

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 13 May 2026 at 7.41pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

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

In attendance: Parish Clerk/RFO

District Councillor M Inskip

County and District Councillor L Dupré temporarily left the room just before the meeting was going to start.

M Housden opened the meeting for the first item on the agenda.

26/063 **Election of Chairman**

L Holdaway nominated M Housden. He said he would prefer someone else take a turn.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved that M Housden be appointed as Chairman for a further year.

Proposed L Holdaway, seconded G Byrne.

26/064 **Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct**

Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct form completed and signed by M Housden and witnessed by the Clerk.

M Housden in the Chair.

26/065 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from K Mackender, S Wilkin, and J Lucas (All personal engagements).

26/066 **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

The Clerk reminded Councillors that as in previous years they must regularly review their Registration of Interests and the Council's adopted Code of Conduct (eg Clauses 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 and Appendix A). Councillors are responsible for notifying any changes to the ECDC Monitoring Officer within 28 days of any changes, with copy to Clerk. Prejudicial Interests must be declared at any meeting, and Speaking Right (Clause 1.5) requested if desired at the beginning of the meeting.

26/067 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

26/068 **Election of Vice-Chairman**

K Mackender had advised that if nominated he would be willing to take the role of Vice-Chairman but equally he would be happy for someone else to be nominated. No one else offered.

M Housden proposed Mr K Mackender.

Resolved that K Mackender be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

Proposed M Housden, seconded G Byrne.

26/069 **Vice-Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct**

Form to be completed by K Mackender, and witnessed by Clerk, before the next meeting.

- 26/070 **Reports from District and County Councillors**
 Monthly reports previously circulated. The meeting was opened for District Councillor M Inskip to speak. He confirmed that the new bins would soon be delivered to the last residents in Witcham. The District Council's Annual meeting was 21 May 2026. No further news on the Local Government Reorganisation.
 7.48pm County and District Councillor L Dupré returned to the room to give her apologies for not being able to return to the meeting.
 7.49pm District Councillor Inskip had concluded his report and he was thanked, and he left the meeting. The business of the Agenda resumed.
- 26/071 **Public Participation** - No members of the public present.
- 26/072 **Minutes**
 Minutes of the Meeting of 15 April 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 L Holdaway and agreed.
- 26/073 **Matters Arising** - None
- 26/074 **Election of Representatives to Committees/Working Groups/Parties and External Bodies:**
 Village Hall Committee (Trustee) – S Wilkin.
 Burial Board – All Councillors.
 Planning Applications – L Holdaway and G Byrne (to monitor and report at Council meetings).
 Finance (to check monthly receipts and payments etc prior to each Council meeting) - All Cllrs on a rotating basis.
 CAPALC – M Housden, K Mackender.
 Speed Recording Equipment (MVAS) – M Housden.
 Play Areas/Recreation Ground, including Weekly Inspections – M Housden
 Designated Councillor - Safeguarding (Adults & Children) – L Holdaway.
 CCC Public Rights of Way Liaison – J Lucas and S Wilkin.
 Cambs Constabulary Community Meetings – G Byrne.
 EPR Power Station Community Liaison Forum – G Byrne.
 Speedwatch Village Co-ordinator – G Byrne.
 Mepal & Witcham Working Party - G Byrne and M Housden.
 East Cambs Parish Forum – None.
 Witcham Wildlife and Nature Conservation Group – None.
- Resolved** that the above be nominated and appointed en-bloc.
 Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne.
- 26/075 **To fix Chairman's Allowance (LGA 1972 S.15(5))**
Resolved that the Chairman's Allowance for 2026/7 remain at £50.00.
 Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway.
- 26/076 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**
- a) **Weekly Inspections** of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman and there was nothing to report. Clerk advised that grounds contractor had noticed a hole in the ground near litter bin outside village hall and that possibly papers inside the bin had been shredded which indicated possible vermin issue. Chairman advised that this would be the hole bored out for the Xmas tree and that the small slab used to cover it after Xmas had been removed. He didn't think it was vermin.

b) **Witcham Events Committee - Annual Peashooting Competition**

on 11 July – Application for consent for use of recreation ground, together with supporting documents, previously circulated, were considered.

Resolved that the Council approved use of the recreation ground for the 2026 Annual Peashooting Competition on 11 July as per application. Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway.

For all events, the Witcham Events Committee representatives must undertake the inspection of the recreation ground and play equipment before and after the event and not solely rely on the last inspection carried out by the Parish Council. Chairman said he would be helping at the event and would accompany the event organiser on these inspections. All sites to be cleared up after each event.

