

Minutes of the meeting of Assington Parish Council on Monday 26 January 2026

Present: Councillors (Cllrs) Andrew Hill (Vice-Chair) David Wiles, and. Bronwen Stacey
In attendance: CCllr James Finch, DCllr Lee Parker, Christine Hargan (Clerk) and one member of the community.

A warm welcome was extended to Kimberley Howard and Mark Armitage, Cllr Hill proposed that both applicants were co-opted as Parish Councillors Seconded by Cllr Wiles the proposal was carried unanimously and forms duly signed.

26101 **Apologies** for absence Cllrs Simon Thorogood and Tony Howcroft

26102 **Declaration of Interests and requests for dispensation**

Cllr Stacey declared an interest in donations to Assington Association and the churchyard maintenance.

26103 **Minutes** of the Assington Parish Council meeting held on 24th November 2025
The Minutes were resolved to be accurate and signed by Cllr Hill.

26104 **County Council Report – CCllr Finch**

Several Councillors reported an issue with opening the previously sent report CCllr Finch agreed to resend it and then updated the meeting on:

- Bus funding, £26 million has been added to the SCC budget over 3 years suggestions for improvements were requested. Cllr Hill pointed out that two suggestions had already been made – to have the bus terminate near the shop/village hall rather than Vicary Estate, and to have a stop added at Perrywoods - but were refuted by SCC. He agreed to resend the suggestions to Cllr Finch.
- Celebrating disability, The Government is offering grants to form local groups for disabled people and requested assistance in identifying individuals who may benefit.
- Fire fighter recruitment There has been a surge in applications, 32% of the applicants were women resulting in 17.2% of new recruits being female across the county,
- **Solar panel proposal near Mildenhall:** Concerns were raised regarding the proposal to site 2,500 acres of solar panels. An amendment to the planning application seeking to add further infrastructure, including battery storage, without reapplying was refused.
- **Unitary Authority:** Paul Geater has voiced support for a single unitary authority. Differing views have been voiced on the best solution to local government reorganisation proposals from the government, but a decision is expected in the coming months.

District Council Report – DCllr Lee Parker

Having previously distributed his report DCllr Parker updated on:

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR):
Capacity is being heavily consumed by LGR work. It is expected that proposals will soon clarify whether one or three unitary authorities will be recommended;
Government may alternatively propose two.
Councils must continue to operate and prepare for all outcomes. Elections may be

cancelled, but this decision is not final as Reform has lodged a Judicial Review. If successful, elections will proceed; if not, the election process will be deferred. A shadow authority will operate for one year. Unitary elections will take place in 2027, with the new authority assuming control in 2028. Parish and Town Council elections will take place next year; Central Government will determine the arrangements.

- Waste collections: New bins will be delivered from February but must not be used until June. Extensive guidance will be provided.
- Parking charges: Charges in Hadleigh are increasing despite previous assurances they would not. A substantial increase is expected; timing of the announcement is awaited. The CIL fund remains ring-fenced and cannot be used to offset such operational costs.
- Culture: Ipswich has been nominated for City of Culture.

Public Forum

No questions were asked

26105

Planning

- **Applications:** None received.
- **Status:** Current applications were noted.
- **Existing permissions:** A holiday home unit has been erected at the Assington Barns site. The Clerk will check whether the planning permission remains valid for this activity.
- **Recycling yard:** A query had been raised by a parishioner regarding a potential roadway and whether it is covered by the existing planning permission. It was reported a drainage pipe has been installed in the ditch and covered with hardcore. DCllr Parker will check with Planning Enforcement and liaise with Councillors.
- **Heavens to Betsy:** The premises have been closed since before Christmas and it was noted the unit was up for sale. DCllr Parker agreed to contact BDC regarding licensing if required and liaise with Councillors.

26106

Correspondence and Emails

A query was raised by a parishioner in relation to the newly surfaced footpath. The Clerk will liaise with the contractor regarding concerns that the surface and edging is inadequate and liaise with the Councillors re the response. A letter will be drafted to residents to explain the situation and proposed resolution.

