

## WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

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**Present:** K Mackender (Vice-Chairman), G Byrne, L Holdaway, S Wilkin

*In attendance* Parish Clerk/RFO  
County Councillor L Dupré

In the absence of the Chairman, K Mackender, Vice-Chairman took the Chair

**25/016 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from M Housden (holiday), J Lucas (holiday). Apologies also received from District Councillor M Inskip

**25/017 To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests – none

Prejudicial interests (and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation) – none

**25/018 Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

**25/019 Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports had been circulated. Chairman of the meeting opened the meeting and invited the County Councillor to speak.

7.32pm S Wilkin arrived.

Councillor L Dupré gave an explanation about the Local Government reorganisation as announced by the Government - removal of existing two tier system for Mayoral authorities, covering large areas and populations. Meetings are currently being set up and for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It was expected that a shadow election would be held in 2027 with takeover being effective from 2028. Those without a current Mayoral combined authority would be a year earlier. Parish Councils could expect correspondence for engagement from the District Council and the Government/Boundary Commission in the coming weeks.

K Mackender asked about the consultation process for the proposals for cycle/pedestrian crossings at the BP roundabout at Ely/Witchford Road and there was discussion about proposals for a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists.

Councillor L Dupré advised that the County Council had agreed the 2025/26 budget and the District Council would be setting its budget on 25 February 2025.

Chairman of the meeting proposed moving to agenda item 25/023 and 25/028 so that Councillor L Dupré was present. Seconded L Holdaway and agreed.

**25/023 Mepal/Witcham Primary School Transport Arrangements from Witcham**

The Parish Council's attention had been drawn to a change in transporting children to the primary school at Mepal from minibus to taxis. The County Councillor had made enquiries with the school transport team and had been advised that 'a 6 seater taxi had covered this route since 2022. There were only two students now using the service. Previously it was linked to Witchford Village College, but the change of school day times meant the bus wouldn't be on time for Mepal anymore'. Councillors noted this response.

**25/028 MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**

- b) The meeting on 10 February regarding Joint Working for Application under Local Highways Initiative Programme (Witcham and Mepal Parish Councils) – Extend 40mph speed limit for remainder of Mepal Road, Witcham and Witcham Road, Mepal (C127) had been attended by G Byrne, S Wilkin and the Clerk from Witcham and L Williams and T Bradney and the Clerk for Mepal. Report received and noted that Mepal Clerk would be contacting the LHI contact at CCC for further advice and recommendations on measures that might be suitable for improving pedestrian, horserider and vehicle safety on this road by reducing the 60mph to 40mph, reinstating lost footpath/verge improvements. It was noted that Mepal would need to carry out a survey in the village to ascertain support for LHI application for Mepal Road as there were other areas in the village where people had sought road-safety improvements too. Increased signage could be beneficial. L Holdaway suggested that it would be useful to include a short survey for Witcham residents to support findings in the Neighbourhood Plan for improving connections between the two villages and this was agreed. Noted that there were 3 properties with stables on the Mepal side and 1 on the Witcham side. Councillor L Dupré re-affirmed her support and also undertook to speak to the highways representative for an update on what and when works were planned for the verge to attempt to find the old path again and cut back vegetation in order to bring it back into use and make a safer link between Witcham and Mepal. She was also happy to speak to the LHI contact.

Councillor L Dupré was thanked and she left the meeting (approx. 8pm). The meeting resumed.

- a) The monthly speed data report had been circulated and was noted. In particular it was good to see that the MVAS equipment was recording lower speeds through the village. G Byrne confirmed that the speedwatch sessions had also revealed a decline in speeding vehicles.

**25/020 Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

**25/021 Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 8 January 2025 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman of the meeting, and the agenda of the same date was signed by the Chairman of the meeting as confirmation of the business transacted at that meeting. Proposed G Byrne, seconded K Mackender.

**25/022 Matters Arising**

There were none.

**25/024 Planning Matters**

The following ECDC decision was noted:

24/00746/FUL Witcham House, Headleys Lane Detached double garage/store, single storey orangery, demolition of garage and construction of two storey extension to front of dwelling – approved.

**25/025 Neighbourhood Plan**

Clerk confirmed receipt of the latest Locality Grant of £2523 to cover the project to 31 March 2025. The Pre-submission consultation period ended on 10 February and the responses from statutory bodies that had come in had been forwarded to the Consultant with copy to the Lead of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Parish Councillors. The Consultant would now examine the responses, including those from parishioners etc., and produce the report for the next stage of the process.

*WNPWG/  
Consultant*

25/026 **Haddenham GP Surgery**

Information about proposals for a new Patient Group and Information Sharing had been circulated. The surgery was asking if a named councillor could be used as a contact point and also for publication of news in a village newsletter.

**Resolved** that in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, all communications should be channelled through the Clerk rather than a Councillor and that the Council would be happy to pass on news updates to the What's On editor. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

25/027 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) **2025 Annual Recreation Ground Inspection Report**, previously circulated, was discussed. All items highlighted had been scored 'low risk' or 'very low risk'.

