

OUSDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10th March 2026

Councillors present: John Gale (Chair), Sylvia Pettitt, Jo Wright and Jess Pettitt.

Also present: Joanne Kirk (clerk), District Councillor Mike Chester and District Councillor for Barrow Ian Houlder.

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Guy Holland Bosworth, Fiona Bills and Edward Page Turner and the reason for absence accepted.

2. Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda.

No councillors declared an interest in any items on the agenda and no dispensation requests were received.

3. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th December 2025 and the planning meeting held on Tuesday 6th January 2026.

It was resolved that the minutes were correct. The Chair then signed them.

4. Public Session.

No issues were raised. Cllr Houlder spoke about the Suffolk County Council elections and his intention to stand as a candidate.

5. District Councillor's Report.

District Councillor Mike Chester presented his report. The report is available on the Parish Council website at <https://ousdenparishcouncil.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/meetings-reports/10th-march-2026/>

- He spoke about the budget for 2026/27. A budget amendment was approved in relation to increasing footfall in towns, particularly in Haverhill.
- Brandon has received 500k to improve the town and create new jobs.
- West Suffolk Council has been a leader in renewable energy.
- There will be more free parking in Bury St Edmunds.
- Cultural facilities such as the Apex which are very popular and increase footfall in Bury St Edmunds.
- Policing. Suffolk is underfunded compared to other counties and the Police and Crime Commissioner has sent a letter to the Government about this.

6. Police issues.

There were no crimes reported in Ousden in January 2026.

7. Update on list of actions agreed at the last meeting.

There were two outstanding councillor actions.

Clerk's update

The registration of the village hall is going ahead, but the Land Registry is taking its time. Ousden Parish Council needs to return the conveyance document to Suffolk Archives but the Land Registry has said they may need sight of it again so Ashton's Legal will keep the document until the land has been registered.

8. Finance

a) Approval of any payments and signing of Schedule of Payments.

It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- J P Kirk - expenses - LGA 1972, s111 – **£27.12**
- CAS – annual renewal of gov.uk domain name and email address - LGA 1972, s111 - **£54.50.**
- HMRC - PAYE - LGA 1972, s111 – **£142.80**

Cllrs John Gale and Sylvia Pettitt signed the Schedule of Payments. The Chair countersigned it.

b) Approval of payments authorised between meetings.

No payments were authorised between meetings.

c) **Statement of receipts and payments made since the last meeting.**

It was resolved that the statement of receipts and payments would be approved.

Receipts

Date	Description	Supplier	Total
09/12/2025	Bank interest received	Lloyds Bank	£4.20
09/01/2026	Bank interest received	Lloyds Bank	£3.57

Payments

Date	Minute	Description	Supplier	Total
09/12/2025	444/10a	Clerk's expenses	Joanne Kirk	£56.78
10/12/2025	444/10a	Legal fees	Ashton's Legal	£1,418.20
10/12/2025	447/15f	Donation	Headway Suffolk	£100.00
22/12/2025	431/9m	Bank charges	Lloyds Bank	£4.25
22/01/2026	431/9m	Bank charges	Lloyds Bank	£4.25
23/02/2026	431/9m	Bank charges	Lloyds Bank	£4.25
Staff costs as per confidential cashbook				

Transfers

Date	From	To	Amount
09/12/2025	Lloyds Bank reserve account	Lloyds Bank Current Account	£1,800
07/01/2026	Lloyds Bank reserve account	Lloyds Bank Current Account	£500
09/02/2026	Lloyds Bank reserve account	Lloyds Bank Current Account	£500

d) **Bank balances and confirmation of bank reconciliation as of 28th February 2026.**

Lloyds Bank Current Account	£924.90
Lloyds Bank reserve account	£6,055.88
Total in Banks	£6,980.78

Cllrs John Gale and Sylvia Pettitt verified and signed the bank statements.

e) **Update on the financial checks carried out by a councillor**

John Gale had checked the accounts. No issues were raised.

f) **Review of income and expenditure for 2025/26 against the budget and discuss the level of reserves for general and earmarked expenditure**

Councillors reviewed the receipts and payments for 2025/26 against the budget. The following overspends occurred in 2025/26.

Overspends as of 31st March 2026		
ICO data protection fee		
Budgeted	£35.00	
Actual	£47.00	
Difference	-£12.00	GDPR fee increased.
Phone costs		
Budgeted	£25.00	
Actual	£26.78	
Difference	-£1.78	Annual increase in contract.
Bank charges		
Budgeted	£0.00	
Actual	£46.75	

		Bank charges of £4.25 a month introduced by Lloyds after the budget was set.
Difference	-£46.75	
Insurance		
Budgeted	£400.00	
Actual	£449.77	
Difference	-£49.77	Increase in premium
Website		
Budgeted	£60	
Actual	£104	
Difference	-£44	Website hosting fee £55, Switching to gov.uk email address and domain name £49)
Other payments		
Budgeted	£100.00	
Actual	£1,608.77	
Difference	-£1,508.77	SARS donation £50, replacement litter bin £117, RBL £50, legal fees to register the village hall £1,291, donation Headway Suffolk £100.

