

WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL

The unapproved minutes of a **Meeting of Westleton Parish Council** held on **Monday 26 January 2026** at 19:30 in the Foyer of Westleton Village Hall.

Richard Green
Clerk to Westleton Parish Council

MINUTES

26/1 Attendance and apologies for absence

In attendance

Cllr Alexander
Cllr Fisher
Cllr French
Cllr Holmes
Cllr Overton
Cllr Shearme
Cllr Turner (Chair)
Cllr Watson
Cllr Webber

Apologies for absence accepted from

Cllr Banks
Cllr Johnson

Also present

County Councillor Richard Smith (minutes 26/1 to 26/3 inclusive)
District Councillor Paul Ashton (minutes 26/1 to 26/3 inclusive)
1 member of the public

26/2 Declaration of interests

Cllr Watson declared a pecuniary interest in items 26/7(c) "Allotments" and 26/9(b) "LionLink".

26/3 Pre-meeting reports from County Councillor and District Councillor

Cllr Smith reported that Suffolk County Council (SCC) will make a decision on its budget at a meeting on 12 February. It is expected that £850m (net) will be spent on services throughout the county, with care home fees to account for £300m alone. He stated that a further £150m would be needed to deliver everything that is needed, but there is no chance of this. Cllr Smith further stated that SCC had decided on a council tax increase of 4.99%, made up of a 2% increase towards social care and a 2.9% increase towards other costs and services. This is the maximum allowed without triggering a referendum.

Cllr Smith reported that pot holes are more prevalent due to the weather, which also makes them difficult to repair, especially on busy roads such as the A12 due to the traffic restrictions needed. Cllr Turner asked whether compensation is paid for repairs by Sizewell C (SZC). Cllr Smith responded that although SZC is responsible for paying for repairs on roads where diversions are required, there is no legal mechanism to request compensation for other roads, despite the impact of SZC-related traffic on road surfaces. He further stated that SZC preparatory projects will take most of the 2026 calendar year to complete, meaning a challenging year on local roads. Cllr Shearme stated that increases in traffic volumes will cause major issues in future on roads not designed for such loads.

Cllr Smith further reported that statistics published in The Times classifying Suffolk as "red" in a report by the Department for Transport are wrong and that SCC has issued a strongly worded response.

Cllr Smith reported that SCC elections have been postponed again officially for one year, but that this will in effect be 1 year and 11 months (until 31/3/2028) when SCC and the district councils will cease to exist. He stated that a question has been posed as to whether parish council elections should be brought into line with the elections of the new unitary authorities. One reason for doing so is cost, as elections are costly to hold at around £4m per election. Cllr Ashton added that the mayoral election has also been postponed to 2028, and that there is therefore a case for all elections (mayoral, unitary, and parish) to all be held on the same day in 2028. Cllr Watson enquired whether this would also apply to elections for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) and Cllr Ashton stated that a mayor would supersede PCCs.

Cllr Fisher enquired about a scheme for courses and funding for roadside works. The Clerk explained the Community Self-Help scheme and Cllr Ashton added that the District Council has responsibility for litter picking and will provide equipment. Cllr Holmes stated he has litter pickers and hi-vis vests. The Clerk will make enquiries regarding adding Westleton to the Community Self-Help scheme.

Cllr Turner informed Cllr Smith that several parishes have joined forces with regard to concerns relating to traffic volumes and speeds on the B1125 and that a letter is being drafted to submit to Cllr Smith.

Cllr Webber enquired about the introduction of variable speed limits on the A12 (similar to the Orwell Bridge) depending on time, safety, and traffic flows. Cllr Smith is having a meeting with Steve Merry and will raise this enquiry.

Cllr Ashton reported that East Suffolk District Council (ESDC) faces similar challenges to SCC with regard to its budget, having received a lower financial settlement from central government. He stated that transition funding is available and there is reluctance to make drastic cuts in the run-up to the outcome of local government reform, stating that most of Suffolk is heading towards the introduction of unitary authorities that will inherit poor financial circumstances.

Cllr Ashton had noted a change in discourse regarding traffic modelling in relation to the closure of the B1125 at Blythburgh. He noted that the Northern Transport Forum will take place next week, and where he will raise his concerns.

Cllr Ashton also noted that the LionLink statutory consultation is now open and stated that ESDC's team for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) is working on response which it is hoping to share with parish councils to help them draft their own responses. Cllr Ashton's impression is that LionLink's own team is much better than the one for SeaLink, which was echoed by Cllr Smith.

