

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Parish Councillors: Cllr B Francis (Chair), Cllr P Clarke, Cllr P Sullivan and Cllr P Hines. Cllr Joanna Spicer (Suffolk County Council Councillor) and Councillor Andrew Smith (West Suffolk Councillor).

L Hibbert (Clerk).

5 members of the public.

Cllr Francis opened the meeting at 7pm. She announced that the meeting would be recorded. No objections were received.

1. **Co-option of new Parish Councillor(s)**

1.1. The Clerk reported that, as far as he was aware, Democratic Services had not received any request from the requisite 10 residents for an election to be held following the resignation of Councillor Mark Lock. The necessary 10 request(s) were required before 11 September. As such, the Parish Council could now seek to co-opt a new Councillor. The Chair asked the residents present whether any of them wished to be co-opted. None did so.

2. **Apologies for absence**

2.1. Councillors P.Sullivan and A Smith had given apologies in advance that they may be unavoidably late to the meeting (both joined the meeting part way through).

3. **Members' Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

3.1. To receive disclosures of personal and prejudicial interests from Councillors on matters to be considered at the meeting. Cllr Clarke identified any issue around the Bowls Club.

3.2. To consider any applications for dispensations in relation to declared pecuniary interests: None received.

4. **Resignation of Councillor Mark Lock**

4.1. The resignation of Councillor Mark Lock was noted. The P.C. extended thanks for the invaluable work he had done, especially concerning the issues of Speeding in the village and drainage in The Street.'

4.2.

5. **Election of a Vice Chair of the Parish Council**

5.1. The Clerk noted that the Council was not required to have a Vice Chair. The Chair commented that it would be helpful for the Council to have a Vice Chair; for example, for when she is not able to be at a meeting.

5.2. Councillor Sullivan agreed to be the Vice Chair. On the proposal of Councillor Francis, seconded by Councillor Clarke it was unanimously RESOLVED that Councillor Sullivan be

appointed as Vice Chair of the Council.

6. Approval of the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council on 3 July 2025

- 6.1. It was proposed by the Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor Francis that the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council on 3 July 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting. By unanimous vote it was RESOLVED that the draft Minutes be approved accordingly.

7. Meeting open to the public

- 7.1. It is requested that this item not exceed 15 minutes and that no member of the public speak for more than 3 minutes.
- 7.2. Mike Millett, the Chair of the Hopton, Barningham and Coney Weston branch of the Royal British Legion addressed the meeting. The branch has 32 members but would like more. Councillor Francis has put up posters advertising the Legion and its work. The Legion mostly provides welfare services and remembrance. A service is usually held at Coney Weston Church and a wreath laid at the US War Memorial, followed by the traditional wreath-laying ceremony and remembrance service at the village memorial.
- 7.3. A lot of the welfare work (such as financial and mental health support) is undertaken centrally but the local branches are always available to assist. The motto of the Legion is 'Service, not Self'.

The local branch of the Legion organises the poppy appeal. They would like to undertake a house to house poppy appeal because Coney Weston has no 'static' collection points such as a village shop. The launch date is Thursday, 23 October. Mike can supply everything necessary. The appeal raised £51.4 million last year. Mike's contact details are on the posters. He consented to his name to being included in the Minutes to assist with any offers of assistance.

- 7.4. A resident asked why there had been a high turnover of Councillors. In response, the Chair noted that the issue was not on the Agenda for the meeting.

[Councillor Andrew Smith joined the meeting]

8. Report from Suffolk County Councillor Joanna Spicer

- 8.1. Cllr Spicer reported that the A134 at Stanton had been re-surfaced but the white lines not yet reinstated. As far as she is aware, the works on the A14 had been completed.
- 8.2. She noted that there were posts on the verge outside the Cattery in the village. Councillor Clarke noted that they had been there for some time. If anyone has an objection to the posts they can report them through the SCC Highways Reporting Tool on the website (Suffolk ReportIT website: highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/)
- 8.3. Councillor Spicer raised the issue of road works around the Village Sign. Councillor Francis confirmed that there had been a burst water main. The leak had been repaired

the previous day. Contractors were awaited to make good the associated works in the road. Councillor Francis and Councillor Spicer had both received communication from Suffolk Suffolk Highways regarding the agreed replacement drainage system in The Street.

- 8.4. Councillor Francis will be meeting with the relevant officer at Suffolk Highways next week regarding the drainage. However, the residents now need to be patient. The works are now in the plan and the money allotted. All that is now required is completion of the legal work and scheduling the work.
- 8.5. Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk District Council had submitted their proposals on the issue of a unitary authority. This is going through Parliament. A Combined Mayoral Authority is very likely to be in place by next May, with elections in early May.
[Councillor Sullivan arrived at the meeting at this point]
- 8.6. Councillor Spicer noted that Shepherd's Grove is a Masterplan at present, not a planning application. Hepworth Parish Council object to the plan. Stanton support the plan on the basis it will bring roads, cycle lanes and potentially jobs.
- 8.7. Planning has been approved for 220 houses to be built opposite Rose and Crown Court on the A143. It is planned to install traffic lights on the A143 at this development.