251107

Clerk's Report

Most outstanding items have been addressed and the log in the appendix has been amended

26108

Finance

- RFO report: Acknowledged.
- Accounts reconciliation against budget: Acknowledged.
- Payments: Authorised as recorded in the appendix. It was agreed to await resolution to issues to footpath prior to settling the account.
- Consider grass cutting contractor for 2026/27
It was resolved to appoint LM Groundcare to cut the footpaths, allotments, wildlife area and verges but to request a reduction in the quote to reduce the cuts to conservation area and footpaths to two and to liaise with the contractor later in the year regarding additional work if necessary, including cutting of the verge on A134.

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- **Budget 2026/27**

The budget has been agreed as attached in the appendix. Further discussion is required regarding Reserves at a future meeting.

- Precept 2026/27 - it was resolved to demand £9,600 from BDC and the form was signed by the acting chair. This will be close to a zero increase for parishioners, following two years of reductions. Clerk to submit the form

26109

Licensed Path, Footpaths, and APC Assets

- **Bench:** Clerk to provide bank account details to the parishioner so that she can make a donation toward the cost of the additional bench. Once this is done to contact the Clerk who will arrange for a suitable base to be installed in a suitable location near the play area.

- **Conservation area**

No issues were raised

26110

IT Policy

It was agreed to adopt the Policy as required under the new legislation.

26111

Neighbourhood Plan Review

The Consultant is looking at the NP but progress is not expected until BDC declare the number of additional properties required in each parish.

26112

Questions to the Chair

No questions were asked of the Chair

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Time date and place of next meeting Monday **30th March 2026** to be held in Assington Village Hall at 7.00pm.

The meeting was closed at 21.25 pm

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Appendix

County and District Council reports

[News » Babergh Mid Suffolk](#), [Council news - Suffolk County Council](#)

A Report for Assington Parish Council Meeting on 26th January 2026

From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley

Tel: 01206 262993 (change) Mobile 07545 423796 Email: james.finch@suffolk.gov.uk

➤ **Suffolk secures more than £26 million bus funding over three years – 2026-2029**

Millions of pounds of investment is to take place in Suffolk's bus network over three years following allocation of Government funding. Services, ticketing, and infrastructure will all benefit under the package worth nearly £27 million between 2026 and 2029.

Suffolk County Council will receive a total of £26,813,760 under the Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG). This funding will enable the continuation and expansion of new and improved services introduced over the past two years through LABG support and its predecessor, the Bus Services Improvement Grant (BSIP), many of which were shaped by community feedback.

The funding is split into two areas. – Revenue and Capital. Revenue investment will focus on:

- Maintaining and growing enhanced services based on local suggestions.
- Increasing publicity and travel information to help residents make informed choices.

Capital funding will deliver:

- Renewal and expansion of Real Time Passenger Information across Suffolk.
- Improved ticketing options and accessibility in partnership with bus operators.
- Investigations into bus priority measures to reduce journey times and encourage modal shift.
- Upgraded bus stops with new shelters, better footway links, and accessibility enhancements—many suggested by local communities.

➤ **Project Celebrating Disability in Suffolk gets £139k grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund**

The project has been made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we will honour the resilience and contributions of people with disabilities, while also helping wider communities better understand the barriers they face today.

Beyond Labels will collect and preserve personal stories, alongside the histories of organisations, schools, and charities that support disabled people to create a record that celebrates disability while sparking conversations about inclusion, accessibility, and equality.

This exciting initiative begins with the recruitment of a dedicated project officer and volunteers, the launch of a community forum, and a programme of activities designed to capture and share lived experiences.

As part of the project, Suffolk Archives, a Suffolk County Council service, will work with local schools and community groups, offering free workshops that teach skills in recording,

➤ **Firefighter applications surge as Suffolk boosts female representation**

Applications to join Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have surged by 32% compared to last year, highlighting a growing interest in a career that makes a real difference to local communities. This year's recruitment drive also saw a significant increase in female representation among successful candidates, with women making up 17.2% of the recruitment pool compared to 11.7% last year, which represents a 38% rise. Recruitment outcomes at a glance:

- Applications up 32% from 2024 (389 vs 280).
- Female representation in the recruitment pool has increased from 11.7% to 17.2% – a 38% rise.
- 345 candidates progressed to the first stage of assessment.
- 203 advanced to the second stage and were assessed against the National Fire Chiefs Council Leadership Framework and the Code of Ethics - 116 passed.
- 88 were members of the public; 28 were existing on call firefighters.
- Following firefighter-specific aptitude and fitness tests, 100 candidates were then interviewed at SFRS Headquarters at Endeavour House, Ipswich.

