

WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of a meeting of Westleton Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 27 January 2025 in Westleton Village Hall.

Ian Haines
Clerk of the Council

There were Present

Cllr Andrew Turner (Chairman), Cllr Julian Alexander, Cllr Barry Banks, Cllr Colin Fisher, Cllr J French, Cllr Paul Holmes, Cllr John Matthews, Cllr Nick Shearme, Cllr I Webber, Cllr David Watson

In Attendance

Cllr Richard Smith (SCC for minutes 25/1 – 25/5 only)
Cllr Paul Ashton (ESC for minutes 25/1 – 25/5 only)
Ian Haines (Clerk)

25/1 Introductory remarks and apologies for absence:

An apology was received from Cllr Ian Johnson (Vice Chair).

25/2 Declaration of interests

Council members to declare possible interests they may have in any items on the agenda, either pecuniary or non-pecuniary and to consider requests of dispensation.

Cllrs A Turner to receive cheque reimbursement from the Parish Council - see minute 25/8.

25/3 Open Public Forum – Contributions from Members of the Public

There were no members of the public present.

25/4 Pre Agenda Report from SCC Councillor

Local Government Reform – Cllr Smith provided a current update. [It was noted that SALC are also issuing regular briefs on the emerging picture].

The County Council are intending to set their Council Tax increase at 4.99% for 2025/26 – made up of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% dedicated to funding social care.

Noted that consideration of the planning application for the Medical Waste Incinerator at Hinton has been further put back.

25/5 Pre Meeting Report from ESC Councillor

Cllr Paul Ashton gave an update on the District Council's budget setting process for 2025/26.

The District Council are carefully monitoring the Government's Devolution proposals. A further announcement is imminent covering the Suffolk and Norfolk reform.

Reference was also made to the recent consultation carried out by the Government on the National Planning Policy Framework.

25/6 Minutes of Previous Meeting – 25 November 2024

It was **agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2024 be accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

25/7 Matters Arising from the Minutes 25 November 2024

None.

25/8 Council Finances and Accounts

(a) **Parish Council Bank Accounts held with Barclays** – the Clerk reported that he had spoken to the Barclays Business Team about obtaining online access in order to have the ability to view only the accounts and arrangements are in hand. Enquiries had also been made about the possibility of transferring money from the Business 'Premium' Account (our Reserves) so that a better rate of interest is earned. However, Barclays had stated that an account needed to have over £100,000 in it before an improved interest rate could be offered/obtained. **Agreed** that the Finance Sub Committee should look at other options for switching/transferring monies held in the 'Premium' Savings account over to a new alternative bank. However, we would maintain our existing 'Current' account with Barclays as this fulfilled a necessary flexible function as far as the Parish Council's finances and transactions was concerned.

(b) **Income 2024/25** - Income to date was acknowledged and approved.

(c) **Expenditure 2024/25** - Expenditures to date were acknowledged and approved.

(d) **Bank balances** as at 23 December noted:-

Current	£58,573.33	
Savings	£25,152.93	
Total Bank Balance	£83,726.26	

Invoices and Payments – The following invoices were **agreed** for payment:-

From	Item	Amount
Ian Haines	Clerk expenses (£65.90) & salary (£770.90) – Dec	£836.80
NJB Contractors	Level out footpath on Common (Black Slough area)	£619.50
Andrew Turner	Purchase of new PC laptop in Black Friday sale	£329.00
John Bebbington	Reimburse expenses for Common catering	£19.31
Toilets+ Ltd	Common 2/12 - 4/12	£157.20*
Guy McGregor Assoc	Production of Payslips (qtr)	£16.20
Leiston Press	Dog signs for War Memorial	£87.60*
Ian Haines	Clerk expenses (£79.90) & salary (£770.90) – Jan	£850.80
Westleton Garage	X2 invoices Fuel for WG's & service of generator	£199.53
Westleton Village Hall	Room Hire	£85.00
Jonathan Alexander	Repairs to Playing Field/Equipment	£992.00

* Payment made by Direct Debit

25/9 Feedback from Working Parties

(a) **Common** – Cllr N Shearme reported that Natural England had raised no objection to the idea of creating a new footpath route from Black Slough to the top of

the nearby ridge. NJB Contractors to now be contacted to undertake the work as per their previous quote.

- (b) A temporary repair has been carried out to the damaged information board whilst Geo Suffolk provide a replacement.
- (c) Noted that a Working Party had been held the previous week and the group had completed further gorse clearance. Cllr Shearme intends to contact Mark Collins again with a view to additional fire breaks being created in the northern area.
- (d) Cllr I Webber reported that Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths had very kindly offered to provide and install some new seats/benches free of charge on the site. The Parish Council recorded their thanks for this gesture.
- (e) **Community Field** – Cllr P Holmes reported that, unfortunately, the recent gales had torn away the roof felt on the storage sheds and this had also exposed problems with rotting timber which needed replacing. He had obtained an estimate of £990.00 (including materials and labour) from Jonathan Alexander for undertaking the required repairs and it was **agreed** that arrangements be put in place to carry out the work asap.

The new carousel is set to be installed on Saturday, 15th February. The Parish Council have successfully obtained a grant of £879.94 towards the cost from the East Suffolk Council Outdoor Playing Space Fund.

Donations of £52.41 had recently been banked. The idea of setting up arrangements so that visitors can make donations by the use of a QR code will be rolled out. Action: Cllrs B Banks & I Johnson [with input/assistance from Paul Shore].

