

STRADBROKE PARISH COUNCIL

Guide to Parish Councils

How your Parish Council works



This document is a guide to how Stradbroke Parish Council, its Councillors and officers work together to ensure that Stradbroke is well served by its Council.



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Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StradbrokePC>

Suffolk County Council website: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/>

Mid Suffolk District Council website: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/>

With thanks to:

General

1. Stradbroke Parish Council is your local authority and it is a legal entity in its own right.
2. The number of Councillors on the Parish Council was set by the District Council at 13.
3. The residents of Stradbroke elect the Councillors every four years – if there are not enough Councillors elected, then additional Councillors can be co-opted (appointed) by the Parish Council at the first meeting after the election. Elections were last held on 2nd May 2023.
4. Parish Councillors are unpaid and they volunteer their time to improve the Parish and maintain it as a sustainable place in which to live and do business.
5. The Parish Council elects a Chairman and Vice Chairman annually at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May.
6. Stradbroke Parish Councillors are all local people. They are rightly bound by a nationally agreed Code of Conduct, which draws upon the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life – Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. Councillors will always endeavour to exhibit these principles in their own behaviour, and will actively promote and robustly support these principles and will be willing to challenge poor behaviour whenever it occurs.
7. If a Parish Councillor resigns during the 4 year term a notice is posted of the vacancy. 10 electors within Stradbroke can call for an election to fill the vacancy by writing to Mid Suffolk District Council. If no election is called then the Parish Council may co-opt.

Responsibilities

1. The Parish Council owns some property and land in the Parish. It holds these assets on behalf of the community and is responsible for maintaining their value.
2. Like other types of local authorities, it has obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and the Data Protection Act 2018.
3. In May 2023, the Council voted to adopt the General Power of Competence. What does this mean? In **simple** terms, it gives councils the **power** to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation.
4. The Parish Council does have specific statutory duties and quite a variety of powers. Unlike other types of local authorities, there are relatively few statutory functions imposed upon it but these are important and relate to, for example, the holding of meetings, the management of its finances and the preparation of annual accounts.
5. Parish Council's powers and duties include:
 - Management and maintenance of land as open spaces and for public recreation.
 - Management of the Cemetery and closed Churchyard.
 - Management of footpath cutting on behalf of Suffolk County Council.
 - Management of street cleaning on behalf of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - Ensuring that land and buildings owned by the Parish Council are properly used and managed.
 - Provision of small community grants.
 - Provision and maintenance of litter bins and dog waste bins.
 - Provision and maintenance of the parish noticeboard.
 - Maintenance and management of the Parish Council assets*.
 - Submitting comments on planning applications as a consultee of Mid Suffolk

District Council.

- Ensuring the Neighbourhood Plan is fully recognised at all stages of planning applications.
- Promoting public participation in all Parish Council meetings.
- Being accessible and communicating with local people.
- Dealing with enquiries and complaints speedily and efficiently.
- Encouraging and developing contact with local groups and organisations.
- Maintaining and developing strong relationships with statutory bodies, including Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council, Environment Agency and Suffolk Police.

***Parish Council assets:**

Health Centre, War Memorial, Playing Field at Wilby Road & Community Shed, Cemetery, Green at Westhall and play equipment. Lease for play area next to the Community Centre. Also: old BT phone kiosk, public access defibrillator, benches, litter bins and dog waste bins, plus various signs and items connected to street cleaning. The Leisure Centre is owned by the Parish Council but Mid Suffolk District Council is responsible for its maintenance and insurance.

What the Parish Council is **not responsible for:**

Suffolk County Council	Mid Suffolk District Council
Birth, marriage & death registration	Collection of council tax & business rates
Education	Environmental health
Fire	Housing
Highways – including parking & lighting	Leisure Centres *
Libraries	Local plans & planning applications
Recreation, arts & museums	Public Conveniences
Social care	Waste Collection
Strategic planning	
Trading standards	
Transport	
Waste Disposal	

*The Leisure Centre in Stradbroke is owned by the Parish Council but is leased to Mid Suffolk District Council.

Decision Making

1. The Parish Council operates much like any other local authority in that most decisions about what the Council does are taken during meetings by Councillors.
2. Although the public has a right, and is most welcome to attend meetings of a parish council and its committees, it is the Councillors who collectively make decisions about council business and what services or facilities it provides.
3. Decisions are taken by voting by all Councillors present, if there is a tie in any vote, the Chair of the meeting has a casting vote.
4. Time is set aside at each meeting to allow external input, not just from the public but also the local District Councillor and County Councillor if they are able to attend.

5. There are times when discussions at the Parish Council meeting must take place in closed sessions; this usually happens when discussing staffing matters or items that are commercially sensitive (such as quotes and tenders for work). The minutes of these sessions will reflect the decisions reached in as much detail as possible.
6. The full Parish Council usually meets on the second Monday of the month in the Court House on Queens Street. Occasionally an extraordinary meeting is called. Details of all upcoming Council meetings are on the homepage of the Council's website.
7. The Parish Council works to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which are the rules by which it operates and conducts its business. These are based on model standing orders prepared by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).
8. In addition, the Council develops its own policies that are approved by Councillors at Parish Council or Committee meetings. All policies can be viewed on the Parish Council's website at: [Meetings & Documents - Policies](#)
9. The Council has 3 committees: Finance & Premises, Planning and Personnel, the committees can have some delegated authority and Terms of Reference are drawn up to reflect this.
10. The Council also establishes Working Groups to undertake specific projects on behalf of the Council. With Task & Finish Groups undertaking a specific task through to completion.

