

MINUTES OF THE BOUGHTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE ALL SAINTS CHURCH, ON TUESDAY 26th MAY 2026 at 7.30pm

Present: Mr Kevin Fisher (Chair)

Parish Councillors: Neil Matthew, Tam Payne, Sarah Miller, Phil Boyle, Sue Pogmore.

Parish Clerk: Jo Lloyd

Borough & County Councillors: – B.Cllr Sue Lintern, C.Cllr Mike Westman (from 8pm).

Public: 11

- 1. Introduction:** Cllr Matthew opened the meeting and welcomed those present, explaining that this was a meeting for residents of the Parish to discuss any issues of importance to them.
- 2. Election of Chair:** Cllr Matthew invited nominations for the role of Chair to the meeting. Mr Kevin Fisher volunteered and all agreed to him chairing the meeting.
- 3. Apologies:** County Councillor Westman sent apologies that he would arrive late.
- 4. Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting:** The draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 6th May 2025 were published on the website and circulated prior to the meeting. They were proposed, seconded and agreed as a true record.
- 5. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council:** Cllr Matthew gave the following annual report.

Review of the Council Year: May 2025 – May 2026

It has been a year of steady progress, careful stewardship, and significant community-focused decision-making. The Council has continued to prioritise transparency, legal compliance, and the long-term wellbeing of Boughton's residents, green spaces, and public assets. I am pleased to present this summary of our work over the past twelve months.

1. Governance, Compliance & Financial Management

AGAR & Audit

The Council again met all statutory requirements for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The Internal Auditor reported **no observations or recommendations**, confirming strong financial controls. We declared **exemption from Limited Assurance Review**, saving audit fees. Following the retirement of our long-standing Internal Auditor, we appointed **Mr Robin Goreham** as the new auditor.

Benefit: Ensures public money is properly managed, risks are controlled, and the Council remains compliant with national audit standards.

Budgeting & Precept

A detailed budget process resulted in a **2026/27 precept of £9,255**, reflecting inflation, asset renewal needs, and the growing requirement for contingency funds.

Ear-marked reserves were strengthened for:

Pond and Green maintenance

Tree works

Street furniture

IT renewal

Future mower replacement

Election costs

Benefit: Protects the village from unexpected costs, ensures long-term sustainability, and avoids sudden large increases in future years.

IT & Data Security

A new Council laptop and Microsoft 365 Business subscription were purchased to meet the new **AGAR Assertion 10** requirements. A new IT policy was adopted. The old laptop was securely wiped and removed from the asset register.

Benefit: Improves data protection, cyber-security, and compliance with national audit rules.

2. Highways, Traffic & Road Safety

Speed Monitoring

SAM2 speed sign data continued to be collected and published. Residents raised concerns about speeding on Wretton Road; the Council agreed to monitor the situation. A Community Speed Watch group was encouraged, though no formal approach has yet been made.

White Gates Both village entrance gates required repairs after vehicle strikes. Repairs were completed promptly using delegated authority, with partial funding from the County Councillor's Highways budget.

Wretton Road Gate to A134 Ongoing issues with the gate being left open were raised repeatedly. Highways installed a lock, which was later cut off; further solutions are being explored.

Benefit: Improves village appearance, reinforces speed awareness, and reduces risks from unauthorised through-traffic.

3. Planning Matters

The Council responded to numerous planning consultations, including:

Temporary upgrade of a field access for Anglian Water (supported and later permitted).

Monitoring of unauthorised works at "Brown Lake" and raising concerns with Planning Enforcement.

Querying tree works in the Conservation Area where permissions were unclear.

Commenting on cricket field application, recommending a **pause** until ownership issues are resolved.

Benefit: Ensures developments respect the Conservation Area, protects the Fen SSSI, and reflects residents' concerns.

4. Pond & Green – Major Focus of the Year

The pond has been the most significant issue facing the village this year.

