

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2026 AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr B Francis (Chair), Cllr P Clarke and Cllr P Hines.
Cllr Andrew Smith (WSC). L Hibbert (Clerk).

Apologies: Cllr P Sullivan (Vice Chair)

Cllr Francis announced that the meeting would be recorded. No objections were made.

1. Co-option of new Parish Councillors

1.1 Cllr Francis informed the meeting that a resident, Mr. Charlie King, is putting himself forward for co-option on to the Council. Cllr Francis proposed and Cllr Clarke seconded that Mr King should be co-opted. The Council unanimously RESOLVED that Mr. King should be co-opted on to the Council. Mr. King then joined the Council for the rest of the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1 SCC Cllr Spicer – apologies. Cllr Sullivan – apologies. WSC Cllr Smith had given his apologies that he would be late.

3. Members Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

3.1 None

4. Minutes

4.1 The draft Minutes of the meeting of the Council on 15 January 2026 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record.

5. Meeting open to the Public

5.1 No member of the public spoke.

6. Report from SCC Joanna Spicer

6.1 Cllr Spicer had given her apologies.

7. Report from WSC Cllr Andrew Smith

7.1 Cllr Smith will provide contact details to request that the Better Recycling display to be brought to the Annual Parish Meeting on 14th May. WSC will be producing a new Neighbourhood Plan, to include identification of potential sites for new housing.

7.2 Cllr Smith understands that Boom Power have sold their option to build a solar farm to another company and that work will start this month. There is concern about construction traffic between A1088 across Euston coming out Coney Weston side of the Rushford Bridge as

potholes remain a significant concern. They can be reported to SCC Highways. Cllr Smith reported that the Parish Council Precepts had been approved.

- 7.3 Cllr Joanna Spicer is retiring before the May elections after 37 years. She has been very supportive of Coney Weston and the other villages. Plans are being considered by villages for a suitable presentation. The Cllrs will consider how to express the thanks of the Council.

ACTION: CLLRS

8. Proposed new date for the Annual Parish Council Meeting

- 8.1 The Annual Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to take place at the Village Hall on Thursday, 7 May. However, the local government elections are now taking place on that date so the Village Hall will be in use. The Council agreed that the APCM would be moved to Tuesday, 5 May at 7pm at the Village Hall.

9. Councillors Reports

- 9.1 Cllr Clarke gave the following reports:

9.1.1 Defibrillator

The defibrillator has been re-registered with Ambulance Control. The cabinet needs replacing. Cllr Clarke has investigated prices for replacement cabinets and identified several options. The best value option is supplied by WEL Medical at £399 plus VAT. Cllr Clarke recommended, and the Council unanimously AGREED that the Council purchase that cabinet. SCC Cllr Spicer has offered a grant of £500, the balance of which it is proposed be put towards replacement electric pads for the defibrillator which are required by September 2026. Cllr Clarke will contact the Village Hall about changing the cabinet as it is fixed to the Village Hall and needs to be connected professionally.

ACTION: CLLR CLARKE

9.1.2 Bus Stop outside The Swan

Suffolk Highways have said that there should never have been a bus stop at The Swan as it is private land up to the highway. They are proposing 2 new bus stops in Thetford Road. One, just past the playing field entrance (on route to the bend) and the other immediately opposite. The Council is supportive in principle but on the basis that Suffolk Highways should be asked to engage with the residents who will be impacted by the proposed new bus stops.

ACTION: CLLR CLARKE

9.1.3 Playing Field

The Public Meeting on 2 March called by the Playing Field charity committee had been positive in attracting plenty of interest from residents in assisting with the development of the Playing Field. There was no interest from residents in becoming trustees of the Charity and the Council is proceeding with its move to become Sole Trustee of the Charity. The Playing Field Committee is to forward the draft replacement Governing

Document to the Charity Commission for guidance. Assistance from residents could be in the form of membership as non-councillors of a Parish Council sub-committee dealing with the Playing Field.

