

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at
7:30pm on Tuesday, 6th May 2025 at the village hall, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve (Vice-Chair),
Julia Korona, Jaclyn Lake, Patricia Mallalieu, Philip Stiles, Indy Wijenayaka;
Clerk: Laura Crump; County Councillor: Bobby Bennett; District Councillor: Indy Wijenayaka.

1. Election of Chairperson and Vice Chair

The Clerk addressed the Parish Council and asked for proposals for the election of Chair and Vice-Chair.

It was proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka, and seconded by Cllr Lake, for Cllr Rich to be the Chairman. All Cllrs were in agreement.

It was proposed by Cllr Rich, and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka, for Cllr Eve to be the Vice-Chair. All Cllrs were in agreement.

2. Apologies for absence

None.

3. District Councillor's report

Cllr Wijenayaka's annual report can be found on the PC website.

4. County Councillor's report

Cllr Bennett's County Councillor annual report and report for March 2025 can be found on the PC website.

5. Public Forum for parishioners

There were no parishioners.

6. Declaration of members' interests for any agenda item at this meeting

None.

7. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4th March 2025

The minutes were approved – proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka and seconded by Cllr Mallalieu.

8. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings

a) Parishioner Arboretum concerns – Cllr Wijenayaka

Cllr Wijenayaka had reported all the issues raised by the parishioner to RMG who informed the property manager. He hasn't since heard back therefore will be chasing for an update.

9. Allocation of councillor roles and responsibilities

The responsibilities were discussed and the Cllrs agreed to the following:

Village Hall – Cllr Mallalieu
Defibrillator – Cllr Mallalieu
Highways – Cllr Eve
Speed Watch liaison & VAS Coordinator – Cllr Eve
Graveyard – Cllr Korona
Safeguarding – Cllr Korona
Environment and Footpaths – Cllr Lake
Finance – Cllr Rich
Planning – Cllr Stiles

10. Village greens 'no parking' signs design and quotation

Two 'no parking' signs were ordered and had been delivered. Next, the signs need to be mounted on posts and installed on the two village greens – the Chair is looking into contractors to carry this out. Estate Manager for Thurlow Estate, Fin Purchase, agreed to pay for the signs.

The Cllrs were asked to decide where the signs should be erected. It was discussed and agreed that there should be one on placed on Burton Green and one on Town Green, both facing the main road. It was agreed that it would not be appropriate for the signs to be placed outside of anyone's house.

11. Update on Playground Project

It was reported that Cllr Wijenayaka had secured a grant from Community Action Suffolk for £1,660.00 for a playground feasibility study. The Chair had a meeting with a consultant and shared details of her proposal of work. The Cllrs approved the proposal and it was agreed for her to undertake the feasibility study.

The Chair had received confirmation from Estate Manager, Alison Provis at Thurlow Estate, that they agree in principle in allowing a playground on Town Green subject to seeing and approving detailed plans. She requested that the PC contact the family at Withersfield Hall to ensure they are aware and happy with the proposals.

The Chair had also met with a playground supplier company who was able to share some guidance and advice about installing a playground along with an estimated quote of £30,000.00

It was agreed that the next step would be to form a committee who can liaise with the consultant to progress the scheme and also work on fundraising.

12. Acorn Biodigester Application

The date for the SCC committee meeting to determine the application is 19th June.

Cllr Eve explained that he had spoken to SCC Flood and Water Engineer due to his response to the re-consultation approving the application. It was determined that the response was looked at as surface level drainage. Cllr Eve pointed out to the engineer that he had said the site was a flood risk 2 zone rather than flood risk 3, as indicated on the flood risk maps, which he agreed was a mistake.

Cllr Eve wrote a letter to Development Manager, Andy Rutter, as a response to submissions from Consultees on the planning portal to the application, including the above mentioned Flood and Water comments. He raised points regarding the EA reconsultation letter, that SCC hadn't mentioned manoeuvring on the site, food waste, and more. The letter has been placed on the online planning portal.

It was discovered by Cllr Eve, that after reading the response from Acorn to the suggestion of limiting the lifetime of the facility to 25 years, that the conditions that Acorn supplied refer to solar energy installations rather than an Anaerobic Digestion facility. Cllr Eve contacted Andy Rutter about this and asked for this information to be placed on the planning portal.