Key Issues Identified

The pond dried out in summer 2025, causing widespread concern. Excessive silt, spreading reeds, and encroaching vegetation were identified as long-term risks. EA regulations restrict how silt can be moved or disposed of.

Actions Taken

Siltex treatments continued (but now paused pending major works). Water quality and silt levels were monitored. Reed and iris growth assessed regularly. A full tree survey was completed—no urgent issues found.

Silt Management Options

Cllr Payne led extensive research with the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage

Board. Four options were presented:

Do nothing – likely to result in repeated drying.

Dredge and spread on farmland – illegal under EA rules.

Dredge and store on the Green before landfill disposal – unaffordable (£12–25k).

Construct a permanent internal bund and relocate silt behind it – preferred option.

Council Initial Preferred Option

Option 4 was identified as a **legal, feasible, and affordable** long-term solution. Funding applications (CIL, FCC Community Action Fund, biodiversity grants) will be pursued.

A **public meeting** was held on 13 April to present the plan and gather feedback.

Subsequently, further options are being considered in collaboration with local ecologists and geohydrologists.

Expected Benefits:

Restores the pond's depth and resilience against drought.

Protects wildlife and biodiversity.

Preserves the iconic centrepiece of the village for future generations.

Ensures all work is lawful, transparent, and professionally guided.

5. Village Assets & Maintenance

Benches & Street Furniture

A damaged memorial bench was temporarily repaired, then removed when it failed again. A new bench has been purchased. The circular picnic bench memorial ring was re-installed. Posts around the Green continue to be replaced as needed.

Mowing & Equipment

Mowing equipment was maintained, repaired, and secured with new padlocks. A full asset stock check was undertaken.

Tree Survey

A professional arboricultural survey found no urgent issues. Deadwood removal will be scheduled. Honey fungus previously noted appears not to be harming the affected tree.

Benefit: Maintains the safety, appearance, and usability of the Green and public spaces.

6. Boughton Fen

Regular maintenance continued, including boardwalk repairs, litter picking, and tree clearance. Ash dieback required removal of several dangerous trees. The Fen Committee continues to manage the SSSI to a high standard.

Benefit: Protects a nationally important habitat and ensures safe public access.

7. Community Engagement & Local Issues

Wishing Well

A resident offered to install a new wishing well. After clarifying responsibilities, the Council approved the project with conditions on siting, maintenance, and insurance.

Cricket Club

The Council heard concerns from both the Club and landowners. The Club has since been dissolved. The Council noted that an Asset of Community Value application has been refused due to lack of standing (Club no longer extant).

Parking at the Surgery

Damage to the verge was reported. Highways agreed to consider reinstating bollards.

Christmas Lights

The Council contributed to new lights around the pond.

Benefit: Supports community spirit, protects local amenities, and ensures fair and safe use of shared spaces.

8. Staffing

After six years of service, Clerk & RFO **Mike Inder** retired. Following interviews, **Ms Jo Lloyd** was appointed as the new Proper Officer/RFO. Meeting dates were changed to the **4th Tuesday of odd-numbered months**.

Benefit: Ensures continuity of professional governance and modernises administrative processes.

Conclusion

This has been a year of:

Strong governance

Careful financial planning

Major environmental decision-making

Responsive action to residents' concerns

Continued protection of Boughton's unique character

I would like to thank all councillors, volunteers, our Borough and County representatives, and especially our outgoing Clerk, for their dedication and service. Boughton remains a thriving, well-run village because of the combined efforts of its community.

6. Report from the Boughton Fen Committee: Cllr Pogmore, Chair of the Fen Committee, gave the following report.

Our working parties have been very busy this year – as well as the usual tasks, we have repaired the boardwalk in several places. This became urgent after someone rode a horse down the high boardwalk and went right through it, then carried on with its shod hooves cutting through the netting on significant lengths of the boarding. A temporary repair was carried out whilst new timbers were ordered, which always takes a little time as we have to wait for them to be treated. Of course, this is very expensive – the price of both timber and netting has increased significantly. Following the damage done in the wet part of the fen last year, we have now put signs up indicating the horses should not be on the paths.

