

# **WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL**

The minutes of a meeting of Westleton Parish Council held at 19:30 on Monday 29 September 2025 at Westleton Village Hall.

*Richard Green*  
**Clerk and RFO to Westleton Parish Council**

## **Present**

Cllr Andrew Turner (Chair), Cllr Julian Alexander, Cllr Barry Banks, Cllr Colin Fisher, Cllr Nick Shearme, Cllr David Watson, Cllr Ian Webber

## **In attendance**

Cllr Richard Smith, Suffolk County Council (minutes 25/153 to 25/157 inclusive)

Cllr Paul Ashton, East Suffolk Council

Cllr Steve Thorpe, Vice-Chair Middleton Parish Council (minutes 25/153 to 25/157 inclusive)

Richard Green, incumbent clerk and RFO

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### **25/153      Introductory remarks and apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Cllrs I Johnson, P Holmes, and J French. All approved.

### **25/154      Declarations of interest**

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 in relation to discussions on allotments (minute 25/161(c)) and Lionlink (minute 25/166).

### **25/155      Public forum – contributions from members of the public**

25 members of the public were present, including Vice-Chair of Middleton Parish Council, Steve Thorpe, who requested that the parishes join forces to scrutinise Sizewell C's (SZC) plans on vegetation clearance and request that the works be paused, citing that 2 of 5 oak trees are now set to be removed. He raised concerns regarding the new proposals for the B1125 and improvements to the B1387, citing figures of an additional 2,500 vehicle movements in each direction per day. A member of the public requested that an explanation is sought from an SZC representative, to which Cllr Turner responded that part of the proposal to co-operate with Middleton Parish Council will include extending an invitation to Sizewell to speak with councils directly.

A second member of the public spoke about the wildflower area on the village green, mentioning that there would be no sense in moving the area due to the time it takes to establish. They stated that if the area is inappropriate in its current location, they propose its full removal though voiced their disappointment if this decision were to be made.

### **25/156      Pre-meeting report from SCC Councillor**

Cllr Richard Smith noted issues with the local road network and questioned the necessity of the length of speed restrictions, noting 4 miles of restrictions on the A12 at Wickham Market. Cllr Smith has been advised that this could safely be reduced to 1 mile and was promised that this would be considered. Cllr Smith has concerns regarding the impact on the tourism industry.

Cllr Smith stated that SCC is not the highways authority in respect of SZC, which has special powers under the development consent order (DCO). SCC is only now an advisory body in this regard. Cllr Smith anticipates 1-2 years of this situation and cited that Leiston is unnavigable at times. Cllr Smith further stated that most of the road improvements will be in place in 2 years' time.

Cllr Shearme asked what SZC's justification is. Cllr Smith has been told that the justification for the restrictions is worker safety. Cllr Shearme went on to mention issues with wide loads.

Cllr Turner mentioned that at the recent Northern Transport Forum (NTF) meeting, he received a commitment from Steve Merry at SCC to look at introducing variable speed limits on the A12 when no construction work is taking place such as at evenings and weekends. Cllr Turner stated that there are plans to reduce the 30mph zone on the A12 from 700m to 450m, but he is unclear on which stretch of the road this will apply. Cllr Turner requested a meeting with SCC Cllr Nicholls to discuss in advance of the next NTF.

Cllr Smith proceeded to give an update on the local government reform process and election of a mayor in May 2026. SCC and ESC have submitted their opinions to the government, which will likely want to consult on the proposals. A decision is due in February/March 2026. Cllr Smith will report back when more detail is available.

Cllr Smith thanked the outgoing clerk for his efficiency, which was sincerely echoed by Cllr Turner who, on behalf of Westleton Parish Council and the village, thanked the outgoing clerk for his sterling work over the years and wished him all the very best in his retirement.

## **25/157      Pre-meeting report from ESC Councillor**

Cllr Paul Ashton mentioned that there would be a public consultation on local government reform and encouraged participation.

Cllr Ashton cited challenges with the District Council's budget with a reduction in income from business rates due to having to share this with the government.

Cllr Ashton gave an update on the impact of national planning policy framework and new housing targets for East Suffolk which have increased from 900 to 1,700 houses per year. He reports that the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan review has just been completed but now cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of new houses due to the increased target. Accordingly, there are more speculative applications from developers and the District Council is having to consider almost any application that it would previously have refused. The local plan process for East Suffolk is now underway and will be completed in 3-4 years' time, at which point ESC will not exist following local government reform.