Reserves

Earmarked Reserves	Opening Balance	Transfers	Spend	Receipts	Current Balance
Earmarked					
Election costs	£1,218	£300			£1,518
Emptying of bins	£225				£225
Defibrillator maintenance	£182	£200	£122		£260
Clerk and councillor training	£144	£20			£164
Maintenance of fixed assets	£400	£400			£800
Village project	£300	£700			£1,000
Ousden Bowls club	£450				£450
TOTAL RESERVE					£4,417
GENERAL FUND					£2,564
TOTAL FUNDS					£6,981

It was resolved that the level of reserves was acceptable.

- g) **To review the register of fixed assets and insurance values and check that the level of insurance cover is adequate.**

The Parish Council's current asset value is **£12,432**. The insurance value is **£47,789**. The insurance value is higher because the asset value includes the Lychgate which Ousden PC does not own but which it insures.

One new asset was purchased in 2025 -26, the litter bin for the playing field.

It was resolved that the insurance value of the Council's insurance would be increased by 5% at renewal.

- h) **Review of the Council's risk assessment.**

It was resolved that the risk assessment would be approved.

- i) **To check that the levels of liability insurance are adequate.**

The levels of liability cover under the new Ansvar Policy are as follows:

All Risks (unspecified items)	Public Liability	Fidelity Guarantee (Dishonesty)	Personal Accident	Employers' Liability
£1k	£10m	£25k	£10k	£10m

It was resolved that the levels of liability cover were adequate.

j) **Review of confidential cashbook and deductions by a councillor.**

John Gale reviewed the confidential cashbook when checking the Parish Council's accounts and confirmed that the PAYE details and tax code were correct.

k) **To nominate a councillor to inspect the Council's property for damage or defects by 30th April 2026 and complete the inspection checklist.**

It was resolved that Cllr John Gale would inspect the Council's property.

9. **To discuss the any planning issues.**

a) **Planning applications received between meetings.**

No planning applications were received.

b) **Proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework - for information only.**

The National Planning Policy Framework is being updated.

10. **To discuss any highways/Rights of Way issues/tree/transport issues.**

a) **Update from the Suffolk Parish Road Safety Group about Suffolk County Council's new 20mph policy.**

Suffolk County Council has approved a new 20mph policy but one of the biggest concerns is how smaller councils will fund the change if they wish to. As County Council elections will take place on 7th May, it was agreed that Ousden Parish Council would wait until after the elections before following up on this.

b) **Registering for Suffolk County Council's Community Self Help Scheme.**

It was resolved that Ousden Parish Council would sign up to this scheme with Cllr John Gale acting as lead volunteer and attend the training.

c) **Replacing the 30mph repeater signs in Ousden.**

The clerk agreed to research the cost of 30mph stickers to put over the existing signs.

d) **The Government's new Road Safety Strategy and 5 related consultations – for information only.**

- **Proposed changes to penalties for motoring offences**
- **Mandatory eye testing for older drivers**
- **Minimum learning period for learner drivers**
- **Mandating safer technologies**
- **Improving motorcycling training, testing and licensing.**

e) **Parish Council survey carried out by Suffolk Highways.**

It was resolved that the clerk would submit a response on behalf of the Parish Council.

11. **To discuss any village issues.**

No issues were raised.

12. **To confirm the dates of meetings in 2026/27.**

- Tuesday 12th May 2026 - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at 6pm and the Annual Parish meeting at 7pm.
- Tuesday 8th September 2026
- Tuesday 8th December 2026
- Tuesday 9th March 2027

13. **To agree the procedure and possible items for the Annual Parish Meeting.**

It was resolved that the same format would be used as last year, with the Annual Parish Meeting taking place at 7pm after the Council's Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will start at 6pm.

- 14. **To discuss any correspondence.**
 - a) **Email from Citizen’s Advice West Suffolk requesting a donation.**
It was resolved that a donation of £50 would be made.
 - b) **Email from West Suffolk Council about their Five Dinners initiative which is free to West Suffolk Council residents – for information only.**
 - c) **Letter from West Suffolk Council about their review of Public Space Protection Order.**
It was resolved that no comments would be submitted.

- 15. **Any other business for noting or including on the agenda of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday 12th May 2026 at 6pm and the Annual Parish Meeting at 7pm.**
No issues were raised.

- 16. **To resolve to exclude press and public under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960: the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of private and confidential information**
 - a) **To discuss staffing matters.**
It was resolved that members of the press and public would be excluded for the remainder of the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.23pm.

Signed (Chairman) Dated