**Resolved** Clerk to contact Wicksteed about train, missing caps etc. Truelink to clean surfaces (contractual). Chairman and Clerk to follow up and resolve as required. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin. Also noted that the Christmas lights that had been on the fence and gate were not acceptable by the independent inspector.

MH  
Clerk

- b) **Monthly report on weekly inspections** of play equipment and recreation ground – K Mackender to check.

KM

- c) **Request to use recreation ground for private football training**  
**Resolved** that the Council did not consent to use of the recreation ground for football training. Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk

- d) **Cemetery** – no updates received.

25/029 **Finance and Administration Matters**

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 item 25/0029a) to 25/029c), namely RSPB lease, deed of public rights of way & car park, and staff matters, 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.

- a) **RSPB Lease.** Clerk reported on update from RSPB and legal advisers.

**Resolved** Clerk to contact the Council's legal adviser to confirm the Council's stance regarding Pre-emption clause as previously discussed. Lease to run from 1 April 2022. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

- b) **Deed Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall.** Request for map showing position of power cable had been received.

**Resolved** Village Hall, with the Events Committee, was required to provide the plan for laying of cable which must be in accordance with the expert advice from their qualified and certificated professional electrical contractor. Also that the Events Committee to be informed about Annual Inspection report regarding no lights to be put on play area gates and fences. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

- c) **The Pensions Regulator.** Noted that the Clerk would complete the Automatic Renewal, due 1 April 2025, as required.

Clerk

8.51pm Chairman re-opened meeting to the public. No members of the public present.

- d) **Receipts and payments schedule** for February 2025, had been circulated. Documentation had been checked by K Mackender.

**Resolved** to approve the receipts and payments for February 2025. (Listed at foot of Minutes). Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

- e) **Quarterly reconciliations and budget report** previously circulated. Bank statements presented at meeting. Total Receipts to 31 December 2024, £55603.60, Payments £42579.65. Balance £64614.13 including all earmarked reserves.
- f) **Resolved** to approve the Quarterly reconciliations to 31 December 2024 and the budget report was noted. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.
- g) **Bank Mandate.** Clerk confirmed the bank mandate had now been updated.
- h) **Annual Parish Meeting – 30 April 2025.** Arrangements discussed and agenda to include standard reports plus update on Neighbourhood Plan, Mepal/Witcham Road speed/safety measures, bus shelter. Items for the Council's Annual Report to be submitted to the Clerk by end of March. The new village conservation group may wish to talk about their plans and it would be an opportunity for promotion of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme for residents.

*Clerk  
All*

25/030 **Consultations**

CCC Planning Local Validation List Consultation, previously circulated. Last reviewed 2023.

**Resolved** to note. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin.

*Clerk*

25/031 **Witcham Events Committee**

Request to use telephone kiosk for advertising and information centre, in particular history of Witcham World Peashooting Championships.

**Resolved** that the Witcham Events Committee needed to provide a clear plan and proposals for the intended use and adaptation of the telephone kiosk with fittings, which must comply with the advice from EDCD regarding Historic England guidance and conservation area requirements. In principle the Council had no objection to using the kiosk for peashooting history information but reserved the right to ask that anything not appropriate to be removed. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

*Clerk*

25/032 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**

- a) No items were reported for raising with the Highways Department.
- b) Noted that the streetlight at the bottom of Headleys Lane/Market Way had been repaired.

25/033 **Correspondence**

The following items of information/interest, and invitations to events had been circulated and unless recorded below as otherwise, were noted:

Community Speedwatch Coffee morning 8 March 2025, 10-12noon, HQ Huntingdon.

CCC The Library Presents [www.library-live/the-library-presents](http://www.library-live/the-library-presents)

NALC & CAPALC Bulletins and training opportunities.

CCC Parish and Community Forum 15 January 2025 Littleport Leisure Centre.

CCC Local Highways carriageway surface treatment 2025/6 listings (none for Witcham).

Cambs ACRE newsletters.

CCC TMC Incident Report.

CCC Events.

EDCD news updates, agendas and minutes – Audit, Planning, Finance and Assets Committees.

EDCD Hate crime awareness and 3<sup>rd</sup> party reporting centre.

<https://www.cambs.police.uk/ro/report/>

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously>

24/034 **Date of next meetings:** 12 March 2025  
 16 April 2025 (Year-end accounts)  
 30 April 2025 – Annual Parish Meeting

Meeting closed at 9.15pm and Chairman of the meeting thanked everyone for their attendance

### Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	UK Power Networks	3.23		3.23
	Groundworks (Neighbourhood Plan Grant)	2523.00		2523.00
Payments	002193 Truelink (Jan)	80.00	16.00	96.00
	002194/BACS Salary Expenses	2295.92		2295.92
	002195 Cartridgesave	28.11	5.62	33.73
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails	34.30	6.86	41.16
To report payment (discussed at January meeting)				
	002191 Groundworks (refund underspend on previous grant)	98.00		98.00

Signed..... Dated .....