MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL AT 7PM

Present: Cllr Bren Francis (Chair), Cllr Patrick Sullivan (Vice Chair), Cllr Paul Hines, Cllr Charlie King and Luke Hibbert (Clerk and RFO)

Cllr Andrew Smith (West Suffolk Council) and Cllr Harry Richardson (Suffolk County Council)

No members of the public were present.

1. **Co-option of new Parish Councillors**

   None

2. **Apologies for absence**

   None

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

   3.1. Cllr Francis declared an interest in Item 11.6 on the Agenda (Approval of Payments and Receipts), being the reimbursement to her of £57.99 she had paid for batteries for the Speed Indicator Device for the village.

4. **Minutes**

   4.1. The Council approved the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Council on 2 July 2026 and authorised the Chair to sign them as a true and accurate record.

   4.2. Matters arising: the Clerk confirmed that all matters arising from the Minutes of the 2 July meeting had been dealt with.

5. **Meeting open to the public**

   5.1. No members of the public were present.

6. **Report from Suffolk County Councillor**

   6.1. Cllr Richardson reported that:

      6.1.1. A143: The 20mph signs are being removed from the A143 so the speed limit will revert to 60mph in both directions. He has asked SCC Highways for some fuller discussions about plans for the A143 given the unsatisfactory planning and communication around the works this year. Cllr Francis expressed her

concern about the failure of SCC Highways to undertake regular inspections which would have identified the problems with the surface works earlier. Cllr Francis queried whether the A14 closure would mean the diversion would go up the A1088 rather than the A143. Cllr Richardson believes so but will check.

6.1.2. Bus service: funding remains in place to retain the bus service for Coney Weston until April 2028. The planned Local Government Review may impact on funding beyond this date.

6.1.3. Drainage: the officer at SCC has informed Cllr Richardson that discussions with the Agent for the landowner have progressed and are close to conclusion.

6.1.4. Vision document: the new SCC administration has published a Vision document setting out its priorities for its term of office. As soon as permitted, Cllr Richardson will circulate this.

6.1.5. Local Government Re-organisation: a Court hearing in October will determine whether the challenge to the LGR by SCC should proceed. The basis of the challenge is that the Government didn't follow the legal advice it had received.

7. Report from West Suffolk Councillor

7.1. Planning: Cllr Smith reported that the Government is changing the way in which planning applications will be dealt with. From 1 November 2026 applications for under 10 residential dwellings or small commercial developments can now be decided by the planning officer. They can't be called in for review by the local authority's Planning Committee. The maximum numbers of Councillors who can sit on the Planning Committee is being reduced from 16 to 13. Consultation, including with Parish Councils, will remain the same.

7.2. A143: Planning Permission has been granted for 1,375 new homes next to the A143 where it meets Bury St Edmunds and 2 new roundabouts, putting additional pressure on the A143.

7.3. Shepherd's Grove development: Stanton Parish Council are not supporting the development. Hepworth are supportive. Bardwell are broadly neutral.

7.4. RAF Barnham: WSC continue to pursue the Home Office for an early decision on the proposal to use RAF Barnham to house asylum seekers, particularly given that RAF Barnham is in a protected wildlife area. SCC have done a comprehensive risk assessment relating to the Primary School in Barnham.

7.5. Bin collection: Cllr Smith has informed the relevant team at WSC that one collection a month for residents' blue bins is insufficient. WSC is reviewing the cycle of bin collections generally.

Cllr Richardson left the meeting.

8. Parish Councillor Reports

8.1. Cllr King:

8.1.1. Playing Field: The clerk gave this report as he had been in contact with the Playing Field Committee. On request for an update by the Clerk the Committee had confirmed that an e mail had been received from the Charity Commission regarding the new Trust Deed allowing the Council to become Sole Trustee in terms that the Charity Commission's response would still be a number of weeks in coming. The Committee would be calling the Charity Commission for further clarity. The Cllrs expressed their frustration with the further delay.

8.1.2. Volunteers: Cllr King has been in touch with various village volunteers and will continue those contacts now that the holiday period is over with a view to confirming which existing volunteers around the village wish to continue in that role.

8.2. Cllr Sullivan:

8.2.1. Village Groups: nothing to report

8.3. Cllr Hines:

8.3.1. Planning Application DC/26/0837/OUT - Outline Planning Permission for a 2 bedroom bungalow on the land behind The Swan has been refused. Planning Application DC/26/0732/TPO, Tree works on an oak tree has also been refused.

8.4. Cllr Francis:

8.4.1. Community Development: Cllr Francis has suggested to Suffolk Libraries that the mobile library stock hearing aid batteries. Other councils had previously done so. The 'Head of Hearing' at SCC had informed her that SCC has 'nominated hearing centres' for this. However, none of these are close to Coney Weston. Cllr Francis is pursuing the issue.