Staff

1. The Parish Council employs a part time Clerk who currently works 25 hours per week.
2. The Clerk to the Council is also the Parish Council's Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer. The Clerk administers the Parish Council's business and must carry out all the functions required by law.
3. Mid Suffolk District Council grant funds a Street Cleaner for 8.5 hours per week who is employed by the Parish Council.
4. The Parish Council also uses contractors for a number of tasks and services including maintenance and repair at the Health Centre and parish-wide grass cutting and hedge maintenance.
5. Contact details for the Clerk are on page 2 and for all Councillors can be found on the Parish Council's website at: [About the PC - Councillor Details](#)

Communication

1. The Parish Council strives to be open, transparent and accessible to local people through effective communication.
2. Like other village groups, the Parish Council reports to the residents each year at the Annual Parish Meeting.
3. Given the importance of effective communication with parish residents and the media, the Parish Council:
 - Maintains the Parish Council's website (www.stradbrokepc.org), providing information about the Parish Council.
 - Runs a Parish Council Facebook page which has recordings of Parish Council meetings where a recording is available: [Parish Council Facebook page](#)
 - Undertakes public consultations on major projects.
 - Posts regular news of Council initiatives on the website and Facebook page.

- Ensures the training needs of both Councillors and staff are met.
- Invites representatives of outside agencies to address the Parish Council on key matters of interest.
- Appoints representatives to appropriate external committees and agencies.
- Attends relevant conferences and meetings.
- Liaises with village organisations and businesses as appropriate.
- Publishes a summary of each Parish Council meeting in the Stradbroke Monthly which is delivered to every household once a month.

Planning

1. In 2019, the residents of Stradbroke voted in a referendum to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan prepared by the Parish Council. This document is used to guide planning in Stradbroke. A formal review of the Plan is currently underway. The Neighbourhood Plan, its supporting documents and all the evidence used to produce it can be viewed on the Parish Council's website at: [Meetings & Documents - Neighbourhood Plan Documents](#).
2. The Neighbourhood Plan now forms part of the policy documents which Mid Suffolk must refer to when considering a planning application. The Parish Council can **only comment** on planning applications. The final decision is made by Mid Suffolk District Council **not** the Parish Council.
3. As Stradbroke has an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, 25% of the contributions made by developers towards infrastructure improvements through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is paid to the Parish Council.
4. The Neighbourhood Plan identified infrastructure improvements that are needed in Stradbroke. An audit of local groups and organisations took place and was updated in 2020 and again in 2021; this helped in the preparation of a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan (PIIP). This plan is reviewed on an annual basis.
5. The PIIP identifies the projects that are needed and the implementation plan highlights who will be involved and funding sources. The PIIP and its audits can be viewed on the Parish Council's website at: [Meetings & Documents - Parish Plans](#)



Playing field at Wilby Road, with Leisure Centre and Community Shed.

Finances

How the Parish Council raises income

1. The Parish Council prepares a budget each year to review the revenue it needs to fulfill its responsibilities.
2. The Parish Council can raise revenue to help meet its spending needs by issuing a 'precept'. This is a figure set by the Parish Council and collected by Mid Suffolk through the Council Tax.
3. The precept is usually reported by showing how much the charge is per Band D property. The average Parish Council annual Band D charge for 2024/25 in England is £85.89, in Stradbroke the annual Band D charge for 2024/25 is £71.35.
4. The Parish Council is the Burial Authority and operates the Cemetery on the Laxfield Road. There is income derived from burial fees and this income is used to offset the maintenance costs incurred.
5. The Parish Council also receives income from renting the Health Centre to the Fressingfield Medical Practice.
6. Suffolk County Council pays a grant towards the cutting of the footpaths.
7. Mid Suffolk pays the Parish Council a grant towards street cleaning.
8. Mid Suffolk also collects contributions made by developers towards infrastructure improvements and pays this to the Parish Council through CIL.
9. Both County & District Councillors can give money towards projects run by the Parish Council; an example is a contribution towards the cost of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.
10. Occasionally, the Parish Council receives donations from members of the public or village groups towards a specific project.



Health Centre – Wilby Road



Cemetery – Laxfield Road

How the Parish Council spends the income

1. Administration & general expenditure

- Administration: Staff & Office costs
- Subscriptions: Information Commissioner's Office, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks.
- Governance: cost of meetings, election costs, insurance, audit fees, legal fees etc
- Other: Wreath for Remembrance Day and other grants/donations to village groups.

2. Grass cutting, tree works and ditch maintenance

- Both Westhall and Wilby Road greens and play areas
- Footpaths
- Permissive Path to Cemetery
- Area outside of Fitness Track at Wilby Road plus a contribution to the cutting of the main grassed area.
- Cemetery and Churchyard
- Hedge cutting also carried out
- Tree works are carried out on land owned or managed by the Parish Council
- Ditches are maintained on land owned or managed by the Parish Council.

3. Recreation

- Inspection, repair and maintenance of all play equipment at Wilby Road and Westhall Play Parks as well as the fitness track around the playing field at the Wilby Road site.

4. Street cleaning and bins

- Mid Suffolk funds a street cleaner through a cleansing grant paid to the Parish Council.
- Parish Council buys the rubbish bags, protective equipment and maintains the cart.
- Parish Council pays Mid Suffolk to empty the litter bins and the dog litter bins.

5. Health Centre

- The Health Centre is leased to Fressingfield Medical Practice who operate a branch surgery from the building.
- The Parish Council is responsible for ensuring that the whole building is properly maintained, insured and that the contractually required health & safety/risk assessments are carried out.

6. Community Shed & Other assets

- Parish Council insures and maintains the community shed building.
- The Users pay an annual service charge to help cover the running costs
- Parish Council maintains the War Memorial, phone kiosk and other assets.

7. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- CIL is charged on some building work in the Parish. It is collected by Mid Suffolk and paid to the Parish Council.
- A PIIP was drawn up to help Councillors decide on the most urgent need for the CIL.