

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF CONEY WESTON HELD ON THURSDAY 14 MAY 2026 AT 7PM AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr B Francis (Chair of the Parish Council), Cllr P Clarke, Cllr P Hines and Cllr C King, Cllr Andrew Smith (WSC), and L Hibbert (Clerk).

15 members of the public.

1. Introduction

1.1 Parish Councillor Bren Francis chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone. The Parish Councillors and Parish Clerk were introduced along with Mark Walsh, Director (Operations, Leisure and Culture), West Suffolk Council who would be giving a presentation on Better Recycling, the changes to recycling and refuse collection being introduced in Suffolk.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1 Councillor Patrick Sullivan and SCC Councillor Harry Richardson.

3. Minutes

3.1 The draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 7 May 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Report from WSC Cllr Andrew Smith

4.1 Cllr Smith expressed his thanks for the service given by Cllr Joanna Spicer. He summarised the Local Government Reorganisation whereby there will be 3 Unitary Authorities in Suffolk. Road maintenance will remain with Suffolk County Council. The Government is requiring a new Local Plan, to be completed within 2.5 years. This will include a call for sites for development. Coney Weston has never previously been subject to a call. Bottle Banks will no longer be required when the Better Recycling changes come into force. This will reduce the income for village halls etc with bottle banks, but they will receive a credit for 2 years after the bottle banks are removed. The Council tax increase is under 3%. Cllr Smith had made a financial contribution towards the toilets at the Village Hall through his Locality Budget.

4.2 Cllr Richardson had sent a short report with Cllr Francis read:

I am delighted to introduce myself as your new County Councillor for the Blackbourn division. I am immensely grateful to the many residents who placed their trust in me last Thursday, but I am equally mindful that many others did not. Now that the elections have concluded and the dust has settled, I intend to represent and work hard for everyone in our villages regardless of which box, if any, they put a cross inside on polling day.

Although the circumstances of these County Council elections were already unique, the consequences for the Blackbourn division are especially important. Joanna Spicer, who has represented this area for 37 years, stood down at this election and will now enjoy a justly deserved retirement. Joanna has been the epitome of what a local Councillor should be: hardworking, determined, diligent, caring, and forthright.

Joanna's politics may not be shared by all, but she has been a stalwart in our county and for our villages and it is my privilege to (try to) follow in her footsteps. Her service will cast a long and formidable shadow, and rightly so. I will not pretend to be Joanna's equal in knowledge or experience, but I am honoured to be the new custodian of her impressive legacy. Local politics aside, I very much look forward to speaking with you in the coming weeks. There is much change to be expected in Suffolk over the next couple of years but I will certainly do my utmost to represent you all to the best of my ability and to mitigate whatever challenges may confront us.

With my very best wishes,

5. Better Recycling

- 5.1 Mark Walsh, Director (Operations, Leisure and Culture) at West Suffolk Council gave a presentation on the Better Recycling scheme changing the waste collection and recycling arrangements for residents in West Suffolk. A copy of his presentation is attached to these Minutes. In response to questions, Mr Walsh confirmed that residents will still have to pay for brown bin collections and that batteries still will not be recyclable.

6. Reports

- 6.1 **Coney Weston Parish Council**: The report was given by Cllr Bren Francis, Chair of the Council.
- 6.1.1 Cllr Francis reported that during the year Mark Lock left the Council and thanks for his significant contributions were given. Charlie King was welcomed as a new Parish Councillor. There are still vacancies for new Parish Councillors. Work carried out by volunteers clearing the parish ditch has assisted with any downpour events. More sandbags have been installed at the bus shelter. Clearing drains of leaves will help as well. Villagers were reminded of their responsibility to clear ditches on or abutting their land. Cllr Francis had received an update from SCC Cllr Joanna Francis from SCC regarding the flood alleviation works: *We do have the final big project to get over the line, but I think Coney Weston legal negotiations are nearing conclusion and I am protecting the funding for construction in 26/27.*
- 6.1.2 Cllr Clarke reported that:
- 6.1.2.1 The defibrillator has now been in place for 14 years. It is working well. The cabinet and 2 electrodes will need replacing in 2026. A grant of £500 is being made by the SCC Councillor.
- 6.1.2.2 The unofficial bus stop outside The Swan is no longer available as it is now a private residence. Cllrs Clarke and Francis met last week with a Transport Development Manager, Suffolkonboard. The proposal is for 2 concrete bus standings on grass verges – one outside the playing field and the other opposite, outside Enniskerry. No other village locations are suitable. The Parish Council attempted contact with the owner of Enniskerry and have asked Highways to make contact with the owner. Approval for the proposal from the Parish Council is sought (see Minutes of Meeting of the Parish Council on 5 May 2026).
- 6.1.2.3 The bare patch on the Playing Field has been ploughed and re-seeded by Vertas who

have the contract to cut the grass at the Playing Field. The area is looking much better. Following the Public Meeting called by the Trustees of the Playing Field in March 2026, the Parish Council has agreed to become Sole Trustee of the Playing Field charity subject to conditions, principally approval by the Charity Commission, the Parish Council and the existing Trustees of a new Governing Document. If the Council does become Sole Trustee volunteers would be sought, including to be part of a sub-committee of the Parish Council to manage the Playing Field and any development projects.

