HACHESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Hacheston Parish Council
Held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 21st May 2025

1. **Appoint a Chair**
   The clerk called for nominations for a Chair. Cllr. Hurlock proposed that Cllr. Hardy be re-appointed as Chair. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Montgomery and carried unanimously. Cllr. Hardy confirmed his willingness to stand again and duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. **Appoint a Vice-Chair**
   Cllr. Hardy proposed Cllr. Lavender be re-appinted as Vice- Chair. This was seconded by Cllr. Judd and carried unanimously. Cllr. Lavender confirmed she was willing to re-stand as the Vice-Chair and duly signed the Acceptance of Office.

3. **Present**
   Councillors: Cllr. James Hardy (Chair) Cllr. Chris Hurlock Cllr. Leslie Judd
   Cllr. Lucy Lavender Cllr. Terry Mee Cllr. Linda Montgomery

   Lydia Kindred (clerk) Two residents

   Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor Sally Noble and County Councillor Stephen Burroughes.
   Cllr. Hardy will speak to Cllr. Hall regarding his health and attending meetings.

4. **Declarations of interest**
   None

5. **Minutes**
   The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12th March 2025 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

6. **Matters arising**
   None

7. **Appointment of Officers and Council Representatives**

Responsible Financial Officer & Webmaster	Lydia Kindred
Examining Councillor	Cllr. Hurlock
Village Hall Parish Council Trustee	Cllr. Hurlock
Hacheston United Charities Representative	Cllr. Hardy
Village Recorder	Rosemary Bowden-Smith
SALC representative	Cllr. Judd
Sizewell Transport Forum Representative	Cllr. Lavender and Montgomery
Community Partnerships representative	Cllr. Judd

PUBLIC FORUM

A resident enquired whether the planning application for battery storage at the substation had been submitted. The Chair confirmed that it had not yet been received but advised that an Extraordinary Council Meeting would be convened once it is live.
The District Councillor provided a written update, stating that she has been meeting with representatives from Groupotec regarding the proposed solar farm at Glevering Park. She reported that the company has been receptive to residents' feedback and is proposing some impressive measures to deliver a significant biodiversity net gain.

8. **Clerk's report**

Councillors Judd and Montgomery are receiving SALC Councillor training. Other Councillors are encouraged to sign up for the training.
A draft of the latest parish newsletter has been prepared. It is currently awaiting confirmation of details regarding. Once details of the consultation periods for the new solar farm planning application and the revised application for Bloomyville Farm are received, the newsletter will be finalised, printed, and distributed. An Extraordinary Planning Meeting can then be called to discuss the applications.
A meeting with the Highways Liaison Officer is scheduled for Thursday 5th June at approximately 11:15 am to discuss various highways and traffic issues in the village. The clerk will attend will attend Suffolk County Council's briefing on local government reorganisation on 2nd June. The session will cover Suffolk County Council's proposal to replace existing district, borough and county councils with a single unitary authority. The donation of £1,500 to the Village Hall towards the purchase of the solar batteries has been made and the new defibrillator pads have been purchased.
Highways Webinar- the clerk attended a Suffolk County Council Highways webinar on 13th May, focused on road closures and repairs. An important point of note is that pothole repairs are expected to last for two years. If a repair fails within this period, the contractor is obligated to fix it at no additional cost to the taxpayer. Any issues should be reported using SCC's Highways Reporting Tool.

9. Responsible Financial Officer's report

a) The following payments were approved:

Amount	Payee	Details
£250.00	Trevor Brown	Internal Audit
TBC	G. Whiting	Grass mowing May - Invoice awaited
£79.20	SALC	Cllr Judd training sessions
£222.24	SALC	Membership subscription
£22.80	SALC	Six months payroll services
£28.33	L. Kindred	Share of Microsoft 365 subscription

b) The following payments and receipts since the last meeting were noted:

Payments:
23.03.2025 SALC £79.20 Cllr Montgomery training sessions
23.03.2025 ESC £74.88 Annual dog bin service charge
01.04.2025 Village Hall £500.00 Donation (direct debit)
29.04.2025 DefibPad £79.02 Replacements pads

Receipts:
03.03.2025 Barclays £6.34 Interest
29.04.2025 ESC £5,0202.00 Precept payment
07.04.2024 HMRC VAT refund

c) Bank balances as at 19th May:
Community account: £1,309.54
Deposit account: £4,218.04

d) Reserved funds
The figures as at 31st March 2024 were noted.

e) Bank reconciliation
The Examining Councillor signed and dated the bank reconciliation and bank statements.

f) Bank mandate review
Cllrs. Hardy, Hall and Mee were noted as mandates on the Barclays account. The clerk is in the process of removing Cllr. Hall and adding Cllr. Judd as agreed at a previous meeting. Cllr. Hardy, Mee and Lavender were noted as mandates on the CCLA account.

g) Direct debit and standing order review
ICO £47.00 per annum
Hacheston Village Hall £1,000 per annum across two payments

10. Internal Auditors' Report on 2024-2025

This was reviewed and the recommendations were considered. The suggested revisions to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are being considered under item 12. It was also noted that the donation to the CAB does not need to be designated as S.137 spending. The Council will continue to build the level of general reserves and has increased its precept to support this objective. The recommendation regarding the risk attached to the CCLA investment was noted and will be considered at item 12f.

