

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 14 May 2025 at 7.35pm in the Village Hall, Witcham.

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

In attendance: Parish Clerk/RFO
Representative of Witcham Village Hall Committee

Clerk reported error on agenda for item 25/093b) Deed Public Right of Way and Parking. The word 'Public' should be removed.

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

25/079 Election of Chairman

K Mackender nominated Mr M Housden.

M Housden said that having been Chairman for around 10 years he would have liked for someone else to take on the role. There were no other nominations.

Resolved that M Housden be appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year.
Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

25/080 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

25/081 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from J Lucas (hols).

Apologies also received from County and District Councillor L Dupré and District Councillor M Inskip.

25/082 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 of the necessity to review the Council's Code of Conduct (circulated with agenda), together with their Registration of Interests regularly. Particular attention was drawn to Clauses 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14. Changes in items of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as defined in the Code of Conduct Appendix A, and Other Interests – Personal - must be declared to the ECDC Monitoring Officer via the Clerk within 28 days of any changes. Prejudicial Interests also to be declared at any meeting, and Speaking Right (Clause 1.5) requested if desired. (Code attached).

25/083 Dispensations

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

25/084 Election of Vice-Chairman

M Housden proposed Mr K Mackender.

Resolved that K Mackender be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.
Proposed M Housden, seconded G Byrne.

- 25/085 **Vice-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 K Mackender and witnessed by the Clerk.
- 25/086 **Reports from District and County Councillors**
Monthly reports previously circulated. Concerns regarding financing of the proposed crematorium at the old Mepal Outdoor Centre discussed.
- 25/087 **Public Participation**
Chairman opened the meeting to the public and welcomed the representative from the Witcham Village Hall Committee who had come to give an update regarding the Deed of Right of Way and Parking. The Plan for the Deed was discussed and agreement reached.
7.53pm Village Hall Committee representative left the meeting.
- 25/088 **Minutes**
Minutes of the Meeting of 12 March 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 Chairman, seconded M Byrne, and agreed. L Holdaway abstained as she had not been present at that meeting.
- Minutes of the meeting of 16 April 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 L Holdaway, and agreed. G Byrne and K Mackender abstained as they had not been present at that meeting.
- Minutes of the meeting of the Extraordinary meeting of 30 April 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, and agreed. K Mackender abstained as he had not been present at that meeting
- 25/089 **Matters Arising**
Neighbourhood Plan – ECDC progressing.
- 25/090 **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.
Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – M Housden, K Mackender (to be disbanded after the Plan is made).
CAPALC – M Housden, K Mackender.
Designated Councillor - Safeguarding (Adults & Children) – L Holdaway.
Cambs Constabulary Community Meetings – G Byrne.
East Cambs Parish Forum – None.
CCC Public Rights of Way Liaison – J Lucas and S Wilkin.
EPR Power Station Community Liaison Forum – G Byrne.
Play Areas/Recreation Ground, including Weekly Inspections – M Housden
Speed Recording Equipment (MVAS) – M Housden.
Speedwatch Village Co-ordinator – G Byrne.
Mepal & Witcham Working Party - G Byrne and S Wilkin.
The above were nominated and then appointed en-bloc.
Proposed K Mackender, seconded G Byrne and unanimously agreed.

25/091 **To fix Chairman's Allowance (LGA 1972 S.15(5))**

Resolved that the Chairman's Allowance for 2025/6 be set at £50.00.
Proposed L Holdaway, seconded S Wilkin.

25/092 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

Weekly inspections of recreation ground and play equipment had been completed by the Chairman. He advised that the table/bench on the recreation ground in front of the Village Hall carpark had been damaged. (emailed 12 May 2025). MH to try to straighten.

*Chairman*25/093 **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 25/093a) to 25/093d) 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. There were no members of the public present.

- a) **RSPB Lease** – awaiting response from RSPB team following Council meeting 30 April.

