volunteered.

**Pond** - Councillor Atkins removed excess vegetation from the village pond and this was disposed of by Councillor Mack

**Biodiversity** – Councillor Scowen continues to promote the monitoring of the biodiversity action plan in the parish. I would like to record my thanks to her for her work on this.

**Defibrillator** - The Council agreed to purchase another defibrillator provided a site with electricity and suitable agreement from the owners could be found in the required part of the village.

**Beerlick's Loke** – the issue of 'improper' use of a property on Beerlick's Loke at the rear of properties on The Street has been raised with the local District Councillor. This is currently in the hands of South Norfolk District Council, but the Parish Council will continue to monitor progress on this matter.

**Website** - The Parish Council now has an updated website. Development of this in the future will provide information on Parish Council business, as well as signposting visitors to Surlingham.org for information about other aspects of village life.

**Cleaner** – The Council received the resignation of Rachel Hardingham from the post of cleaner and village hall booking clerk. I would like to thank Rachel for her service and work for the Council over a number of years. Steve Gildersleeve has been appointed as her replacement on a self-employed basis.

**Training** – The Council joined with Bramerton, Claxton and Rockland St Mary with Hellington in a joint training organised by Norfolk Parish Training and support. We were happy to host the training which received positive feedback from all involved.

To summarise, a total of 107 motions have been passed during the year. I would like to thank all councillors for their work again this year. On behalf of the Council, I would like to thank Steve Gildersleeve for his amazing work in a number of different roles that he takes on for the Council. My biggest thanks go to Charlotte for her commitment and professional work for the Council as Clerk again this year.

Martin White

Chair, Surlingham PC

**26.58.02 County/District Councillor – Read by Councillor Thomson.**

Councillor Thomson gave his thanks to Norfolk County Council employees for their hard work covering a dual role whilst preparing for devolution and Local Government Reform.

**26.58.03 Tornados Football Club.**

None.

**26.58.04 Luncheon Club.**

The Luncheon Club has decided to meet on a less formal basis going forward and will not be continuing meeting at Surlingham Village Hall.

**26.58.05 Padmaloka Buddhist Retreat.**

**To add when received.**

**26.58.06 Surlingham Primary School.**

None.

**26.58.07 Off the Page.**

Unfortunately, we have been 'on hold' since September 2025 to date, by agreement, as we have had 4 members facing serious long term health issues/major surgery and the devastation of the unexpected death of one of our founding members. We hope to restart within the next months if possible.

**26.58.08 Church & Poor Charity – read by Janet Rogers.**

The Charity was created in 1909 and generates income from leases of marsh, farmland, and allotments. The income is divided equally between the Church and the Community.

Requests for assistance from parishioners and groups can be made at any time by contacting the Clerk.

The Trustees meet as required throughout the year with most disbursements made before Christmas.

In 2024 the Trustees negotiated a generous 10-year lease with the RSPB on Flanders and Town Marsh, the agreement includes an annual rent increase in line with the retail price index.

The allotments continue to be very productive, and all ten plots are taken.

The Parochial Church Council received half of the annual income to help pay for insurance and maintenance of the Church, and an additional payment to cover the cost of tree survey.

Last year disbursements were given to individual parishioners and Surlingham Tornadoes Football Club to help fund pitch maintenance and training equipment.

The Lunch Club, Gentle Exercise Class, and WI received funds to enable them to continue to run by helping to offset the Parish Hall hire costs.

The Trustees also funded residential placements for 2 primary school children.

Income for 2025/6 was £4735 and expenditure £4078. The reserves are currently £4975.

Trustees of Surlingham Church & Poor Charity

**26.58.09 SPATS – read by Charlotte Rust, Parish Clerk.**

SPATs continue to support the community by providing payments for eligible taxis journeys. We are funded by Norfolk County council via a grant. There is a healthy balance in the account, and we would like more people to use the scheme. Currently households of Surlingham can claim against 4 taxis journeys per month, they will receive 50% with a maximum payment of £10 per journey (journeys must be outside of the timetabled bus service). Claim forms are on Surlingham.org or available at Surlingham garage. Each application needs to have receipts of the journey.

Sadly one of our Trustees Mr B Heeler passed away last year so we had a vacancy. Neil Evan's the owner of Surlingham Garage has agreed to be our new trustee.

Many thanks,

Heidi Dimmock and Sonia Cox (Trustees)

**26.58.10 WI.**

None.

**26.58.11 St Mary's Surlingham – read by Pippa Thurlow.**

Last Saturday we had a service of Blessing for a couple's marriage vows. The bride's grandparents had managed the dairy herd at hare's Farm. Before we came to live here, 40 years ago, the farm had been used for fruit production. One has to acknowledge changes through the years.

We now have a very small regular attendance at church services, but the same ancient and historic building in our care. As you know there are cracks in the Church tower walls and deterioration in the metal cross beams which means that the bells cannot be rung. We have been trying for some years to qualify for Heritage Lottery Funding to support the cost of repairs and are employing Saul Penfold to expediate this. Our latest bid has just been submitted. I am concerned for the future of the Church should the bid fail.

The Church is popular with visitors; walkers, people interested in history, the environment and family connections. A place seen to be cared for which is bright, welcoming, and peaceful/ It has a lot of potential.