Finally, Cllr Ashton noted that a planning application for High Lodge Leisure at Hinton is imminent and that he has asked that Westleton Parish Council be included as a statutory consultee.

Cllr Smith and Cllr Ashton both left the meeting

26/4 Public forum

The one member of the public present did not take the opportunity to speak.

26/5 Minutes of previous meeting

It was **agreed** that the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 15 December 2025 be accepted as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

26/6 Matters arising from the minutes

The Clerk reported that the new defibrillator approved at the last meeting has now been fitted and is operational. He will ensure that it is registered on The Circuit. The Clerk also reported on correspondence from the Village Hall regarding co-operation around the defibrillators in the village. The Village Hall is contemplating hosting a defibrillator, and subject to its location being agreed, the Parish Council has discussed the option of donating its old defibrillator to the Village Hall.

26/7 Councillors' portfolio reports

- (a) **Common** – Cllr Shearme circulated a report prior to the meeting. Donations of £1432.67 were collected from the New Year's Day fireworks. Cllr Holmes wished to thank all those involved in making the New Year's Day fireworks a success, and Cllr Fisher stated that he felt the donation of £150 to the fire service was not sufficient for the amount of assistance they provided throughout the event and in extinguishing the fires that occurred on the heathland. Cllr Webber added that the annual report for the Common has now been finalised and posted on the parish website.
- (b) **Community Field** – Cllr Holmes circulated a report prior to the meeting and noted that donations of £41.35 had been collected from the donation box. Cllr Fisher reported that he has requested an updated quote from UKPN for an electricity supply to the Community Field and will compile a business plan to form a basis for any future grant applications. Cllr Holmes and the Clerk will continue to pursue setting up a QR code for donations in future.
- (c) **Allotments** – Cllr Watson circulated a report prior to the meeting, together with a draft tenancy agreement. Rents of £70 per full plot (two half plots) and £40 per half plot were **agreed** by all. It was further **agreed** for the Clerk to seek a quote from Fairweather Law in Framlingham for legal advice in respect of the agreement with the landowner and review of the tenancy agreement. Questions were raised regarding the water supply, and it was generally felt that the best option will be to have a time-restricted water supply and a bowser or trough or other bulk store. The Clerk noted that the application for the water supply has been submitted to Essex and Suffolk Water and that he is awaiting a quote, which should be available by 23 February.
- (d) **Affordable housing** – Cllr Fisher circulated a report prior to the meeting, noting that there has been no further progress despite chasing, and that the issue appears to lie with the potential vendor's solicitor being non-contactable.

- (e) **Trees and footpaths** – Nothing to report.
- (f) **Community wellbeing** – The Clerk circulated a report on behalf of Cllr Overton prior to the meeting. She added that there were concerns in the village regarding work to The White Horse Inn and the potential impact on the pond.
- (g) **Strategic Objectives and community engagement** – The Clerk reported that a group consisting of himself, Cllr Banks, Cllr Overton, and representatives from the Village Hall had been formed, and that a date would be scheduled soon to start this initiative. Cllr Webber requested that the group also include a representative from the Church.

26/8 Parish Council surgery

Cllr A Turner reported that no specific points were raised at the Parish Council surgery held on 26 January, although there were general discussions around NSIPs. The Clerk was thanked for his prompt addressing of overflowing glass recycling bins in the Reckford Road lay-by.

26/9 Sizewell C and NSIPs

- (a) **Sizewell C** – Cllr Turner reported that the next Northern Transport Forum (NTF) meeting will be held on 4 February and that two written questions can be posed in advance. Cllr Turner suggested three questions for consideration by the Parish Council: i) When is the proposed opening of the Northern Park and Ride (NPR)?; ii) What is the timing of the works proposed in Westleton?; and iii) What are the plans for the removal of the 50mph signs around the zig-zags on Reckford Road? Cllr Turner further reported that he is finalising a co-ordinated letter on behalf of several parishes highlighting concerns about traffic volumes and speeds on the B1125 and seeking measures to avoid the B1125 becoming a preferred unofficial route to avoid other congested and/or restricted roads due to SZC. There was some discussion around amendments to SCC's policy of 20mph speed limits.
- (b) **NSIPs** – Cllr Turner reported that SeaLink planning inspectorate meetings are underway and that he has applied to speak. He further reported that the LionLink statutory consultation has now started. Although the proposed route is to the north-west of Westleton, the ancillary infrastructure works, traffic impacts, noise, dust and vibrations may impact the village directly and could last for at least three months. Cllr Turner advised not to respond to the booklet that has been provided, as the questions it contains are loaded – the consultation ends on 10 March and LionLink will present their plans and be available to answer questions at the Village Hall on Saturday 21 February. The Parish Council therefore recommends waiting to make any submissions until after this date. The Clerk has initiated co-ordination between Westleton, Darsham, and Yoxford regarding LionLink and is routinely circulating information on meetings and events, both official and unofficial.