Resolved that if the RSPB accepted the Council's revised draft document, Clerk authorised to take forward for our solicitors to get final copy back for signing in next Council meeting.

Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.

Depending on timing, may be necessary to hold an extraordinary meeting to get signed off.

Clerk

- b) **Deed of Right of Way and Parking** – Plan.

Resolved that provision be made in the Deed so that a cable for electricity from the Village Hall supply may be laid, now or in the future, close to the south side of the drive towards the entrance; approximate location to be shown as black dotted line on the Plan. Proposed Chairman, seconded LH.

Clerk

Resolved that the Clerk to follow up regarding marking up the Plan showing ownership etc and approximate location of electricity cable and connection to Village Hall supply. Information to be passed to Solicitors so they can instruct surveyor on what is required. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk

- c) **Staff Matters** - Awaiting feedback from CCC on Discretions Policy.

Pensions Regulator - Re-enrolment return completed and acknowledgement received. Clerk's annual leave for summer noted. Clerk's hours for March reviewed. Extra hours had also been worked in April to cover the additional meetings and year-end processes, and Clerk said she would reduce hours in May to bring down those worked in April.

Resolved to approve payment of 20 additional hours worked during March to cover year-end processes, Neighbourhood Plan admin, policies, and the additional meetings that had been held. Proposed Chairman, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk

- d) **Bus Shelter Repairs** – deferred as not all quotes in.

Clerk

Meeting re-opened to public – no public present.

Resolved to re-order agenda to consider item k) before item e),
Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway and agreed by all.

25/093 **Finance and General Administration (cont)**k) **Renewal Insurance Policy**

Clerk

Resolved to renew the Council's insurance with Zurich on Long Term Agreement (LTA) of 3 years. Renewal Fee including discount for LTA £668.55. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded Chairman.

e) **Approve receipts and payments for May 2025.** Documentation checked by G Byrne and K Mackender.

Resolved to approve the Receipts and Payments schedule for May and to release cheques, including renewal of insurance. Proposed G Byrne, seconded K Mackender.

Clerk

f) **Internal Auditors Report** (previously circulated)

Resolved to receive and content noted Proposed Chairman and agreed unanimously.

Clerk

g) **Approval and signing off the Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the 2024/5 AGAR.**

AGAR Section 1 had been circulated at the April meeting for Councillors to consider, together with JPAG guidelines.

Resolved that the AGAR 2024/5 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement, as completed in the meeting, be approved, and be signed by the Chairman. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

h) **Approval and signing off of the Section 2 – Statement of Accounts of the 2024/5 AGAR**

Resolved that the AGAR 2024/5 Section 2 - Statement of Accounts be approved, and be signed by Chairman. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

i) **Appointment Internal Auditor for 2025/6**

Resolved to appoint LGS to serve as Internal Auditor for 2025/6. Proposed K Mackender, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

j) **Review of Budgets and Reserves**

Clerk had updated the budgets in accordance with Minute 25/064d) and circulated with agenda. Updated analysis of earmarked and general reserves, also previously circulated, were discussed. A question was raised as to whether or not the large sum earmarked for increasing cemetery space should be reviewed since still no land had been found? Also, if it was still a priority for the village? The amount held would only cover admin expenses and the start of the process. Monies had been set aside in this earmarked reserve budget for a number of years to build up a sum to be able to undertake this project. A loan would still be required to actually purchase land. It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan survey had included questions on what people in the village felt about needing to extend space for burials and interment of ashes. This had revealed strong support from responders for further space to be provided and had been included in the Community Action Plan passed over to the Council by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group last year. (summary attached).

Resolved that the revised budget and the analysis of earmarked and general reserves be approved. Proposed K Mackender, seconded S Wilkin.

25/094 **Planning Applications**

The following ECDC decision was noted:

25/00285/CLP Magnolia Place 9 Silver Street Loft conversion – Approved.

25/095 **Highways and Streetlighting**

Items reported to Highways Authority – none.

