

SUFFOLK VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting - Minutes

Monday 13th July 2026, online via Cisco Webex

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Attendees

Bury Bobcats - Erika L, Cairo I, Sam L
Claydon High - A Wilshaw (For 4-a-side and Team Suffolk sections)
Ipswich Ravens - Amy S
Newmarket - Nathan D
Seagulls - Steve H
Stowmarket - Andrew W

Apologies

Ipswich Raven - Dom M
Ipswich VC - Chris W
Newmarket VC & Castle Manor - Rob D
Abi W-S (Secretary)

Minutes of 2025 AGM

These were accepted as an accurate record.

Matters arising since 2025 AGM

See below for more detail on each

Inter-school 4-a-side events – rotational / positional / backcourt / substitution rules

[Briefing Note on 4-a-side schools volleyball in Suffolk](#) explains background to the inter-school events we deliver in partnership with Suffolk PE & Sport Network, some national context and a proposal for rule and officiating changes for 2026-27.

Ahead of the meeting support for the proposal had been received from Rob D (Castle Manor) and U Szczech (St Benedict's).

Ahead of the AGM, A Wilshaw asked whether the new serving rules could make the games longer and thus fixtures longer for staff and students? Andrew had replied:

You are right that not allowing some games to be dominated by one server will lead to longer games, however, when we have five or seven teams on one court we often require games on the other court to complete before the next game can proceed. No longer allowing timeouts will slightly shorten some games and compensate. With these changes close games won't be significantly longer than they currently are.

Another tool we use to keep control of event length is omitting cross-over semi-finals and jumping straight to finals.

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Another thing I've considered to keep control of the time is limiting events to six rather than eight teams. This would often mean your third teams miss out.

Volleyball England advocate games of 6-8 minutes for Volley4s. The crowd I grew up playing with never liked timed games so, while they make scheduling easier, we've never resorted to timed games. There are adult tournaments nearby which are timed though, so I'm not against switching if we are finding we can't complete the fixtures around 5:30pm.

If you think we should go with timed games for initial 2026-27 events to try to ensure we don't have to skip cross-over semi-finals, and can still accommodate eight teams per event, I'm happy to propose that.

A Wilshaw had discussed the possibility of timed matches with some other teachers. There is a preference for games played to a specific number of points.

Agreed we will implement the proposal and aid to application from the briefing note for 2026-27, continuing with playing to a specific number of points. If we're regularly unable to accommodate the fixtures for seven or eight teams on two badminton courts in the after-school slots available, we could restrict events to six teams.

A Wilshaw had asked whether we could produce videos demonstrating the new rules. The Suffolk VA Committee could not commit to this but **hope to offer an officiating workshop in September open to likely players.**

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Team Suffolk restart

Ahead of the meeting, a [briefing paper describing the current status of plans for Team Suffolk to be restarted](#) was shared. Plans are led by Cairo and supported by a number of eager volunteers.

The paper also includes two options for the Suffolk VA to overcome the challenge of insufficient fully-qualified coaches in Suffolk.

1. Employ a remote coach... They could have a call / calls with interested parents, players and the assistant coaches to find out what they all want to get from the sessions then plan the sessions for the assistant to deliver
2. Stick to pretty basic stuff, such as that covered in the Let's Play Volleyball framework, using pretty standard session plans and work with Volleyball England to see if they're happy with the risks and for the sessions to go ahead under their insurance without an L2 coach involved.

An additional three other options were discussed during the meeting

3. Not attempting to restart in 2026-27 and instead supporting Asst. Coaches to become Coach qualified
4. Paying a supervisor - Andrew has one idea of someone we could approach
5. Inviting guest coaches

The commitment required to become fully qualified was discussed with Amy sharing her current experience. Most of the Asst. Coaches interested in helping with the Team Suffolk restart are focussed on playing at the highest level they can and don't want to switch focus to become coaches.

Cairo is leaning towards option 5 and has contacts in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire plus Chris Watson. Andrew offered to put Cairo in contact with potential coaches from Essex.

