

DRAFT Barnham Parish Council

Chair: Cllr John Bauer Vice Chair: Cllr Martin Belsham

Minutes of a Meeting of Barnham Parish Council held on Tuesday 14th July 2026, commencing at 7.00pm Venue: Barnham Village Hall, Mill Lane, Barnham IP24 2NG

Present: Cllr Bauer (Chair), Cllr Belsham (Vice Chair), Cllr Beck, Cllr Watson, Cllr Webb, Cllr Wyer, Suffolk County Cllr Harry Richardson, West Suffolk District Cllr Andrew Smith. Pauline Smith (Clerk/RFO). Members of the public: 9

1. To receive apologies for absence and consider approval of absence

Apologies for absence were received from and approved for Cllr Hawthorne.

2. To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and non-registrable interests as detailed in Appendix B of the LGA Model Code of Conduct. To consider requests, not already received and determined, for dispensations relating to matters on the agenda: None received.

3. To approve minutes of the meeting held on

- Tuesday 12th May 2026
- Tuesday 30th June 2026 (Finance)

The Minutes for both meetings were taken as read and unanimously approved.

Proposed: Cllr Belsham. Seconded Cllr Webb. Signed by the Chair

4. Public Forum

To receive comments or questions from members of the public relating to matters on this agenda. Other matters may be raised at the discretion of the Chair.

RAF Barnham: Questions were raised about vehicles accessing the site, work being carried out without planning permission and sewerage provisions.

A: The MOD is able to carry out general maintenance on the site and also certain other works that do not require planning permission. The intention appears to be that they will carry out any works that can be done without permission in order that – should planning permission be approved – they can move quickly to complete the necessary works.

There is a sewerage pumping station that serves the camp on the opposite side of the A134 – however, whether this would have sufficient capacity is one of many questions that we cannot currently answer.

5. To receive reports

5.1 West Suffolk Councillor, Andrew Smith

The previous local plan, approved July 2025, covered the period 2024 – 2041. West Suffolk Council is now required to commence work on the new Local Plan to 2045. The requirements of this are for an additional 5,000 homes across Suffolk, in addition to the 8,000 required within the previous Local Plan.

5.2 Suffolk County Councillor Harry Richardson – Report previously circulated/attached.

Cllr Richardson explained Suffolk County Council is extremely supportive of Barnham School, particularly during this period of time when parents are expressing concerns about the potential proximity of RAF Barnham Camp. The Leader, Cllr Hadwen and

other Councillors have visited the school and met with the Head Teacher. Similarly, Cllr Richardson, Cllr Bauer and Cllr Smith and be visiting the school on 17th July.

Cllr Richardson has visited Barnham and other villages within his division with the SCC Community Engineer. The parish council has raised requests that the following be reviewed: White lining at junctions of Blacksmith Lane/The Street and Church Lane/Water Lane; St Martin's Lane – severely deteriorating footpath.

Cllr Richardson provided information about the emergency road closure between Stanton/Ixworth (A143), and the severe impact on local villages.

5.3 Euston Estate Director, Robert Childerhouse, provided an overview of the Barnham site proposals submitted to West Suffolk Council's Emerging Local Plan 2045 during the Call for Sites period.

Site at The Street/St Martin's Meadow. New access proposed from The Street as well as using the existing site entrance at St Martin's Meadow.

- Up to 24 residential dwellings including social housing
- New public house with 40 car parking spaces

Site north of The Street/Euston Road

- Up to 9 residential dwellings

Site south of The Street/Euston Road

- 2 residential dwellings

Site on the Bury Road

- 'Green' Petrol and EV Charging Station
- Truck/Lorry stop
- Café & Farm Shop
- Pedestrian link from Barnham Village Hall/School to the new facility will enable residents to walk to the shop/garage. *For more information see attachment.*

Considerations such as highways, Ecology and Heritage impacts have already been assessed, and professionally prepared reports were included as part of the submission. The Estate considers that these plans will be beneficial to the village.