Cllr Webber asked what changes there would be to soften the criteria for having to grant permission, to which Cllr Ashton responded that it does not matter if the site is unallocated or outside of a settlement boundary per the local plan if it meets other criteria.

Cllr Banks asked about housing demand, citing the fully unsold development in Westleton at Cherry Lea. Cllr Ashton suggested contacting the local MP in this regard, but mentioned that the reality is that although the target has increased, the number of houses being built has decreased, but not due to lack of permission being granted.

Cllr Turner asked whether sales of new-build homes are tracked at the district level, and suggested that this be taken into consideration in planning. Cllr Ashton to follow this up.

Cllr Watson asked about affordable housing requirements, with Cllr Ashton citing the high "hope value" of land as being a major issue in the viability of affordable housing schemes, adding an average of £85,000 to every new home.

Cllr Fisher asked about infrastructure, specifically citing sewage in relation to Westleton. Cllr Ashton remarked that infrastructure generally follows development rather than preceding it. He noted that the provision of adequate sewerage is down to the local water authority.

Cllr Turner asked whether ESC receives CIL funding from SZC. Cllr Ashton stated that this generally comes in indirect forms, such as £50m in measures to mitigate harm to tourism.

Cllr Ashton reported on the Tour of Britain cycle race which saw good promotion of area with 4 hours of coverage on ITV4. He cited this as positive in light of the challenges that SZC poses for the housing market and tourism.

Cllr Turner returned to the point raised by Cllr Steve Thorpe (see minute 25/155) that Middleton Parish Council has requested Westleton Parish Council's support in approaching SZC to request that the vegetation works be postponed. Cllr Turner stated that although this matter

was covered in the DCO, vehicle figures appear to be different in the DCO document. Cllr Turner further stated that until the Northern Park and Ride (NPR) at Darsham is up and running, workers can make their way to the SZC site any way they choose and that high vehicles numbers will be experienced until the NPR is in use. Cllr Turner suggested adding an agenda item to a future SZC meeting regarding reducing LGVs on B-roads.

**VOTE** – Cllr Turner motioned to support Middleton Parish Council's call for joint action to request a postponement of the vegetation clearance with a view to calling a meeting with SZC, which was **approved**.

#### **25/158 Minutes of previous meeting – 28 July 2025**

It was **agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2025 be accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### **25/159 Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting on 28 July 2025**

Cllr Banks noted the lack of reports received from working parties in advance of the meeting, which would give an opportunity for more questions and more constructive discussions. Cllr Turner requested that the chairs of the working parties be asked to provide their reports in advance, which will be requested in conjunction with the preparation of the agenda by the clerk the week before the meeting.

#### **25/160 Council finances and accounts**

##### **(a) Projected-year end figures**

The outgoing clerk referred to the notes submitted by Cllr Webber, who summarised that the Parish Council expenditure on routine items continues to exceed the precept which may need to be increased.

##### **(b) Income 2025/26** – Income to date was acknowledged and approved.

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

The outgoing clerk mentioned item 38 – a direct debit to Wave Utilities which was substantially higher than expected, and which the outgoing clerk is attempting to challenge. Wave Utilities states that it issued correspondence warning of high usage. However, the outgoing clerk stated that no such correspondence was received. The water has now been turned off at the meter, and the meter reading is unchanged from November 2024. Cllr Fisher asked whether the payment method can be changed. A suggestion was made to run a test to check the accuracy of the meter, and to continue to press Wave Utilities for a copy of the correspondence that was sent to warn of the higher-than-usual consumption.

##### **(d) Bank balances as at 22 September 2025 were noted as follows:**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Current                   | £35,986.96        |
| Savings                   | £50,495.37        |
| <b>Total bank balance</b> | <b>£86,482.33</b> |

**(e) Invoices and payments** – The following invoices were **agreed** for payment, with the outgoing clerk and Chair noting the increase in audit fees charged by PKF Littlejohn from £252 in 2024 to £378 in 2025.

