

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 11 June 2025 at 7.35pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

Present: M Housden (Chairman) G Byrne, J Lucas, S Wilkin

In attendance Parish Clerk/RFO
County and District Councillor L Dupré, and
District Councillor M Inskip.

25/100 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from L Holdaway (work commitment), and K Mackender (work commitment)

25/101 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests – none

Prejudicial interests – none

25/102 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

25/103 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports had been previously circulated.

County Councillor L Dupré gave an update and it was confirmed the works on the bridge at Mepal were nearly finished.

6.40pm S Wilkin arrived and apologised for not being able to get to the meeting on time.

New Tiger 12 bus service included a stop at Sutton to take passengers to the Longstanton Park and Ride. Whippet was also running a service from Sutton to Hunstanton on Saturday and Sundays until the end of August. Adults and Health - Integrated Care Boards (ICB) must cut their running costs by around half by October 2025. Spending per head by ICBs, which varies across the country from £49 to just under £21, will be cut to £18.76.

From the District Council report it was noted that there was a petition to stop the Mepal Crematorium and the Liberal Democrats were seeking advice from Ministers about spending CIL to finance it. Local Government Reorganisation – now down to 3 options for new unitary authority and public consultation is planned but details still being finalised. Submission of preferred option(s) to be with the Government by November 2025. Government's decision will be announced 2026. Shadow authorities to run for 10-11 months so CE and Officers can be appointed and old Councils will be dissolved with takeover by new authorities to take place April 2028.

G Byrne said that in view of the recent disclosure that the Ely branch of NatWest would be closing soon, was it worth looking into getting a hub. L Dupré advised that this would be a decision by the banks although the Council does permit Barclays to use Ely library since that branch closed. 7.53 pm L Dupré left the meeting.

25/104 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

25/105 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 14 May 2025 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, and the agenda of the same date was signed by the Chairman as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman and agreed. J Lucas abstained as she had not been present at the meeting.

25/106 **Matters Arising**

Clerk confirmed that the insurance renewal had been completed, and an acknowledgement received.

25/107 **Finance and Administration Matters**

- a) **Receipts and payments schedule** – June 2025, previously circulated. Documents had been checked by J Lucas and G Byrne. **Resolved** to approve the receipts and payments for June 2025. Proposed J Lucas, seconded G Byrne.
- b) The latest Parish Council **Standing Orders** template provided by NALC, which had been amended to reflect provisions under the recent Procurement Act and Regulations (and the Civility and Respect Policy), had been updated for Witcham and circulated to Councillors. **Resolved** to approve and adopt the amended Standing Orders. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman.
- c) **Bank Interest rates.** Noted instant savings account dropping from 1.8% to 1.6% and short term savings account dropping from 2.15% to 2.05% from 5 June 2025.

Clerk

8.08pm M Inskip left the meeting.

Exclusion of the Press and Public: It is hereby resolved that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at agenda items 25/107d) – 25/107g)), namely RSPB lease, deed of right of way & car park, quotes and staff, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded from this meeting and they are herewith instructed to withdraw. Proposed Chair of meeting and agreed.

There were no members of the public present.

- d) **RSPB Lease.** Latest correspondence from solicitors reviewed. **Resolved** that the Council agreed to leave in Clause 8 as per latest draft put forward by the RSPB team, subject to time limit on counteroffer as advised by the solicitor, ie one month. Proposed J Lucas, seconded G Byrne.
- e) **Deed of Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall** Latest correspondence reviewed and noted. It was hoped the Draft Deed and the Plan would be available for July meeting.
- f) **Bus Shelter roof repairs – tiles and internal boarding** Quotes, previously circulated, were discussed.

Clerk

Clerk

8.35pm J Lucas apologised and left the meeting.

Resolved to approve the quote from RH & PJ Connolly £1420. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk

- g) **Staff Matters.** Report of Clerk's workload/hours received and noted. To be reviewed again July.

8.45pm Chairman re-opened meeting to the public – there were no members of the public present.

