

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2025 AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllrs: B Francis (Chair), P Sullivan (Vice Chair), P Clarke and P Hines.
Cllr Joanna Spicer (SCC) and Cllr Andrew Smith (WSC) L Hibbert (Clerk).

Cllr Francis announced that the meeting would be recorded. She also informed the meeting that microphones would be used by the Cllrs for ease of the members of the public to hear the discussions at the meeting. No objections were made.

1. Co-option of new Parish Councillors

None

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Smith had given his apologies that he would be late.

3. Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

3.1 Cllr Francis declared her interest in Item 9.1 planning application in respect of her house.
Cllr declared an interest in anything that may be discussed in respect of the Bowls Club.

3.2 Cllr Clarke declared his interest later in the meeting re the proposed £20 payment by the Council to him for approval by the Council.

4. Minutes

4.1 Cllr Francis identified an error in the draft minutes of the meeting of 11 September 2025. At paragraph 8.4 Cllr Francis should read Cllr Spicer. Subject to this amendment, the Council unanimously agreed that the draft Minutes be adopted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5. Meeting open to the Public

5.1 A member of the public raised the issue that Cllr Clarke had not identified under item 3 his pecuniary interest in the proposed £20 payment by the Council to him. Cllr Clarke explained it was a reimbursement for a payment he had made on behalf of the Council and declared this interest which was noted.

5.2 A member of the public raised concerns about the decline of the Playing Field and that he had raised the issue 2 years ago, If the charity trustees decide to wind up the charity, questions arise about the future of the land. For a number of years, there have been discussions on transferring ownership to the Parish Council (which could be achieved by a Scheme agreed with the Charity Commission, including a covenant to maintain the Playing Field's existing use). The resident requested the PC to outline a strategy for the Playing Field. Cllr Clarke confirmed he would report on the matter.

6. Report from SCC Joanna Spicer

- 6.1 Cllr Spicer has met with Amande Mays, Asset Manager (Drainage), SCC highways regarding the works to alleviate the flooding risk. Cllr Spicer emphasized that there should be only one point of contact with Amanda Mays. She also had an assurance that the scheme was designed and funded.
- 6.2 Cllr Spicer has met with the Head of Legal and Head of Corporate Property, SCC and there seems to be a lack of co-ordination between the two teams. Amanda Mays has said that she would like the work done this financial year (by 31 March 2026). Cllr Spicer has given some impetus to progressing the matter.
- 6.3 Cllr Spicer asked if there had been any problems with drainage since the heavy downpours recently. A resident explained her flooding issues since 2016 and concern at the delays. Cllr Clarke said that the repairs and clearance of the 'Parish Ditch' had alleviated the problem of the rainwater rushing down The Street and aggravating the problems further down.
- 6.4 A resident reported that some other residents had dug channels to take water away from their properties to the road. Any further issues should be reported to the PC via Cllr Francis.
- 6.5 A resident commented that it was positive that SCC had made a planning application for works to the trees the subject of TPOs. Cllr Clarke explained that it is the roots of the relevant trees that the application relates to as these will be disturbed by the drainage works. The drainage works and works to the roots need to be done at the same time. The PC also supports the application. A date has not yet been given for the works to be undertaken.
- 6.6 Cllr Spicer reported that the B111 had re-opened today. There had been problems with the works on the A143 between Ixworth and Stanton. Temporary traffic lights and a 40mph speed limit are in place.
- 6.7 She also reported that devolution (the election of a combined Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk) will definitely be going ahead to form a Combined Authority. The election of a Mayor will take place in May 2026. The Mayor would be responsible for the funding of certain services such as the Fire Rescue Service, Strategic Planning, Public Health and Education (adult and over 16s).
- 6.8 On Local Government Re-Organisation (LGR), the Government has received business cases from SCC for one local authority and from the local Borough and District Councils for 3 new local authorities. There will be a consultation. Whether the County Council elections go ahead is unclear.

[Cllr Smith joined the meeting]

- 6.9 Cllr Spicer reported that the majority of Coney Weston is now in a 10km Bird Flu Surveillance Zone . There had been an outbreak in Honington. Cllr Spicer will provide a Notice.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

7. Report from WSC Cllr Andrew Smith

- 7.1 Cllr Smith apologised for arriving late. There will be an ongoing timing clash between the CWPC meetings and the WSC Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 7.2 Re the Rural Suffolk Bus Review (separate to the Local Bus Steering Group), WSC have agreed recommendations and objectives, a copy of which would be sent to the Parish

Council for review.