The two information signs that had been removed for repair have now been re-installed – this time in an upright position, rather than at an angle, in the hope that less debris and water will fall on them. Many thanks to all those involved with this.

We have had a number of fallen trees due to the gales – the majority being due to ash die-back. It was quite alarming to see that the root structure of these trees is almost non-existent due to the disease. With so many of the trees being close to the road, we have had their condition assessed and the decision was taken to fell the ones that looked most at risk. It has been fortunate that the very large ones that had already fallen had gone into the fen. However, it took significant effort from a working party, followed by the services of a contractor, to clear the footpath, then clear the timber. After obtaining quotes from suitable companies, a contractor was chosen to fell and clear several of the ash on Stoke Road. An NE permit had to be obtained before any work could start, and our chosen contractor was competitive using the timber for firewood, thus offsetting a proportion of the cost.

As it has been so dry, it was not necessary to open the outfalls this year, to enable the reed cutting. Whilst this was very convenient, and a good cut was achieved, the fen

really should have a depth of standing water at the end of the winter.

During the autumn, representatives of Boughton Fen were invited to join a group concerned with diminishing population of the marsh carpet moth. It's food plant is *Thalictrum*, which has been carefully managed on our site in recent years. It was a privilege to attend the first meeting at RSPB Lakenheath, consisting of committed and knowledgeable professionals from many nature reserves in Norfolk, Butterfly Conservation, and similar bodies. Thanks to Stephen Eyles' efforts on Boughton Fen, we were able to contribute actively to the meeting, and are looking forward to more involvement in this group.

Bird life has again been active. Last year, seven types of warbler were present, and there are currently reports of all types of birds, as well as the usual range of Marsh harriers, bittern, cuckoos and hobbies. On a positive note, three tawny owl chicks were ringed about a fortnight ago, which is good news as owls have had a difficult time recently. We have had new volunteers join our team, and if anyone is interested in this sort of activity, please contact me.

As always – thanks to the volunteers and the fen committee for all their hard work.
Sue Pogmore

7. Reports from Borough and County Councillors.

Borough Councillor Sue Lintern gave the following report:

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Focus and Key Projects

This year has been significantly shaped by Local Government Reform (LGR). Considerable work has been undertaken to develop the business case submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). We now know that Norfolk will transition to three unitary authorities, with West Norfolk joining Breckland and nine parishes from South Norfolk.

A major priority throughout this process has been ensuring staff are supported during the transition while maintaining the delivery of day-to-day services across the Borough. Work has also commenced on our flagship Guildhall renovation project. Scaffolding is now in place, and the next phase will involve the careful removal of the existing roof. Every tile, timber, and material is being catalogued and reused wherever possible within the wider restoration project. Live camera feeds have also been installed inside the Guildhall, enabling residents to follow the progress of the restoration by visiting #29 (next door).

In addition, works are due to begin shortly on the Custom House, one of King's Lynn town centre's most iconic and historic buildings.

Progress has also continued on both the King's Lynn and Hunstanton Masterplans. Public consultations have taken place throughout the year, providing residents with the opportunity to help shape the future of both towns. This work ensures that the incoming unitary authority will inherit a strong pipeline of well-developed, deliverable projects.

Financial Position and Achievements

To deliver a balanced budget this year, Council Tax was increased by £5 per household alongside a 7% increase in discretionary fees and charges. This results in a Borough Council charge of £152.87 for a Band D property, (remembering only 7p in every £1 of total Council Tax paid goes to the Borough Council).

The Borough Council continues to contribute 40% of its Council Tax receipts towards the funding of Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs). We continue to press for a fairer national funding solution for IDBs, alongside more efficient delivery of existing County-level services.

Since taking administration responsibility, efficiencies of 15% have already been delivered, with a further 10% built into the 2026/27 financial plan. This has enabled the Council to rebuild its General Reserve to £10 million and move away from the significant financial challenges previously inherited. We are now in a stronger position to begin making meaningful investments within our communities.

