

VILLAGES OF HUNWORTH AND STODY

Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting Tuesday 19th May 2025, 6:30pm in Hunworth & Stody Village Hall.

The Annual Parish Meeting is an opportunity for residents and electors in the villages of Stody and Hunworth to raise any matters of concern to them that relate to their local community.

Present: Cllr Karl Carter (Chair of the Parish Council), Kerry Harris (Parish Clerk)
NCC & NNDC Cllr Andrew Brown, 9 Residents, 1 Apology

1. Welcome and apologies

The meeting started at 7pm. The Chair welcomed all to the Meeting. He had received apologies from one resident.

2. Annual Report from the Chair of the Parish Council – Karl Carter

This year has again been dominated by the Stody Estate planning application for the Hunny Bell pub and the adjacent farmyard.

That planning application has been approved and refurbishment of the pub and six houses on the farmyard was the final scheme. The plans to reduce the pub size and use the car park and garden for housing have all been rejected and the result is a scheme requiring funding for the pub linked to some housing on the farmyard only.

I know that even this planning permission is not supported by many in the village who feel Stody Estate have used the pub as a ransom to get the housing and the statement by Stody Estate that the pub would not open until they got their planning application did nothing to help and proved the point.

One thing that we all agree on is the pub needs money spending on it and essentials like foul drainage have to be fixed for good on a site where the water has to go uphill. The pub has not been maintained for many years and will need significant investment to get it back open, plus the four guest bedrooms in the pub barn area.

The planning permission for the housing is not being linked to the opening of the pub which is very disappointing, but is linked to the work having to be done on the pub before housing is occupied and we now have the Section 106 for that detail. Stody Estate still have to find an operator to take on the lease of the pub at a time when pubs are closing at record levels as price increases, fuel cost and additional business rates hit the sector hard. This will be made even more difficult with the local competition also stepping up their offering over the last two years the Hunny Bell has been closed.

We finally got a decision from Anglia Water on a foul sewer for Hunworth after our application. The answer was a no, based on cost for limited gain with the number of properties involved and the recommendation for package treatment plants to replace septic tanks, but there is no obligation to change.

The driveway across the main green has had a major upgrade and the contractor will be back to rectify the low spots now the weather is drier.

Alan Suffling stepped down from his many years cutting the grass on the greens for which we all thank him very much and the work is now with a contractor which given the additional cost has resulted in an increase to the precept. We have also sold the ride on mower as a consequence of moving to a contractor with their own equipment.

I would also like to thank Angus Beaton and his team of volunteers for their stewardship of Hunworth Common, which is enjoyed by many local residents and visitors to the village.

On the question of precept, we have only very limited financial resources to undertake any additional work in the villages but have responsibility for the greens and the common land. At a time where Council budgets are very tight the services such as Highways is very limited here and we are faced with low standards of Highway maintenance and unable to get regular work done such as the flooding issue on the main green.

Finally, I want to thank Kerry for all the support she gives to the Parish Council and particularly to me to keep me in order. We are very fortunate to have such a good Parish clerk and that makes a real difference in making sure we can support our two villages.

3. Open Forum

A resident asked when work was due to start on the Farmyard. The Chair stated that this is not yet known.

A resident thanked NNDC Cllr Brown for his work on the Section 106 Agreement to protect the village.

A note from Cllr Suffling was read out thanking Parish Councillors for their kindness on his finishing volunteer cutting of the Hunworth Greens.

4. Close Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting and the meeting closed at 7.10pm