- 7.3 Re bottle banks, it is hoped that payments will be made to the Village Hall for the next 2 years in light of the new recycling scheme.
- 7.4 Cllr Spicer asked for feedback from the public on the bus service for Coney Weston. A resident expressed frustration that the bus takes about 1 hour 15 minutes, missing the interchange at Stanton by about 30 seconds. Are there any solutions, such as missing out Bardwell? Cllr Smith reported that Simonds have confirmed they will not do that. Cllr Spicer commented that the Council is already providing a lot of subsidy.
- 7.5 Cllr Smith advised that a solution offered by the Local Steering Group (LSG) would be a hub and spoke system with buses taking users to the route of the Number 70 for onward travel to Bury St Edmunds.. Cllr Spicer commented that future funding is dependent on the usage levels by the public.
- 7.6 The LSG had met with Mark Cordell, Chief Executive of the Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District, discussing initiatives such as a small incentive scheme (for example, based on number of journeys made) funded by BID and Simonds in an effort to increase usage of the buses. Statistics will assist a presentation on the issue to the future Mayor who will have strategic authority for transport across Norfolk and Suffolk.

[Cllr Spicer left the meeting]

- 7.7 A resident asked about the solar farm plans. Another solar farm is planned for Bardwell. There is an application to change the permitted noise level. The solar farm will go ahead but timing is unclear because the developers want to know the outcome of the noise level application and possibly another proposed variation after that before proceeding.

8 Councillors Reports

- 8.1 Cllr Clarke gave the following reports:

8.1.1 Defibrillator
Nothing to report

8.1.2 Playing Field
Cllr Clarke read the following report:

It's worth highlighting that there has been significant work carried out on the Playing Field's legal status and useful maintenance has been, and is still being, carried out.

Before I describe the current situation, it is worth outlining the legal status of the Playing Field, as we understand it:-

The land is now Vested in the Official Custodian of the Charity Commission, which complies with the Charity's Governing Document (the original 1967 Conveyance).

The Title of the land has been transferred to the Official Custodian of the Charity Commission.

These 2 developments have regularised the Playing Field's legal position.

The Parish Council is doing what it can to support the Trustees in maintaining the village asset, however the Council does not manage or own the land. As many residents will know, the three remaining Playing Field Trustees have indicated that they wish to step down from their roles. To help secure the future of this village facility, flyers were recently delivered to every household inviting volunteers and potential new Trustees to come forward. We're pleased to report that six residents have kindly offered to help with ongoing maintenance tasks, and one person has expressed possible interest in becoming a Trustee once they know more about what's involved.

However, it's important to note that at least three new Trustees will be needed for the Playing Field Charity to continue in its present form. The current Trustees cannot be expected to remain indefinitely, so finding replacements is becoming increasingly important.

One option being explored is for the Parish Council to act as a temporary Sole Trustee, to ensure the Playing Field remains open and maintained until new Trustees are appointed. Enquiries are underway with both the Charity Commission and a specialist consultant to confirm the legal process for this arrangement.

In the meantime, a number of practical maintenance tasks are being organised with the help of the new volunteers. The immediate aim is to reduce the time and cost of upkeep — which will mean simplifying the playground equipment to the original slide on the mound and the spring rocker.

The volunteers have recently started removing the plastic membrane which had been deemed a trip hazard and the last-remaining swings have been removed as they were identified as being a medium risk.

At the end of his report Cllr Clarke invited questions from the public.