11. Procedural

a) Internal Controls

The Council's Statement of Internal Control was considered and minor amendments were made for clarity. The Statement was considered effective and fit for purpose.

b) Accounts

The Council's Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025 were accepted as circulated.

c) AGAR Form

The Chair read through the Annual Governance Statements and Councillors agreed each statement. Section One and Section Two (Accounting Statements) of the Local Councils' Annual Return for year ending 31st March 2025 were duly completed. The annual paperwork will be published on the village website.

d) External Audit

It was agreed to opt out of an external audit as an exempt council and the Certificate of Exemption was duly completed and signed by the Chair and RFO.

e) Significant Variances

The statement of significant variances was noted and considered in order.

f) Clerk's pay

It was agreed that, from 1st April 2025, the Clerk will revert to her contracted weekly hours. A one-point scale increase was also approved in recognition of a further year's service. It was noted that the Clerk has now reached the top of her scale banding.

12. Policy Review

a) Standing Orders- NALC recommended revisions to Orders 14 a,b, c (Code of Conduct) and 18 a, c, d,f (Procurement and Financial Regulations) were adopted.

b) Assets Register – No amendments required

c) Financial Regulations- NALC recommended revisions to items 5.4, 5.7 & 5.11 were adopted.

e) Risk Assessment Physical Assets. The clerk will draft a risk assessment regarding moving the Speed Indicator Device, for consideration at a future meeting.

f) Financial Risk Assessment – The auditor's comments regarding the CCLA Fund were noted and this risk was added to the Assessment. It was noted that many other Parish Councils invest with the CCLA and SALC have recommended their products. The CCLA has an AAA rating from Fitch Ratings.

g) Data protection Policy - No amendments required. Councillors were reminded of the need to password-protect any device that includes Council documents and to periodically delete emails with personal data in them that are no longer needed. Councillors were also encouraged to use the gov.uk Councillor email addresses that have been provided by the Council and the clerk will re-circulate information on how to set these accounts up.

h) Website Accessibility Policy – The Council uses Suffolk Cloud's standard policy which is WCAG 2.2 compliant.

13. Code of Conduct

Councillors considered the Suffolk Code and the LGA Code and agreed to re-adopt the Suffolk Code of Conduct.

14. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Report

The report for the period ending 31st March 2025 was approved and will be sent to East Suffolk Council for publication. It was noted that the Council has reserved CIL funding for the traffic-calming markings painted on The Street in 2024.

15. Internal Auditor

It was agreed to re-appoint Trevor Brown as the Council's internal auditor for the year ending 31st March 2026, if he is willing to continue this role. The clerk wished to note her appreciation to Mr Brown for his diligence, clarity and supportive assistance throughout the audit.

16. Street Licence

It was agreed to apply to Suffolk County Council for a licence to purchase planters for verges along The Street at a cost of £170. If successful, a grant application to the District Councillor for funding for the planters will then be submitted.

17. Correspondence

Battery Storage Facility near Wickham Market Substation – It was agreed to arrange a meeting with the agent to receive further details on these proposals.

Mowing request– It was agreed to request a quotation from the Council's mowing contractor to include an additional section of grass near the Village Hall. If the quote is deemed reasonable, the Parish Council will cover the cost.

Request to support the Village Big Lunch – It was agreed to donate £400 to this community event.

Devolution information evening Brandeston 2nd June – The clerk will attend

SALC 75th anniversary event 1st July – Cllr Judd will attend

ESC Community Governance Review re Councillor numbers –This was noted. Councillors agreed that the current number of councillors remains appropriate.

ESPA Affiliates meeting at Yoxford Village Hall 3pm Saturday 24th May- Noted

Devolution survey re how the unity Council/s in Suffolk could be divided – Councillors were encouraged to respond. This will be published on the website and Nextdoor to raise awareness locally.

Planning application DC/25/0595/EIA- Councillors felt they did not have sufficient expertise to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment was required and therefore agreed not to call a meeting to discuss it.

18. Councillor reports

Cllr. Judd reported on the latest SALC Area Forum held in March which focused on devolution developments.

Cllr. Mee has reported safety concerns about the traffic-lights near the roundabout and Cllr. Lavender will also raise this at the next Transport Forum. This prompted a broader discussion about the Park & Ride development. Councillors agreed to consider carrying out another traffic survey later this year to compare results with the previous one conducted in December 2023.

19. Matters to be raised at the next meeting

Section 19 Flood report- update on recommendations and actions

20. Next meeting

The next meeting was confirmed as being 7pm on 16th July 2025.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9pm.

Signed: ………………… ……………………….

Chair **Date**