| From                      | Item                                                                                          | Amount   | Power              |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Ian Haines                | Clerk expenses (£41.00) & salary (£892.25) – Aug including backdated national award to 1/4/25 | £933.25  | LGA 1972, s.112    |
| Chris's Tree Services     | Tree Work on The Common                                                                       | £300.00  | SMHAA 1908, s.34   |
| Ian Haines                | Clerk expenses (£73.00) & salary (£795.17) – Sept                                             | £886.17  | LGA 1972, s.112    |
| Toilets+Ltd               | Community Field 4/7-31/7                                                                      | £118.80* | PHA 1936, s.87     |
| Guy McGregor Assocs       | Payroll services - quarter                                                                    | £16.20   | LGA 1972, s.112    |
| HJG Gardening             | War Memorial Maintenance (August)                                                             | £160.00  | WM(LAP)A 1923, s.1 |
| HMRC (Ian Haines – Clerk) | Employer National Insurance Contributions (backdate to cover period April – Sept 2025)        | £448.49  | LGA 1972, s.112    |
| Toilets+Ltd               | Community Field 1/8-28/8                                                                      | £129.60* | PHA 1936, s.87     |
| PKF Littlejohn            | External Audit Fees                                                                           | £378.00  | LGA 1972, s.111    |
| Toilets+Ltd               | Common 15/9-18/9                                                                              | £150.00* | PHA 1936, s.87     |
| Toilets+Ltd               | Community Field 29/8-25/9                                                                     | £129.60* | PHA 1936, s.87     |
| HJG Gardening             | War Memorial Maintenance (Sept)                                                               | £88.00   | WM(LAP)A 1923, s.1 |

\*Paid by Debit Card

## 25/161 Feedback from working parties

- a) **Common** – Cllr Shearme reported that a working party by Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths took place a couple of weeks ago, with a new footpath created on the far-side of the common. The diseased oak trees on the common have been dealt with, with new growth noted from the base of the trees. Cllr Turner requested that changes to the scope of previously agreed work be brought before council before proceeding.
- b) **Community field** – No report was received owing to Cllr Holmes' absence, although Cllr Turner reported on a personal injury that occurred on the site when a child tripped over a hidden wire. Cllr Turner has removed the wire and notes that the gap now left must be filled. No further correspondence has been received regarding the incident.
- c) **Allotments** – Cllr Watson reported on the event held on 21 September 2025 at the Village Hall and stated that 14 people had indicated interest in an allotment plot, though some not wanting a full plot. Nine questionnaire responses had been received, which will be reviewed at the meeting due to be held on 6 October at 19:30 in the Village Hall foyer. The review will form the basis for the structure of tenancy agreements. Feedback from prospective plot-holders sets rent expectations at between £50 and £100, with an average of £70.

Cllr Banks asked about the formation of an association. Cllr Watson stated that it will be up to the plot-holders to form an association.

- d) **Affordable housing** – Cllr Fisher has received communication from Greg Dodds with an update on progress, which has been slow. The head of terms has been drafted and once an option agreement is in place, a planning application can be submitted.

## 25/162 Planning applications

The following planning applications were noted.

| Site                                                    | Reference      | Details                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spa & Retreat, Potton Hall, Blythburgh Road, Westleton, | DC/25/1209/FUL | Part retrospective application for formation of car parking area to serve the Potton Hall spa and venue.                        |
|                                                         |                | <b>Deadline for observations: 20/8/25</b><br><b>Response: See comments below under corresponding application DC/25/2621/FUL</b> |

| Site                                                    | Reference      | Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spa & Retreat, Potton Hall, Blythburgh Road, Westleton, | DC/25/2621/FUL | Conversion of existing outbuildings currently used as commercial spa treatment rooms into 9 units of accommodation for Sizewell Workers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                         |                | <b>Deadline for observations: 22/8/25</b><br><b>Response: No objections in principle. However, we note that the site already has provision for 20 parking spaces which we feel should be the maximum number allowed. If necessary, ESC should require the applicants to implement a ride share agreement for the Sizewell workers so as to keep traffic on local roads to a minimum.</b> |

| Site                                                 | Reference                       | Details                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chatburn Farmhouse, Yoxford Road, Westleton IP17 3BT | DC/25/2413/FUL & DC/25/2414/LBC | Demolition of later elements of the dwelling, new rear extension and minor alterations |
|                                                      |                                 | <b>Deadline for observations: 18/8/25</b><br><b>Response: No objections</b>            |

| Site                                               | Reference      | Details                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RSPB Minsmere , Sheepwash Lane, Westleton IP17 3BY | DC/25/2840/ADN | Non-Illuminated Advertisement Consent - Replacement of all signage at RSPB Minsmere Site |
|                                                    |                | <b>Deadline for observations: 5/9/25</b><br><b>Response: No objections</b>               |

| Site                                       | Reference      | Details                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Pightle, Love Lane, Westleton IP17 3BA | DC/25/3467/FUL | Removal of the external chimney stack, provision of first floor balcony, internal |

|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | reordering of the property to provide enhanced accommodation including partial conversion of the existing garage, resulting in changes to external elevations and provision of solar panels to both slopes of the main roof.<br>With the exception of the front door, which at present is oak, all the remaining Upvc windows, not affected by the proposed works, will also be changed to white coated aluminium |
|  |  | <b>Deadline for observations: 6/10/25</b><br><b>Response: No objections</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

### **25/163 Other planning matters**

None at this time.

