

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 10 September 2025 at 7.33pm 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
District Councillor M Inskip

25/132 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from County and District Councillor L Dupré.

25/133 **To receive declarations of interest from Councillors on any items on the agenda**

Pecuniary interests - none

Personal interests – none

Prejudicial interests – none

25/134 **Dispensations**

To note any new Dispensations granted: Nil

25/135 **Reports from District and County Councillors**

Monthly reports for August and September, previously circulated, were noted. M Inskip reported that there was little to update the reports. It was noted that the site for the crematorium on the A142 Mepal was now being cleared ready for building to start. Maintenance work on the Mepal bridge now complete. 7.40 M Inskip left the meeting.

25/136 **Public Participation** There were no members of the public present.

25/137 **Minutes**

Minutes of the Meeting of 9 July 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 S Wilkin. K Mackender, L Holdaway and J Lucas abstained as they had not been present at the meeting.

25/138 **Matters Arising**

25/120 & 25/107f) *Bus Shelter* – Repairs to bus shelter roof, inside and out had been completed. Chairman had prepared and painted the paintwork and there were just the 3 internal walls to wash and emulsion. J Byrne and K Mackender said they would help.

Noted that people were taking items other than books and leaving at the bus shelter. Neighbours and Councillors had removed. Note to go in next newsletter asking people to leave only books.

25/126 *TTRO Witcham – Mepal Road closure 4-8 August 2025 – BT works.*

G Byrne reported that the works had been completed.

25/126 *Mepal Bridge works* – the works had now been completed.

25/128 *Issues with Water Supply System – Martins Lane:* Acknowledged by AW and further response awaited.

Noted that during a recent fire at Martins Lane the Fire Brigade experienced problems with water pressure being only 1 bar in this area instead of 2 or 3.

Clerk

Clerk

25/139 **Planning Matters**

25/00813/FUL 24 Westway Place, Replacement of 4No 7.5ft high x 6ft wide fence panels at the bottom of the back garden.

Resolved that there were no concerns. Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

25/139 **Planning Matters (cont)**

25/00690/FUL Raven Barn, Headleys Lane Garage conversion, along with front and side extension.

Noted that the hedge, which breached the CCC boundary on Headleys Lane outside this property, had finally been removed but not yet replanted on the correct boundary line, in-line with existing hedge, to comply with planning consents.

Resolved that there were no concerns. However, the Parish Council would like to see the reinstatement of hedge in-line with the existing hedgerow as per original consent of the building. Proposed J Lucas, seconded S Wilkin.

Clerk

25/140 **Finance and Administration Matters**

- a) **Receipts and payments schedule** – August and September, previously circulated. Documents had been checked by G Byrne and K Mackender.

Resolved to approve the receipts and payments for August and September. Proposed G Byrne, seconded Chairman.

Clerk reported that the subscription for antivirus expired in October and it was agreed to arrange for renewal for 3 years at the discounted rate.

- b) **Quarterly reconciliations**, (April-June) and budget report previously circulated to Councillors. Bank statements presented at meeting. Receipts (including half the Precept) £10975.21, Payments £5790.53. Balance £65686.221, including all earmarked reserves.

Resolved to approve the quarterly reconciliations and budget report. Proposed J Lucas, seconded G Byrne.

Clerk reported that the savings rates were dropping again and that the Fixed Rate Deposit account matured on 27 October. (agenda item for October)

- c) Annual village inspection report, previously circulated, was received and reviewed. Some more of the 'dog fouling signs' had faded and required replacing, and ECDC had never replaced 'contact details for emptying' on the dog bins. Clerk to order more dog fouling signs and contact ECDC regarding contact detail notices. (Get bin numbers and possibly make signs ourselves)

Clerk

- d) Exclusion of Press and Public

To consider whether under 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 25/140e) to 25/140i) 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.

8.05pm Chairman closed the meeting to the public.

- e) RSPB Lease had still not been received despite follow-up by the Clerk several times since July. Council's legal advisers waiting on RSPB response, ie Clause 8. Deferred to October meeting.
- f) Deed of Right of Way and Parking for Village Hall. Documents still awaited. Defer to October meeting.
- g) Application for access by Open Reach to install equipment on pole at recreation ground near village hall for updated internet previously circulated.

Resolved to approve the granting of access for work on pole for Village Hall internet facilities. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

- h) Discretions Policy had been amended for adoption, circulated 29.7.25.

Resolved to approve and adopt the amended Discretions Policy as agreed with LGPS. Proposed G Byrne, seconded L Holdaway. Chairman signed document and Clerk to forward copy to LGPS.

Clerk

25/140 **Finance and Administration Matters** (continued)

- i) Approval of payment of NJC Salary award backdated to 1.4.25.
Resolved to accept the recommendations of the NJC salary award, backdated to 1 April 2025. Proposed G Byrne, seconded S Wilkin.
 (to be paid in October salary)

8.11pm Chairman re-opened meeting to the public. No members of the public present.