➤ **Council fears Sunnica is to become a 'Trojan horse' for new large infrastructure projects**

Sunnica Ltd is a joint venture between Tribus Clean Energy and PS Renewables. They are hoping to extend the provision in their agreed planning permission, to secure 'future value-adding flexibility', as stated in their letter to government:

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“To provide the Scheme with sufficient future value-adding flexibility in relation to adjacent land that may be subject to planning applications in conjunction with the Scheme.”

These changes would enable them to integrate future proposed developments that come forward, by allowing local planning applications to overlap with the entire boundaries of the Sunnica scheme.

It means that new, vast projects such as data centres **could cover many hectares of land**, on top of that covered by the already-agreed solar panels, battery storage and associated infrastructure.

A consultation on these proposed changes will begin in due course. However, while the proposal sets out a limited number of consultees, it is very important to recognise that any relevant party will be able to respond. ,

Since this article was published, Sunnica Ltd has announced that it does not intend to proceed with the change concerning the 'future value-adding flexibility'. The consultation will solely focus on the amended Order Limits surrounding Burwell substation.

➤ **Seasoned political journalist, Paul Geater, backs One Suffolk**

A political journalist with over 40 years' experience scrutinising and reporting on councils in Suffolk has backed the plan to scrap the county's six councils and replace them with one authority delivering all local and county wide services. Suffolk-born Paul Geater, who currently presents a current affairs radio talk show on Suffolk Sound but previously spent decades as a political correspondent for the East Anglian Daily Times and Ipswich Star, said:

“I started off by thinking the three councils option was probably going to be the best [but], the more I have heard, the more I have looked into this, the more convinced I have been that the One Suffolk option is the only real sensible choice for the government. “I am highly sceptical about the financial claims both sides have made about this. [But] I am much more sceptical about the claims from the three councils, I just don't see how their proposals can achieve the kind of savings the government is talking about.

“It comes down to a few things. First of all, Suffolk has an identity and has had an identity for more than a millennium. I don't think I come from Ipswich and South Suffolk, Suffolk has its own identity. I was born and brought up in the East of Suffolk... I lived for a time and worked for a time in Bury St Edmunds in West Suffolk. It is all Suffolk to me and I think that identity is very important.

“When you look at how the proposed splitting is being done, frankly the three Suffolk people seem to be using a kind of geographical gymnastics to try to equalise figures in all kinds of places and it really does develop something of a dog's breakfast of a map. Stowmarket has absolutely nothing to do with Lowestoft, it looks to either Ipswich or Bury St Edmunds and yet the idea is that local government should be run for Stowmarket from Lowestoft. It doesn't make any sense. It just looks to be as if you're building in duplication. *“I have filled in my consultation form and said that as a reporter who spent 40 years covering local government in this county that my feeling is the only solution for Suffolk is to have one council for the county.”*

➤ **Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions for the Stour Valley**

Fostering is a flexible role with options for short term care from a weekend a month to longer term opportunities, all providing life-changing support for local children. If you want to find out more about what it's like to foster or adopt with us, please call a member of the team on 01473 264800

➤ **My Priorities**

Education - Supporting Vulnerable People - Jobs and Growth - Localism and the Stour Valley - Building on Suffolk's Strength all underpinned by strong financial management and fair council tax.

District Councillor Report –Lee Parker Babergh District Council For Parish Newsletters – January 2026

Welcome to my January newsletter. I predict a very busy next couple of years as plans to move our current governance model from two tier to a single unitary authority take shape. For those that might be confused as to the intention and timeline of the changes, I will be posting regularly via Parish newsletters as well as the Ward Parish Facebook and Whatsapp groups. You can also follow me on my Facebook group, Lee Parker – District Councillor

Whilst there are some 'big ticket' items for Babergh to contend with, the day-to-day work of the Council continues. Our Planning, Housing & Licensing teams continue to function to deliver those services and ensure continuity.

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Local Government Reorganisation

(LGR)Work continues on the Government’s plans to replace Suffolk’s current two-tier system, (County and District Councils), with new single or unitary councils. Babergh, along with neighbouring districts, has supported the “Three Councils for Suffolk” option — a proposal that aims to create councils that are both efficient and genuinely local.

The joint business case has now been submitted to Government. If approved, we could see:

- Shadow authority elections in May 2027, and
- Full implementation from April 2028.