On Sunday, 1 March Cllrs Francis, Clarke and Sullivan and a resident moved the membrane to the area in the playing field where it will be loaded into the skip.

The membrane is non-recyclable which has impacted on the cost of the skip hire and disposal. For every additional ton an additional cost of £168 will be incurred. The weight will not be given by the contractor until the skip has been returned to their depot. The Council agreed a price of up to £600 for the skip hire, removal and disposal.

ACTION: CLLR CLARKE

9.1.4 Suffolk Parish Councils group on speeding and safety:

Nothing to report

9.1.5 Support Our Buses

A meeting of the group is scheduled for next week. An additional year of funding may be available and a Saturday service may be trialed. However, ultimately the continuation of a bus service is dependent on it being used sufficiently.

9.1.6 Village Group liaison

The Bowls Club has received a grant of £15k from Sport England towards the new pavilion. With other grants, the Club has now raised approximately half of the funds required.

9.2 Cllr Francis gave the following reports:

9.2.1 Parish Councillor recruitment

Charlie King has been co-opted on to the Parish Council.

9.2.2 Community Development

Residents should all have received a 'Better Recycling' leaflet through their doors. Cllr Francis has asked WSC for a version of the leaflet in a form that can be posted on Facebook.

Able Community Care have produced a helpful postcard note on avoiding scams and are offering 'No uninvited visitors' stickers to residents. Cllr Francis will post information on Facebook and the Noticeboard.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

9.2.3 Drainage and Highways

SCC has not yet completed the legal work with the landowner for the drainage works. It is understood that compensation has been agreed and the funds for the work have been earmarked by SCC who are hoping to start the work in the summer.

9.2.4 Sandbags

The sandbags purchased by the Council last month have been filled and are stored in the Bus Stop.

9.2.5 Information from SCC regarding Local Government Re-organisation

The elections are going ahead on 7 May. The Village Hall will be used.

9.2.6 Village Hall Car Park

Cllr Francis has called the agent for the Mrs Amy Mann several times, the owner of the Village Hall car park which is leased to the Council but has not received a response.

9.2.7 Churchyard grass cut

As part of discussions with the Church about use of the grant paid in April 2025, the Clerk has clarified that the grant is for the purpose only of grass cutting costs.

9.2.8 Emergency Plan

Cllr Francis has received a copy of Bardwell's updated Emergency Plan from WSC Councillor Andrew Smith which she will consider with the Council's existing Emergency Plan. Cllr Francis will report to the Council on any suggested updates to the Council's Emergency Plan.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS.

9.2.9 Noticeboard

Nothing to report

9.2.10 WSC Consultation on Public Space Protection Order

The Playing Field is not currently covered by a Public Space Protection Order (which covers dog waste for example). If it is covered, WSC can enforce the restrictions. Cllr Francis will respond to WSC to see if the Playing Field can be covered by Order.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

9.2.11 New Residents:

There are a number of new residents in the village. Cllr Francis will deliver copies of the Parish News to them.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

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10. Policies

Cllr Francis proposed and Cllr Clarke seconded that the following policies/documents be adopted by

the Council.

- 10.1 Website Accessibility Statement
- 10.2 Reserves Policy
- 10.3 Grants Policy and Grant Application Form
- 10.4 Complaints Form
- 10.5 Employee's Code of Conduct and Grievance Policy

Cllrs Clarke, Francis, Sullivan and Hines RESOLVED that the policies/documents be adopted. Cllr King did not vote as he had not seen the draft documents.