Cllr Eve had contacted Cambridgeshire CC about their response to the application highlighting that the data provided by Acorn provides no information of where agricultural traffic will intersect the A1307 in Cambridgeshire and the effect of traffic coming to the Streetly End Anaerobic Digester. He explained that Acorn have provided no justification for their assumption that 75% of trips will come from the west and only 25% of trips from the east, which significantly reduces the number of vehicles turning right across the traffic to enter the site.

All Cllrs endorsed and thanked Cllr Eve's hard work.

As previously agreed, Cllr Eve will be representing the PC at the committee meeting and will have three minutes to speak. The points for him to speak about were discussed and it was suggested that the Cllrs have an informal meeting just prior to the committee meeting to hear what Cllr Eve has prepared and give feedback. It was agreed for the Cllrs to meet at 7pm on 17th June.

Cllr Wijenayaka told the PC that the Muck-Off campaign are also at the stage where they need to get their script together for the committee meeting. They are exploring publicity coverage as the committee meeting nears. The campaign have organised a bus to transport people to the meeting on the 19th June and had asked attendees to pay a deposit for their places. As members of the PC will also be attending and using this bus, it was proposed by the Chair for the PC to contribute £100 towards the cost of the bus, this was seconded by Cllr Mallalieu.

Cllr Lake suggested contacting Nick Timothy. The Chair said he would follow this up and remind of the assistance he had previously indicated to the Cllrs at their meeting.

13. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Stiles

Cllr Stiles reported that the Plan had been back and forth between himself and West Suffolk due to West Suffolk requesting various edits to the document. He hopes it is now all in order and he has a meeting next week to verify this.

14. Update from the Traffic Working Group – Cllr Eve

Cllr Eve's annual TWG report can be found on the PC website.

Cllr Eve had met with Matthew Fox, Local Engineer Suffolk Highways, and had discussed the process for the implementation of the village gates. It was reported that:

1. We will need to apply for a licence for the gates which will cost £150.
2. We will have to purchase the gates from our preferred supplier
3. Highways will install the gates as per their quote
4. The 106 monies will be deducted from the cost of installation. We will be responsible for the remainder of the costs.
5. The licence will last one year to allow time for installation

The PC are still awaiting a response from the Thurlow Estate in regards to their decision of giving permission for the PC to install the gates on the south side of Horseheath Road, as the verges here are owned by the Thurlow Estate.

15. Update from the Village Hall Committee – Cllr Mallalieu

The latest VHMC report can be found on the PC website.

Cllr Mallalieu told the PC that a few members of the VHMC were soon to be leaving, including the Chair and secretary. The PC discussed whether the committee might collapse. Cllrs were asked to speak to parishioners who they think may like to join the committee. An article will also be placed in the village magazine.

16. Finance

- a) Presentation of monthly accounts – Income and Expenditure and Bank Reconciliation
- b) To note payments made since last meeting

These were approved – proposed by Cllr Eve and seconded by Cllr Stiles.

- c) Approval of the end of year accounts 2024/25 and Chairman's Annual Accounts Report

The accounts and report were discussed and approved – proposed by Cllr Korona and seconded by Cllr Stiles. These can be found on the PC website.

- d) Confirmation that the Parish Council meets the criteria for exemption for 2024/25 and wishes to be an exempt authority

Confirmed - proposed by Cllr Stiles and seconded by Cllr Eve.

- e) Consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

- f) Consider and approve the Accounting Statements 2024/25

The AGAR was considered and approved – proposed by Cllr Wijenayaka and seconded by Cllr Eve.

- g) Approval of Internal Controls 2025
h) Approval of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct

These were all approved. Proposed by Cllr Stiles and seconded by Cllr Lake.

- i) Confirmation of receipt of 2025/26 precept

Noted.

- j) Approval of the use of BACS by the Parish Council for online payments

Continued approval.

- k) To note the Clerk continues as the PC's Responsible Financial Officer

Noted.

17. Correspondence

- a) Email – East Anglian Air Ambulance donation request

It was proposed by the Chair to send a donation of £50 which was seconded by Cllr Eve. All were in agreement.

- b) Email – Cars parked on green

The emails received from a parishioner had been shared with the PC. As discussed at item 10 on the agenda, the Cllrs had decided the location of the two 'no parking on the green' signs to be placed on Burton Green and Town Green facing the main road. It is hoped that the signs will deter the ongoing parking on the greens. The parishioner has been informed.

18. Planning

- a) **Borough notifications since last meeting**
b) **Applications received since last meeting for consideration**

All were considered and noted.

19. Agenda items for the PC meeting being held on 8th July 2025

- Outcome of Acorn Biodigester application and next steps
- Playground

The meeting closed at 20:45.