Throughout the process, Babergh has emphasised transparency and community involvement. I will continue to share updates as the timetable becomes clearer.

Better Recycling – Changes Coming in 2026

This year will see significant changes to household waste collections under the new “Better Recycling” scheme.

Key changes include:

- Weekly food waste collection for all households.
- Expanded recycling: paper, card, plastics, metals, glass, and cartons.
- Three-weekly collections for general refuse and recycling (food waste remains weekly).
- More materials will be accepted overall, helping reduce waste and cut carbon emissions.

Residents will receive an information leaflet between January and March explaining how the changes affect each household.

Babergh District Council – News in January

Car Parking Charges – What’s Changed and Why

Babergh District Council has confirmed that car parking charges in council-run car parks now apply where they were previously subsidised (free) and that increases to tariffs are part of the latest review. These changes follow a review of parking that started in 2024, and the revised charges have been in place since earlier this year in places such as Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham. The changes were made because Babergh Cabinet contend that Council can no longer afford to subsidise free parking and needs to generate additional income to help protect essential local services. Blue Badge holders continue to park for free for up to three hours. Sundays and bank holidays remain free to park.

Support for Ipswich’s City of Culture 2029 Bid

Babergh District Council has unanimously backed Ipswich’s bid to become UK City of Culture in 2029, recognising the significant cultural and economic benefits this could bring to the wider area.

Local Government Reorganisation Consultation

Earlier this month, residents were reminded to take part in the Government’s statutory consultation on future council structures. Thank you to everyone who shared their views.

Looking Ahead

I will continue to keep parish councils and residents informed on:

- Progress with Local Government Reorganisation,
- The rollout of the Better Recycling scheme, and
- Further district-wide initiatives throughout 2026.

As ever, if any parish or community group would like a more detailed briefing or has questions about any of the above, please feel free to contact me.

01787374857

Lee.parker@babergh.gov.uk

Facebook: Lee Parker – District Councillor

Actions

Minute	Action	Who	Complete
	Planning c2omments to BDC	Clerk/AH	✓

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Date

	Pay suppliers	Clerk/Cllrs	✓
	Review planning applications prior to meetings	AH	✓
25622	Neighbourhood Plan update, approach Consultant for costs etc	AH	✓
25710	Neighbourhood Plan - apportion £10,000 of CIL money toward the cost of a review.	Clerk	✓
25904	Enquire about ANPR scheme and forward to Cllrs for consideration	Clerk	✓
25904	Place survey forms into the bus stop, compile responses and send to Cllr Finch	AH/Clerk	✓
25909	Obtain quotations for cutting footpaths and verges	Clerk	✓
25912	Contact Mortimer Contracts for updated estimate for section of path from Orchard Road to the Village hall	Clerk	✓
251106	Provide parish photos for the website Thank you Cllr Stacey – If anyone else has photos please forward them on to the Clerk	all	
251106	Follow up request for ANPR Decided to put into dormancy until the NP consultation as it needs to have parish support	Clerk	✓
251109	Send photos of fallen signage at Rose Green and Dorking Tye to local contractor Cllr Thorogood to pick up	ST	
25113	Book village hall for meetings throughout 2026	Clerk	✓
25113	Email prospective councillor joining information for the PC	Clerk	✓
26100	Clerk to liaise with both Cllrs Armitage and Howard regarding training and induction to Parish Council	Clerk	
26104	Traffic/reckless driving going past the pub, James Police should do it, reported category 1 danger to life, SCC are not legally able to progress, go back to Police. David to send James to revert to Police. again in village has it gone anywhere – no James will chase	JF	
26104	Consider parishioner responses re bus service	JF	
26104	Resend the email with parishioner survey responses for improved bus services	AH	
26105	Liaise with Cllrs re potential roadway at recycling plant	LP	
26106	Contact contractor re the footpath in The Street and liaise with Cllrs Hill & Thorogood to draft a re response to parishioner	Clerk	
26108e	Review reserves at the next meeting	All	
26108d	Contact contractors re Grass Cutting and notify that contract has been awarded, and minor change to number of cuts to the contract for successful applicant	Clerk	
26108f	Send Precept Demand to BDC	Clerk	
26109	Contact parishioner with bank details to enable donation toward bench to be made.	Clerk	