11. Clerk's Report

- 11.1 Cllrs Clarke and Francis attended the WSC Parish Forum in February. Cllr Clarke reported that this had been quite well attended. The issues of recycling, affordable housing and 20 mph speed limits had been discussed. The Clerk has attended training on Annual Meetings, and the Chair had received and read the training materials.
- 11.2 The Clerk provided an update on a VAT. A previous Internal Audit report had recommended that the Council liaise with HMRC about whether £28 of Insurance Premium Tax ('IPT') in a previous financial year had been wrongly reclaimed from HMRC as VAT. The Clerk had previously reported that it had not been reclaimed. However, he has now identified documents that suggest it was reclaimed. The VAT reclaim form itself is not available. The Clerk reported that dealing with HMRC generally on VAT and other matters has been extremely time consuming, involving hours of time on the phone, online and reviewing the Council's records. This has impacted on his ability to work on other matters for the Council and in working for more than his contracted hours. Matters had been considerably complicated by the fact that there have been 3 clerks during the period in question, documents including invoices were stored electronically, the Council's e mail address has changed with access to one of the accounts no longer available, and the Council having replaced its laptop. In addition to the £28 IPT issue, invoices for the 2023/24 financial year are not available for the reasons above. Without invoices to support VAT payments to suppliers a VAT reclaim cannot be made. It is likely that the amount of VAT would have been very small. Given the disproportionate amount of time the Clerk was spending on VAT matters, the limited hours the Clerk is employed for, and the impact it had been having on his ability to deal with other matters for the Council, and that not all historic invoices are available, the Clerk had sought the guidance of SALC. The advice received from SALC was that, given the matters stated above, it would be appropriate for the Council now to deal with the previous recommendation of internal audit that the Council liaise with HMRC by instead adjusting the next VAT reclaim by £28 to correct the apparent overclaim. Furthermore, the Council can resolve not to make a VAT reclaim for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 11.3 On the basis of the above, Cllr Francis proposing and Cllr Clarke seconding the Council unanimously RESOLVED that the Council's next VAT rebate claim should be adjusted to correct the previous £28 overclaim and that the Council will not make a VAT reclaim for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 11.4 The Clerk reported that the following issues identified in previous Internal Reports had been dealt with:
- 11.4.1 The VAT/Insurance Premium Tax issue (see above)
 - 11.4.2 The latest versions of the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had been adopted

(including up to date procurement thresholds)

11.4.3 SALC's Letter of Engagement for the Internal Audit for 2024/2025 had been approved

11.4.4 A Website Accessibility Statement had been approved

11.4.5 The working from home allowance had been correctly recorded in the AGAR

11.4.6 A note had been published regarding the late publication of the documentation supporting the period for exercise of Public Rights.

12. Finance

12.1 VAT - The Council has received its VAT reclaim on payments in the 2024/25 financial year

12.2 Skip hire – see 9.1.3 above

12.3 SALC Letter of Engagement - The Council approved the SALC Letter of Engagement as the Council's internal auditor for the 2025/2026 financial year. The Chair signed the Letter.

12.2 Banking arrangements - Cllr Francis has researched various interest bearing accounts for the Council's funds. She recommended that the Council open an interest earning instant access savings account with Lloyds. There were other interest bearing accounts but some of those require notice of withdrawals and opening an additional account with Lloyds should be straightforward as they are the Council's existing bank. The Council unanimously agreed to proceed with the opening of that account.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

12.3 Internal Control Statement – the Chair had undertaken a review of the Council's Internal Controls. The completed Internal Control Statement had been circulated to the Council for review in advance of the meeting and was formally presented to and received by the Council at the meeting.

12.3 To review income and expenditure from 1 April 2025 to 28 February 2026:
The Cllrs reviewed and there were no questions.

12.5 To approve payments and receipts:

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

Suffolk Cloud (Website Accessibility Audit)	Online	70
Suffolk Cloud (Domain name and mailbox storage)	Online	130
Clarkes of Walsham Ltd (sand)	Online	52.29
Lloyds Bank (Service Charge)	Direct debit	4.25
Clarkes of Walsham Ltd (VAT on sand)	Online	10.46
Coney Weston Playing Field (Insurance)	Online	100.00

Administration	Online	801.68
Information Commissioner's Office	Online	47

13. Date of next meeting

13.1 The date of the next meeting is Tuesday, 5 May 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 Legal Personnel Issues.

Approved as a true and accurate record

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 Cllr Bren Francis
 Chair

May 2026