- a. Re ownership, a resident commented that a lack of clarity on the issue had resulted in the loss of Lottery funding previously. Cllr Clarke clarified that the 1967 Conveyance provides that the land should have been vested in the Charity Commission in 1967 which has now been achieved, the land being vested in the name of the Official Custodian of the CC.
- b. A resident commented that the Trustees of the Playing Field Charity think that the PC owns the land. The PC becoming the Sole Trustee would be a big step forward. No resolution has been passed by the PC to pursue this whilst it investigates the possibility. Cllr Clarke advised that he had contacted the CC asking for advice on the issue of the PC possibly becoming a Sole Trustee. The PC would prefer new trustees to be appointed. The resident commented that the PC becoming Sole Trustee would give the Playing Field a sustainable future, unlike Trustees who could resign.
- c. A resident has asked for the Charity's Accounts and Annual Report several times with no response. They should be provided on request. Cllr Clarke advised that Charity appears to be compliant on the CC website.
- d. Cllr Clarke reported that the CC's response time for advice is 4 months. A resident commented that the CC website has details about changing a charity's constitution by

a scheme and the situation doesn't seem to have advanced in the last 2 years. Cllr Clarke re-iterated that responsibility for the Playing Field is with the Trustees of the Charity, not the PC and stated that the legal situation is now on a firm footing following vesting in the Official Custodian to allow the trustees to progress when previously it had been unclear.

- e. A resident stated that the issue of ownership had been raised over a number of years. Cllr Clarke advised that the PC had sought to reduce legal fees by doing the work to vest the land in the Official Custodian itself.
- f. A resident expressed frustration and suggested the PC inform the Trustees it has the resources of the Clerk who, with advice from SALC, for example, could put a Scheme to the CC to take over as Sole Trustee. Cllr Clarke advised that no further steps would be taken until advice has been received from the CC. A consultant (Robert Horn) has also been approached for assistance.. Cllr Francis summed up that the options are being explored. The Clerk subsequently confirmed that Mr Horn is not receiving any payment from the PC for his services.
- g. Cllr Clarke confirmed that the Playing Field and the Playground are owned as one piece of land. Another resident commented on the poor state of the Playing Field. Cllr Clarke responded that more volunteers, including volunteer trustees would assist. A resident said he had volunteered previously twice but had now withdrawn that offer.
- h. A resident asked what had happened to the money received from the sale of the mower. Cllr Clarke said this was a question for the trustees of the Playing Field charity.

8.1.3 Suffolk Parish Councils group on speeding and safety:

Representatives of 22 PCs met at Moulton Village Hall to discuss the value of a collective voice to push for action at County Council and police regarding enforcement of speed limits, in particular the use of fines. There will be meetings with the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner amongst others. Responsibility for the issue will probably be taken over by the new Unitary Authorities but there is momentum.

8.1.4 Village Group liaison – volunteers:

No update

8.2 Cllr Francis gave the following reports:

8.2.1 Community Development: no report

8.2.2 Drainage and Highways: covered earlier in the meeting

8.2.3 Discussions with Suffolk County Council regarding LGR: Cllr Francis attended the forum to understand SCC's position on the issue.

8.2.4 West Suffolk Council Parish and Town Forum

Coney Weston residents will be receiving an additional recycling bin with the aim to start the new recycling process from 1 June 2026. Each resident will receive information through the post. There have been some new appointments in the Planning department and the issue of Parish Cllrs training on the updated planning process is being considered.

8.2.5 Emergency Plan:

Cllr Smith has some useful information following the fire at Bardwell. This could be incorporated into the Emergency Plan.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

8.2.6 Noticeboards:

The noticeboard at the Village Hall is deteriorating. It doesn't close properly and there is water ingress. Cllr Francis proposes contacting the Village Hall Committee to discuss. Cllr Smith raised the possibility of a grant from the locality budget.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

8.2.7 New Residents:

Cllr Francis has spoken to a new resident on Thetford Road and will drop off information to them.

8.2.8 Cllr Francis reported that the Village Hall no longer has a receptacle for recycling batteries. Would the PC be happy for her to contact the Village Hall Committee to discuss the possibility of a replacement as several residents had raised this, and for it to be in the lobby area? Cllr Francis would be happy to take on responsibility. This suggestion was agreed.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

9. Planning

9.1 To consider planning applications:

DC/25/1667/FUL - Proposal Planning application - a. one self-build dwelling (replacement of existing) b. alterations to existing access Location Three Crossways, Town House Thetford Road Coney Weston Suffolk IP31 1DR

Cllr Francis left the meeting. Vice Chair Cllr Sullivan took over as Chair for this part of the meeting.

This is the second planning application for the replacement of the property. It is taller than the existing building but is within the same footprint other than a small side extension. It will not impose on anyone and will look better than the existing building. A benefit is that the plan reduces 2 entrances/exits to 1 entrance/exit with the addition of a splay which will give safer access to and from the road.

