

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 12 November 2025 at 7.32pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

Present: M Housden (Chairman) K Mackender (Vice-Chairman) G Byrne, J Lucas, S Wilkin.

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

25/164 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies received and accepted from L Holdaway (Work).

25/165 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests – M Housden Agenda Item 25/175 Witcham Events

Committee - member

Prejudicial interests – none

25/166 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

25/167 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports for November, previously circulated, were noted and meeting opened for County and District Councillors to summarise and update. Councillor Dupré gave an update and said Councils were considering the various options for unitary authorities under the Government's re-organisation of local councils. All would be meeting in their respective Councils during November, to each decide on their submission to Government. The Government would consult and would make the decision on the make-up of the unitary authorities for Cambridgeshire, based on their published guidelines. CCC Budget consultations were underway.

She said that in response to the Government requirements for cost savings, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough's NHS Integrated Care Board (responsible for planning and commissioning local health services) had been gathered into a much bigger cluster of boards, including Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire making it one of the biggest in the country. Thus the focus on Cambridgeshire would be reduced. Critically they must make a 50% cut in running costs.

The Arthur Rank Hospice faces a funding deficit of £829,000, primarily due to the withdrawal of a long-standing funding contribution from Cambridge University Hospitals. A petition to save beds and protect end-of-life care in Cambridgeshire was to be presented to Government on 3 November.

There were plans to merge Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) NHS Trust with Norfolk Community Health & Care NHS Trust for the end of March 2026 to become East of England Community Health & Care NHS Trust.

(Services for children and young people, dental provision, musculoskeletal physiotherapy, contraception and sexual health services etc).

Specialist schools proposed in March and Gamlingay had been put on the back burner by the Government.

Councillor Dupré had continued to raise with CCC officers the excessive and obstructive use of road works signage, which was confusing.

The public utilities are responsible for putting out signage for works they are carrying out on the highway. Also to let her know of any concerns regarding new LED lights, dark pools and overgrown shrubs/trees obstructing the newly installed LED lights.

All

25/167 Reports from County and District Councillors (cont)

Regarding the endorsement of the MP for the LHI application for speed reduction and reinstatement of path between Mepal and Witcham, Councillor Dupré advised that the MP was sympathetic but could not write to support individual applications.

District Councillor Inskip confirmed Lorna had covered the Local Government Reorganisation process in ECDC. He advised that regular street sweeping was being carried out in villages and following a complaint from a resident in High Street, he confirmed this road had also been swept. More drivers would be recruited in the next budget.

Clerk asked for guidance to pass back to the Witcham Events Committee who were proposing to purchase and install village name signs at the three entrances into the village together with extra wording relating to Witcham being home to the World Peashooting Championships. Councillor Dupré confirmed this would be a County Council matter and she would forward the Clerk the contact details so that permissions and procurement arrangements could be dealt with.

*LD
Clerk*

8.00pm L Dupré and M Inskip were thanked and they left the meeting. Meeting closed and business resumed.

25/168 Public Participation There were no members of the public present.

25/169 Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting of 8 October 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 S Wilkin, seconded G Byrne.

25/170 Matters Arising

None

25/171 Local Government Reorganisation

Correspondence from the County and District Councils giving respective updates, had been received and circulated. There was nothing further to discuss at this stage. Covered under Minute 25/167 above.

25/172 Planning Matters

The following ECDC decision was noted:
25/00690/FUL Raven Barn, Headleys Lane, Garage conversion, along with front and side extension - Approved.

25/173 Anglian Water – Low Water Pressure

G Byrne reported that AW had been out to test pressure and flow rates at Mepal Road and all found to be to the required standard. Clerk advised that she was still awaiting a response from Anglian Water that had been promised last month following their investigations.

Clerk

25/174 MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham

- a) Monthly speed data reports, previously circulated, were noted.
- b) Local Highways Initiative Programme
Chairman reported that he and G Byrne had attended the LHI engagement webinar last week, which had been useful and informative. They had advised that as Witcham was a small village there would be no extra points gained for making more than a 10% contribution rate to any LHI application. The revised report (part of application submission) had been updated regarding information from the British Horse Society and figures for near-miss incidents were being prepared for adding in. Estimate for speed reduction measures

25/174 **MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**
(cont)

£18,000 plus more if additional road-markings as suggested by Police was included.

Resolved unanimously that the Council would proceed with an LHI application for speed reduction measures on the Witcham-Mepal Road as per the document circulated. Council will contribute 10% of costs to maximum £2500. G Byrne authorised to complete application on-line (closing date 16.1.26) and to include Draft Neighbourhood Plan (for identified Community Actions relating to this project) and correspondence from the Police and British Horse Society. Clerk's email address to be used for correspondence. Proposed J Lucas, seconded M Housden.

