

WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL

The **unapproved** minutes of a meeting of Westleton Parish Council held at 19:30 on Monday 27 October 2025 at Westleton Village Hall.

Richard Green
Clerk and RFO to Westleton Parish Council

MINUTES

25/179 Attendance and apologies for absence

In attendance

Cllr Alexander
Cllr Banks
Cllr Fisher
Cllr French
Cllr Holmes
Cllr Johnson (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Overton (from minute 25/186)
Cllr Shearme
Cllr Turner (Chair)
Cllr Watson
Cllr Webber

Apologies for absence accepted from

None

Also present

Cllr Ashton, East Suffolk Council (minute 25/179 to 25/187 inclusive)
Cllr Richard Smith, Suffolk County Council (minute 25/179 to 25/186 inclusive)
8 members of the public

25/180 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.

Cllr Watson declared an interest in relation to minutes 25/188(c) (Allotments) and 25/193 (in respect of LionLink).

25/181 Contributions from members of the public

Eight members of the public were present with two requesting to speak. One, the chair of the trustees of Westleton Village Hall requested that the Parish Council give consideration to the village hall's application to fell a sycamore tree (minute 25/189). A second member of the public voiced concerns on behalf of another resident in respect of speeding. Their comments were duly acknowledged by the Chair.

25/182 Pre-meeting report from County Councillor

Cllr Smith provided councillors with a summary document on the County Council's case for local government reform and a single unitary authority, stating that an outcome is expected in March 2026 following a public consultation in November/December. Cllr Smith stated that it will be tricky to balance the amalgamation of the current councils and upholding of business as usual. Cllr Smith further stated that it is unclear whether there will be County Council elections next May, and that an announcement is expected in January. There will be an election for a unitary mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk in May 2026, although it is as yet unclear what their policy areas will be.

Cllr Smith stated that the County Council is awaiting government suggestions regarding the exponential growth in the need for social care for young people and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, with £200m in debt being incurred in these areas. The proposals due in the autumn have been delayed and are now expected in early 2026 following the budget on 26 November. The County Council is also awaiting details of a three-year financial settlement for local government.

Cllr Smith is in the process of preparing a draft budget for 2026/27, with planned net spending in 2025/26 of £805m. He stated difficulties in delivering a balanced budget. Cllr Smith further mentioned that the first budget for a new unitary authority would be set by shadow authorities ahead of new unitary authorities being in place in 2028.

Cllr Turner raised questions regarding the B1125 extension to the Sizewell Link Road (SLR), to which Cllr Smith responded that he is due to have a meeting with Steve Merry on Friday [31 October].

Cllr Ashton believes it will be difficult to stop the extension as it is published in the Development Consent Order (DCO). Cllr Ashton further believes it will be crucial to see impact of the road closure at Blythburgh and

that additional traffic bound for Aldeburgh could end up using the B1125. Cllr Ashton further stated that monitoring will be key.

Cllr Holmes voiced concern regarding traffic for Sizewell C (SZC) once built, citing current high levels of traffic in the early mornings bound for Sizewell A and Sizewell B.

Cllr Smith noted that the County Council's policy is for the SLR to be removed once construction of SZC is complete, but that the road closure at Blythburgh is expected to be permanent.

Cllr Shearme raised concerns regarding LGVs for SZC using the B1125 through the village. Cllr Turner stated that there should be a decrease in SZC traffic once the Northern Park and Ride (NPR) at Darsham opens.

25/183 Pre-meeting report from District Councillor

Cllr Ashton reiterated Cllr Smith's mention of a public consultation on local government reform, and stated that the government is due to make a decision before the end of second week of March so as not to coincide with mayoral election.

Cllr Ashton echoed Cllr Smith's budgetary concerns also at district level, citing that inflation – which peaked at 11% – is outpacing council tax increases, which are set at 3%, meaning that the District Council is having to call on reserves. Cllr Ashton stated that there is an expectation that East Suffolk Council will not fare well from the government's financial settlement. Cllr Ashton also mentioned the introduction of a new baseline for business rates which will result in a reduction in the amount allocated to the District Council.

A member of the public questioned the impact of the council tax premium for second homes, to which Cllr Ashton responded that it has had some impact, especially in tourist areas.

25/184 Minutes of previous meeting – 29 September 2025

It was **agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2025 be accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

25/185 Matters arising from the minutes

None raised.

25/186 Casual vacancy on the Parish Council – co-option of a new member

Three candidates raised an interest in being co-opted as a member of the Parish Council, of whom two were present as members of the public. The Chair invited the candidates present to give a brief presentation.

