



Cookley and Walpole Parish Council



A meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting was held at 7:00pm at the Pavilion, Walpole on 26th May 2026

Minutes:

Present: Cllr R Chase (Chair), Cllr C Leggett, Cllr Z Mair, Cllr M Porter, Cllr L Andrews, Cllr J Lewis, Cllr B Travers, Cllr A Thomas and Cllr J Winter.

Also in attendance: Tina Newby (Clerk).

- 1) Apologies: Received for Cllr J Henson.
- 2) To approve the Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting: These were approved in June 2025
- 3) An Annual Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council: *See Appendix 1*
- 4) A report from the District Councillor J. Ewart: *See Appendix 2*
- 5) A Report from the County Councillor: Not received
- 6) Reports from Local Groups & Organisations:
- 7) A Summary of the Parish Council Accounts to March 31st 2026: *See appendix 3*
- 8) Local Issues: Dr Harvey has sampled 25 locations and there was one last month not at a dangerous level!

Meeting closed at 7:16pm

26th May 2026.

The George Calver Charity Report
Cookley & Walpole Parish Council AGM

Over the past year, the Trustees of the George Calver Charity have met 4 times and agreed to grant money to the following applications.

£1500 to a lady who wanted to further her education in the hope of getting a better job to support her two small children.

£200 towards school uniform.

The Charity has also awarded money to several families at local schools, to help towards an end of year residential trip.

There were several other applications over the year but, after discussion, the Trustees did not feel they fitted the Charity criteria.

The GCC now has a basic website and we hope that this will encourage people to apply for funding.

With many thanks

Lucy Winter

Annual Report

Parishes of Kelsale and Yoxford Ward 2025/26

Julia Ewart – East Suffolk District Councillor

For those I have not yet met, I am Julia Ewart, your East Suffolk District Councillor, and along with my family I am a resident of Kelsale. It continues to be both a privilege and a responsibility to represent the Kelsale & Yoxford Ward as part of East Suffolk Council.

As I look back over the last year, I am struck by the depth of challenge our communities have faced — but equally by the strength, patience and kindness they have shown in response. It has been a complicated and, at times, exhausting year. Local Government Reorganisation, relentless infrastructure consultations and ongoing disruption have often made progress feel slow and frustrating. And yet, time and again, our villages have shown resilience, humour and a deep commitment to one another.

This report is intended as a clear, honest and detailed reflection on the year behind us, and on the opportunities and risks ahead. Where I touch on the political or structural landscape, it is simply to ensure residents are informed about how local government is changing and what that may mean on the ground.

Local Government Reorganisation and Boundaries

The current proposal is for Suffolk to move towards three new unitary authorities, projected to save £34 million annually, with around £20 million reinvested into frontline services. This process has dominated much of the past year's discussion and decision-making.

Under current plans, East Suffolk will join with Mid Suffolk, while statutory responsibilities such as education and adult social care are retained within the wider system. Boundary changes taking effect in May will place Yoxford into the Blyth Estuary Division, while Kelsale will move into the Saxmundham & District Division, stretching south to Orford.

In my view, these changes broadly reflect two natural "orbits": Orford aligning with Woodbridge, and Kelsale looking towards Saxmundham. However, transitions like this can be unsettling, and my priority throughout remains continuity of representation and making sure local voices are not diluted or overlooked.

Community Spirit and the Strength of Our Villages

Across the ward, community spirit remains one of our greatest assets. Our villages continue to demonstrate generosity and connection through fetes, dog shows, charity events, coffee mornings and informal acts of neighbourliness that rarely make headlines but make all the difference locally.

I want to make particular mention of the **wonderful village spirit shared among the communities that use the Huntingfield Hub**. The way villages come together through the Hub — sharing resources, space, ideas and support — is an excellent example of how rural communities can collaborate rather than compete. That sense of shared ownership and practicality is something we should celebrate and protect.

East Suffolk's **HERE For You** programme again visited towns across the district, including Saxmundham, Lowestoft, Kesgrave, Beccles, Felixstowe and Southwold, creating important opportunities for residents to raise issues directly with councillors and officers. Alongside this, the **Village Hall and Community Buildings Fund** has continued to offer grants of up to £15,000 for essential repairs and upgrades, helping keep village buildings viable.

