

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 14 January 2026 at 7.38pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

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

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

Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

26/001 **Apologies for absence** - None

26/002 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none
Personal interests – none
Prejudicial interests – none

26/003 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

26/004 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports for December and January, previously circulated, were noted and meeting opened for County and District Councillors to summarise and update.

K Mackender sought advice from the County Councillor regarding the County Council's plans for road maintenance. There were many stretches of road across the County where the road surface was so riddled with potholes, some being very deep, that driving conditions especially at night and after rain, were extremely dangerous. In particular, the A10/Cambridge Road, golf course roundabout/BP roundabout, was very bad. Work on these roads had not long been completed. It was unacceptable. He asked how soon the road would be fixed and if the contractors would be responsible for returning urgently. Other Councillors cited other examples in the area, eg main roads serving Littleport, Welney, Soham.

County Councillor Dupré outlined the process for the County Council highways department to assess and prioritise works, together with figures for budget and expenditure this year, and the contribution from central Government and from County Council resources. However, the impact of weather, the volume of traffic, the miles of road that needed work on, and costs (£500m to do all the work required), soil issues, etc meant they could only do as much as the budget would allow. For example, full works of excavating and relaying roads cost approx. £1, 000,000 per mile.

She was unable to give an indication of when these reported roads would be repaired until after officers had assessed and prioritised across the County.

People are urged to report all potholes on the CCC 'Report It' website as soon as possible. Parish Councillors were deeply concerned about the safety for users of the roads, and also the damage to vehicles. It further emerged that two of the three routes to Cambridge from this area, (via Wilburton/Cottenham and Earith/Longstanton, would be closed for works, including utility works, for long periods in the coming weeks. This would only further exacerbate the problems on the A10 as all vehicles would have to use that one single route. Go to County Council website for details:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults/how-long-does-it-take-to-fix-a-road-fault>

All

26/004 **Reports from District and County Councillors (cont)**

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-plans-and-policies/highway-policies-and-capital-maintenance-programme>

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/highways-transparency>.

To report any highway or streetlight faults visit:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

County and District Councillors each gave an update on their usual monthly reports. Noted that 35 bus routes were being reviewed and indeed under threat of being withdrawn, including T12 the new route Sutton to Longstanton to connect up with the busway route into Cambridge. Councillor Dupré said there were concerns about inadequate consultation processes associated with withdrawing these services. For some people they were critical for being able to work, attend hospital appointments etc.

Councillor Inskip reported that over Christmas there had been an increase in antisocial behaviour by drivers on the Elean Business Park again. The Police had visited the site several times. ECDC was now looking at having a Public Space Protection Order, the area for which would also cover the Elean Business Park. (See also Minute 26/013 Consultation).

Local Government Review – The Government's shortlist, selected from the options submitted by the local principal authorities, were expected to be released 9 February 2026. There would then be a consultation period of 7 weeks for the public, stakeholders, etc to comment and the Government would be making final decisions on the structure for a unitary authority.

8.13pm L Dupré and M Inskip were thanked and they left the meeting. Meeting closed and business resumed.

26/005 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

26/006 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 12 November 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 S Wilkin. L Holdaway had not been at the meeting and abstained from the vote.

26/007 **Matters Arising**

25/178b) Verge cutback at Market Way: CCC Rights of Way Officer had explained the work had been carried out after complaints and an assessment. The overgrown hedges were blocking light and wind, so the drove surface didn't dry, causing mud and ruts, making it difficult for users to access.

25/173 Anglian Water had investigated the dates residents had complained of low water pressure and confirmed these coincided with mains water bursts across the area. Pressures of 3.4 bar had recently been measured in the areas where there had been issues in August.

25/176/c) 2026/7 Precept: Clerk confirmed the submission to ECDC had been made.

25/178e) Streetlighting: Councillors to monitor that tree branches obscuring light from streetlights were cut back.

26/008 **Planning Matters**

The following ECDC decisions was noted:

25/00690/NMAA Raven Barn, Headleys Lane Non material amendment to previously approved 25/00690/FUL for garage conversion, along with front and side extension.