Coastal Investment

Many residents will recall the extensive work undertaken to coordinate the removal of oil nurdles from the North Coast beaches. More recently, significant repairs have been completed to address the major sinkhole on the promenade. In addition, several million pounds have been earmarked for future coastal repairs and protection works.

Our capital programme also includes substantial investment in public welfare facilities and infrastructure improvements across the coast.

Planning and Housing

As previously reported, the Local Plan was formally approved by Government in March 2025. However, we have now been instructed to begin work on a new Local Plan due to significantly increased housing targets.

The annual housing requirement has risen from 554 to 989 homes per year, with only 30 months allocated to complete the revised plan — an extremely challenging timeframe.

Housing Delivery Programme

The Borough Council's housing programme aims to deliver 1,000 homes, primarily for rent, with a strong emphasis on affordability.

To date:

- 972 homes have been completed or are under construction
- 260 homes are market sale properties
- 127 affordable homes are now occupied
- 27 homes have been sold through shared ownership
- 92 properties are occupied within the private rental sector.

Grants and Community Infrastructure

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding continues to be available, although the allocation process has changed.

Twenty percent of total CIL receipts will continue to support local projects, and Parish Councils may still apply for funding in the usual way. The previous points-based system has now been replaced with a simpler and fairer process, with all applications considered directly by the CIL Funding Committee.

The remaining 80% of CIL funding is retained by the Borough Council for strategic infrastructure projects.

Parish Councils are encouraged to develop Parish Infrastructure Investment Plans, which can greatly strengthen future CIL applications. Support and guidance remain available to assist with this process.

Waste and Fly-Tipping

The Council has invested in a dedicated enforcement team to tackle the increasing issue of fly-tipping and waste crime. Strong enforcement powers are available, including

prosecution and fixed penalties, and the Council remains committed to taking firm action where necessary.

Cabinet Role

My Cabinet portfolio for Culture, Heritage and Events continues to be both active and rewarding. Throughout the year we have maintained a wide-ranging programme of free events while also supporting numerous organisations delivering activities within our communities.

My responsibilities also include liaison with Parish and Town Councils, ensuring local councils remain informed on key Borough matters. I work closely with the communications team to provide timely updates on issues directly affecting local communities.

Parish and Town Councils play a vital role in supporting residents, and I remain committed to maintaining strong working relationships and providing ongoing support wherever possible.

Supporting Local Projects

I have been pleased to support several local initiatives across villages within the Wissey Ward through the Borough Council Community Grant Fund, including:

- Boughton PCC – Breakfast Club and Coffee Mornings
- Wereham Village Hall – Short Mat Bowls Carpet

I look forward to visiting these groups in the near future.

In addition, I worked closely with the Stoke Ferry Village Hall Committee to help secure a £62,000 FCC Communities Foundation grant towards internal renovation works — an excellent outcome for the village.

I have also supported Northwold Village Hall in securing funding for a new flat roof and associated internal improvement works.

Recognition and Awards

The Borough Council has recently been shortlisted for two Local Council Awards:

- Most Improved Council
- Housing Scheme of the Year

While we await the final adjudication, being recognised alongside some of the country's strongest local authorities reflects the significant progress made in recent years.

Although our powers remain limited until the transition to unitary government is complete, we remain committed to continuous improvement and delivering the best possible outcomes for our residents.

Representing You at Borough Level

I continue to serve on the Planning Committee, contributing to decisions that directly affect our communities.

I also attend Cabinet briefings and scrutiny meetings regularly to remain fully informed on emerging issues and ensure Parish Councils are kept updated on matters affecting their areas.

Looking Ahead

I will continue to keep Parish Councils and residents informed on developments relating to Local Government Reform and any other issues impacting our villages and communities.

As always, I remain committed to representing and supporting the residents of Wissey Ward and ensuring your voices continue to be heard clearly at Borough level.

Thank you for your continued support.

