

Ditchingham Parish Council

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Ditchingham Village Hall

Monday 11th May 2026 – 7.30 pm

Councillors: Keith Weston (Chair), Brendon Bernard (Vice Chair), Angela Gifford, Neil Humphries, Gill Oliver, Tony Swan, Ed van Dijk and Stephen Young

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO): Sally Chapman

Also Present: Three parishioners and two members of Bungay Conservation Volunteers

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions from the parishioner's attending.

MINUTES

1. **Chair's Welcome**
The Chair of Ditchingham Parish Council, Mr Keith Weston, Chaired the meeting and welcomed all present.
2. **To Confirm the Annual Parish Meeting Minutes of 12th May 2025** - View on [DPC's website](#)
The Minutes from the Meetings held on 12th May 2025 were confirmed unanimously as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.
3. **The Chair's Report on Ditchingham Parish Council's Activities**
The Chair gave a verbal summary of his report (*attached*).
4. **The Responsible Financial Officer End of Year Report**
The Responsible Financial Officer read out her report (*attached*).
5. **To Receive Reports Giving A Summary of The Year's Activities from Council's Committees:**
 - a) **Community Committee**
The Chair, Cllr Gifford read out her report (*attached*).
 - b) **Planning & Highways Committee**
No report.
6. **To Receive a Report from the County Councillor**
County Councillor Barry Stone sent apologies and a report. View on [DPC's website](#)
7. **To Receive a Report from the District Councillor**
Councillor Bernard gave a verbal update. South Norfolk District Council ended the 2025/26 financial year with a balanced budget. The District Council will cease in 2028 and be replaced by a new authority. Ditchingham Parish will be within the Waveney Valley Area ward. The Conservative Party is still the largest party in the District Council, although it does not hold an overall majority. The Broadland Council headquarters are working well and the solar panels are generating good revenue. Planning applications have been submitted for approximately 3,000 acres of solar panels in the surrounding area, which are facing significant opposition from local communities.
8. **To Receive a Report from Ditchingham School Governing Body**
The Chair summarised their report (*attached*).

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9. To Receive a Report from Ditchingham United Charities

The Chair summarised their report (*attached*).

10. To Receive a Report from Ditchingham Village Hall

The Chair thanked Cllr Bernard for his input into the installation of solar panels at the Village Hall and for his grant fundraising support towards the project. Since being installed, the solar panels have benefited the Hall and are increasing revenue.

11. To Receive a Report from Bungay Conservation Volunteers

The Chair read the Bungay Conservation Volunteers report (*attached*) and thanked them for their much-appreciated work.

12. To Receive Reports from Community Groups

None

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm

3. The Chair's Report the 2026 Annual Parish Meeting

Council Structure

For the first time in many years, we have the right number of Councillors. We welcomed, by co-option, two new Councillors – Ed Van Dijk and Stephen Young; we thank them for coming forward. We have established an Events Organising Working Party. Cllr. Angela Gifford is its convener. The working party has already been working hard, making plans for the Summer Fete to be held on 14th June.

Anti-social behaviour

Villagers are having to contend with a lot of unacceptable behaviour by a selfish minority. These include the raising of union flags on street lights; minor vandalism at the skate park; speeding vehicles and, more recently, graffiti on signage. The Council has taken what limited actions it can. We have liaised with police, we continue to deploy our speed awareness machine and we have removed some graffiti.

BMX pump track at the Thwaite Road Play Area.

There have been many positive responses to a new consultation and the Council decided to proceed. Cllr Ed van Dijk is leading the project. We have held on-site meetings with a number of specialist pump track companies who have submitted their ideas. We are now beginning to explore funding sources.

Maintenance of Assets

- Some money, though less than last year, was spent on repairs to the **Thwaite Road Play Area** equipment following the annual, professional inspection.
- Care of the **Community Orchard**, in Hollow Hill Road, is largely being provided by the Bungay Conservation Volunteers. We are very grateful for their ongoing support. The Council recently installed a bench for visitors to the orchard.
- The roof of the **Lychgate** at the cemetery has been repaired.
- Repairs to the fence along **Cheyne Walk** will be carried out soon.
- Although it is not a PC asset the **Amenity Area adjacent to The Maltings** development is concerning residents because it has not been maintained. DPC has been putting pressure on P.J. Livesey, the owner and on the Broads Authority in an attempt to get the matter resolved.