25/00286/DISA Land South West Of Ely Model Aircraft Club Hive Road To discharge Condition 2 (biodiversity improvements) of decision dated 10 June 2025 for 25/00286/FUL. Retrospective change of use to mixed agricultural and straw thatching yard.

26/009 **MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**

- a) Monthly speed data reports, previously circulated, were noted. Speedwatch sessions would recommence once the weather improved and hours of daylight increased a little.
- b) Local Highways Initiative Programme. Mepal – Witcham road speed reduction measures. The application had been received by CCC. Clerk to advise Mepal Parish Council that an application for speed reduction measures had been submitted and a response from CCC was awaited.
G Byrne to forward information to everyone regarding next stages and timescales.

Clerk

GB

26/010 **Witcham Events Committee**

The replacement of the 'Witcham' village signs (3) at the entrances to the village by the Events Committee were likely possible under the Private Funding Highway Improvements Scheme and the details had been forwarded to the Chair of the Events Committee last week with a note that the Parish Council must be kept in the loop regarding design etc. The Events Committee would be responsible for completing the form and overseeing the project with the County Council, of course.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/privately-funding-highway-improvements>

There was no update on their proposals for utilising the telephone kiosk in High Street, nor new table-tennis table on the site of the old cricket nets on the recreation ground.

26/011 **Neighbourhood Plan**

The Referendum had been organised by ECDC for 12 February 2026 and councillors confirmed the poll cards had been received by residents. Notice and timetable for the Referendum had been published. (see ECDC website, Neighbourhood Plans – Witcham).

Correspondence from ECDC and the Consultant regarding these next stages had been forwarded to Councillors, and the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had been advised that the Examiner's Report stage had been completed and the Referendum set.

The Consultant had assisted in drafting text for publishing on website and quarterly newsletter (Minute 26/012) and passed by ECDC.

Resolved to organise for postcards to be prepared and distributed to each household – cost approx. £80 (non- budget; to be taken from general reserves). J Lucas, G Byrne and Chairman delegated power to oversee design and content of the postcard based on the sample offered by the Consultant. Proposed G Byrne, seconded J Lucas. (for delivery just before the Referendum).

Clerk

Resolved that the 5 copies of the submitted Neighbourhood Plan for Referendum offered by ECDC would be held during the pre-Referendum period by M Housden (The Slade), Witcham Equestrian Centre (Mepal Road), J Lucas (The Orchards), White Horse PH (Silver Street) and the Clerk so they would be available for residents to examine before the Referendum. These copies to be kept clean and returned to the Clerk for safekeeping and future use. Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

SW

JL

Chairman/

PH

26/012 Finance and Administration Matters

- a) **Receipts and payments schedule** for the months of December and January had been previously circulated. Documents had been checked by J Lucas.
Cambridgeshire ACRE Membership was due for renewal, £74.50 including VAT.
Resolved to approve renewal of Cambridgeshire ACRE Membership for 2026, £74.50. Proposed J Lucas, seconded G Byrne. *Clerk*
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for January. Cheques to be released. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for December. (Cheques already signed and released – see Minute 25/176). Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway.
- b) **Quarterly accounts and reconciliations** to 31 December 2025, previously circulated, were reviewed and bank statements presented at the meeting and checked by G Byrne. Receipts to-date £21,488.25, including Precept £19,000. Payments were £15,369.78. Balance £66,620.00 including all ear-marked reserves. NB these figures excluded interest for December on a savings account as the bank statement had not arrived in time for preparation of the quarterly accounts and would be included in the next quarter.
Budget monitoring report to 31 December 2025, previously circulated, was reviewed.
Resolved to approve the quarterly accounts and reconciliations report to 31 December 2025. Proposed G Byrne, seconded J Lucas.
Resolved to approve the Budget Monitoring report for period ending 31 December 2025. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman.
- c) **IT Policy** –the draft, prepared by the Clerk from CAPALC template, was presented and discussed at length, together with information about the new Assertion 10, which would form part of the 2025/26 AGAR return. All documents had been previously circulated together with the SAPP Practitioners Guide (formerly JPAG).
Resolved to adopt policy subject to amendments as discussed. Namely a Committee of Councillors to oversee implementation, security and compliance would not be formed. As the Council was so small (6 Councillors) this function would be carried out as an agenda item on some of the normal monthly Council meetings. Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway. *ALL*
Training – check what CAPALC offer and G Byrne would attend and provide summaries for Councillors. *GB*
Resolved that TEEC be asked to undertake the audit they offer regarding compliance for Accessibility, £50, and await report for any actions that might be required. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
- d) **Future IT administration professional support.** Noted that the previous provider had now retired.
Resolved that Clerk should sign up with Star IT for professional support including support for email system. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- e) **2025/6 Year End and Audit Procedures**
Timetable discussed.
April meeting – for year-end accounts would be 15 April 2026
Annual Parish Meeting 29 April 2026 (agenda to be discussed Feb) *ALL*
Annual Meeting of the Council, election for roles – 13 May 2026.
Apologies for absence for some of these meetings noted by Clerk.
Councillors were agreeable and available to move the September meeting to Wednesday 2 September. 2026/7 Calendar of dates to be published and village hall booked in coming weeks to confirm arrangements. *ALL*
- f) Fall in interest rates of 0.1% on savings noted.