This is the first stage in the lengthy Local Plan process. Submission does not guarantee acceptance of the sites by West Suffolk Council. Sites that are accepted/considered valid will be made available for public consultation during 2027.

In response to questions from a resident, it was explained that the 'call for sites' period closed 20th May 2026. This was prior to the announcement by the Home Office that MoD Barnham is being considered as accommodation for asylum seekers.

There is no suggestion that the announcement by the Home Office will impact on the Estate's decision to submit these proposals.

The Chair thanked Mr Childerhouse for his contributions. Copy of Estate proposals attached. *Since this meeting, Barnham Parish Council has been deeply saddened to learn of the death of Robert Childerhouse. The Council extends sincere condolences to his family, friends and colleagues at this very difficult time.*

6. **MOD Barnham:** Proposal by the Home Office to accommodate up to 1,250 single male asylum seekers, aged 18 yrs – 65 yrs at the site known locally as RAF Barnham Camp.

6.1 **Proposal to formally ratify the Parish Council's stance that:**

Barnham Parish Council Objects to this proposal on the basis that the site is wholly inappropriate for this purpose, as detailed within the attached document as presented to the meeting of West Suffolk Council on 1st July 2026.

Proposed: Cllr Beck Seconded Cllr Watson

Resolution: Unanimously Agreed

- 6.2 To provide details of the actions taken by the Parish Council to date, and in association with West Suffolk Council, report of progress to date and future plans, including arrangements for community engagement drop-in sessions

The Chair provided an overview of the extensive activity of the Parish Council, in association with West Suffolk Council, from the moment the first “details” began to emerge during 25th June. Frustratingly, this occurred following receiving advice only a few days previously, when following up on rumours via West Suffolk Council, that no such plans were in-hand. (see attached).

Cllr Smith provided an overview of West Suffolk Council activity since receiving multiple phone calls from members of the press on 25th June:

- **29th June:** Full Council Meeting called by Cllr Cliff Waterman, Leader of West Suffolk Council
- **1st July:** Extra ordinary meeting of West Suffolk Council - Cllr Waterman proposed a motion, seconded by Cllr Andrew Smith, local member for Barnham calling for the council to agree RAF Barnham is not the right place to home asylum seekers. Councillors backed the motion unanimously which gives the council a stronger voice in any talks with the Home Office and better able to pass on the concerns of local communities. Chairman of Barnham Parish Council, spoke at the meeting expressing community and parish council concerns. *See attached.*

Following that meeting Cllr Waterman wrote to the Minister, Alex Norris MP, to inform him of the Council's decision and outlining the reasons why the Council believes Barnham is not the right place.

- West Suffolk Council Officers visited Wethersfield: Guidance obtained regarding holding in 'drop-in' sessions in preference to single large public meeting.
- **13th July:** Proposals to house asylum seekers at the RAF Barnham Camp should be prevented under national Habitat Regulations: Letter from Cllr Cliff Waterman, Leader of West Suffolk Council to Alex Norris MP, Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, explaining how the council believes the legally binding ecological constraints will rule out the development at Barnham Camp. The letter also points out that the Habitat Regulations would need to be met no matter what planning powers were being used, including by the Government.

The focus of the parish council's objections relates to the 'place' – i.e. the unsuitability of the site.

A newsletter produced in association with West Suffolk Council, to keep residents updated, has been delivered to all households. This is the first of a series of newsletters that will be produced as the situation progresses. The parish council is extremely grateful to the Link Distributors who kindly and swiftly agreed to deliver this. The newsletter provides details of the 4 drop-in sessions in the Village Hall. These have been arranged on varying dates and times to provide the opportunity for as many people to attend as possible, to provide views and concerns and ask questions. The first session is on Thursday 16th July 9.15 am – 11am. It is hoped that this session will be enable parents who have dropped off children at school to come along. The Mayor of Thetford and the Thetford Town Council Clerk will be attending this session.