Wider Issues

- Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation will include the election of a mayor, the abolition of District Councils (with Unitary Authorities established) and, probably, greater roles and responsibilities for PCs. The latest update is that the Government has decided to adopt the three Unitary Authorities (UAs)

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model. There will be elections for “shadow” UAs next May. The UAs will take over from District and County Councils in April '28. Elections for Mayor are scheduled for May '28. At the consultation stage DPC opposed the changes. Of the options available the three UAs model being imposed is the one we favoured.

- With the closing of most local bank branches Bungay Town Council has been campaigning for a banking hub; DPC has lent its support.

Potentially a significant change for the village is the proposal to build housing on the land bordered by Loddon Road and Tunneys Lane. The planning application is still making its way through the system.

Although not on our doorstep, the enormous proposed East Pye Solar farm will impact South Norfolk. At the early consultation stage, I suggested a DPC response. In the event Cllrs' responses were not forthcoming so no corporate submission was made. A small number of Cllrs sent in individual responses. Later versions of the plans appear to have taken on consultees' objections and some mitigation measure will be included. East Pye Solar is now at the 'pre-examination stage' of the DCO process, which usually lasts around three months. During this time, an Examining Authority will be appointed to lead the examination into the proposals.

I shall conclude this report with some “thankyous.” I thank my Vice -Chair, Cllr. Bernard for his ongoing support. My thanks also go to my fellow Cllrs. for their contributions to the work of the Council. Between them they have kept a check on our trees, arranged the Remembrance Service, overseen some contract work, started work on the fete and on the BMX track project. It must be remembered that all Cllrs. are volunteers.

I also thank John, our employee, who has taken on the cleaner's role in addition to litter picking, regular play equipment visual checks and managing the SAM. He does a good job and reports to our Clerk.

And it's our Clerk and Responsible Officer, Sally Chapman to whom I am especially grateful. This is a paid role. Managing the budget, our assets, contracts, insurance, audits, compliance with ever-changing regulations – I could go on – is a very complex and time-consuming job. Our clerk does all that in a very efficient way. Without an accomplished clerk I very much doubt whether we could recruit Cllrs. (and certainly not a Chair!) I thank Sally very much for her important work for the parish.

Keith Weston

Chair Ditchingham Parish Council

4. The Responsible Financial Officer End of Year Report Year End 31 March 2026

For the financial year ending 31 March 2026, the Council has maintained a strong and stable financial position.

Income

Total receipts for the year were £61,702.91, an increase compared with the previous year (£60,136.38). The Precept remained unchanged at £47,000.00. Notable increases were seen in Cemetery income, Business Account interest and Community Infrastructure Levy (£1,069.45). Grants received also totalled £1,000.00. VAT reclaim income reduced compared to the previous year.

Expenditure

Total expenditure for the year was £49,196.73, a reduction from the previous year (£55,645.02). Key variations included reduced spend on play area equipment compared to the prior year and increased investment in areas such as Thwaite Road Play Area maintenance, street lighting works, tree survey and maintenance, and the Lychgate roof repairs. The Community Orchard also incurred expenditure of £790.00 during the year.

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Financial Position

The Council achieved a surplus of income over expenditure of £12,506.18, compared with £4,491.36 in the previous year. The balance carried forward at year end stands at £149,964.21.

Reserves

General Reserves total £23,500.38, with Earmarked Reserves standing at £126,463.83, reflecting continued financial planning and allocation for future projects and liabilities.

Overall, the Council remains in a sound financial position, with adequate reserves in place and continued investment in key community assets and services.

Sally Chapman

Responsible Financial Officer

Ditchingham Parish Council

5. a) Community Committee Report

The past year has been busy, with the VE day celebrations and the forthcoming Fete, preparations for which, started in early March.

The VE Day Village Hall event was a great success, the official sign of the statue was well attended and the afternoon tea afterwards, was very well received with people waiting for others to finish eating, as chairs needed to be freed up. The food, provided by volunteers and some from the PC purse was excellent. The volunteers who served the food and washed up, did a mammoth task.