9. Report from West Suffolk Councillor Andrew Smith

- 9.1. Councillor Smith noted that a lot of what he had intended to report on been covered in Councillor Spicer's report.
- 9.2. He produced a chart showing the proposal for future bin collections. From April 2026 residents will receive an additional bin and a food 'caddy' for use for food waste inside the house. Brown and black bins will be collected fortnightly. Paper, glass etc will be collected on alternate fortnights. This recycling will have to be placed in different bins (no charge will be made for the additional bin, brown bins are already charged for). Councillor Smith noted that West Suffolk Council is the only local authority in Suffolk to retain a fortnightly black bin collection.
- 9.3. Councillor Smith noted that he had arranged for a £600 grant to be made to the Village hall to improve its toilet facilities, and Councillor Spicer noted that she had arranged for a similar grant of £700. Thanks from the Village Hall Committee were passed to Councillors Spicer and Smith.

10. Councillor's reports

- 10.1.1 Defibrillator: Councillor Clarke reported that the defibrillator had not been used in the last 2 months. Its status had been checked and Ambulance Centre updated that it is in operation.
- 10.1.2 Playing Field: the current trustees say they are in the process of resigning. The Parish Council has produced a flyer advertising for new Trustees. If no-one comes forward, the Parish Council may take over as sole trustee. However, this is not certain - there would be technical and legal issues. The current trustees are aware that they cannot simply walk away from the charity. The Councillors were happy with the proposed flyer (circulated by Councillor Clarke at the meeting), and that Councillor Clarke would write to the Trustees with the Parish

Council's proposal.

10.1.3 Proposal from Moulton and Lidgate Council; a proposal had been received from Moulton and Lidgate Parish Council to take a united approach with other Parish Councils with Suffolk County Council in respect of road safety and speeding. Moulton and Lidgate will take the lead. The Councillors agreed this proposal and the Clerk will write to their Clerk accordingly.

ACTION: CLERK

10.1.4 Village Group liaison - Councillor Clarke reported that the Village Hall had been closed in August for an upgrade to its toilet facilities. West Suffolk Council had given the Bowls Club a Club Premises Certificate. This meant that the Club could sell alcohol to members and guests during permitted hours which would assist with raising funds. Shepherd's Grove had been covered in Councillor Spicer's report. There is an issue around the ability of the members of the public at meetings having difficulty in hearing all that is being said. Councillor Francis will speak to the Village Hall Committee about any possible resolution.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

[Note: Councillor Clark subsequently submitted a written report that had formed the basis of his Report, as follows:

***'Defibrillator** - The defibrillator has not been removed from the cabinet this last 2 months. A status check was made with the National Defibrillator Network last month which ensures that Ambulance Control knows that the defibrillator is operational.*

***Playing Field** - The current Trustees have informed us that they are in the process of resigning. The Parish Council have created and printed a flyer which will be delivered to every household in the village asking for new volunteers and Trustees to run the charity. If nobody comes forward, the Parish Council may need to take over as the Sole Trustee.*

***Proposal from Moulton and Lidgate Council to jointly lobby Suffolk County Council (SCC) on speeding and road safety** - They are proposing that a united approach from many Councils may produce a more productive response from SCC in allocating more resources to tackle this issue. Thus far we have tentatively offered our support. It is proposed that we formally agree this initiative and convey our whole-hearted support.*

Village Group Liaison:-

Village Hall - Was closed, the whole of August, in order that a major upgrade to the toilet block could be undertaken by committee members and other villagers. The transformation is a vast improvement.

***Bowls Club** - The Committee successfully obtained a 'Club Premises Certificate' from West Suffolk Council in September which allows the Club to sell alcoholic drinks to Members and their Guests during 'permitted' hours. They will be looking to raise funds in order to replace the current Pavilion with a new one.*

***Shepherd's Grove** - This relates to the MasterPlan submitted by Jaynick Properties for the development of land at Shepherds Grove. This is not a formal Planning Application but a precursor when interested parties can express their concerns. This will mainly affect Hepworth and Stanton Parish Councils. These 2 Councils were contacted for advice on their response and whether we could find a way of supporting them. Neither responded to us.*

There is nothing further to be done until the Planning Application is submitted.']

10.2.1 Speed: Councillor Clarke reported that former Councillor Mark Lock will continue to monitor the speed camera on a voluntary basis. The Council is grateful for Mr Lock's continued support. Councillor Francis will continue to post the information on Facebook.

10.2.2 Drainage: Councillor Francis had been contacted by Suffolk Highways [see SCC Councillor Spicer's report]. The burst water main at the Village triangle had been repaired. Contractors now need to fill in the hole.

10.2.3 A resident has raised the issue of an overgrown tree and a dead tree at Coles Path. Councillor Francis has reported this on 'ReportIT Suffolk'.

10.2.4 The grass on the verge near the Village sign used to be cut by WSC. This is no longer being cut, and neither is the Village Triangle. Councillor Francis has reported this.