Candidate Juliet Overton felt it was important to have better gender representation in the Parish Council, to which Cllr Smith reported that Westleton is the only parish council in his ward to have an all-male council. Candidate Overton mentioned that she lives in Westleton on a full-time basis and has long-standing roots in the area. She stated that she wishes to be active in the community, with a particular focus on well-being.

Candidate Peter Abery cited his corporate background and experience working as a school governor and museum trustee, as well as roles with various NGOs. He has lived in Westleton for five years and is keen to get involved.

There then followed a secret ballot of the council's current members, with Juliet Overton duly co-opted as a member of the parish council. Cllr Overton signed a declaration of acceptance and formally joined the meeting.

Cllr Smith left the meeting.

25/187 Council finances and accounts

(a) Clerk's report

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council's current financial position and invited members to think about planned expenditure ahead of preparations for the budget for 2026/27. The Clerk has yet to receive information from East Suffolk Council regarding possible changes in Westleton's tax base, which could have an impact on the precept. The Clerk further reported that he is actively seeking to minimise clerk-related expenses and has opted for quarterly payroll runs for the payment of his salary.

(b) Finance Committee – The Finance Committee will meet on 12 November.

(c) Income 2025/26 – Income to date was acknowledged and approved.

(d) **Expenditure 2025/26** – Expenditure to date was acknowledged and approved.

(e) Bank balances as at 25 September 2025 were noted as follows:

Current	£41,798.30
Savings	£50,495.37
Total bank balance	£92,293.67

(f) **Invoices and payments** – The following invoices were **agreed** for approval:

From	Item	Amount	Power
Julian Alexander	Sundries reimbursement (oil for benches on small green & key for shed on village green)	£23.70	LG(MP)A 1976, s.19
Community Action Suffolk	Fees for website hosting	£66.00	LGA 1972, s.142
D. Bracey Play Safety Inspections	Inspection of play equipment at Community Field	£168.00	PHA 1875, s.164
Jon Alexander	Bus shelter repair works	£150.00	LG(MP)A 1953, s.4

25/188

Feedback from working groups

(a) **Common** – Cllr Shearme circulated a report prior to the meeting. Cllr Shearme requested to begin planning for a Christmas tree. Cllr Fisher will make enquiries with the RSPB and National Trust for the donation of a 15ft tree. Westleton's fireworks event will be advertised in the Yoxmere Fisherman. There will be no additional expenditure on fireworks this year with fireworks to be supplied from stock from the previous year.

(b) **Community field** – Cllr Holmes provided an update and summarised the recent safety inspection report, citing that there are some items that will need to be addressed in the new year, such as the replacement of stilts to the climbing frame, which Cllr Holmes proposed to undertake using the Parish Council's internal resources.

Cllr Holmes further reported that the donation box had been broken into and that he has now replaced the padlock. Cllr Fisher made the offer of an alarmed padlock. The use of a QR code for making donations will be pursued further, with Cllr Webber mentioning that a pay-to-park set-up as at Dunwich Heath car park may be worth exploring.

Cllr Holmes asked Cllrs Alexander and Shearme to take over as working group leads for the Community Field for the next three months while he undergoes medical treatment. Cllr Turner requested that Cllrs Alexander and Shearme draft a schedule of costs ahead of the Parish Council's January meeting based on the findings in the safety inspection. Cllr Alexander suggested reviewing the security of the sheds at the site, which Cllr Turner in turn requested be included in the January report.

In respect of the outstanding matter with Wave Utilities, it was **agreed** that the Clerk will contact the company to request a reduction in the bill by way of a credit against the Parish Council's future bills as a gesture of goodwill. Regardless of the outcome of this request, it was further **agreed** to close the outstanding complaint.

(c) **Allotments** – Cllr Watson circulated a report prior to the meeting. The allotment site is now being marked out with half plots. A water supply will need to be instated and fencing installed.

(d) **Affordable housing** – Cllr Fisher circulated a report prior to the meeting. The heads of terms are in transit and Cllr Fisher will chase if he does not receive an update within a couple of weeks.