### **25/164 SAPP 25 Practitioner's Guide Assertion 10**

Paul Shore provided a report following his attendance at a SALC training event. The details were communicated to councillors in advance. The event dealt with the principles of local authorities having a digital presence and ensuring digital accessibility, in that local authorities, by law, must cater for accessibility. Paul Shore stated that Westleton Parish Council is roughly 95% compliant, with the website now revamped to include annual audits, and items listed in the correct order for those using screen readers and other accessibility tools.

Paul Shore noted two areas to address:

- 1) An IT policy needs to be published. Paul Shore has drafted such a policy, with Cllr Turner requesting that councillors read this ahead of the next meeting.
- 2) The Parish Council should stop using personal email address and it is suggested to move to .gov.uk email addresses per current best practice, which generally becomes a rule within 12 to 18 months. The cost is £24 per email address, per year. Concerns were raised regarding efficiency of receiving notifications.

**Vote** – it was **agreed unanimously** to switch to using .gov.uk email addresses.

The outgoing clerk thanked Paul Shore for his hard work.

### **25/165 Tree & footpath warden report**

No report at this time.

### **25/166 Energy projects (NSIPs)**

Cllr Turner reported that the meeting with LionLink and National Grid representatives held on 23 September 2025 was positive in that it gave the opportunity to raise concerns one-to-one with representatives regarding the cumulative impact of NSIPs in the area. The Planning Inspectorate's SeaLink hearings will start on 5 November 2025.

### **25/167 Northern Transport Forum and Sizewell C Community Forum**

Following a meeting of the Northern Transport Forum on 6 August 2025, Cllr Turner noted that 25 speeding violations have been recorded in Westleton during the last two days of July and the whole of August. Figures for September not yet available.

### **25/168 Parish councillor vacancy**

The outgoing clerk reported that two applications have been received to date, with the closing date set as Friday 3 October.

**25/169 Village parking**

It was agreed to defer discussions to the next meeting.

**25/170 Village Green – wildflower area**

In reference to the public forum (minute 25/155), Cllr Turner reported that a path had been mowed through the wildflower area which made it more accessible. Cllr Banks stated that the area needs regular maintenance, with Cllr Turner noting that while he liked the concept, the project had not materialised as hoped.

**Vote** – It was **agreed** to give the wildflower area a one-year break and to revisit the project in autumn 2026.

**25/171 Village Green – black storage shed**

Cllr Turner reported that the shed on the village green that includes 5ft of land around its boundary is to be gifted to the Parish Council in the will of Robert Cox. The Parish Council gratefully accepts this offer and will take a decision on its purpose at the requisite time. Questions were raised by councillors regarding maintenance and costs, with Cllr Fisher querying access arrangements.

**25/172 War Memorial – update on benches and shrub reduction**

It was proposed to put Cllr Webber's suggestions to HJG Gardening and enquire regarding the cost. The work can be done over the winter. Cllr Turner has asked The Crown PH about the donation of a new bench, and this will be raised with their management.

**25/173 Parish Council surgery**

A number of parishioners attended to discuss the SZC matter raised in minutes 25/155 and 25/157.

**25/174 External audit sign-off**

The outgoing clerk noted that KPF Littlejohn has issued a sign-off certificate for the completion of the audit for 2024/25. The outgoing clerk reported no issues with the exception of a small technicality in the completion of a form.

**25/175 Remembrance Sunday – 9 November 2025**

The outgoing clerk spoke to Rev. Tim Rogers who stated that there will be no church service at Westleton, but a wreath will be laid. Services will be held at Peasenhall and Dunwich. The British Legion has been contacted and arrangements are in place for collecting the wreaths.

**25/176 Future of the White Horse Inn**

No update at this time.

**25/177 Correspondence to the council**

None at this time.

**25/178 Date of next meeting**

The Parish Council will next meet at 19:30 on Monday 27 October 2025 at Westleton Village Hall.

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Meeting closed at 21:38

**SIGNED:**