

# WESTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Tuesday 13 January 2026 in the Village Hall at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs David Barker (Chair), Steve Christian, Diane Gladders and Robin Lambert. Also in attendance County and District Cllr Andy Mellen, Ginny O’Hegarty (Clerk) and 5 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES and approval of absences. Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Steve Caley and Richard Brown.
2. DECLARATIONS of interests and dispensation. Cllr Barker declared an interest in Agenda item 9.1.
3. MINUTES of the Council meeting held on Tuesday 13 September 2025 previously circulated and taken as read were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman.
4. MATTERS arising from Council Meeting held on 13 September 2025. It was noted that County Cllr Stringer had been instrumental in providing speed signage in Haughley.
5. To consider any applications for co-option to the vacancy on the Parish Council. Mr. Martin Brown expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the village by joining the Parish Council. It was resolved to approve his application with immediate effect and Cllr Brown joined the meeting and completed the Acceptance of Office paperwork. The Register of Interests will be completed in due course.
6. County Councillor Report. Cllr Mellen reported on the government’s offer to Councils to postpone local elections scheduled to be held in May if postponement will help them with their capacity to handle reorganisation. Suffolk County Council had called an extraordinary council and cabinet meeting to discuss the potential postponement. Changes to waste collections would take effect in June and publicity would be sent out to households. Funding is available towards warm homes and bus services.
7. District Councillor Report. Cllr Mellen reported on a new football pitch in Stowmarket and a new darts venue. A range of grants and support is available for business and community organisations with details available at [heartofsuffolk.co.uk](http://heartofsuffolk.co.uk)
8. Speed Indicator Device (SID). Cllr Richard Brown had provided a report noting that the battery is charged as often as possible but through the winter when there is little sun on the solar panel the charge only lasts a few days. The device sometimes displays in kmh rather than mph since the solar panel was installed. It is not a fault with the unit that can be fixed as it appears to occur when the battery runs out and the unit switches off, then when the device resets after receiving a small charge from the solar panel it resets to the factory settings which are in kmh.

Residents expressed concerns about speeding and that due to the absence of pavements in Westhorpe residents have to walk in the road. Council requested Cllr Mellen investigate whether 30mph roundels could be painted on the road and the feasibility of obtaining rumble strips to be discussed at the next meeting.

## 9. Planning:

At 7:55pm Cllr Barker withdrew from discussions and it was agreed that Cllr Christian would chair the meeting.

### 9.1 Council considered the following planning application:

DC/26/00001 Land Adjacent To Kells House, Church Road, Westhorpe. Application under Section 73A of Town and Country Planning 1990 - Variation of Condition 1 (Approved Plans

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and Documents) and Condition 5 (Materials) of planning permission DC/19/03660 dated: 24/10/2019 - Demolition of existing farm buildings and erection of two dwellings with new access drive and vehicle hardstanding. Council supported the application.

At 8.01pm Cllr Barker rejoined the meeting.

9.2 Council noted the status of the following planning application:

DC/23/05193 and DC/23/05077 Bacton Middle School. The developer wishes to vary their application. The Parish Council's objections to the variation were submitted on 7 December 2023. The application is currently awaiting a decision.

10. Neighbourhood Plan update. Councillors expressed concerns over the cost, time commitment and availability of consistent support from residents.

11. It was noted that the consultation on local government reorganisation had closed.

## 12. Finance Update

12.1 The Council's financial position at 31 December 2025 was reported at £12,185.59 with £10,621.44 held in the community account and £1,564.15 held in the business premium account. The bank reconciliation as at 31 December 2025 was noted, verified and signed by Cllr Barker.

12.2 Council approved the following payments authorised between meetings:

- a. 07.10.25 Cheque number 100496 - £214.00 Zurich Municipal insurance premium
- b. 09.10.25 Direct Debit to Nest Pension £6.81
- c. 15.10.25 Cheque number 100499 £44.54 SALC Clerk training course fee
- d. 26.10.25 Cheque number 100497 £163.41 V O'Hegarty (Clerk's salary, September 2025)
- e. 28.10.25 Cheque number 100500 V O'Hegarty £163.41 (Clerk's salary, October 2025)
- f. 07.11.25 Direct Debit to Nest Pension £6.81
- g. 06.11.25 Direct Debit to ICO Data Protection fee £47.00
- h. 13.11.25 Cheque number 100498 £57.60 SALC Payroll Services
- i. 25.11.25 Cheque number 100503 £8.10 SALC Clerk training course fee
- j. 03.12.25 Cheque number 100504 £214.40 V O'Hegarty (£129.41 Clerk's salary, November 2025 and £84.99 Microsoft 365 renewal)
- k. 15.12.25 Cheque number 100505 £550 Suffolk Cloud domain name registration, mailboxes, website hosting and support

12.3 It was resolved that the following payments would be approved:

- a. 07.01.2026 Cheque number 100506 V O'Hegarty £139.61 (£129.41 Clerk's salary, December 2025 and £10.20 stamps)
- b. 07.01.2026 Cheque number 100507 £32.00 Westhorpe Village Hall hire

12.4 The following amounts had been received since the 23 September 2025 meeting:

- a. £200 Westhorpe Village Hall refund of contribution to development of village website
- b. £550 MSDC Locality Funding Award

12.5 Council resolved to move to online banking. The Clerk was asked to investigate the process.

12.6 a. The year to date spend against budget was noted and the 2026/27 budget was approved.

- b. It was resolved that the precept demand would be £4,000. The parish council element for a Band D household will be £46.56 per annum an increase from £46.11 which equates to £0.45 per annum per Band D household, an increase of 1.0%.

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## 13. Questions for the Chairman

- There is a concern about the pond at the back of the bus shelter rising and overflowing onto the road. The Chairman reported that improvement work had been undertaken beside the village green to improve drainage and reduce flooding.
- An issue had been raised regarding dog fouling in the churchyard and with the Church dustbin being used as a dog waste bin. Council suggested moving the existing green dog waste bin from beside the telephone box to inside the church wall near the footpath subject to PCC approval. If approved, MSDC will be notified of the new location.
- The Chairman confirmed the following parish council meeting dates: 17 March 2026, 19 May 2026, 22 September 2026 and 12 January 2027.

14. Date of next meeting Tuesday, 17 March 2026 at 7.30pm at the Village Hall.

15. Meeting closed at 9.00pm