

CHRISTCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Christchurch Parish Council held in the Community Centre on Monday 8 September 2025 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs A Sparrow (Chairman), J Bliss, B Burfield, R Feeney, J Hayes, J Hughes, S Potter, S Fisher (CCC), D Roy (FDC), D Gibbs (Clerk), Canon Mark Collinson, two parishioners

065/25-26 Apologies for Absence

Cllr M Summers (FDC)

066/25-26 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

067/25-26 Public Time

- a) Canon Mark Collinson addressed the meeting to provide an update on the project to restore and reopen the Parish Church. Canon Collinson became the Rector of the Six Fen Churches Benefice a year ago. The Church of Christ was opened in 1864 and has a Grade II listing. It is currently closed and needs significant investment due to drainage issues. The floor was replaced in 1995 but a recent survey indicated that the soakaways are no longer functioning. Constant damp in the building has caused part of the ceiling to collapse.

The key elements of the new project are the replacement of the surface water drainage system and external rainwater goods around the building, followed by all necessary repairs to the ceiling.

A public meeting was held in March, attended by around 45 people, following which a survey was circulated, with 51 responses, indicating a strong support among the community. An action group was formed to lead the project, explore the potential for low-carbon technologies and to consider alternative uses for the building alongside its core function as the parish church.

The action group has drawn up a brief for the appointment of an architect to lead the project and a tendering process will take place shortly. The anticipated cost is between £600,000 and £1 million and the plan is to seek the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Chairman thanked Canon Collinson for providing such a comprehensive insight into the project. It was noted that Cllr Potter is a member of the action group.

- b) No issues were raised by the public attendees.

068/25-26 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 14 July were correctly recorded and signed as being a true record.

069/25-26 Matters Outstanding

- a) Clarion garden project, Upwell Road - The Clerk reported that he and Cllr Roy had met Harriet Gilder-Haddon from Clarion Housing Group to discuss the project.

Members noted the challenge of maintaining the space and agreed that low maintenance features should be a priority. Raised beds and the removal of the hedge were suggested. A memorial bench, noticeboard and bookshare were also mentioned. Recent events connected to the location must be considered and it may be necessary to delay the project until the conclusion of those matters. A public poll to generate ideas and support for the project was agreed. The Community Payback team could be tasked with the clearance of the site. Funding could be available from the Whitemill Environment Fund. Further discussions will take place with Clarion Housing Group.

- b) Fenland District Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan - Members noted that Norfolk County Council has recently installed monitoring devices on waste collection vehicles to map mobile signal strength and download speeds across the county and agreed to lobby for a similar approach to be taken in Cambridgeshire.
- c) Public defibrillators - The Clerk reported that the defibrillator at the Dun Cow has still not been registered on The Circuit. Cllr Feeney will register this. Cllr Hayes reported that it will not be possible to mount a defibrillator on the former Farmer's Boy public house. Members discussed the possibility of attaching one to a lamp post or a new standalone post. The Clerk will investigate this.
- d) Community Centre valuation - The Clerk reported that the valuation has not been received.
- e) Bin outside former village shop - The Clerk noted that the proposed location on Upwell Road adjacent to Fen View would be close to the existing bin at the bus shelter. Members agreed to monitor the area to ascertain whether an additional bin was required.
- f) Parking outside Townley School - Cllr Sparrow reported that he had sent an email to the school and will be meeting with the Headteacher soon.
- g) MVAS battery replacement - The Clerk will order the new battery.

070/25-26 Police Report

The Clerk reported that the new Chief Constable has been appointed. Simon Megicks was the Deputy Chief Constable of Norfolk Constabulary. The new neighbourhood officer PC Lorraine Foster-Bentham visited the Community Centre then visited Townley School to look at parking issues at the end of the school day.

071/25-26 County & District Councillors Reports

Cllr Fisher highlighted the County Council's engagement survey on Option A, the preferred option for the reorganisation of local government.

Cllr Roy mentioned an emergency first aid course taking place at the Tower Hall, Friday Bridge and suggested that a similar course could be arranged in Christchurch. The deadline for the Electrical Safety grants scheme is on 12 October. NHS winter vaccinations are being delivered at some community hubs. The County Council's new highways fault reporting system goes live on 22 September.

072/25-26 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported on meetings attended and correspondence received, including the presentation of the Local Highways Improvement application to the panel on 25 July.

Correspondence included traffic orders for the closure of Crown Road from 25 to 31 October and Fifty Road from 10 November to 19 December, invitations to the District Council Chairman's Civic Reception and Charity Coffee Morning, a request from the Combined Authority to install a bus timetable case on the bus shelter, and the

Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service Love it, Hate it, Shape it survey about Doddington.