25/141 **Consultations**

The Council had been invited to comment on the following:

- a) CCC Public Rights of Way Hierarchy Engagement.
 Noted limited network of walks for the community, Public Rights of Way 1 & 13 makes a loop for a south circular route around the village, good for people's well-being including dog walkers and horseriders. Also footpath between High Street and Back Lane.
 Important to preserve and maintain the footpaths/byways/bridleways in the village that are used regularly by residents and visitors.
Resolved to submit response to survey highlighting the importance of the public right of way system for people's wellbeing, including exercising with dogs and horses in the village, as drafted in meeting. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

- b) CCC Local Nature Recovery Strategy (circulated 29.7.25) (on-line survey c/d 11.9.25) [Visit the LNRS Public Consultation Website](#)
 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) - a key component of the Environment Act 2021. Aim - to set priorities for nature recovery in the country.

Clerk had circulated to the lead of the Witcham Conservation Group (village volunteers), Editor of 'What Is On In Witcham' and placed on the noticeboard so people could respond to the survey.

Resolved that Clerk advise that Witcham supports enhancing biodiversity. In particular, Witcham is a very rural area bordered by SSSI protected areas such as the Ouse Washes. Our community supports biodiversity and had formed a voluntary conservation group as part of the outcome of drawing up the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan. Proposed J Lucas, seconded L Holdaway.

Clerk

It was suggested that perhaps the Lead for the Conservation Group might like to include an item in a future Council newsletter about the groups work.

- c) ECDC Vulnerable Communities Strategy and Community Engagement Directory and Community Engagement Tool Kit (circulated 22.8.25)
 The Community Engagement Toolkit would be designed to help with effective engagement with communities and help identify barriers or additional considerations. They were looking to know what issues local people faced, what support might be needed and how agencies could best engage with local people. The survey was discussed but Witcham being a small village with very limited resources had no feedback.
Resolved that the Council had no feedback to offer on the questions on the survey. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.

- d) CCC Launch of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) - Phase 2 Public Engagement Survey.

Clerk

Noted that the County Council's preferred option was A, ie Fenland, Peterborough City, and Huntingdon as one unitary authority, and Cambs City, ECDC and SCDC as a second.

The County Council had issued a media release to raise greater understanding about what the LGR means for communities, which was noted. It was also noted that the Parish Council July newsletter had carried an article about the re-organisation giving website links and urging people to examine and respond.

All individuals were encouraged to respond to the survey by 3 October 2025.

<https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/your-future-councils/>

25/142 **Recreation Ground and Cemetery Matters**

- a) Weekly inspections of play equipment and recreation ground for August and September had been completed by the Chairman. He advised he had filled cracks in path near play area but the section nearest to High Street had also now cracked. He would monitor over the coming weeks to see if now that the dry weather was coming to an end the gaps would naturally close once the earth beneath was moist. Clerk to book the annual inspection for in the New Year.

- b) Report of tree inspection, 11 July 2025, received and discussed. Some trees not growing very well now and it had been recommended to leave and monitor for the future, ie felling, replacement.

Clerk

Resolved that the Clerk should obtain quotes for works identified to be carried out by tree surgeons, for the October meeting. Noted that an application required submission to ECDC Tree Officer for works to be carried out as this was in the conservation area. Proposed J Lucas, seconded K Mackender.

- c) Rescind Minute 25/029b) regarding refusal to allow Christmas lights to be erected around infant play area.

Resolved to rescind Minute 25/029b) regarding refusal to allow Christmas lights to be erected around infant play area. Proposed K Mackender, seconded L Holdaway.

- d) Reconsideration of granting consent for Witcham Events Committee to erect Christmas lights at the infant play area, provided that a full risk assessment is included with their application, which is acceptable to the Parish Council.

Resolved to approve the granting of consent for Witcham Events Committee to erect Christmas lights at the infant play area, provided that a full risk assessment is included with their application, which is acceptable to the Parish Council. Proposed J Lucas, seconded G Byrne.

- e) Request for updating Active Places Data list (Sport England database). The Clerk opened discussion on the future use and maintenance of the recreation ground. Since the collapse of the Witcham Cricket Club, the recreation was no longer maintained as a proper sports field. It was now kept maintained as an open space for people to use for games and exercise as individuals, including access to use the small football goals.

Resolved that the Clerk to respond advising that at the current time the recreation is no longer maintained as a proper sports field. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

Clerk

25/143 **MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**

- a) The monthly speed data report had been circulated and was noted.

- b) Local Highways Initiative Programme - report of meeting with the County Council representative, previously circulated, regarding extending the 40mph speed limit on Mepal-Witcham road and reinstatement of footway on verge, received and noted. Discussion opened regarding future steps. G Byrne advised that the Police had suggested carrying out a traffic and speed survey to ascertain the sorts of speeds and numbers of people doing what speeds. If people already doing a lot over 40mph, traffic calming measures would be called for. If the pathway was to be reinstalled the speed limit on the road would need to be 40mph. Applications for the LHIP grant support could be split, eg Parish Council speed reduction and a community group for the pathway. There was only space for a narrow pathway so not suitable for horses to walk on but a member of the British Horse Society had indicated it could still be used as a refuge for the horses to move out of the way of traffic. Would the County Councillor be able to get the MP involved?

