

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 8 July 2026 at 7.40pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

Present: M Housden (Chairman), G Byrne, L Holdaway, S Wilkin.

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

Chairman opened the meeting and advised that sadly Mr Ashley Bamforth had passed away in June. Ashley had served on the Witcham Parish Council for 26 years, of which 23 years were as Chairman until May 2014. He retired from the Council May 2015. His dedication to the community included support for the village hall and its refurbishments, the Peashooting Championships, plus many other activities in the village, and he was events organiser for the local U3A and had supported the Citizens Advice Bureau.

- 26/098 **Apologies for absence** – K Mackender (work), J Lucas (personal).
Chairman reported that L Holdaway had emailed to apologise that she would be late due to train issues.
- 26/099 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**
Pecuniary interests - none
Personal interests - none
Prejudicial interests - none
- 26/100 **Dispensations**
To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil
- 26/101 **Reports from District and County Councillors**
Monthly reports, previously circulated, were received and noted.
Chairman opened meeting for the County and District Councillors to speak.
County Councillor advised that Local Authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were expecting the Government to announce its proposed new council boundaries before parliamentary business ended for the summer on Friday 17 July.
The County Council had started the 5-yearly review and updating of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.
The County Council had extended the contract for road maintenance with M Group from June 2027 to June 2030 and included a number of enhancements to the contract, which have been jointly agreed between the Council and M Group - prioritising improved value for money and quality control. This also gave the proposed new local government regime an opportunity to have time to do the work for a new procurement once it comes into being later.
Buses. The Mayor had announced that he would not increase the mayoral precept: Following an independent review it is apparent that due to funding shortfalls, severe cuts to bus networks across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are to be expected. The report projects a 10% network cut by 2029 and a 19% reduction by 2035, with nearly 38% of services at risk.

7.50pm L Holdaway joined the meeting.

The County Councillor's Facebook survey (Sutton) revealed strongest support for direct bus to Cambridge. Connections to other buses and trains were poor.

26/101 Reports from District and County Councillors (cont)

LHI presentations by applicants to the LHI Member Panel Day took place on 3 July. The decision on which application(s) would get approved to be announced shortly after the Highways and Transport Committee meeting on 6th October 2026.

The District Councillor advised that the problems with the new food caddies were being looked into.

A new strategy to address long term empty homes is being developed by Consultants, the Empty Homes Network, which will also review and progress the District Council's caseload of long-term empty homes. Agreed by the Operational Services Committee and will be reviewed March 2027.

The Finance & Assets Committee had approved its Climate and Nature Action Plan and Monitoring Report 2026, along with its 'Climate and Nature Top 20 Actions for 2026/27'.

An Inclusive Play Audit had been carried out across the district. The [Inclusive Plan and Open Spaces Fund](#) had been set up (over £250k) to provide capital funding towards projects that ensure playgrounds are accessible to children of all abilities.

Business grant scheme opened 6 July.

8.05pm County and District Councillors were thanked and they left the meeting. The business of the agenda resumed.

26/102 Public Participation There were no members of the public present.**26/103 Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting of 13 May 2026 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.

Minutes of the Meeting of 10 June 2026 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 L Holdaway.

26/104 Matters Arising

Minute 26/091c) Noted that the dog signs had been ordered from ECDC.

Minute 26/091b) PIPA inclusive play audit had been requested. Photographs despatched.

Minute 26/110 Peashooting Championships Banner – requested documents had been received and forwarded to Councillors, confirming consent for erection of the banner on the recreation ground.

26/105 Highways and Streetlighting

- a) LHI Application update – 3 July 2026 Panel meeting – updates. Chairman and G Byrne gave update. The County Councillor had given strong support for the application. The Police had confirmed that speedwatch sessions could not be carried out on a 50mph stretch of road. Noted the estimated cost for the project had increased from £25k to £27,432.96.