Clerk

Chairman, on request from a Councillor, and approved by Councillors present, **moved the meeting back to 26/071 – Public Participation.** The Councillor reported that County Council Highways (contractors for verge cutting) had damaged a wall in the village and the owners were pursuing with the County Council for remedy, unfortunately, currently without success despite video evidence. Noted.

Chairman moved the meeting to next items on the agenda:

26/077 **Finance and General Administration****Exclusion of Press and Public**

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 special and confidential nature of the business about to be transacted at Agenda Items 26/077a) to 26/077b) listed below, 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. There were no members of the public present.

a) **RSPB Lease** – Lease not received for signing.

Resolved that this item be deferred to next meeting. Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne.

b) **Deed of Right of Way and Parking** – Amended Deed not yet received for signing.

Resolved that this item be deferred to next meeting. Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne.

L Holdaway said that in future the Council should instruct solicitors to submit legal documents with tracked changes from the start thus saving time and effort for all. Noted that recent editions of both documents tracked changes.

Meeting re-opened to public – no public present.

Clerk

c) **Renewal of SLCC membership**

Resolved to approve renewal of SLCC membership, £158. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman.

d) **Annual subscription to Cambs Community Archive Network/website. (LGA1972, S.137)**

Resolved that the Council in accordance with its powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, should incur the following expenditure which in the opinion of the Council is in the interests of the area and its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure. To make payment of £100 for annual subscription – Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network/website for Witcham items [Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network](#) Proposed L Holdaway, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk

Clerk

26/077 **Finance and General Administration** (cont)

- e) **Renewal of insurance policy**
Resolved to approve renewal of insurance with Zurich £692.75.
 Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman. *Clerk*
- f) **Approve receipts and payments for May 2026.** Documentation had been checked by Chairman.
Resolved to approve the Receipts and Payments schedule for May and to release cheques. Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway. *Clerk*
- g) **Internal Auditors Report**
 Clerk reported on the internal Audit which had taken place on 30 April 2026. Page 4 of the AGAR form had been completed and signed off by the Internal Auditor.
Resolved to receive and note. Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway.
- h) **Approval and signing off the Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the 2025/6 AGAR.**
 AGAR Section 1, together with the 2025 Practitioners Guidelines, had been circulated at the April meeting for Councillors to examine.
Resolved that the AGAR 2025/6 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement, as completed in this meeting, be approved, and be signed by the Chairman. Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway.
- i) **Approval and signing off of the Section 2 – Statement of Accounts of the 2025/6 AGAR**
Resolved that the AGAR 2025/6 Section 2 - Statement of Accounts be approved, and be signed by Chairman. Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway.
- j) **Approval of Certificate of Exemption (Section 9 Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015.**
Resolved to approve the Certificate of Exemption and it be signed by the Chairman. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Holdaway.
 Noted that the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Annual Governance and Accountability Return would be published on 1 June 2026, inspection period 3 June 2026 to 14 July 2026. *Clerk*
- k) **Appointment Internal Auditor for 2025/6**
Resolved to appoint LGS to serve as Internal Auditor for 2026/7.
 Proposed Chairman, seconded L Holdaway. *Clerk*
- l) **Review of Budgets and Reserves**
 Clerk had updated the budgets in accordance with Minute 26/056g) and circulated with this agenda. Updated analysis of earmarked and general reserves, also previously circulated, were discussed.
Resolved that the revised budget and the analysis of earmarked and general reserves be approved, subject to moving £120 from general reserves to Training. Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway. *Clerk*
Resolved that the Clerk should seek advice about transferring allocation of CIL monies to different projects as part of the review about extending the cemetery (Witcham Neighbourhood Plan Community Action 6) for June meeting. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded G Byrne. *Clerk*
- m) **Cemetery Rules and Fees**
 There were no changes to be made to the Rules. The proposed changes to fees were examined.
Resolved to approve the Cemetery Rules and Fees as presented. Proposed by Chairman, seconded L Holdaway. *Clerk*
- n) **Annual Village Inspection**
 G Byrne and Chairman undertook to do the annual village inspection. *Clerk, GB MH*

26/078 **Witcham Neighbourhood Plan**

Chairman summarised comments and feedback received at the Annual Parish Meeting regarding the Neighbourhood Plan. In particular it was noted that the Witcham Wildlife and Nature Conservation Group was undertaking a lot of planting work and gathering information about wildlife. They were asked to document this information. They had been asked to submit regular reports back to the Parish Council and to publish their activities for residents.