Cllr Turner further reported that ESDC has just released a consultation on its strategy on accommodation for NSIPs workers. He will draft for a response and circulate for comment.

26/10 Planning

It was noted that the Clerk and Cllr Johnson will be attending the Town and Parish Forum in Melton on 2 February. The Clerk requested that councillors submit any questions that they wish to be raised at the forum. The Clerk reported that the Parish Council is being consulted on ESDC's Statement of Community Involvement. Consideration will be given to drafting a response to this.

26/11 Council administration

- (a) **Clerk's probation** – It was **agreed** to retain the Clerk following the end of his probation period.
- (b) **IT matters** – The end of transition period to .gov.uk email addresses was noted and all email correspondence shall now be via councillors' .gov.uk email addresses. Councillors considered, adopted, and signed an IT policy kindly drafted by Paul Shore.

26/12 Council finances

- (a) **Expenses policy** – A draft expenses policy was circulated by the Clerk and its adoption was **agreed**.

- (b) **Banking** – The Clerk provided an update on the switch from Barclays Bank to Unity Trust Bank, noting that the Unity Trust accounts are now in use as the Parish Council’s primary accounts, and that the Barclays accounts will be closed once the final cheque payment clears.
- (c) **Bank reconciliation Q3** – It was noted that the bank reconciliation for Q3 has been drafted and circulated by the Clerk, and verified by Cllr Webber.
- (d) **Financial position** – The Parish Council’s financial position per 20 January 2026 as circulated by the Clerk prior to the meeting was noted.
- (e) **Receipts** – Receipt of the donation from the New Year’s Day fireworks of £1432.67 and of the donations at the Community Field totalling £41.35 were both noted.
- (f) **Payments** – The payments below were noted and **approved**, with the exception of the payment to Westleton Garage, which Cllr Fisher believed should not be subject to VAT. The Clerk will query this before payment is made.

Payee	Details	Amount	VAT	Total	Power
HMRC	PAYE and NI	£630.89	NIL	£630.89	LGA 1972 s.112
Intermedical	New defibrillator	£549.00	£109.80	£658.80	PHA 1936 s.234
Warrior Fire and Rescue	Donation for bonfire/fireworks cover	£150.00	NIL	£150.00	LGA 1972 s. 137
Clerk	Clerk’s salary and expenses Q3 (1.10 – 31.12 2025): <i>Salary - £1871.01</i> <i>Mileage - £71.10</i> <i>Expenses (postage & printer ink) - £61.35</i>	£2003.46	NIL	£2003.46	LGA 1972 s.112
Jim’s Mowing (N Shearme)	Expenses and mileage for Christmas tree: <i>Mileage - £14.85</i> <i>Tree - £100.00</i>	£114.85	NIL	£114.85	LGA 1972 s.145(1)(a)
Essex & Suffolk Water	Application fee for allotment water supply	£453.00	£90.60	£543.60	Small Holding & Allotments Act 1908, ss.23, 25
Westleton Garage	Expenses for bonfire/fireworks	£34.17	£6.83	£41.00	LGA 1972 s.145(1)(a)
J French	Expenses for wine for bonfire/fireworks	£8.00	NIL	£8.00	LGA 1972 s.145(1)(a)

26/13 Correspondence to the council

The Clerk received correspondence from residents regarding overflowing glass recycling bins in the Reckford Road lay-by (minute 26/8) which have now been emptied. The Clerk also received correspondence regarding the lack of a bus service in Westleton. Cllr Turner will share information about this with the Clerk in order to draft a reply to the resident.

Cllr Fisher raised an issue of problem parking. It was agreed that the Clerk will draft a note on behalf of the Parish Council to affix to the vehicle.

26/14 Date of next meeting

The parish council next meets on Monday 23 February 2026.

Meeting closed at 21:31