The parish council appreciates the support of West Suffolk Council who are providing professional security and audio equipment for the drop-in sessions and funding the printing costs of the newsletters.

On Friday 10 July 2026, five Barnham Parish Councillors, the Clerk, and West Suffolk District Councillor Andrew Smith met with our MP, Peter Prinsley, to discuss the Government's proposals to accommodate up to 1,250 single male asylum seekers at MOD Barnham (RAF Barnham Camp).

During the meeting, councillors explained Barnham Parish Council's decision to object to the proposal, expressing many of the serious concerns raised and the reasons why they believe the site is unsuitable for its proposed use.

The meeting was constructive and positive. Dr Prinsley expressed the view that the site is not a suitable location for accommodating asylum seekers. The Parish Council was very encouraged by the discussion and hopes to continue working constructively with Dr Prinsley as the matter progresses.

Barnham Parish Council has invited Dr Prinsley to attend one of the drop-in sessions. Unfortunately, he cannot commit at this time.

The Parish Council has also contacted Thetford's MP Terry Jermy. Due to parliamentary protocol, Terry Jermy, is unable to attend meetings of Barnham Parish Council, because Barnham is not in his constituency. However, the parish council is keen to keep lines of communication open and Cllr Bauer's contact details have been provided to him.

7. Barnham Village Hall: Wifi

To receive information from the Treasurer of Barnham Village Hall to enable a discussion and decision regarding available support from Barnham Parish Council to assist with this project.

The Treasurer provided estimated costings and details for the proposed internet/Wi Fi provision. See attached. The cost of the monthly internet connection is expected to be c.£30 ex vat (via Zen Business).

As well as the benefits that this would bring to hirers of the hall, it could provide an opportunity to upgrade the heating system (currently run on a coin operated system), utilising a 'nest' system or similar. It will also provide an opportunity for a CCTV system installation with remote access.

For the parish council, whilst additional equipment would be required, this would provide the opportunity for hybrid meetings – enabling residents to attend remotely, increasing community engagement and democracy.

When parliamentary time allows, the Government will be passing the relevant legislation to enable parish councils to formally hold meetings online. *Full details of what will be permissible has not yet been confirmed.*

In principle the parish council is willing to assist but is awaiting more precise details. Cllr Smith suggested that there may be an opportunity that West Suffolk Council will assist or potentially he could use part of his locality budget.

Resolution: Awaiting further details prior to finalising commitment.

8. Financial report and invoices for approval

8.1 Bank details and balances were circulated (see attached).

8.2 To Approve payment of Clerk/RFO Salary

(Figures are inclusive of PAYE - work from home allowance is identified separately)

May 2026 £234.00 plus work from home allowance £26.00 Total £260.00

June 2026 £234.00 plus work from home allowance £26.00. Total £260.00

Proposed Cllr Webb Seconded Cllr Beck

Resolution: Payments unanimously approved

9. Clerk's Report: Grass cutting Contract

There have been further operational changes at Vertas. Clerk is monitoring.

Cllr Watson highlighted the untidy verge adjacent the church which is not currently part of the parish council's grass cutting contract, similarly from the corner of the village hall car park towards the school, also not part of the contract: previously when Vertas had the contract with the school they would continue along the verge when they were cutting the corner at the school gate.

Review: Clerk

10. Suffolk County Council Community Self Help Scheme:

It was noted with appreciation that Cllr Webb has successfully passed the requisite examination to enable Barnham Parish Council to carry out work under the auspices of this scheme.

11. Reports from Barnham Parish Councillors relating to their areas of responsibility

11.1 Cllr Watson – Playpark: Cllr Watson has provided a suggestion of a play panel which could potentially be attached to the multi-use slide/climbing frame.