26/012 **Finance and Administration Matters**

- g) New Year Newsletter. Previously circulated and amended copy presented at meeting. Approved subject to further changes as discussed in respect of Referendum information.

9.30pm J Lucas advised that she would soon have to leave the meeting and Chairman proposed moving to agenda item 26/014 which was agreed by all.

26/014 **Highways and Streetlighting**

- a) No items for reporting to the Highways Authority other than Councillors reporting any highway potholes in the coming weeks.
- b) Temporary Road Closure A1101 – Outwell (alternative route) WTR06203PT 4 January 2026 – 13 February 2026 (long diversion route affecting many villages and towns) TRO – Noted.
- c) Request for additional light to replace one removed at The Orchards. Following comments from residents about recently installed new lights providing inadequate light coupled with the fact that one had been removed at this location when the previous lighting system was switched by Balfour Beatty:

Resolved to make request to CCC/Balfour Beatty for a street light to be reinstalled at this location. Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne. *Clerk*

A note had been included in the newsletter asking residents with concerns about lighting levels under new scheme to contact the Clerk and Chairman undertook to have a walk around the village to check. *ALL*

- d) Resident's complaint regarding car parking and vehicle damage at The Orchards/Westway Place, including the number of cars that are now parking on the road at Westway Place. A vehicle parked on a private drive had been damaged by another reversing to turn at the cul-de-sac near farm gate at bottom of Westway Place. Councillors were sympathetic to the problems experienced and, of course, parking in this area of the village had been discussed a number of times over the years, including taking up with the District Council (owners of the greens) and Sanctuary (owners of the car parks) without a successful resolution. The Parish Council did not own any of the land and so had no powers to undertake further responsibility to successfully resolve the issues. Councillors also reported that vehicles were being parked on junctions and other places that made it difficult for other drivers. Note to go in future newsletter asking drivers to be more considerate, including not causing obstruction for emergency vehicles.
- e) Report of antisocial behaviour involving vehicles at Elean Business Park during Christmas period. Noted this had been discussed under Minute 26/004.

9.43pm J Lucas left the meeting.

Chairman proposed returning to Agenda Item 26/012 and this was agreed.

26/012 **Finance and Administration Matters (cont)**

- h) **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 26/012i) to 26/012k), namely LGPS, RSPB lease, Village Hall 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 Chairman, seconded S Wilkin. There were no members of the public present.
- i) **LGPS** – details previously circulated. **Resolved** to accept the report and change in rate. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*

26/012 **Finance and Administration Matters** (cont)

- j) **RSPB Lease.** Revised document from RSPB team and advice, previously circulated, was discussed at length.
Resolved Clerk to submit drafted response to solicitor setting out acceptance of this latest version of the draft document. Proposed Chairman, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*
- k) **Deed of Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall,** Revised document and advice previously circulated. Further advice presented at meeting was also considered.
Resolved to respond to solicitor as discussed and raise proposed points of clarification with Village Hall Committee for their meeting next week. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*

10.25pm Chairman re-opened the meeting.