25/096 **MVAS, Speedwatch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**

- a) **Speed data** for April, had been circulated by the Chairman. Noted that high speeds were still being recorded in Martins Lane towards crossroads and out along The Slade.
- b) **Speedwatch** – G Byrne confirmed the sessions were going well.
- c) **Joint Mepal and Witcham Parish Council Working Party – Local Highways Initiative Programme – Mepal – Witcham Road Speed Reduction Measures and Pathway – report of meeting held on 22 April 2025.**

Notes circulated and G Byrne gave verbal update. Mepal would survey their parishioners to establish level of support for speed reduction at the locations in the village causing concern among residents and the Witcham to Mepal road. Results expected later this summer. Noted that flattening the verge and laying road planings would cost £70-80 per linear metre – about 300m within Witcham parish boundary, from cemetery. An application would be required for grant via CCC system. Clerk asked if CCC would continue to be responsible for the verge and new path or if it would revert to the Parish Council for future maintenance of the surface of the path. A councillor asked if the proposed path would connect up with a walk. Councillors to consider this and discuss at a future meeting.

25/097 **2025 Annual Parish Meeting**

Draft minutes of APM held on 30 April had been previously circulated to all Councillors and were noted.

25/098 **Correspondence**

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

Government Planning Reforms: pro-growth Planning and Infrastructure Bill, cutting down the average two-year statutory pre-consultation period by half and paving the way for new roads, railways, and windfarms that will bolster the country's connectivity and energy security. [Planning reforms to slash a year off infrastructure delivery - GOV.UK](#) (including Fens Reservoirs scheme)

East Cambs Parish and Community Forum, 21 May, focus - Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission: Final Report.

CPRE How to Respond to Planning Applications.

CCC Essential Maintenance to Mepal Viaduct Bridge May (deferred a week) Closures & Events Diary.

ECDC Hate Crime Awareness and 3rd party reporting centre training.

ECDC Council and Committee meeting agendas and Minutes licensing, planning.

CAPALC Shape the Future of Age-Friendly Communities & NALC newsletters, events, bulletins. Cambs ACRE newsletter.

Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network – Executive Committee vacancies.

HMRC Employer newsletters.

Mayoral and County Council Elections 1 May 2025

25/099 **Date of next meeting:** 11 June 2025

There being no further meeting the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.32pm





Schedule of Receipts and Payments





		£	£	£
Receipts:	Precept	9500.00		9500.00
Payments: c/p	MS online services – 7 licences emails 18.4.25-17.5.25 due 19.4.25	32.20	6.44	38.64
b/c	Lloyds fees Feb/March	6.17		6.17
002208	Ely Print Services	118.00		118.00
002209/BACS	Salary Expenses	550.67		550.67
002210	Cartridgesave	50.10	10.02	60.12
002211	LGS Services	185.00	37.00	222.00
002212	K&M Lighting Services	22.05	4.41	26.46
002213	Zurich Insurance	668.55		668.55

Signed..... Dated

2025/26 CALENDAR OF DATES

11 June 2025
 9 July 2025
 10 September 2025
 8 October 2025
 12 November 2025
 14 January 2026
 11 February 2026
 11 March 2026
 8 or 15 April 2026
 29 April 2026 Annual Parish Meeting
 13 May 2026 Annual Meeting of the Council

27.30. We need to provide additional graveyard space within the village			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		22.83%	21
2	Agree		29.35%	27
3	Neutral		45.65%	42
4	Disagree		2.17%	2
5	Strongly disagree		0.00%	0
			answered	92

27.31. We need to provide additional cremation memorial garden space within the village			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		16.30%	15
2	Agree		38.04%	35
3	Neutral		41.30%	38
4	Disagree		4.35%	4
5	Strongly disagree		0.00%	0
			answered	92

Community Action – to investigate options for providing additional graveyard and cremation memorial garden space

<https://www.witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk/Contents/ContentItems/4xmtdyxby6523z9c76yq1zkv45>