25/108 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) Weekly inspections of play equipment and recreation ground had been completed by the Chairman. He would arrange for someone to have a look and deal with the picnic bench outside the play area. He reported that a branch had recently broken off the dark leaved tree on the recreation ground adjacent St Martins Lane. He had removed the

25/109 Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters (cont)

broken branch. Agreed Clerk should contact ECDC Tree Officer to engage for an inspection and advice for maintenance. Chairman reported on security of the roadway to the village hall and it was agreed letter be sent thanking resident for their assistance. Issues discussed but it is difficult to erect a structure as users of the village hall needed access including delivery vans. To be kept under review.

Clerk

- b) Annual Play Inspection. Wicksteed report, previously circulated to all Councillors on 30 May 2025, was received and considered. Mitigation options were discussed. Based on information available at the time, it had been deemed prudent to not put any lights at the play area - until perceived risks fully understood.

Cllrs

Councillors present asked for this to be discussed at another meeting, ie to rescind Minute 25/029b) regarding the instruction to the Witcham Events Committee that no lights were to be put up around childrens' play area. (Standing Order 7a)

*MH/GB/
SW***25/109 MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal – Witcham**

- a) The monthly speed data report was received and noted.
- b) Joint Working for Application under Local Highways Initiative Programme (Witcham and Mepal Parish Councils).
Report from Mepal Parish Council following their Council meeting on 8 May was received. Noted that due to low Councillor numbers within Mepal Parish Council, any actions from Mepal would be delayed until such time more Councillors could be co-opted. The Working Group members had been notified. Mepal needed to concentrate on regeneration of Laurel Close play area and the Pride of Place project. Speed reduction measures within their parish was something they would wish to progress once time allowed. They would re-visit the subject once the former projects were completed.
The Councillors present discussed various options to make some progress within the parish of Witcham for reducing speed on the Witcham to Mepal Road and also for the reinstatement of the footpath in the verge, eg from the cemetery down to approximately the 30mph sign near Equestrian Centre as a first stage. In particular it was felt desirable to consider reducing the speed limit to include the houses and stables just over the Witcham parish boundary.

Resolved that the Clerk contact CCC to arrange a visit for G Byrne and Chairman to attend CCC offices to discuss options. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin.

*Clerk***25/110 Highways and Street Lighting Matters**

- a) Witcham Gravel PROW verge. Response from CCC circulated 30 May 2025. Removal of the saplings awaited.
- b) CCC (Restricted Byway No 10 Mepal) Definitive Map Modification Order 2025, operative from 14.5.25.
Notice and Order received. (This was also related to correspondence from CCC regarding M080 and M081 upgrade public footpath to bridleway – Mepal and Witcham, in October/November 2023).
Resolved that the Council had no concerns. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin.
- c) There were no other items to be reported to the Highways Authority.

*Clerk**Clerk***25/111 Reports of meetings attended by Councillors**

There were none

25/112 Correspondence

Essential Maintenance to Mepal Viaduct Bridge - Weekend Closures

CAPALC Meet and Greet with Charlotte Cane, MP.

NALC newsletters, bulletins.

Cambridgeshire ACRE - Staying in Touch – May 2025.

CAPALC CCC New Tiger Bus routes including Tiger 12 – a rural connector

between Longstanton Park & Ride and Sutton, including Willingham and Earith

CAPALC Great Collaboration – environmental help.

CCC Traffic Management Centre (TMC) Incident Reports.

ECDC agendas and minutes, licensing, planning, full council.

ECDC Press releases: Solar panels producing renewable energy for The Hive,
& Community grants.

East Cambs Parish & Community Forum Agenda – 21 May 2025.

24/113 Date of next meeting: 9 July 2025

Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed
at 9.53pm.

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Nil			
Payments:	002214 Truelink Apr&May	1147.00	229.40	1376.40
	002215/6/BACS Salary Expenses	1387.60		1387.60

Signed..... Dated