8 Finance Report

Assington Parish Council	£ 103,089.75
20485977 - Current T1	£ 428.62 Available: £ 428.62
20485980 - Instant Access	£ 102,661.13 Available: £ 102,661.13

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Date

Budget 2026 - 27						
	2024 - 25		2025 - 26			2026 - 27
	Budget	To year end	Budget	YTD	Forecast to year end	Budget 2026-27
Income						
Balance Brought Forward from year end accounts	TBC	£88,874.16		£0.00		
Grants P3 grass cutting	400.00	385.68	400.00	386.52	386.52	400.00
Grants other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bank Interest	2,000.00	2,427.01	2,000.00	1,681.52	2,000.00	2,000.00
Other = Donations, rebanked cheques Jubilee and Allo	360.00	360.00	360.00	360.00	360.00	0.00
CIL	0.00	1,599.50	0.00	9,561.10	9,561.10	0.00
Precept	10,000.00	10,000.00	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00
VAT Repayment	0.00	1,154.19	0.00	0	800.00	0.00
Total Income	12,760.00	£15,926.38	£12,360.00	£21,589.14	£22,707.62	£12,000.00
Expenditure	Figures exclude VAT where paid as it is reclaimed, and is shown as VAT paid					
Staff Costs, salaries, HMRC	5,000.00	3,612.90	5,000.00	3,783.19	5,500.00	6,000.00
Admin	300.00	300.19	300.00	416.31	500.00	500.00
Subscriptions	294.00	282.69	294.00	284.30	284.30	294.00
Donations	1,100.00	1,100.00	1,100.00	0.00	1,100.00	1,200.00
Street Lighting	900.00	0.00	900.00	574.30	800.00	900.00
CIL	300.00	7,765.75	30,000.00	1,195.20	6,000.00	
Insurance	460.00	264.00	300.00	264.00	264.00	300.00
Audit	1,200.00	170.00	460.00	170.00	1,050.00	1,200.00
Footpaths, hedges, allotment	300.00		1,200.00	1,650.00		1,200.00
Contingency	1,400.00	0.00	500.00	0.00	828.00	500.00
Maintenance	200.00		1,400.00	365.90		1,000.00
Water and associated costs Allotments / Conservation	65.00	0.00	200.00	167.33	0.00	200.00
Neighbourhood Plan		0.00	0.00		65.00	0.00
Bank charges		71.40	65.00	54.00	84.00	84.00
VAT Paid		£1,076.43	0.00	527.04	0.00	0.00
Total Expenditure	£9,595.00	£14,643.36	£41,719.00	£9,451.57	£16,475.30	£13,378.00
Totals BF+ Income - Expenditure		-£13,489.17	£83,438.00	£12,137.57	5,000.00	25,000.00
Unity Trust Current Account	31 March 2025	£4,922.97	20-Jan-26	£428.62		
Unity Trust Deposit Account	31 March 2025	£85,732.05	20-Jan-26	£102,661.13		
			Total held in bank	£103,089.75		

Ringfenced Reserves (Comprising £1,500 each for) Asset Replacement, Allotment/conservation, Election costs	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,500.00
CIL	64,446.57	73,347.88	73,347.88	76,236.44	59,054.00
General Reserves	12,952.00	15,448.06	15,448.06	10,950.00	34,535.75
Total	81,898.57	93,295.94	93,295.94	91,686.44	98,089.75

CIL Budget		
	2024 / 25	2025 / 26
	YTD	YTD
Total received in year	£9,561.10	9,561.10
Total retained CIL (previous year retained plus new receipts)	£65,514.26	65514.26

Earmarked CIL donation toward Church Tower Project	20,000
Earmarked CIL toward Neighbourhood Plan	10,000

Payments to be made

£730.78 Clerk Salary

£49.49 WAVE (Anglian Water)

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£6,750 Mortimer Contracts for the footpath This payment is not approved pending job completion
£66.00 Community Action Suffolk
£30 Cllr Expenses
£171.54 Community Heartbeat Trust replacement pads for the VH defibrillator
Donations £550 to Assington Association and £600 toward Churchyard maintenance both items to be placed on the January agenda each year. Proposed by Cllr Hill seconded by Cllr Howard
Payments paid since the last meeting
£12.00 bank charges

Income Received since previous meeting
£386.52 remittance from SCC for cutting footpaths
£561.59 Interest on Deposit account

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Date