Clerk instructed to contact Consultant for further advice.

Clerk

G Byrne proposed that a note should go in the next newsletter advising residents that following completion of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council would be investigating the Community Actions that had been put forward. Residents would be invited to contact the Parish Council with any views or concerns they might have. Seconded L Holdaway and agreed unanimously.

26/079 **Highways and Streetlighting**

- a) Chairman reported that the work to remedy issues with gully/drainage at The Slade/High Street junction would take up to 12 weeks. Dead elder trees required action on the verge near the village sign and the village noticeboard – Clerk to report to County Council. Also serious problem at this site with bird droppings. Light from some of the new street lights was being obstructed by trees in Martins Lane and High Street – Balfour Beatty to be informed.

Clerk

Noted that a new Local Highways Officer had been appointed to cover this area. Clerk to flag with him that the road-markings at the junction Headleys Lane and High Street had still not been repainted despite promises from previous incumbents of the post. There were potholes in High Street near bus stop and there was concern about damage caused by verge cutting contractors.

Clerk

- b) The monthly MVAS speed data had been circulated and details were noted.
- c) Speedwatch sessions. G Byrne advised that two sessions were being held this month.
- d) Update on scoring and timetable for LHI processing of submitted applications, previously circulated, was noted.
- e) LHI application – speed reduction measures Mepal/Witcham road. Further submission to support this application following announcement by the Mayor of the Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough regarding withdrawal by the Government for funding A10 improvements which would have eased congestion and would now impact the A142.

G Byrne proposed that this should be submitted if and when the Council was invited to give a presentation as the next stage of the application. Seconded Chairman. .

26/080 **2026 Annual Parish Meeting**

Draft minutes of APM held on 6 May 2026 had been previously circulated to all Councillors and were accepted subject to amendment regarding the strawburner.

Clerk

Regarding the dog bin at The Slade. Noted that the dog bins do carry a message encouraging members of the public to report full bins to the District Council urgently so they could carry out extra rounds of emptying. Need to check that all the bins still carry this sticker.

MH

To help improve access to space for putting up notices for village events etc, Chairman said that he had a noticeboard he could put up in the bus shelter.

MH

Resolved that Chairman should put up the noticeboard in the bus shelter. Proposed Chairman, seconded G Byrne.

26/080 2026 Annual Parish Meeting (cont)

Noted that at the Annual Parish Meeting, it had been suggested that the conservation group and the events committee should publish regular bulletins for residents.

26/081 Reports of Meetings

Noted that G Byrne had attended the Strawburner Liaison meeting on 21 April 2026 and that potentially the Government may not renew the contract as they were more focused on other methods of energy production such as wind and solar panels.

26/082 Correspondence

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

CCC/Balfour Beatty. Latest update on switchover to LED lights for Cambridgeshire.

East Cambs Community Coordinator. Community Transport and Health updates

CCC The Library Presents – Spring 2026.

Parish and Community Forum updates - 20 May, 1:30–4:00pm (main meeting 2 – 3.30pm), at St Mary's Church in Ely & Community Editors meeting 19 May 2026.

East Cambs Community Policing meeting 14 July 2026.

Mereside GP Practice Group – newsletter Apr-June and updates

TMC Roadworks & Events Bulletin.

ECDC Council and Committee meeting agendas and Minutes - audit, planning and Annual Council Meeting.

ECDC Hate Crime Awareness training.

NALC newsletters, events, CEO bulletins.

CAPALC Bulletins, finance training for councillors, HR issues. Code of Conduct.

Cambs ACRE newsletter, cancer awareness.

ECDC Community Fund closing dates

ECDC Register of Interest - updates.

26/083 Date of next meeting: 10 June 2026

Agenda Item: Signage play/fitness equipment.

There being no further meeting the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.04pm.

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Precept	9750.00		9750.00
Payments:	002259 Ely Print Centre	118.00		118.00
	002260 CCAN renewal Archive subscription	100.00		100.00
	002261 K&M Lighting Street light mntnce 6m	22.05	4.41	26.46
	002262 Cartridgesave toners	51.94	10.39	62.33
	002263BACS Salary expenses May			
	002264 SLCC renewal membership	158.00		158.00
	002265 Zurich Ins	692.75		692.75
	Direct fee Lloyds	6.25		6.25
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails debited 20.4.26	33.81	6.76	40.57

Signed..... Dated