6.1.2.4 The Suffolk Town and Parish Councils group on Speeding and Road Safety is seeking to raise the profile of residents' concerns about speeding and road safety generally. There is considerable interest from Parish Councils not yet members of the group. Administrative expenses of £4,000 (plus the charges for the measures put in place) are charged by Suffolk Highways for installing traffic calming measures such as speed bumps and chicanes which are significant. The focus is on trying to find ways of sharing this administrative cost. There is also a significant push to introduce 20mph speed limits across Suffolk given the evidence of the reduction in deaths and injuries that these limits bring. However, when this had been considered previously there had been no confidence that the 30mph limit is being adequately enforced, so there seems little point introducing a 20mph speed limit until enforcement improves.

6.1.2.5 Cllr Clarke gave thanks for the numerous volunteers who do such great work in and around the village on the website, events, rubbish picking etc. More volunteers would always be welcome.

Peter and Jane Marsh – grass cutting along village hall footpath

Clive and Susi Stanley – litter picking

Kate Martin and Carol Hockley – flowers at the village sign and Thetford Road

Mark Lock – speed data

Chris Flood – website and Community FaceBook page

Julian Flood – grass cutting at pumping station

Mark Lock downloads the results from the Speed Indicator Device which are put on Facebook by Cllr Francis. Unfortunately, speeding in Coney Weston is not a priority for the Police so the data is no longer sent to them. Cllr Francis has 30mph signs to be placed on wheelie bins if any resident would like them. The battery in the Speed Indicator Device at Thetford Road may need to be replaced in the near future.

6.1.2.6 Grant funding for the bus service is available only for the next 2 years. If the services are not used sufficiently no further grant funding will be forthcoming.

6.1.2.7 The Bowls Club have offered use of their car park to the Mobile Library van which used to park outside The Swan. No response has yet been received.

6.2 **Coney Weston Village Hall**: the Chair of the Village Hall committee reported that a grant of £700 had been received from SCC Cllr Joanna Spicer and a further grant of £600 from WSC Cllr Andrew Smith. A donation had also been received from the proceeds of the Open Gardens event. The members of the Committee were thanked. Numerous events are held at the Village Hall. The Chair highlighted the significant fixed costs associated with the running of the Village Hall such as heat, electricity, music licence, insurance, fire extinguisher testing, rent of the car park etc. The Committee has reviewed and updated its policies. Future maintenance projects include changing the front window, a new noticeboard and possibly a new canopy over the entrance. The Village Hall's Annual General Meeting is on Wednesday, 20

May.

- 6.3 **St Mary's Church**: the Churchwarden reported that as a historic building the Church is always in need of funds. Some funds are received for burials. A working party of members of the public had already carried out one strim of the Churchyard. Another is taking place on Saturday, 17 May. It is aimed to be a community event, not just something for members of the Church. Refreshments are provided. The Church is attractive and a tidy Churchyard supports the village. The congregation usually stands at about 16, but more like 80 for the Christmas candlelight service.
- 6.4 **Bowls Club**: the Chair of the Bowls Club reported that the Club had a good year. It now has 40 playing members and 12 social members, which number is likely to rise. The Club is now licensed to sell alcohol to members and guests. The Pavillion is too small and in a poor state. Fundraising for a new pavilion is going well. The construction budget is £62.5k. Significant grant funding has been secured and the amount raised to date is £48k. In anticipation of securing all the funding, digging of the foundations has begun.
- 6.3 **Table Tennis**: the Table Tennis club was started about 18 months ago. There are 3 table tennis tables, one of which had been provided by the Village Hall Committee for which thanks were given. About 15 people come along each Thursday from 4 to 6pm. It is sociable and good fun. Tea and biscuits are provided. More people are always welcome.
- 6.4 **Playing Field**: a Trustee reported that title to the Playing Field is now properly recorded at the Land Registry. The trustees wish to retire but no replacements had come forward before or after the Charity's Public Meeting in March. The Parish Council has agreed to become Sole Trustee subject to a new Governing Document being in place. A draft has been submitted to the Charity Commission for comment. Thanks were given to the volunteers who had removed and arranged for the disposal of the membrane. The Charity has no income and thanks were given to the Parish Council for meeting the costs of the grass cutting and insurance. Cllr King reported that he had moved to Coney Weston last year and had a young child so he wanted to see a Playing Field and Playground available to residents. He would sit on any sub-committee of the Parish Council established for this purpose and would be asking for volunteers to assist

There being no questions, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.30pm

Approved as a true and accurate record

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Cllr Bren Francis
Chair

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