In the past year we have had the participation of the school in seasonal celebrations and at Christmas we had the ringing of the Hand Bells (and at the school fete). The hand Bells were restored with the help of

donation. We have just had a butterfly decorating workshop and teas. Di Smith's butterfly designs can be seen in the Church. Celtic Prayer continues to be held in the Church porch on alternate Tuesdays through the year. There have been several funerals including John Ellis, Geoff Pinder, and Lucy Reeve. Also, internments of ashes.

We continue to be thankful for the work done by Graham and Ros Cole, keeping the grass cut in the churchyard, help and involvement by members of the community is so appreciated, welcomed, and enjoyed. A large branch from the Ash tree to the south of the Church fell down following high winds and heavy rain and damaged the churchyard wall. It is hoped that the wall will soon be repaired. The tree work has been done, with thanks to Padmaloka who assisted.

Pippa Thurlow

Councillor White offered the Parish Councils support for the refurbishment of the Church.

### **26.58.12 Wheatfen – read by Charlotte Rust, Parish Clerk.**

In the past year at Wheatfen we have all worked together to embrace a number of changes. After nine years, warden Will Fitch left us in December to follow new opportunities. He achieved a great deal as warden, was extremely popular and is much missed.

Following Will's departure, Matt Wilkinson, former warden at RSPB Strumpshaw, stepped in on a temporary basis. Matt is passionate about the habitat and has a wealth of experience from which we've all benefitted. Thanks to Matt, our trainee Emily could carry on with her training, volunteer sessions continued and our winter work schedule was completed on time.

In recent days we have appointed Lewis Yates, who will join us in May. Lewis has a long understanding of nature reserves having grown up on one in East Sussex. Since graduating and then completing his MSc he has worked for various wildlife trusts and conservation organisations around the UK. For the past four and a half years Lewis has been a warden with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust at Worlingham Marshes.

Aside from changes in staff, Wheatfen has been flourishing this year. Having completed our winter fen management, the vegetation is beginning to grow once again and insects are waking up. A visit to Wheatfen in spring will provide you with the opportunity to see otters, marsh harriers, warblers, wildflowers, butterflies, bees and so much more. This precious landscape is vital to support, and we work hard to provide the species that call Wheatfen home with the best chance to have suitable habitat.

Climate change is bringing uncertainty to the future of the Norfolk Broads with rising water levels and increased salt levels causing concern for our fen specialist species. We will continue to work with groups across the Yare Valley to best safeguard the rare habitat and continue to research how changing conditions are affecting our well-loved landscapes.

We have a busy events program planned for the 2026, providing visitors with the opportunities to learn more about butterflies, dragonflies, wildflowers and more. We are proud to continue to provide the opportunity for locals and visitors to explore the wild side of the Norfolk Broads for free and enjoy the peaceful walks around our reserve.

### **26.58.13 Community Orchard.**

None.

### **26.58.14 Coldham Hall Sailing Club – read by Gary Corbett.**

Thank you for your kind invitation, I'm Gary Corbett and represent Coldham Hall Sailing Club.

I'm pleased to report all is well at the club, we have an increasing membership both sailing and paddle craft, Sunday sailing races and our midweek sailing is well underway this year, we plan to restart our Tuesday social paddle evenings the beginning of May for the season.

We continue to maintain the clubhouse and site, although we are looking for additional canoe/kayak storage, it is so popular, a good access point to the river.

The club has a full programme of events planned, both on and off the water, from 1.30pm on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April we hold the clubs Open Day, inviting all to pop down, have a sail and/or a paddle in a kayak/canoe,

maybe a paddleboard, importantly meeting members, bring a picnic; this year we will be running the club's Try/ Discover Sailing Programme, two theory sessions and at least 6 sailing sessions starting in May. This year is the 50<sup>th</sup> 'Yare Navigation Race'. Traditional River Cruisers from all over the Broads come to Coldham to race to Breydon Water and back, a prestigious event on the Broads Sailing calendar, this year the races are on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September, extra special. Locally we manage the 'Triple B' our own Coldham, Breydon and back for all other sailing craft from Laser's, Wayfarers to production yacht's, this is on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July, Triple B was previously raced at Buckenham Sailing Club.

Earlier this year we assisted Brundall Sea Scouts with their Baden Powell overnight trek crossings of the Yare on a circular route, we have replaced the metal Defibrillator cabinet with a polycarbonate cabinet outside the Tavern and help to maintain it.

Our canoe/kayak/paddleboard section will continue to undertake a 'Paddle Clean-up of the river' an ambitious Rockland to Surlingham Ferry, maybe beyond.

We continue to work closely with the RSPB and Broads Authority to enhance 'The River Yare'. Over the winter the club completed 17 tree and brush clearing work parties.

All members of the Parish Council and residents are warmly invited to visit Coldham Hall Sailing Club.

Information on activities and events can be found on our web site [www.coldhamhallsailingclub.co.uk](http://www.coldhamhallsailingclub.co.uk) with all contact details or please pop along to the club for more information.

Yours sincerely and take care.

Gary Corbett,  
Coldham Hall Sailing Club, Surlingham.

**26.58.15 Bowls.**

None.

**26.58.16 Other reports.**

None.

The meeting closed at 20:10pm.