Nathan advised that developing a performance group of those aged around 16 was difficult in Team Suffolk's initial incarnation; GCSEs, and part-time jobs take a lot of attention. However, greater retention was seen with the younger group once they progressed to a similar age.

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Facilities

Planning applications have been approved for rebuilds of the following schools, including replacing their sports halls.

1. Ormiston Sudbury Academy
2. East Bergholt High
3. Hagleigh High
4. Thurston Community College

These are all planned to be 18m x 33m (same as St Alban's, Northgate, Newmarket) rather than Sport England's updated 20m x 34.5m which allows for side-by-side training courts each with 1m service zone at each end.

When we noticed the 18m width, we consulted [Keith Nicholls](#). He noticed they also all incorporate natural light in the designs despite Badminton England, Table Tennis England, English Gymnastics (which covers trampolining as well as other forms) and Volleyball England all having advice against it.

The Department for Education are funding the rebuilds. According to the Design and Access Statement for Thurston, the DfE's specification "places strong emphasis on the quality of the learning environment, particularly in terms of daylighting and ventilation". We have not yet learnt whether this explicitly includes the sports halls or whether the company awarded the contracts is assuming daylight is best everywhere without considering the consequences.

Additionally, the following are part of the government's Schools Rebuilding Programme (SRP) and affected by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). They are targeted for rebuild before end of 2029:

- Farlingaye High (Woodbridge)
- Claydon High
- Stowupland High

Due to the need to deal with the RAAC problems urgently in #2, #3 and #4, plans are being rushed through and the DfE say they do not have budget to build larger sports halls so are replacing like-for-like. We expect this to be the same for the above three.

In addition to the size and natural light problems, court markings and anchors for equipment are also a concern. When planning permission was granted for Sudbury, a condition was included to require the applicant to submit details of the proposed court markings for review. The court marking plans submitted did not include volleyball or netball. They were approved none-the-less. No similar condition has been applied at Thurston. We have not checked East Bergholt or Hadleigh.

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We have been engaging in a variety of ways:

- Steve engaged with staff and councillors at East Bergholt prior to grant of planning permission - we hope they take on board his recommendations re. court markings, anchors and equipment
- Cairo has been engaging with
 - Sudbury head teacher and other teachers re. court markings and anchors (no response)
 - Thurston community use staff ahead of grant of planning permission re. size, natural light, court markings, anchors and equipment
- Andrew has been engaging with
 - Council staff covering 1-4 plus Claydon and Stowupland
 - PE staff at Farlingaye and Claydon
 - Community use staff at Stowupland
 - Active Suffolk
 - Volleyball England

The following are also in the SRP. Timescales for their rebuilds are less clear. The first two have been subject to consultations to determine whether the rebuilt school should have increased capacity.

- Castle Manor Academy (Haverhill)
- Ormiston Endeavour Academy (Ipswich – Whitton)
- Samuel Ward Academy (Haverhill)

Continued effort is required to secure the best possible outcomes at the above schools.

In addition to the people we are already aware of that we can contact, Nathan recommended contacting RH in Thurston PE department who could be a useful ally.

Review of 2025-26

Chair's report - Andrew

See [Report from Chair 2025-26.pdf](#) which was circulated in advance.

Andrew highlighted the following areas:

- Forthcoming Assistant Coach course
- Eastern Region Championship
- Ron Ames Cup - alignment with Cambridgeshire rules
 - There was agreement that playing to 21 instead of 25 in sets 1-4 was a good change. Andrew to ask Abi to incorporate in our published rules
 - Steve asked whether this would also apply to women's games. Andrew stated the rules would be available on our website should we choose to use them for ladies, but fixture format can be decided by participating teams if competitions emerge

Treasurer's report – Steve

See <https://www.suffolkvolleyball.org.uk/home/meetings-and-reports/>

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Other committee member reports

None provided

Club reports

Bury Bobcats

Sam shared:

- The challenges the club had to deal with after Abbycroft notified them the sports hall at Bury St Edmunds LC would be unavailable for a large part of the season.
- This led to opportunities as the club explored other venues. They're happily using Culford which is ~20m wide and now has equipment for two parallel six-a-side courts. They're also happily using the slider system with shallow net down the length of Thurston's hall for beginners / intermediates on Monday with greater capacity than the competition court plus small court arrangement they use at Bury St Eds LC
- Possibility that much of the club's future activity will be away from Bury St Edmunds LC which has only had weekday availability on Thursdays and Fridays.
- Excited about possibility of a more normal season and prospect of regenerating competitive ladies and men's teams.