8.4.2. Parish Council's Forum: Cllr Francis had attended the Town and Parish Council forum at the end of July and asked the representative of the WSC

recycling team whether a new schedule of bin collections would be sent out by post to residents, the current schedule only running up to the end of November. She had been informed that a schedule for bin collections running from December 2026 would not be sent to residents. The information will be available on the WSC website. Andrew Smith WSC will look into this as it's possible that a new schedule is being considered. On LGR, elections will be taking place in May 2027, and in April 2028 for the new Unitary Authorities.

8.4.3. Suffolk Parish Councils group on speeding and safety: Nothing to report.

8.4.4. Support Our Buses: See Cllr Richardson's report.

8.4.5. Drainage and Highways: see Cllr Richardson's report.

8.4.6. Village Hall car park: Cllr Francis and the Clerk have been in communication with Brown & Co (agents for the landowner) and the Village Hall committee. The Council and the Village Hall committee were in agreement that should a new lease be agreed on expiry of the current lease in January 2027, the parties will be the Committee and the landowner. The Council will no longer be the leaseholder. The parties are in discussions.

8.4.7. Churchyard: no grass cutting had been necessary because of the drought conditions.

8.4.8. Emergency Plan: Cllr Francis has brought this up to date. A draft had been circulated to the Cllrs in advance of the meeting. The Council UNANIMOUSLY agreed that the draft Emergency Plan be adopted.

9. **Councillors' Responsibilities**

9.1. Following the resignation of Peter Clarke from the Council the Cllrs agreed that Cllr Sulivan would now be responsible for Village Group liaison and Cllr Hines would be responsible for the defibrillator, with Cllr Francis available to deal with any defibrillator issues should Cllr Hines not be available.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS AND CLLR HINES

Clerk's report

9.2. The Clerk reported that:

9.2.1. Planning: the reasons given by the Planning Officer for rejecting the application for Outline Planning Permission on the land behind the Swan included that it didn't satisfy the conditions under the Local Plan for development on land outside the Settlement Boundary, that the site stands

within a Greater Crested Newt risk zone, and that there were 2 ponds close to the site. No ecology survey had been submitted.

9.2.2. PCC: in line with the Council's decision, a further £200 grant was being paid to the PCC. With the previous payment, this represented a total grant to the PCC this financial year of £600 against a grant request for £1,000.

9.2.3. Standing Orders: NALC are undertaking a consultation regarding possible updates to the Model Standing Orders. The Clerk will monitor developments.

9.2.4. Training: Cllr Hines will be attending training run by the Suffolk Preservation Society on planning applications.

9.2.5. Speed Indicator Devices: Cllr Francis has purchased replacement batteries.

10. **Finance**

10.1. VAT: The Council has received a rebate of £120.66 from HMRC in respect of VAT paid in the financial year 1 April 25 to 31 March 26.

10.2. HMRC: contact details for the Council had now finally been updated by HMRC for both VAT and PAYE making communication and the online process much easier.

10.3. Insurance renewal: the Clerk has obtained quotes from Zurich and Community Action Suffolk for renewal of the Council's insurance for the year from 1 October 2026. Zurich were the current insurer and had given the most competitive quote. The Cllrs UNANIMOUSLY agreed that the Council should renew the policy with Zurich.

10.4. Banking Arrangements: The Clerk updated the Council that he had attended an online session with Unity Trust Bank facilitated by SALC. UTB currently bank over 25% of Parish Councils and the Clerks attending the session whose Parish Councils already bank with UTB had spoken highly of them. The Council could obtain a higher interest rate with UTB than Lloyds. As such, the Council UNANIMOUSLY resolved to move the Council's bank accounts from Lloyds to UTB.

ACTION: CLERK

10.5. To review income and expenditure from 1 April 2026 to 31 August 2026: the Clerk presented a Budget Update report to 31 August 2026. Noted by the Council.

10.6. To approve payments and receipts: the following payments were approved (Cllr Francis not voting on the reimbursement payment to her for purchase of the SID batteries):

Reference	Payee	Detail	Power	Online payment/direct debit/cheque	Amount £
1	Councillor Bren Francis	Reimbursement for purchase of SID batteries	s.111, Local Government Act, 1972	Online	57.99
2	HMRC	National Insurance	s.111, Local Government Act, 1972	Online	997.07
3	Clerk	Administration	s.111, Local Government Act, 1972	Online	828.16
4	Zurich insurance	Annual insurance	s.111, Local Government Act, 1972	Online	363
5	Church	Balance of grant	s.111, Local Government Act, 1972	Online	200
6	WEL Medical	Defibrillator cabinet and electrode pads	s.111, Local Government Act, 1972	Online	642.30

11. Date of next meeting

11.1. The Councillors approved Thursday, 5 November 2026 as the date for the next meeting.

12. Exclusion of Public and press in the public interest for consideration of confidential items

12.1. Legal and personnel issues.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed as a true and accurate record

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Cllr Bren Francis (Chair)

5 November 2026