Resolved to approve increasing the Parish Council's portion of the funding to full 10% of current estimated cost and to write to LHI officer to confirm the increase in Parish Council funding. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

- b) Monthly speed data report had been circulated by the Chairman and was noted. G Byrne said one Speedwatch session had been held in June, the second having been cancelled because of high day-time temperatures. Volunteers down to 4. Enquiries had been received from 2 potential volunteers and these would be followed up.
- c) No items reported to Highways Authority.

*Chairman/
GB*

26/106 **Planning Matters**

Planning Matters

26/00672/TRE Glebe Lodge, High Street. T1 Bird Cherry Reduce height by approx. 3m. Noted

26/107 **Finance and Administration Matters**

- a) **Receipts and payments schedule** for July had been previously circulated. Documents had been checked by G Byrne and Chairman. **Resolved** to approve the receipts and payments for July. Cheques to be released. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
Resolved that Clerk make arrangements to pay salaries and any invoices due for payment before the September meeting in accordance with the Financial Regulations and to be reported at the September meeting. Eg grasscutting, salaries, signs. *Clerk*
- b) **External Audit** – Exemption Statement acknowledgement and instructions. Noted.
- c) **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 26/107d) to 26/107f)), namely Village Hall Deed of Right of Way & Car Park, RSPB Lease, and signage quote, 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 and agreed by all.

Meeting closed to the public. There were no members of the public present.

- d) Delay on progress with Village Hall Deed of Right of Way and Parking, noted. Expected to be ready for the 2 September Council meeting. *Clerk*
- e) Delay on progress with RSPB lease. Noted. Request to date lease 1.4.26 by RSPB considered.
Resolved to agree date of lease to be 1.4.26 subject to it being available for completion for the September meeting and that this was the final amendment. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
- f) Quote for new play signs, previously circulated, was considered.
Resolved to accept the quote from Digital Creations for £92 plus VAT. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*

Chairman re-opened meeting to the public. There were no members of the public present.

26/108 **Witcham Neighbourhood Plan and Development Community Facilities**

Chairman reported on the Actions Report from 'Discovery Walk' the previous month, previously circulated. Further progress awaited from the County Council's East Cambs Area Community Co-ordinator and the Conservation Group.

Chairman to remind the Conservation Group leaders to collect data.

26/109 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) Weekly inspections of play equipment and recreation ground had been completed by the Chairman. Nil to report on.
- b) Application for use of recreation ground for yoga during summer heatwaves (circulated). Noted this is well attended by Witcham residents.
Resolved to consent to the yoga group using the recreation ground in the evenings during heatwave periods over the summer, provided they have booked the village hall as normal. Proposed S Wilkin, seconded L Holdaway. *Clerk*

26/109 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters (cont)**

Resolved to contact Village Hall to advise that the Council is getting requests to use the recreation ground because it is too hot in the hall during hot weather and suggest they purchase air-con system (likely grants would be available) to install in main hall and meeting room.

Clerk

Proposed Chairman and agreed by all.

S Wilkin and Chairman to speak to Kickboxing leaders.

c) Application erection of headstone at cemetery

Resolved to approve the application submitted by Chatteris Funeral Services. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

26/110 **Correspondence**

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

ECDC Agendas and Minutes – Finance & Assets, Operational Services,

Planning, Council. Planning Forum for parishes **19 August 10-11.30am**,

Cambs Local Heritage List website project Assets.

NALC bulletins and events

CCC Highway events and TMC roadworks

CCC Parish and Community Forum 15 July 2026 online

Cambs ACRE Staying in touch newsletter, Rural affordable housing in your parish

CAPALC councillor training

Policing – East Cambs Community meeting 14 July 2026.

HMRC Employer bulletin

Pension – Access and Fairness changes

26/111 **Date of next meeting:** 2 September 2026

Meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Nil			
Payments:	002270 Truelink grass & grounds Jun	645.24	129.04	774.28
	002271/BACS Salary expenses Jul	564.87)		
	& reimbursement expenses	91.89)		656.76
	002272 Npower streetlight energy	29.76	1.49	31.25
	Direct fee Lloyds debited 19.6.26	7.25		7.25
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails			
	debited 20.6.26	33.81	6.76	40.57

Signed..... Dated