- 25/143 **MVAS, Speed Watch and Speed Reduction Measures Mepal-Witcham**
Resolved that to approve that the Chairman and G Byrne could meet the Police representative to discuss further and report back to Council. The Clerk should contact Sutton Parish Council to find out about the survey they had had done by consultants to support their LHIP project, including costs. Proposed K Mackender and seconded S Wilkin.

Chairman/
GB

25/144 **Highways and Street Lighting Matters**

- a) Items reported to Highways Authority
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>
 No items had been reported to Highways.

Clerk reported that the halogen streetlight lamps in Witcham, maintained for the County Council by Balfour Beatty, were due to be replaced with LED lamps as part of a county wide exercise during September.

K Mackender and L Holdaway reported that a yellow sign had been placed near the Church to inform that works were to be carried out and there could be delays of 15 minutes. The Clerk was not aware of any planned works in this area.

L Holdaway reported that the white lines at the end of High Street, junction with Headleys Lane, had worn away and needed replacing.

It was noted that although the County Council had been out and marked up potholes to be repaired last year, works had not yet commenced.

- b) Noted that the hedge which breached CCC boundary on Headleys Lane (northern side, ie Pond Farm development) had been removed but not yet replanted. (Planning conditions).
 Nothing further to add other than as discussed and minuted under item 25/139 Planning Matters.

25/145 **Neighbourhood Plan**

- a) Update from ECDC regarding Consultation under Regulation 16, Neighbourhood Planning (general) 2012, Consultation period 17 July 2025 to 2 September 2025, received. Parish Council website already updated with link to ECDC for results:
<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-guidance/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-10>

Resolved to note information received from ECDC regarding comments following consultation. Information received from Consultant also noted. Proposed L Holdaway, seconded K Mackender.

- b) Details from ECDC regarding the appointment of an Examiner received and considered. Advice also received from Consultant. Advice regarding next stages and timescales, including referendum discussed. The making of the Plan needed to be completed as soon as possible. Timescales offered by ECDC were unacceptable. Councillors committed to holding an extra-ordinary meeting before the next Council meeting on 8 October to deal with dealing with any communications from the Examiner.

Clerk

Resolved to accept that A Ashcroft be appointed as the Examiner for Witcham Neighbourhood Plan as soon as possible. Proposed J Lucas, seconded Chairman.

25/146 Correspondence

CCC Cambridgeshire's Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)(survey closed 31.7.25.
 Mereside Medical newsletter.
 SLCC update on local council devolution.
 Cambridge University Archive Centre Open 17 September.
 CCC Essential Maintenance to Mepal Viaduct Bridge - Weekend Closures.
 CCC TMC Incident Report July.
 CCC Events Diary September 2025.
 CCC Aurora Asset Management Newsletters July and August and noted changes to the 'Report It' highway faults system.
 CCC Flood and Water Newsletter.
 CCC The Library Presents – (events at libraries across the County).
 Dr Bike free bicycle checks 13.9.25 - Ely Railway Station, 15.10.25 - Soham Library, 16.10.25 -Littleport.
 ECDC agendas and minutes, Planning, Finance & Assets, Audit.
 ECDC press releases: Youth Fusion, Net Zero Villages, Removing Barriers for Vulnerable People, Soham Wellbeing Event 7 Sept, Students Artwork, Country Park and Jubilee Gardens Celebrate Green Flag.
 East Cambs Parish & Community Forum updates. Next meeting 17.9.25.
 CAPALC Share the Vision Conference 19.9.25, Wyboston Lakes.
 CAPALC Star Council Awards, incl Climate Change.
 CAPALC Governance training for Councillors 23.9.25.
 CAPALC Bulletins.
 Cambs ACRE Newsletters, ACRE & NALC Flooding Survey,
 ACRE AGM 8.10.25 at 2pm, zoom.
 NALC Newsletters, Events and Bulletins, and Utility Aid – energy support.

24/131 Date of next meeting: 8 October 2025

Meeting closed at 9.40pm.

Schedule of Receipts and Payments

		£	£	£
Receipts:	Nil			
Payments:	002219/BACS Salary Expenses Aug	551.04		551.04
	b/c Lloyds (May/Jun) debited 21.7.25	6.25		6.25
	Lloyds (June/July) debited 19.8.25	6.75		6.75
	c/p MS online services – 7 licences emails			
	July/Aug due 20.7.25	32.20	6.44	38.64
	MS online services – 7 licences emails			
	Aug/Sept due 20 Aug	32.20	6.44	38.64
	002220 Truelink Jul	535.00	107.00	642.00)
	Truelink Aug	149.00	29.80	178.80)
	002221/2/BACS Salary Expenses Sept	926.16		926.16
	002223 Npower St Light Energy Apr-Jun25	27.60	1.38	28.98
	002224 Royal British Legion Poppy Wreath	40.00		40.00
	c/p MS 365 annual subscription	84.99		84.99

Signed..... Dated