Warm regards,

Cllr Sue Lintern

Borough Councillor for Wissey Ward

County Cllr Mike Westman introduced himself, being newly elected and having taken office the previous week. He explained there were a record number of new people on the County Council. They will be voting in the Chair and Vice-Chair at their first meeting. As Reform did not get a majority they will need coordination with other parties to form a minority administration.

The County Council cannot currently dispose of electrical items due a fire, and Cllr Westman advised this issue might not be resolved quickly. They hope to re-instate a facility for disposal of electrical goods and batteries at an alternative location. For now, the advice is to try supermarkets for battery disposal and big retailers for white goods. Cllr Matthew asked Cllr Westman about his prior political background. He has been District Councillor for Priory Ward, Thetford since May 2025 by-election. Before that he was not politically involved nor a member of any party. He was asked how he would find out what local residents want, and answered that he is visiting parishes, listening very closely and plans to take any concerns to officers at County Hall. Cllr Lintern suggested the Parish Council could send a report with information on any local issues.

8. Pond Project update:

Cllrs Payne and Matthew gave an update on the project to improve and maintain the village pond. There was a public meeting in April which determined that the public are not certain about the proposal to create a bund. Options continue to be explored including a more environmentally sympathetic bund or removal of silt off site.

A local ecologist has made a science-based case for removal of silt to farmland but it is not yet known whether the EA will allow this. The Parish Council would like to thank him for putting in a lot of work.

Next steps will involve examining the ecosystem and ecology of the pond, which is likely more directly related to ground water levels than previously thought. The Council are being cautious and want to ensure that whatever is done is thought through carefully. It was noted that dredging will not guarantee the pond won't dry out again in the near future, but it would increase water capacity and reduce silt.

Any work will need to be funded, and quotes have suggested the cost will be higher than initially thought. There will also need to be an ongoing maintenance plan. The Council want to consult the village to find out what sort of pond they want - a tidy amenity pond or a more unkempt wildlife habitat.

At present the water level is down 300mm from the overflow and it is possible the pond level might be worse this year than last. There are reed warblers at the pond, and also daphnia which are good indicator of pond health. There are no algal blooms. The irises are not blooming as well as last year, possibly due to being out of the water some time. It is hoped that a geologist will come to talk to village about what he understands of the pond, this might be combined with bat evening.

MOP question: Is there any evidence the pond is a pingo, as mentioned in the minutes of the public meeting? This had been suggested by the EA due to the configuration, size and location but it is not believed to be a typical pingo. It may have been formed by a subterranean collapse. The ecologist and geologist have suggested that the clay is leaky, with water rising up through it. Water level data shows that the pond level mirrors the

chalk streams nearby. This is why digging out or dredging the pond might not prevent it drying out. The Parish Council want to understand more before making decisions.

- MOP comment: Regarding the history of the pond - there is no pond shown on a 1797 map () and a road is shown where the pond is now. There was also no mention of a fishery in the Domesday Book, and this is how ponds were often recorded. The pond is present on a map from 1826, so perhaps it was excavated when farmers were taking ownership of the nearby fields. It has been known as "Boughton Pit". The MOP agreed that the pond appears to be affected by local hydrology, with evidence of it having dried up in all the major drought years.

The next steps were summarised in a 3 step plan:

1. Gather evidence in order to understand the pond (monitor water level, nutrients, oxygen levels; groundwater assessment; ecological survey.) Find out what village wants via survey.
2. Low risk and reversible options (improve oxygen levels, consider discouraging duck feeding)
- 3 – Larger scale project once more is understood.

9. Reports from public organisations: None.

10. Public Forum:

A MOP asked a question re. the Wretton Rd gates.

A MOP raised an issue regarding a drainage which is affecting the Church. The PCC need NCC Highways to look at the drains in the road before they can proceed further with their insurance company. C.Cllr Westman agreed to raise this with NCC Highways engineers.

A MOP asked whether the Parish Council might organise a litter pick as they have in the past, this request was noted.

11. Meeting closed at 20.41.

Signed

Date