

Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday 2nd September 2025 in Stansfield Village Hall

Present: Cllrs: R Barnes (Chair), Spillett, Slater, Ball, Corlett, P Barnes. About 30 members of the public, plus Cllr Bobby Bennett(Suffolk County Council) and Insp. Ben Hollands and Sgt Jordan Marlow (Suffolk Police.) Also one member of the Press.

Apologies: accepted from : A Pallett (Vice Chair away on holiday), A Lines (Clerk)
Cllr P Barnes agreed to take the meeting notes.

1. **The Chair welcomed** everyone to the meeting called by the Parish Council to discuss incidents of loose dogs threatening and causing fear to residents, and an incident involving the killing of 35 sheep in the village.
The local MP Nick Timothy had been invited, but was unable to attend and instead was offering a special meeting with parish councillors and residents.
The Chair advised that the meeting was being recorded by Cllr P Barnes.
2. There were no declarations of interest or any dispensation requests.
3. **The Minutes of the Parish Council Annual General Meeting held on 14th May 2025** were approved and signed as a true record.
4. **Reports.**
 - i) Inspector Ben Hollands of Suffolk Police apologised both personally and on behalf of his organisation for the police force not having acted sooner and in a more robust manner when complaints about attacks by loose dogs had been reported by residents and the parish council. He gave a timeline of the receipt of reports stretching from 6th May to the major incident on 18 July, including two earlier attacks on sheep. The Community Resolution Order (see details later*) imposed on 10th July with strict measures intended to prevent further incidents, should have been imposed earlier. As well as a delay in investigations starting, many Police officers were not well versed in rural crime matters and training was now in progress. The amount of oversight by senior officers was also being examined. He apologised for these failings.
Insp Hollands also outlined several Laws applicable to offences of causing fear, dogs being loose, and attacks on livestock...much of which did not carry the power to seize dogs or arrest owners. He assured residents that the dogs would not be returning to the village.

II) Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner: Cllr P Barnes read out a report which confirmed that Police were *“..aware of previous reports involving the dogs and it is accepted that the initial police response did not reflect the seriousness of the situation and should have prompted a more robust and timely intervention.”*

The Community Resolution Order conditions* included ...*"compensation to the farmer, secure fencing, and control measures for two dogs"*. The Suffolk Constabulary is taking steps to upskill the Response and Investigation Teams on rural crime matters and to spread awareness amongst all officers of the resources and expertise available through the Rural Crime Team. *" These changes are essential to ensure that future incidents are handled with the urgency and seriousness they deserve."*

The issue *"...of giving the Police powers to take preventative action early, when serious threats are flagged up by a community, would be an issue for Government to take up."*

5. Public Forum:

Many members of the public, largely residents in and around Stansfield parish, took the opportunity to ask questions. One resident said that there had been incidents going back to February involving the two dogs. Not all incidents had been reported to the Police, and some incidents that had been reported had not appeared in the Timeline given by Inspector Hollands. Several people described being threatened or attacked by the dogs in their gardens, out on walks or when in their cars. One concerned children.

Could the Parish Council have been more pro active in passing details of incidents to the Police? Assurance was given that all information received from many interactions with residents affected was passed on, and chase-ups were made. Police confirmed that the PC had been in lengthy communication to pass on information, especially from residents reluctant to report direct.

The best number to report incidents to Police was 101, but if an attack was in progress then 999 should be used.

One issue raised was the difficulty in obtaining conclusive proof that dogs in question had committed the damage found. Insp. Hollands said that the high cost of obtaining DNA evidence was a factor.

Had checks been made that the conditions of the Community Resolution Order been carried out? Insp. Hollands spoke about the large workload of officers involved.

Could a shepherd or farmer shoot dogs attacking livestock? Sgt. Marlow said there was a defence for this action but it was advisable to take footage of the animals in the act first. Police can seize or shoot dogs if they see them in the act.

There was some discussion about the alleged breed of the two dogs concerned and their suitability for domestic private ownership, as Kennel Club advice was that they needed considerable amounts of training.

The shepherd said he had not only lost a great number of sheep but also the large investment made in his breeding programme for the future. And he was faced with a large vet's and clearing up bills. The Chair offered great sympathy on behalf of all present.

6. Stansfield parish councillors discussed **actions to be taken** following this meeting including holding a meeting with the local MP concerning possible legislation changes. The PC is also working with Police, SALC and The Police and Crime Commissioner to improve the way councils can communicate Threats to a Community to the Police to improve the chances of prevention of incidents. A draft mechanism for reporting is being worked on. A local charity called Lightwave had contacted the PC to offer support to anyone affected by the incidents. Tel: 07974613978.

The meeting was closed at 8.16pm and attendees were then afforded the opportunity to speak informally with Police about the matters raised.

PMB 2nd September 2025