073/25-26 Members and Residents Issues

- a) Sixteen Foot Road surface condition - Cllr Feeney expressed concern regarding the continuing deterioration of the Sixteen Foot Road, which has seen another serious accident in recent weeks.
- b) Overgrown vegetation in the Recreation Ground - Cllr Hayes reported that areas adjoining the gardens in Wayside Estate that had been cleared by the Community Payback team were becoming overgrown again. It was agreed that the Payback team should be asked to revisit the site.
- c) Padgetts Road building works - Members asked about building work taking place at a property on Padgetts Road. The Clerk advised them that he had reported the matter to the District Council's Planning Enforcement officers for further investigation.
- d) Cllr Potter reported that a street light adjacent to Townley School is obscured by vegetation. The Clerk will report this.
- e) Cllr Hayes reported that more fly-tipped waste had accumulated near Bedlam Bridge. The Clerk reminded Members that the District Council considers this to be private property and will not remove waste from the site.

074/25-26 Recreation Ground

Nothing to report.

075/25-26 Nature Park Project

Cllr Sparrow reported that the field has been flailed and sprayed, the willow branches have been chipped and removed, and the brash burned. The soil heaps have been levelled. A second spray will be required, at a cost of £805. Members resolved to proceed with this. The Upwell Internal Drainage Board has offered to flail the dyke at no cost to the Council. The fence rails will be securely nailed shortly.

Contractors will be invited to tender for the cultivation, levelling and reseeding of the field. The contractor will be selected at November's meeting for the reseeding to take place in the spring.

An update will be sent to the volunteers who have been involved in the project since its inception to encourage them to assist with the next stage of the project.

076/25-26 Village Centre Regeneration Project

Cllr Sparrow thanked Cllr Galbraith for obtaining a map from the County Council showing their boundaries around the site. The scoping document has been updated. A working group will be established to explore options for the site and to arrange the public consultation. A meeting of the working group will be held on 7 October at 7.30pm for those interested.

077/25-26 Highways

- a) It appears that the closure of the Sixteen Foot Bank scheduled for 18 and 19 August did not take place. The Clerk will discuss the schedule with Highways Officers.
- b) The Clerk updated Members on the progress of the 2025/26 Local Highway improvement application for Wayside Estate. The project was presented to the assessment panel on Friday 25 July. The panel's scoring will be presented to the

County Council's Highways and Transport Committee on 14 October for confirmation of funding. If successful, the detailed specification for the works will be developed by the end of June 2026, with a view to implementation by December. Consultation with affected residents will also take place after October's meeting.

078/25-26 Play Equipment Inspection

Cllr Sparrow declared a pecuniary interest in this item. Members considered a quote of £1,202.55 plus VAT from Fenland Leisure Products for the minor rectification works agreed by the Council at the June meeting (038/25-26). They resolved to approve the quote.

079/25-26 Finance

- a) The management accounts as at 31.8.25 showed income of £24,318.85 and expenditure of £9,275.23, resulting in a surplus of £15,043.62 and total funds held of £53,069.16.
- b) Members noted the 2025/26 Local Government pay settlement.
- c) Members noted the report of the External Auditor for 2024/25.
- d) Members noted the following sums received since the last meeting:

Fenland District Council (grant).....	£10,000.00
NatWest Bank (interest)	£ 19.62
- e) Members noted the following sum paid by direct debit:

HMRC (tax and national insurance)	£ 319.94
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- f) Members approved the following accounts for payment:

Clerk salary and home office allowance (August and September) ..	£ 841.06
Giles Landscapes & Management Ltd (flail and spray field)	£ 1,770.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP (audit fee)	£ 252.00
- g) Members reviewed the Council's insurance cover due for renewal on 30 September. The fidelity guarantee has been increased in line with the Internal Auditor's recommendation. The renewal premium is expected to increase when the new valuation of the Community Centre is received. Members authorised the Clerk to obtain a revised proposal based on the new valuation and to proceed with arranging the necessary cover.

080/25-26 Policies

Members reviewed the draft Information Technology Policy provided by the Clerk. Cllr Feeney expressed concerns regarding elements of the policy. Members requested more time to consider the provisions of the policy and asked the Clerk to add it to the agenda for the next meeting.

081/25-26 Santa Run

The Clerk reported that Fenland Farmers had offered to bring the Santa Run to the village again this December. Members agreed to support this and asked whether more tractors might be included. The Clerk will discuss this with Fenland Farmers.

082/25-26 Consultations

Members noted the following consultations and resolved accordingly:

- a) Local Nature Recovery Strategy - In view of the short deadline, Members were invited to respond individually.
- b) Local Government Reorganisation Option A - Further comments not necessary.

083/25-26 Public Time

Canon Collinson commented that, having recently relocated to the Fens, he was shocked at the appalling state of many of the roads, particularly main routes like the Sixteen Foot Road.

084/25-26 Matters for Next Meeting

Sixteen Foot Road.

085/25-26 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Parish Council will be Monday 13 October.