

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Annual General Meeting
of the Suffolk Preservation Society
On Wednesday 10th December 2025 at 6pm
at Little Hall, Market Place, Lavenham**

PRESENT: Robert Townshend (RT) (Chairman)
Karl Debenham (KD) (Treasurer)
William Dunn (WD)
Jonathan Benson (Member)
Nick Reid (Member)
Sara Fox (Aldeburgh Town Council)
Peter Hill (Aldeburgh Town Council)

Via Teams: 16 Members

In attendance: Penny Rush (PR) (Office Manager)

Agenda Item No.	AGENDA ITEM
1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>RT welcomed everyone to the meeting including those attending online.</p>
2.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Lois Hunt (Trustee) Anna Forrest (Member) Tom Foakes (Director) Juliet Gordon (Member) Josephine Rogers (Member) Geoffrey Probert (President)</p>
3.	<p>Chairman's address</p> <p>The Chairman reported that early in 2025 the trustees were alerted to a serious situation involving the Society's financial position that came to light and materially impacted each of the financial years 2021 to 2024. In particular it transpired that during the period that Covid-19 restrictions were in place and continuing thereafter, significant sums have been diverted from</p>

	<p>the Society without authorization, including numerous payments out of the Society's bank account. The total amount is in excess of £123k in respect of the four years 2021 to 2024, with other years also impacted.</p> <p>The matter was immediately reported to the Police, and investigations continue with the involvement of specialist officers. An employee of the Society was immediately suspended and subsequently dismissed. The Charity Commission was promptly informed and the Society has been in regular contact since. The Commission has acknowledged that the matter is being addressed appropriately.</p> <p>As well as the financial loss, the impact on the Society's administration has been considerable, including the loss or destruction of almost all of the financial records. The financial data and materials put before the trustees were not authentic and contrary to the trustees' understanding and belief, had not been independently examined. Consequently, it has been necessary to reconstruct Annual Accounts for the years 2021 to 2024 relying exclusively on copy bank statements and other external sources. Therefore, whilst the trustees are confident that the Society's total income and expenditure are correct, the constituent elements have been assessed to the best of the trustees' ability on what was available.</p> <p>The Chairman noted he was unable to disclose any further information due to the ongoing police investigations by Suffolk Police.</p>
4.	<p>Minutes of the AGM meeting on 14th June 2024</p> <p>The Chairman asked the meeting attendees to approve the minutes. Karl Debenham proposed and Thomas Seymour seconded. They were unanimously approved.</p>
5.	<p>Approval of Accounts 2021-2024</p> <p>The Chairman asked the meeting attendees to approve the accounts for the years ending, 2021, 2022, 2023 & 2024, previously approved by the Trustees on 25th November 2025. Simon Sturgis proposed and Thomas Seymour seconded. They were unanimously approved.</p>
6.	<p>Re-election of Trustees</p> <p>The Chairman noted that Lois Hunt and Karl Debenham were up for re-election for a further term of office in accordance with the constitution. The Chairman thanked them for their continued support. Simon Sturgis proposed and Thomas Seymour seconded and they were unanimously duly re-elected.</p>
7.	<p>Re-Appointment of Independent Examiners</p> <p>The Chairman brought forward the motion to authorize the trustees to appoint independent examiners to hold office until the conclusion of the next AGM, and pending such appointment to re-appoint Walter Wright on an interim basis. Nick Reid proposed and Will Dunn seconded and it was unanimously agreed.</p>
8.	<p>Introduction to the New Director</p> <p>The Chairman informed the meeting that due to an unexpected family bereavement on Monday morning Tom Foakes, the newly appointed Director was unable to attend the meeting and introduce himself. The Chairman advised that Tom would have the opportunity to talk about his vision for the Society at the next AGM in June 2026. Simon Sturgis noted that following a recent Board meeting where Tom had presented his vision for the Society he was greatly encouraged and impressed with the new team of Tom Foakes and Penny Rush, Office Manager and felt</p>

	<p>positive about the future of the Society, this was endorsed by the Chairman. Simon Sturgis also proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, the Treasurer and Thomas Seymour for all their efforts in dealing with the issues created by the maladministration.</p>
9.	<p>Members' questions to the Director and Trustees</p> <p>Nick Reid asked what was being done as to recovery of funds. The Chairman confirmed that this was being addressed by the trustees, and that Suffolk Police were intent on pursuing the criminal investigation, and that proceedings were expected to follow.</p> <p>The Chairman concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and noted that Tom and Penny would be sending out a programme of events for 2026 at the beginning of January.</p> <p>There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6:20pm.</p>