Reinstatement of the pathway to be put forward at a later date as an LHI project.

25/175 **Witcham Events Committee**

The Chairman had declared a personal interest and K Mackender took the Chair (8.17pm)

a) The following applications were considered for approval. All details including risk assessments and public liability insurance had been circulated to Councillors to examine prior to the meeting.

- i) Remembrance display at the Recreation Ground. Annual event. The display on the garden at the entrance to the recreation ground and various other locations as detailed in the application, ie poppies, 16 crosses and metal 'Tommy' soldier statue. (Ref Minute 25/157)

Resolved to approve the application. Details for future displays must be submitted to the Council each year ahead of the event. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

Clerk

- ii) Christmas lights – various sites around recreation ground and erection and lighting of tree outside infant play area, and bus shelter.

Resolved to approve the application subject to submission of valid public liability insurance document. Displays to be removed by Twelfth Night as per details on the application form. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

- iii) Erection of table tennis table on recreation ground, donated to Parish Council for future care.

Resolved to accept the donation of the table tennis table after the Events Committee had purchased and arranged for safe installation on the old cricket practice site on the recreation ground. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

Clerk

Clerk to ensure added to Register of Assets once in situ and inform the Council's insurance company. Weekly inspections by the Chairman to be included on the schedule for other play equipment, recreation ground etc.

Clerk

Chairman

- iv) Telephone Box, High Street – use of kiosk as mini museum displaying information about the history of the Peashooting Championships. Noted that the Events Committee would like to proceed with this project having received consent in principle earlier in the year. (Ref Minute 25/031 (Feb25)). The Council looked forward to receiving further details on design and how it would be managed. Proposed J Lucas, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk

- b) Proposals for erection of new village boundary signs, to read 'Witcham - Home of World Peashooting Championship since 1971'.

Resolved that the Council had no objection and wanted to be kept informed regarding design etc once the Events Committee had got approval and assistance from the responsible authority, Cambs County Council, Highways Department. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk

8.29pm K Mackender left the Chair and M Housden returned and took the Chair.

25/176 Finance and Administration Matters

- a) **Receipts and payments schedule** for November had been previously circulated. Documents had been checked by G Byrne and K Mackender.
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for November, and approved that the Clerk should deal with receipts and payments for December and report at January meeting in accordance with the Council's Finance Regulations. Proposed G Byrne, seconded K Mackender. Clerk
- b) **Quarterly accounts and reconciliations** to 30 September 2025 were reviewed and bank statements presented at meeting. Receipts to-date £20596.35, including Precept £19000. Payments £9676.10. Balance £71421.78 including all ear-marked reserves.
Budget monitoring report to 30 September reviewed.
Resolved to approve the quarterly accounts and reconciliations, and the budget monitoring report to 30 September 2025. Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne. Clerk
- c) **2026/7 Budget and Precept.** Draft budget and calculation of the Precept had been drafted by the Clerk and previously circulated to all Councillors for examination, together with details of current earmarked reserves. Following discussion and amendments it was
Resolved to approve the expenditure budget of £21700, expected income £2200, and to set the Precept at £19500. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas. Clerk
- d) 8.55pm
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 25/176e) – 25/176g), namely Neighbourhood Plan, RSPB lease, deed of right of way & car park, 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.
- e) **Neighbourhood Plan**
 Documents previously circulated were reviewed.
Resolved to agree the points raised by ECDC and the Consultant. Also to approve that on behalf of the Parish Council, the Consultant should make the submission of the points raised, including relating to WHM11 and WHM12, plus amend 'Church Street' to 'High Street', and query 'context' should be 'content' (7.59). Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender. Clerk
- f) **RSPB Lease.** Revised document from RSPB team previously circulated.
Resolved that Clerk to seek further advice regarding commencement date, otherwise all seemed satisfactory to progress. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.
- g) **Deed of Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall,** Revised document previously circulated.
Resolved approve latest draft subject to minor amendments and omission of references to cycle racks, as discussed. Proposed Chairman, seconded J Lucas. Clerk

9.41pm Chairman re-opened the meeting.

25/177 Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters

- a) Weekly inspections of play equipment and recreation ground had been completed by the Chairman. Noted still waiting for some cracks in tarmac path across the recreation to move back together now that dry weather has given way to more rain. To be under review at weekly inspections.
- b) Noted that the application for consent for tree works on the recreation ground had been submitted and work was tentatively scheduled for 4 February 2026, subject to consent being granted.
- c) Request from the Witcham Conservation Group to plant spineless pyracantha on recreation ground for winter berries for birds. This was thought to be a good idea but not near old wall. A plant or two in the gap between the play area and the bay tree near the bench was a possibility.