Village Halls, Youth Services and Community Capacity

Village halls remain the backbone of rural life. In **Kelsale**, the Village Hall continues to be a priority. As the heart of village activity, its modernisation is essential if it is to remain sustainable and fit for future generations. I continue to support the trustees and volunteers who give so generously of their time and energy.

East Suffolk has also announced the **£1.5 million Thriving Places Fund**, launching in April 2026, aimed at helping smaller towns and villages safeguard community buildings, revitalise public spaces and build long-term resilience.

I am also pleased to see progress at **Peasenhall Assembly Hall**, where a long-planned modernisation and accessibility programme is now coming to fruition — a testament to patient leadership and volunteer commitment.

In **Yoxford**, as the village hall develops and evolves, there is a real opportunity not just to improve the building itself, but to think more ambitiously about the services it can host. Our **Community Partnership Officer, Sam Kenward**, will play a key role in supporting discussions about how we can **scale up opportunities for young people** who live in rural villages.

Many rural children and teenagers simply outgrow the limited play provision that suited them when they were very young — quite literally “the swing they sat on when they were three”. As they get older, they need stimulation, connection, creativity and safe places to gather. Supporting youth services in rural villages is challenging, but with the right conversations, partnerships and documented plans, it is absolutely achievable.

On a planning note – I just wish to acknowledge the endeavours of the Peasenhall Parish Chair, who has been locked into sorting out a dilemma in the parish involving a planned children's play ground and a proposed site with East Suffolk Council's planning department. Such dedication in supporting a Parish has to be truly admired.

Infrastructure, NSIPs and Community Impact

The past year has been dominated by major infrastructure projects — **Sizewell C, Sea Link, LionLink and associated works** — bringing diversions, A12 delays and increased traffic through Yoxford, Kelsale, Peasenhall and surrounding villages.

During the Sea Link examination, I raised repeated concerns about poor coordination between developers and the sheer volume of overlapping consultations. The cumulative effect of this disruption is now placing real strain on residents, and the mental health impact should not be underestimated. I raised this directly at a recent Suffolk County Council meeting.

I sit on the **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) Working Group**, which covers all major schemes, and I insist on open, honest discussion of their impacts. These are no longer abstract proposals — they now have tangible, daily consequences for residents.

The **Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC)** now has funding for an NSIP coordinator to support parish clerks. I have argued strongly that clerks should be present at key meetings, as they are often tasked with responding formally yet may not have access to the full context of discussions.

Highways, the A1120 and Partnership Working

Highways issues remain the single most frequent concern raised with me. Responsibility sits with Suffolk County Council, not East Suffolk, and this separation continues to cause frustration, delay and confusion.

One route that has caused particular concern is the **A1120 through Peasenhall and Sibton**. Increased traffic volumes, HGV movements, pinch points, noise, safety issues and the cumulative effect of national infrastructure traffic have all placed sustained pressure on these villages. Solutions are rarely simple, and progress can feel painfully slow, but persistent, joined-up working does matter.

In this context, my **close working relationship with Councillor Burroughes has been invaluable**. Having a constructive, open and determined partnership across tiers of government has helped ensure concerns are not dismissed and that the lived reality of these villages is consistently represented. While challenges remain, collaboration of this kind is essential if we are to make headway on routes like the A1120.

Planning, Cockfield Hall and Independence

Planning continues to be one of the most difficult and sensitive areas of work. Slow responses and inconsistency remain an issue, and I have repeatedly pushed the planning department for clearer communication and decisions that genuinely reflect risk and evidence.

To be absolutely clear: I am not against development. I am for the right development, in the right place, with proper scrutiny and meaningful consideration of impact. That is why I have been so emphatic about proposals such as those at **Cockfield Hall**.

The site sits within a recognised **flood plain** — something that **Storm Babet brought sharply into focus**, with water saturation and pressure on local drainage systems plainly visible. Against that reality, proposals to excavate historic grounds to create two recreational lakes, involving the movement of vast quantities of clay and the use of millions of gallons of water, raise serious questions about flood risk, resilience and environmental responsibility.