Complaints to Highways about too much dirt on the road, the broken rails near the river on Belsey Bridge Road, and the need swiftly to remove fallen trees have been actioned by the Council, surprisingly quickly which is reassuring.

The problems last year of spirit bottles and cans being thrown in the road side, has not been as large a problem this last 12 months, just a few, now and then.

The shelter in The Dip has removed some of the behaviour that was not acceptable and complained about by the residents.

The playground has been visited and appropriate work carried out to maintain a safe and good-looking area. The plans for the new bike track look encouraging and are ongoing.

The allotments have been neglected by a few, for personal reasons, but a new gentleman is moving in and hopefully will bring the plot back into productivity. Thanks to Alan for his feedback re the allotments.

Cheyne Walk, is still waiting for its new fencing and currently people are actually walking onto the field , and in a couple of cases, then moving, into the private field above.

The Community Orchard is thriving and is a lovely feature for the village.

Angela Gifford

Community Chair

Signed _____

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8. To Receive a Report from Ditchingham School Governing Body

Ditchingham Primary Academy Report

We have had another jam-packed year of learning and fun at school. We continue to work collaboratively within our Kingfisher Federation (Ditchingham, Gillingham and Earsham Primary), this is a very strong and effective partnership where we work together on the same curriculum plans and complete enrichment activities together.

This year we are looking forward to the three Year 5 and 6 classes going away together for two nights to Horstead Activity Centre. Our number on roll continues to fluctuate being the small village school that we are.

Over the year we have had many enrichment opportunities and chances to raise money for charities. We have taken part in Children In Need, Nelson's Journey Rudolph Run, Comic Relief, NSPCC Number day to name a few! As always, we are grateful for the support of families with these events.

Our KS1 children put on a wonderful Christmas play and we have celebrated our art work by having a gallery that parents could come to. All of these opportunities are a great way for the children to live out the school values and motto in allowing them all to shine from the inside out.

Mrs Adcock
Head of School

9. To Receive a Report from Ditchingham United Charities

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL For the Financial Year 2025-26

Clerk: Sally Thomson

Chair: Gillian Ogden

Apologies for my absence this evening but I hope you find this annual report to be informative and a true record of our activities over past financial year. For those unaware of the work of the Ditchingham United Charities, it is a long-standing local gem set up many years ago ostensibly to provide "relief in need" and for "charitable purposes for the general benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Ditchingham". It is a charity, registered and monitored by the Charity Commission, for disbursing funds administered by a group of nine Trustees.

The Charity's constitution states that the DUC body is made up of nine Trustees: one ex-officio member (always the current Rector of the Parish), five Nominative Trustees (appointed by the Parish Council, but the person appointed need not be a member of the council), and three Co-optative Trustees. There is also a clerk who supports the work of the Trustees.

At the 2025 AGM, both the Chair (myself) and the Vice-Chair (Louise Wilkin) were re-elected for the following year and there were no other changes to the Trustee body, meaning that the 2025-26 membership of the DUC has been as follows:

- Ex-officio member: Rev. Chris Hutton
- Nominative Trustees: Keith Weston, Reg Kirkpatrick, Alan Larkin, Simon Wilkin and Laura Myatt
- Co-opted Trustees: Gillian Ogden, Louise Wilkin, Geoffry Fairhead

Sally Thomson, our Clerk, continues to skilfully support the Trustees in numerous ways through maintaining the accounts, completing the annual Charity Commission return, arranging an account audit, organising meeting agenda and minutes, correspondence, liaising with the editor of the Parishioner, and dealing with requests and payments. Her professionalism and quiet efficiency are second to none and the Trustees and I are hugely

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grateful to her and would like to thank her wholeheartedly in this public forum for her unwavering support, efficiency and clarity with which she fulfils these varied responsibilities.

Many thanks must also go to the Finance Committee and all the Trustees who are always prompt, caring and thoughtful in their responses to requests. Each Trustee serves with integrity, and for that, I am grateful.