Cllrs Clarke, Sullivan and Hines unanimously agreed to support the Application and to notify West Suffolk Council of this decision.

[Cllr Francis returned to the meeting.]

C/25/1610/TPO - TPO 406 (2005), TPO 005 (1974), TPO 207 (1994), TPO 076 (1981), TPO 455 (2007) and TPO 125 (1987) tree preservation order - two Horse Chestnut (T1 and T4 on plan, T1 and T1 on orders), one Walnut (T2 on plan, T2 on order), four Sycamore (T3, T5, T6 and T9 on plan, within A1 and T1, T2 and T9 on orders), one Cherry (T7 on plan, T15 on order), two Oak (T8 and T11 on plan, T16 and T14 on orders) and one Maple (T10 on plan, T1 on order) drainage works within root protection area in accordance with mgroup highways aboricultural consultants bespoke method statement.

This is an application for works in respect of the roots of trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders. It is connected to the drainage works in the village for flood alleviation. The Council

unanimously agreed to support the Application and to notify West Suffolk Council of the decision.

10. **Clerk's Report**

10.1 Largely covered by the previous reports. The Clerk has attended some training and been on a call with the CEO of SCC regarding LGR. Cllrs Hines and Sullivan had attended Cllrs training provided by SALC. The printer has broken. Work arounds (including Cllr Francis printing the papers for this meeting) are very inefficient so a new printer is required. The laptop has been repaired. The PC has agreed to make a donation of £50 to the British Legion for a wreath to lay at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. Cllr Francis will lay the wreath.

11. **Matters Arising**

11.1 The Budget for the Parish Council for 2026-27.

12. **Finance**

12.1 Budget:

The draft budget is being prepared. It will reflect, for example, the increased cost of SALC next year (internal audit, payroll and subscription) and of the website provider. The Defibrillator cabinet will need updating which will cost around £800. Cllr Clarke and the Clerk have looked at the cost of replacement of accessories. There will be ongoing costs for the grass cutting at the Playing Field.

12.2 Banking arrangements:

Former Cllr Lock has been removed removed from the mandate. Cllr Sullivan is being added.

12.3 To review income and expenditure from 1 April 2025 to 31 October 2026:

The Cllrs reviewed and there were no questions.

12.4 Remembrance Day wreath:

Mike Millett of the Royal British Legion has delivered the wreath. A donation by the Parish Council of £50 was agreed.

12.5 To approve payments and receipts:

[Cllr Clarke left the meeting.]

See 3.2, in relation to printing a flyer for the Playing Field, as a result of which a number of residents had volunteered to assist. Cllrs Francis, Hines and Sullivan unanimously agreed that Cllr Clarke should be reimbursed.

[Cllr Clarke returned to the meeting]

The Bank Reconciliation and Schedule of Payments were reviewed and the following payments unanimously agreed:

Vertas	144.95
Administration	890.89
Village Hall hire	26

Peter Clarke (reimbursement of Playing Field flyers)	20
British Legion	50
Sand and sand bags	See below
SALC (payroll)	28.80
Bank charge	4.25
Bank charge	4.25
Vertas	144.95
Amazon (printer)	258
Clerk reimbursement (Laptop repair)	78
HMRC (National Insurance)	38.61

12.6 Cllr Clarke asked the PC to consider buying new sand bags in case of flooding due to possible delays to the drainage works. Existing sand bags had either been removed or are disintegrating. Cllr Clarke shared a price comparison:

- 48 Pre-filled sand bags from Clarkes inc delivery = £447
(Wickes and B&Q were more expensive for sand)
- Clarkes sand = £74 plus delivery
- B&Q sandbags = £21

It was unanimously agreed that the Council would purchase the sand from Clarkes and sand bags from B&Q, and the sand bags be manually filled. They would be stored in the bus stop.

ACTION: CLERK

13. Date of next meeting

13.1 The date of the next meeting is Thursday 15 January at 7pm at Coney Weston Village Hall.

14. Exclusion of the Public and Press

14.1 The meeting was closed to the public and press to consider Personnel Issues.
The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

.....
Cllr Bren Francis
Chair