I have pressed the planning department hard on the detail of such applications because detail matters. Over time, it became clear that my insistence on greater scrutiny and better outcomes for residents was not always being fully heard. That experience directly led to my decision to leave my political party and continue as an **Independent Councillor**, so that I can speak plainly, firmly and without constraint. My responsibility is, and will always be, to residents. The price I paid, was to be then removed from the Planning Committee.

Local Plans, Village Dreams and the Importance of Being Documented

I am very mindful that many villages hold long-standing dreams — for housing that meets local need, for community buildings, for improved facilities, for better spaces for older people or young families.

As East Suffolk Council moves towards a **new Local Plan**, it is absolutely crucial that these aspirations are captured formally in documents. **Recorded plans attract funding**. Unplanned or undocumented work — no matter how worthy — is simply much harder to bring into train, particularly in an environment of scarce resources and increasing competition.

Sharing village ambitions through parish plans, evidence documents and Local Plan engagement is one of the most practical ways communities can future-proof themselves.

Water, Council Tax and Local Economy

Our villages have faced repeated water-related challenges. Last summer's water quality incident revealed unauthorised abstraction by Sizewell C, contributing to a falling water table and increased bacteria levels. Incidents like this underline the importance of vigilance, transparency and accurate information when residents' health is at stake.

Council tax rose by 4.9%, yet only around 8% remains with East Suffolk. My view is straightforward: residents are the client, and services should reflect that contribution.

Local businesses, particularly rural pubs, face business rates approaching £50,000 per year. These pubs are not luxuries — they are employers, social anchors and community hubs. Once lost, they are rarely replaced.

Please pay attention to the new water supply being worked on through Walpole and Sibton to support SZC as two million gallons a day – Essex and Suffolk Water are on hand to answer questions about this.

Waste, Partnerships and Achievements

From June 2026, the **Better Recycling** scheme will introduce weekly food waste collections, twin-stream recycling and three-weekly general waste collections. New bins and caddies will arrive between February and May. If households experience problems, please contact the helpline or email me directly — I will help resolve issues.

Despite the pressures, there have been significant achievements:

- £4.8 million secured to decarbonise leisure centres
- 116 sites now involved in Nature at Work
- A new community hall underway in Aldringham cum Thorpe
- Support secured for demolition costs in Thorpeness after coastal erosion

The **Community Partnership**, led locally by **Sam Kenward**, continues to play a vital role. Meetings are held four times a year across village halls, with every parish invited. Delegates can come from the wider community, and funding opportunities are real and tangible.

Looking Ahead

As we look forward, I hope every village continues to see itself as part of one local team. When we work together — from Parish to Parliament — our voice is stronger, clearer and more effective.

Strong communities are built by those who turn up, speak up and step forward. The pandemic reminded us how important it is to know our neighbours and understand local need. Those lessons must remain with us.

Development, in every sense, means taking ownership of our future. Now is the moment for our villages to shape what comes next. East Suffolk Council stands ready to support this through its **Our Direction** strategy.

Thank you for your trust, your patience and your continued community spirit. I will continue to serve you as new councils and elected representatives take shape.

Julia Ewart

Councillor for Kelsale & Yoxford Ward

Contact details - Tel 07770666604 E julia.ewart@eastssuffolk.gov.uk

Appendix 3

Cookley and Walpole Summary of Accounts 2025-2026

APM Item 7

Balance b/f	£17,251.38	
Receipts		
Precept		£12,300.00
Interest		£138.23
First Aid		£10.00
Cemetery		£1,440.00
		£13,888.23

Payments		
Administration		-£5,934.92
External Meets and Training		-£695.20
Maintenance & Repairs		-£2,754.57
s137 & Donations		-£1,474.29
		-£10,858.98

Balance c/f £20,280.63

Reserves

General Reserves

unbanked payments	£1,098.08
Room hire	£500.00
trees	£140.00
maintenance	£4,000.00
capital	£2,000.00
cemetery	£75.00
contingency	£940.00
Precept 80%	£9,840.00

EMR

CIL	£1,687.53
-----	-----------

£20,280.61

VAT to be reclaimed -89.32
£20,191.29

End