Managed by CCLA Investment Management Limited, the Charity's longstanding investments continue to provide steady returns so, again for the 2025-26 year, there was a generous sum for grants. In addition to the investment funds, the DUC owns two parcels of land (grazing marshes) both of which are let to the same tenant and whose rents are included in the sum to be disbursed. At the May 2025 AGM, the Trustees had £22,436.58 to disburse. The DUC constitution decrees that 1/3 of the "Townlands Trust" income must go to the Church, and the Clerk's fees must also be covered in the first instance, which left £16,745.55 for disbursement, slightly less than last year's amount.

Prior to each AGM, the Finance Committee meets to review requests in relation to our constitutional rules and to make recommendations to the full body of Trustees at the AGM, although grants are only confirmed with the agreement of the whole Trustee body. At our 2025 AGM, the DUC enabled the following recipients to receive grants as we felt they supported the criteria "general benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Ditchingham":

- Broome & Ditchingham Pre-School
- Bungay Area Community Transport
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Ditchingham Graveyard upkeep
- Food Bank
- Friends of Ditchingham Primary Academy
- Heartfelt Hands Baby Massage
- Parochial Church Council
- Parishioner Magazine
- Tiny Tots Stay & Play
- Village Fete (toilet hire)
- Village Hall

Each year, additional monies are reserved for students who qualify for a further education place – we normally receive applications in late summer/early autumn, following pupils' acceptance on courses which is after our AGM. In 2025, three students qualified in receiving one-off grants of £400.00 to support their first term of study. Also at our AGM, we always signpost funds to be set aside for "relief in need" which is one of the Charity's main roles. The DUC is grateful to agencies and individuals directing these hardship cases to us and, in the past for example, have included sources such as the local Social Prescribing Link Worker at the surgery and the primary school. In 2025-26, there were three cases requiring our help, and all recipients were grateful to have received grants tiding them over their financial challenges in this very difficult economic climate.

As ever, I am indebted, first, to our Clerk, Sally Thomson, who skilfully manages not only our accounts, but the Trustees, too! She fulfils so many administrative responsibilities and therefore she is crucial to our ongoing success. Secondly, to the Trustees, I am grateful for their compassionate involvement in our dealings, for their measured consideration and especially for the time they give.

Gillian Ogden
Chair, Ditchingham United Charities
Charity Commissions No. 207488

Signed _____

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11. To Receive a Report from Bungay Conservation Volunteers

Bungay Conservation Volunteers (BCV) Orchard Activity Report to Ditchingham Parish Council

Date: April 2026

Members of Ditchingham Parish Council,

Bungay Conservation Volunteers (BCV) are pleased to present this report outlining our recent work and ongoing commitment to the orchard.

In April 2025, The Conservation Volunteers worked in the orchard alongside the Waveney Volunteers for Nature. This marked our final period operating under the umbrella of The Conservation Volunteers before BCV became an independent organisation in June 2025. Following this transition, we were grateful to be invited by Ditchingham Parish Council to continue managing and caring for the orchard, a role we have been delighted to undertake.

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting, BCV has carried out four working sessions within the orchard—three during 2025 and a further visit on 10th April 2026. Over this period, our volunteers have contributed significantly to the upkeep and enhancement of the site. Key activities have included the careful pruning and weeding of both established and newly planted hedgerows, as well as the mulching and protective re-fleeing of the orchard's fruit trees.

In addition to maintenance work, we have supported the orchard's development and biodiversity by planting three walnut trees, sowing wildflower seeds, and introducing daffodil bulbs along the boundary fencing. Efforts have also been made to manage invasive Alexanders, helping to preserve the balance of the orchard's ecosystem.

Beyond the practical achievements, our volunteers have greatly valued the opportunity to spend time in such a well-loved and peaceful community space. We are sincerely appreciative of the Council's continued support, encouragement, and the remuneration provided for our work.

Looking ahead, BCV is pleased to confirm a return visit in November 2026, during which we plan to establish a new hedge line alongside the existing mature hedge to further enhance habitats for local birdlife. We also anticipate organising an additional activity day later in the year, bringing our total planned visits to three.

We would like to extend our thanks to Ditchingham Parish Council for maintaining and supporting such a valuable community asset. We look forward to continuing our work together in the future.

Bungay Conservation Volunteers

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