10.2.3 New residents: there are no new residents in the village.

10.3 Councillor's roles - in the light of the departure of Councillor Lock it was appropriate to consider the roles of each of the Councillors.

[All members of the public left the meeting at this stage]

The Clerk read out the existing roles of Councillors as recorded on the website. Councillor Francis has taken over as Councillor responsible for Drainage and Highways and will retain responsibility for Notice Boards. Councillor Hines will take on the planning role being the lead Councillor considering any planning applications and reporting to the Council. Councillor Clarke will retain his role liaising with village groups and volunteers, with Councillor Sullivan deputising as necessary. The website will be updated accordingly.

ACTION: CLERK

11. Clerk's report

11.1. The Council received the Clerk's report.

11.2. The Clerk has attended various training sessions on the role of Clerk and the new GDPR assertion that is to be included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return ('AGAR') from 2026. The Clerk and Councillor Francis had attended Zoom calls with the CEO of Suffolk County Council on the move to unitary authorities. SCC support a single unitary council. Cllrs Hine and Sullivan will be attending Councillor's training from SALC in October.

11.3. The Council's insurance needs to be renewed by 30 September. Community Action Suffolk had declined to quote. Zurich (the existing provider) had quoted £363, including Insurance Premium Tax and £24,000 of insurance cover for the War Memorial.

11.4. The Council is making good progress in dealing with the recommendations in the previous SALC internal audit reports. In particular, (1) the Pension Regulator enrollment date had been confirmed as November 2026, (2) the SALC letter of engagement for the 2024/25 audit had been approved by the Council, with approval confirmed to SALC, and (3) subject to the Councillor's review at today's meeting the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations will have been updated.

11.5. A request by Spud and Spice to operate a food van in the village had been referred to the Village Hall Committee.

12. Policy Review

12.1. The Councillors discussed the draft Policies produced to the meeting by the Clerk. Drafts had been circulated and reviewed by Councillors in advance of the meeting. The Clerk explained that, as well as good practice, the policy review was required to comply with the recommendations in the SALC internal audit report, the requirements of the proposal from Zurich for insurance for the year 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026, and in preparation for the increased scrutiny of the Council's compliance with GDPR to be introduced to the 2026 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

12.2. Councillors Clarke and Bren proposed an amendment to paragraph 15(xv) of the draft Standing Orders to include:

“the Council is not under an obligation to hold a Council meeting to consider any planning application, or to provide comments to the local planning authority”

12.3. Following discussion, Councillor Clarke proposed and Councillor Sullivan seconded the adoption of the draft policies and updated Asset Register (incorporating the proposed amendment from Councillors Clarke and Francis), and it was unanimously RESOLVED that the following draft Policies and updated Asset Register be approved and adopted:

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Code of Conduct
- Data Protection and Information Management Policy
- IT Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
- Privacy Notice
- Risk Assessment
- Internal Controls Statement
- Asset Register.

13. Planning

13.1 The Councillors considered the application for the following Planning Permission:

The application at Charnwood Crown Lane Coney Weston Suffolk IP31 1HG Ref: No: DC/25/1223/HH
<https://planning.westsuffolk.gov.uk/onlineapplications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=T0GEU7PDLRK00&activeTab=summaryd>

13.2 The Council has no comments on the application. The Clerk will communicate this on West Suffolk Council's planning portal

ACTION: CLERK

14 Matters arising

14.1 Matters arising for the next meeting are the budget and the Complaints Policy

15 Finance

15.1 Insurance renewal: this had been explained in the Clerk's Report. The Council agreed to accept Zurich's quote of £363 inclusive of Insurance Premium Tax for the year 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026.

ACTION: CLERK

- 15.2 Banking: Following his resignation, Councillor Lock has been removed from the bank mandate. Councillor Francis will circulate information on alternative banks for the Council.

ACTION: COUNCILLOR FRANCIS

- 15.3 The proposed increase in SALC's price for providing payroll services from April 2026 was agreed.
- 15.4 The additional accounts check against the bank reconciliation was undertaken by Councillor Hines and Councillor Francis, who also reviewed the invoices for payment as set out in the Schedule of Payments. Having done so, the Council authorized the following invoices for payment [Note: the Zurich invoice had not been received by the time of the meeting. However, the premium had been communicated to the Councillors in advance of the meeting. Payment of the Premium was authorized by the Council on receipt of the invoice].

Detail	Amount	
Suffolk Association of Local Councils	79.20	Councilor training
Office expenses	72.34	
Vertas	144.95	Playing Field grass cutting
Vertas	144.95	Playing Field grass cutting
Bank charges	4.25	Lloyds
Staff costs	565.20	
Bank charges	4.25	Lloyds
Zurich	363.00	Annual insurance renewal
SALC	79.20	Councillor training

16 Date of Next Meeting

- 16.1 The date of the next meeting of the Parish Council is Thursday, 6 November at 7pm at Coney Weston Village Hall.

17 Exclusion of the Public and Press

- 17.1 The meeting was closed to the public and press to consider Personnel Issues.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

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Councillor Bren Francis
Chair