25/189

Planning applications

The following planning applications were considered. Responses will be submitted as follows:

Planning ref.	Details	Response
DC/25/3789/FUL	Loft conversion with dormer and roof windows. Change to front fenestration, internal alterations at Ronley, Reckford Road	No objection
DC/25/4026/TCA	Removal of sycamore tree at Westleton Village Hall	No objection

25/190 Other planning matters

Cllr Turner reported on his attendance at a meeting that introduced East Suffolk Council's Local Plan review. The call for sites is open until 6 January 2026 and will be advertised by way of posters, a notice on the website, and a mention in the Yoxmere Fisherman. Cllr Turner reported that the Reckford Road site allocation would need to be resubmitted by the landowner but would not be subject to reassessment and would be re-approved on the back of the currently adopted Local Plan. Cllr Ashton will investigate this further. The Parish Council is not looking to propose any sites itself at this stage. Cllr Banks proposed to combine a future meeting regarding the White Horse Inn with raising awareness of the Local Plan review. This approach was **agreed** by all.

Cllr Ashton left the meeting.

25/191 IT Policy and IT matters

Members considered and **approved** the IT Policy kindly drafted by Paul Shore. Members further discussed arrangements to transition to the use of .gov.uk email addresses. Cllr Turner signed the IT Policy on behalf of the Parish Council, with members to sign the policy individually once .gov.uk email addresses are in place.

Paul Shore offered to hold a drop-in session for councillors to help set up their new email addresses.

Paul Shore further reported on the requirement to undertake an accessibility scan of the website. It was **agreed** to have this performed by Community Action Suffolk at a cost of £108 inclusive of VAT.

The Clerk will continue to liaise with Paul Shore in respect of the email addresses and IT-related matters.

25/192 Tree & footpath warden report

Cllr Webber reported on shrub works at the War Memorial and moved to approve the £25 increase in costs for the work, totalling £275. Cllr Webber reported that he has placed a notice in the village noticeboard reminding parishioners of the regulations for working on trees in a conservation area, which covers much of Westleton, citing that permission must be sought from East Suffolk Council before any work takes place, unless exemptions apply, such as in order to remove unsafe trees, when at least five days' notice must be given.

25/193 Energy projects (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects)

Cllr Turner reported that the planning inspectorate consultation on Sea Link starts next week and that he will draft the Parish Council's comments for input. Cllr Turner stated there is no further news on LionLink, with a National Grid Ventures consultation expected in January. Cllr Fisher questioned the impact of electromagnetic fields on biodiversity and the noise of converter stations.

25/194 Northern Transport Forum & Sizewell C Community Forum

There was no further discussion beyond what was already discussed in minute 25/182. A meeting of the Northern Transport Forum (NTF) is due to take place on Wednesday 5 November with Cllr Webber agreeing to attend on behalf of the Parish Council. Cllr Turner asked for members to submit any questions by 31 October for presentation to SZC at the NTF.

Cllr Shearme left the meeting at 21:05 and returned 21:06.

25/195 Village parking

It was **agreed** to defer discussions on village parking issues until after the implementation of infrastructure changes in the village to see what their impact is on traffic and parking.

25/196 Review of approved contractor list

The Approved Contractor List was **approved** with the addition of M P Stephenson in respect of work on the Common.

25/197 Parish Council meeting dates for 2026

Cllr Turner reported on a potential availability issue in respect of the Parish Council's use of the Village Hall as a venue for its meetings in 2026. The Clerk will continue to liaise with the manager of the Village Hall to find a suitable solution. Councillors were adamant that the Parish Council's meetings cannot be held later than 19:30, and that a venue with adequate capacity is needed given the increase in public participation.

The following timetable for meetings in 2026 was **agreed**:

Date	Location	Notes
Monday 26 January	TBC	
Monday 23 February	TBC	
Monday 30 March	TBC	
Monday 27 April	TBC	Annual Parish Meeting
Monday 18 May	TBC	Annual Meeting of the Council
Monday 29 June	TBC	
Monday 27 July	TBC	
Monday 28 September	TBC	
Monday 26 October	TBC	
Monday 30 November	TBC	

25/198 Future of the White Horse Inn

Cllr Turner provided an update on concerns and options regarding the future of the White Horse Inn. A community meeting was held on Monday 13 October and Cllr Turner subsequently wrote to Chestnut Group to report on that meeting. A subsequent meeting held with Chestnut Group was positive.

25/199 Correspondence to the Parish Council

The following correspondence was considered and noted:

Date	Details of correspondence	Actions taken/required
21/10 – 24/10	Nine items of email correspondence from villagers in Westleton and Middleton concerning works relating to Sizewell and B1125/B1122 proposals.	Noted and filed
23/10/25	Notification from SALC of 3% increase in subscription fees.	Noted for budget

25/200 Date of next meeting

The Parish Council will next meet at 19:30 on Monday 24 November 2025 at Westleton Village Hall.

-- Meeting closed 21:18 --