26/013 **Consultations**

The following were considered, details having been previously circulated.

- a) CCC RECAP Resource and Waste Strategy, and RECAP Design Guide Consultation (closes 26.1.25) - No comment
- b) ECDC Proposed changes to the Rural Settlement List for 2026/2027. (closes 6 March 2026) [Rural Settlement List 2026 to 2027 | East Cambridgeshire District Council](#) - No comment, acceptable.
- c) ECDC Public Space Protection Order (12 Jan to 16 Feb) Vehicle related antisocial behaviour Elean
Resolved to support the making of this Public Space Protection Order. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin. *Clerk*

26/015 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

Weekly inspections of play equipment and recreation ground had been completed by the Chairman. He had also adjusted matting near train and trimmed back overgrown hedge on northern side. Councillors reported positive feedback from residents regarding the remembrance and festive decorations organised by the Witcham Events Committee.

Resolved that a letter of thanks should be sent to the Witcham Events Committee. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender. *Clerk*

26/016 **Reports of Meetings**

CAPALC Annual General meeting had been attended by the Chairman. He reported that a new website was about to be launched and there had been staffing changes. Subscription fees were set to rise by 4%.

26/017 **Correspondence**

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

Police Funding 2026/7.

Volunteer schools appeals panel member (on noticeboard).

Parish and Community forum 21 Jan 2026 – no one appointed.

Cambridgeshire Fens Perspectives Workshop, 9 Dec 2025 – no one appointed.

Cambridgeshire County Council Budget Briefing with Town and Parish Councils webinar 11 December – no one attended.

Cambridgeshire Community Foundation New funding for water environment & communities – Anglian Water.

CCC Winter Edition - Waste Education Centre Newsletter

CCAN Annual Report Dec 25

Avian Bird Flu – posters placed on noticeboards.

Ely Bus Route Update – Services 9 and 10, effective 2 January 2026.

NALC Star Council Awards.

CAPALC Staff changes.

CCC Events newsletter.

26/017 **Correspondence** (cont)

ECDC agendas and minutes: Finance & Assets, Licensing, Operational Services, Planning, Full Council, <https://eastcambs.gov.uk/about-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/meetings-calendar-0>

ECDC Press Releases, White Ribbon Day, Neighbourhood Planning grants, CE retirement, Bin lorry fire – batteries.

CCC Ely Strategic Adaptation for Emergency Resilience – climate change for local communities, St Mary's Church Hall, 27 November 2025 – no one attended.

Parish Community Forum notes, and next meeting 21 January 2026.

NALC Governance Elections, Events, Bulletins and Newsletters.

CAPALC new website.

Cambs ACRE newsletter.

TMC Incident Report.

26/018 **Date of next meeting:** to be re-arranged for Wednesday 4 February as half the councillors were not available on the pre-scheduled date of 11 February.

Meeting closed at 10.40pm.

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

January 2026		£	£	£
Receipts:	UK Power Networks (Substation)	86.69		86.69
Payments:	002240 Npower	55.26	2.76	58.02
	002241 Truelink (Dec)	89.00	17.80	106.80
	002242 Cartridgesave	80.07	16.01	96.08
	002243/BACS Salary expenses Jan	568.87		568.87
	002244 Cambs ACRE membership	62.08	12.42	74.50
b/c	Lloyds (Nov/Dec) debit due 18.1.26	7.75		7.75
c/p	MS online services – 7 licences emails debited 22.12.25	32.20	6.44	38.64
December 2025				
Receipts:	Nil			
Payments:	002237/8/BACS Salary Expenses Dec	1089.55		1089.55
	00239 Truelink (Nov)	89.00	17.80	106.80
b/c	Lloyds (Oct/Nov) debited 19.12.25	7.67		7.67
c/p	MS Online services – emails Nov/Dec debited 18.11.25	32.20	6.44	38.64

Signed..... Dated