Cllr C Fisher had circulated details of an estimate provided by UK Power Networks of £17,000 (exclusive of VAT) for carrying out works to provide a three phase 100A electric connection to the Playing Field entrance. This is in association with an idea previously been mooted of electric vehicle charging points being installed in the car park area as per a separate quote/set of options provided by GreenfutureEnergy Ltd. It was reported that the Clerk had established that CIL monies *could* be used for the purpose. However, the Parish Council were mindful that this was a big outlay, and a decision had still to be taken as to whether there was really the demand for such a facility and if, indeed, it was seen a suitable location. Furthermore, if UKPN are not the only possible installer, alternative quotes need to be sought. It was **agreed** that Cllr Fisher would seek further clarification/details from GreenfutureEnergy and report back. The Finance Sub Committee will then need to meet to assess and make a recommendation on whether or not to proceed given that there are other projects and priorities which the Parish Council have in the pipeline.

- (f) **Allotments** – as previously reported, the Parish Council are looking to negotiate with David Watson over a specific site. The Allotment Sub Committee will need to convene to take forward negotiations. In the meantime, the Clerk was asked to contact people who had previously responded to the survey (carried out in May 2022) in order to establish that there is still sufficient local interest.
- (g) **Affordable Housing** – Cllr C Fisher reported that Orwell Housing Association (OHA) had presented their plans at the village consultation event on 9th December. The event had been well supported. OHA are reviewing the

comments/feedback received and a final meeting of the Affordable Housing Group will be held to discuss the results. OHA then hope to submit final plans for the scheme to East Suffolk Council for determination.

25/10 Planning applications

From	Item	Details
Lucarnes, Mill Street, Westleton IP17 3BD	DC/24/3636/FUL	New Consultation To build a part two-storey and part single-storey extension to the rear; replace the existing side conservatory extension with a porch; render over existing brickwork above damp proof course on main house; build a detached garden store: increase the hard standing for parking.
	Status:	Deadline for observations: 2/1/25 Response: No objections.

From	Item	Details
Walk Barn Farm, Walk Barn Lane, Westleton IP17 3BZ	DC/24/4472/FUL	1. Conversion of the Bat attic of the existing outhouse into a library, to include a new external door and winding staircase, new ribbon window in the front elevation and new rooflight in the rear roof slope. 2. Conversion of the existing small garage on the ground floor of the existing outhouse into a sauna and associated bathroom and 3. New garage adjacent to the existing outhouse to same size/design as a matching 'twin' building but with reversed roof slope.
	Status:	Deadline for observations: 5/2/25 Response: No objections.

25/11 Other Planning Matters

Cllr J Matthews advised that the Cherry Lee development is progressing, and it was understood that the estimated completion date would be August 2025. It was noted that a temporary arrangement had been set up whereby a hardstanding had been put down in the field opposite the development to allow contractors working on site to park their vehicles. Some local concern had been raised about this and there was also an issue with regard to the roadside kerb. Cllr A Turner to discuss further with the landowner.

Reference was also made with regard to the repainting of the road white lines which the County Council had recently carried out on Darsham Road in the vicinity of Clematis Close.

25/12 Tree & Footpath Warden Report

Cllr I Webber reported that a consultation had come through from ESC on plans to pollard a lime and holly tree at the Old Vicarage, Darsham Road. No objections to this were raised.

25/13 Energy Projects

Cllr A Turner advised that the Parish Council were awaiting the start of the Development Consent Order for the proposed Sealink project in order that we can then formally register ourselves as an 'interested party'.

25/14 Sizewell C B1125 Transport WP

Noted that the next meeting of the Northern Transport Forum will be held on 5/2/25.

25/15 New Year Fireworks

The event unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the weather forecast of high winds which meant that it would have been unsafe to proceed.

It had not proved possible to obtain a refund from the firework supplier and so, in the circumstances, rather than return the goods and obtain a credit note, a decision was taken to place the fireworks in storage (with safety advice from the provider) for use next year. This arrangement was **agreed**/endorsed.

25/16 Possible Reinstatement of Bus Service for Westleton

Cllr A Turner reported, the Parish Council's submission for the 521 service between Aldeburgh and Halesworth to be extended to incorporate a calling point in Westleton had not been supported by the County Council as the bus operator had stated there were driver working time constraints. However, it was understood that our bid/proposal for a new service linking Westleton and surrounding villages with Saxmundham and Leiston was being favourably looked at.

25/17 Parish Council Surgery - 27/1/25

Feedback was given from the drop in held earlier that day. Noted that discussions were being held with Paul Shore over undertaking improvements to the format of the Parish Council website.

25/18 Future of the White Horse Inn

In the absence of any definite announcement, we will continue to include this as an agenda so that a month by month assessment can take place.

25/19 Village Summer Fete

Cllr B Banks reported that a date for the event had now been set for **Sunday, 6th July** and he was co-ordinating arrangements as part of an Organising Committee made up from different representative groups from within the village. Agreed that Cllrs A Turner & P Holmes will act on behalf of the Parish Council.

25/20 Village archives

Cllr B Banks advised that Francis Berry is now undertaking the role and work with the assistance of volunteers has begun to digitise the records.

25/21 Clerk Annual Leave & Time Off in Lieu

Noted that the Clerk will be taking annual leave between 4-14 February and also using time off in lieu (TOIL) between 17-21 February.

25/22 Correspondence

Thank you letter received from St Peter's Church for donation – noted.

25/23 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the Council next meets at 7.30pm on Monday 24 February 2025.