Resolved that the Council had no objection in principle to some spineless pyracantha being planted on the recreation ground but not near the wall on the eastern side. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

*Clerk***25/178 Highways and Street Lighting**

- a) To note any items reported to Highways Authority – none.
- b) Reports of lorries at Market Way and very harsh cutting back of the hedgerow had been received. Concerns about destroying habitat and visual impact. Hedgerow not just brambles had been destroyed.
Resolved that the Council should contact County Council to enquire why the verge had been cut back so severely. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.
- c) Temporary Prohibition of Through Traffic Order 2025-2066 - Closure of Headleys Lane from Back Lane to Market Way for gully investigations and any works, 10-12 November 2025, noted.
- d) Litterpick 11 October 2025, noted.
- e) Balfour Beatty would be cutting back branches around street lights near the village sign in The Slade, adjacent the noticeboard at the crossroads and at Martins Lane. (L9EKG, L8EKG & L2EKM). Noted.
- f) Notice from nPower regarding the introduction of the Market-wide Half-Hourly Settlement (MHHS) Programme for streetlight energy supplies with effect from 22 October 2025, noted.

*Clerk***25/179 Reports of Meetings**

There were none other than LHI Engagement session attended by Chairman and G Byrne (Minute 25/174). Chairman would attend the CAPALC AGM on 27 November 2025.

25/180 Witcham Conservation Group

Request from the Witcham Conservation Group for Councillors to be appointed to the Group.

Resolved that the Parish Council was supportive of the Group's work and would be very interested in any feedback, eg minutes of meetings and reports of activities. Unfortunately at the present time there was no one available to be appointed as a Parish Council representative on this volunteer group. Proposed K Mackender, seconded J Lucas.

*Clerk***25/181 Correspondence**

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

Cambs Community Police Event 22 January 2026 – No Councillor available.
ECDC Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centre – training. No Councillor available.

East Cambs Parish Council Conference 12.2.26 Isleham – sharing projects and best practice. No Councillor available.

25/181 Correspondence (cont)

CCC Local Highways Initiative Engagement session on-line. G Byrne and Chairman attended.
 CAPALC AGM 27 November 2025 (online) Chairman to attend.
 CAPALC bulletins.
 Royal British Legion – 2025 Remembrance Range ‘Tommy’.
 CCC Proposals for Bus Routes X10 – Littleport and Little Downham. Placed on bus stop noticeboard.
 CCC Events newsletter.
 CCC Waste Education Centre newsletter. Placed on noticeboard.
 CCC Older People’s Health Watch Partnership – Board Vacancy. No one appointed.
 NHS Health Watch Membership Boards – vacancies. No one appointed
 NHS Notice - COVID-19, flu, RSV or pneumococcal vaccinations. Placed on noticeboard.
 ECDC Licensing, Planning, Audit, Council – agendas and minutes
<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/about-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/meetings-calendar-0>
 ECDC Press Releases – Remember Hedgehogs, Avoid being a Bonfire Bandit.
 ECDC Capital Growth Fund Grant Scheme.
 ECDC Rough Sleeper survey night 14 November 2025. Clerk to respond.
 ECDC Grants for businesses.
 ECDC Register of Consultees.
 NALC Bulletins and newsletters.
 NALC Governance elections.

Additional correspondence recently received:

CAPALC Sustainability & Climate Change training 13.11.25 10am to noon
 CAPALC Care Micro Enterprises – empowering local people to care for their communities.
 County Council Budget Briefing 11.12.25, 6.30pm and
 Consultation: 3 December to 7 January.
 ECDC Press Release Local Government Review.
 Anglian Water Thriving Communities Fund.
 Mereside Patient Group Qtly newsletter.

25/182 Date of next meeting: 14 January 2026

Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.50pm.

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Nil			
Payments:	002232 Truelink Oct	89.00	17.80	106.80
	002233 K&M Lighting	22.05	4.41	26.46
	002234 nPower Streetlighting	31.22	1.56	32.78
	002235/BACS Salary expenses Nov	835.56		835.56
	002236 Cartridgesave	47.80	9.56	57.36
	b/c Lloyds (Aug/Sept) debited 19.10.25	4.75		4.75
	b/c Lloyds (Sept/Oct) debited 18.11.25	6.75		6.75
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails debited 20.10.25	32.20	6.44	38.64

Signed..... Dated