Cairo & Erika shared

- Potential expansion of beginner sessions with four more Asst. Coaches
- Rejection of Men's NVL application due to lack of 3R level referee

The club believe they're not far from being accepted into NVL.

Andrew asked which venues they had stated they would use for NVL. Skyliner and Stowupland. Andrew commented Stowupland isn't really big enough (although Stowmarket VC were allowed to play there for many years) and doesn't have post padding. Sam mentioned the height was not adjustable on the Skyliner posts at his last visit Andrew suggested South Lee as an alternative.

Andrew also stated that the 3+2 net arrangement at Bury St Edmunds LC had the potential for even greater capacity than Thurston with the slider system if floor plugs are serviceable and nets still available. Bury LC has a greater catchment not requiring travel via car.

Seagulls

Steady season with ten or eleven committed players for regular training. One-and-a-half members attending Asst. Coach course.

Ipswich Ravens

Amy highlighted:

- Success of dedicated ladies' sessions and mentioned potential changes in men's team training schedules.
- Really high numbers for the beginners / intermediate sessions on Saturday mornings as well this season, The club usually sees a dip after Christmas because of mock exams / St Alban's hall availability. In the past the club has booked more expensive venues during this period but didn't do this year. When they reconvened after their break, numbers stayed really high.

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Ipswich VC

Andrew exchanged messages with Chris W. Eric is retiring. Future of the club very much in question.

Stowmarket

Club continues to run three sessions

- Volley2s (Wednesdays) - pretty stable
- Open session (Sundays) - Isaac and Mike stepped up to help lead after Tom stepped back. Isaac likely to move away for uni. Isla on Asst. Coach course; we hope she will begin to help lead small groups
- Men's competitive (Wednesdays) - Some players leaving for uni so another season of regeneration ahead

Newmarket

The following update was not provided during the meeting but has been received since:

Newmarket have achieved an amazing club milestone by retaining both teams in the NVL, our division 2 team fought until the last game of the season falling just short of MK City in the promotion battle. Our division 3 team started the season unbeaten but saw a difficult run of away fixtures stretching the squad to its limits. The final away was where the club found out the fate of the team; surviving relegation following new regulations.

Newmarket continue to develop competitive teams in the NVL for Suffolk players while also looking to make a return to the local scene for the upcoming season.

Resolutions

- **Approve 2025-26 accounts & treasurer's report** - approved unanimously
- **Approve 2025-25 chair's report** - approved unanimously

Election of officers

The following were elected unanimously:

- **Chairperson** - Andrew Whitefield
- **Treasurer** - Steve Hicks
- **Junior Development Officer** - Andrew Whitefield
- **Ladies Officer** - Amy Scrivener
- **Website Officer** - Steve Hicks
- **Data Protection Officer** - Andrew Whitefield
- **Committee Members** - Cairo Ivatt, Sam Langley, Erika Lazar

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- Andrew contacted Rob Dovaston at conclusion of the meeting to ask whether he wishes to continue

Plans for 2026-27

Goals

Andrew plans to focus on facilities and supporting Cairo with Team Suffolk re-launch this year

Fees

Agreed to hold at same level as 2025-26 to allow SVA to continue to pay Abi for Ron Ames Cup admin.

Likely entrants for Ron Ames Cup

- 1 x Bury, second team possible if don't have to commit to early
- 1 x Stowmarket?
- 1 x Ravens?
- 1 x Newmarket?

Date for committee / fixtures meetings

Entries for Ron Ames Cup by mid-Sept, Abi to propose fixtures without need for a meeting if possible.

Facilities / Team Suffolk will determine need for committee meeting.

Any other business

None