Action: Clerk to research

11.2 Playpark – weeds growing through safety surface: These will be sprayed (Cllr Hawthorne)

11.3 Cllr Webb has cleared the area around the village gateway. Tree in front of gateway entering the village from Euston needs cutting back as it obscures the sign.

Action: Clerk

11.4 Cllr Bauer: Speed Indicator Sign. Concern was raised at a vehicle recorded at a speed of 78mph on 21st June at 10.20pm(am?).

10% of motorists are persistently driving at speeds exceeding 35mph.

Review of data to be carried out to establish patterns of speeds/times and then to request police presence.

Question: Would there be any benefit in obtaining a second unit as the perception is that vehicles entering the village from the traffic lights are travelling faster than those in the opposite direction?

11.5 Cllr Belsham- Police liaison: Cllr Belsham has emergency contact numbers for the police and PCSO should they be required during the drop in sessions. Whilst the police will attend the drop in session/s if available this is subject to operational requirements. Questions can be forwarded by Cllr Belsham if required.

11.6 Cllr Belsham - School liaison: Since the announcement re RAF Barnham, Barnham School has found itself central to a lot of publicity, particularly in relation to security. The school always takes security extremely seriously. If considered necessary, a professional assessment will be undertaken, and any requisite action will be taken.

11.7 Cllr Beck - Community Engagement: Aim to participate in a Christmas event. It was highlighted that councillors are currently involved in a very significant level of community engagement re the RAF Barnham proposal.

12. Highways Matters: for consideration: Dealt with within Cllr Richardson's report.

13. Planning

To consider the parish council's response to planning application consultation documents received from West Suffolk Council, the planning authority.

Resolution: The Parish Council unanimously resolved that it has no comments to make in relation to the following applications:

13.1 DC/26/0991/TCA Trees in a conservation area notification - one Ash (T1 on plan) fell. Hill View Euston Road Barnham Suffolk IP24 2NJ

13.2 DC/26/0847/TCA Trees in a conservation area notification - two beech (marked T1 and T2 on plan) overall crown reduction by two metres, one beech (marked T3 on plan) overall crown reduction by 2.5 metres and four lawson cypress (marked G1 on plan) overall crown reduction by three metres. Ridge House Euston Road Barnham Suffolk IP24 2NJ.

13.3 DC/26/0814/HH Householder planning application - a. widening of existing access including partial demolition and re-build of flint and brick wall b. installation of entrance gates. Cargill House The Street Barnham Suffolk IP24 2NF

14. Planning Other:

14.1 Planning Application Decisions since May meeting

DC/26/0625/HH Householder planning application - single storey extension to side of dwelling. Jubilee Cottage Euston Road Barnham Suffolk IP24 2NJ
Decision: Approved 23rd June 2026

DC/26/0740/HH Householder planning application - a. loft conversion with flat roof dormer to rear and two pitch roof dormers to front b. front porch Half Acre Water Lane Barnham Suffolk IP24 2NA. Decision: Approved 9th July 2026

14.2 Enforcement Matters: Meeting with the West Suffolk Council Principal Enforcement Officer, Andy Smith and members of the parish council held via Teams on 30th June 2026. Whilst willing to respond to questions and understanding of the frustrations expressed about the planning system, there was no new information available.

- 14.3 Local Plan Scoping Consultation** – ends 28th July 2026.
Purpose: The council asked residents and groups for early views on what the new plan should contain and how to communicate in the future.
Key Topics: The consultation covered housing growth, protecting the natural environment, supporting jobs, tackling climate change, and building healthy communities.
Details previously circulated
- 15. Diary Dates:** Community Engagement re RAF Barnham, Drop-in Sessions:
16th July 9.15am – 11am; 18th July 10am – 1pm: 28th July 7pm – 9pm
- 16. Questions to the chair/items for inclusion on next agenda:** None
- 17. To confirm date of next meeting**
Tuesday 8th September 2026

Minutes signed as an accurate record by: Cllr John Bauer, Chair

Date: 8th September 2026