MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CONEY WESTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 2 JULY 2026 AT CONEY WESTON VILLAGE HALL

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)

4 residents 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 Hines declared an interest in Item 10 on the Agenda (Planning) on the basis he is a neighbour of the property the subject of the planning permission application and as such is a consultee, and he also has a financial interest as a prospective purchaser of the land.

4. **Minutes**

   4.1. The Council approved the draft Minutes of (1) the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 4 May, and (2) the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting on 14 May and agreed that the Chair should sign them as a true and accurate record.

   4.2. Matters arising: the Clerk confirmed that all matters arising from the Minutes had been dealt with or were being dealt with.

5. **Meeting open to the public**

   5.1. Three members of the public present wished to speak on Item 10 (Planning), one of whom also wanted to speak on Item 8.1 (the Playing Field):

   5.1.1. In respect of the Playing Field, a member of the public informed the meeting that he had offered to continue assisting with the transition from the 3 existing trustees of the Playing Field charity to the Council as Sole Trustee. He reported that, having spoken to the trustees recently, he understood that about 2 weeks ago the Charity Commission had returned the application in respect of the draft replacement Governing Document because it had not been signed or had been signed incorrectly. The existing trustees have been told by the Charity Commission that it is seeking external legal advice on the application and a response could take up to 12 weeks.

5.1.2. A representative of the Bowls Club informed the meeting that the Bowls Club had not yet received formal notice of the planning application from WSC and was not aware that public notice of the application had been posted outside the property. However, the Bowls Club will be submitting a detailed response to WSC objecting to the application tomorrow. The response will include: the land in question is outside the building line and as such, if the application is approved it would amount to 'mission creep' of building outside the Settlement Boundary potentially making future similar applications more difficult to resist; there are insufficient amenities/infrastructure in the village; previous applications at Crown Lane and Rushford Road had been rejected on the same grounds. The resident asked that these comments be passed on to WSC by the Council.

5.1.3. The second member of the public who wished to speak regarding Item 10 stated that it is for a single story 90 square metre property, there is no indication where it will be located on the plot, but wherever it is built will be outside the development boundary for the village. The development boundary had been deliberately put behind the properties on Thetford Road and had only recently been set out only recently as part of the latest Local Plan. There is no reason to encourage WSC to allow development beyond that boundary. The location of the plot means that if development is allowed it would have a detrimental effect on the character of the area and on the neighbours. The resident encouraged the Council to object to the application, and also Cllr Smith for WSC to 'call in' the application because it is outside the development boundary and for the other reasons stated.

5.1.4. A third member of the public who wished to speak regarding Item 10 stated that people had been seen looking around the site and there were rumours that the land had already been bought.

6. <u>Report from Suffolk County Councillor</u>

6.1. Cllr Richardson reported that SCC is bringing a Judicial Review in respect of the government's decision to abolish SCC and replace it with 3 Unitary Authorities. He hoped the outcome of that challenge would be known within months.

6.2. SCC has been briefed by the Home Office in respect of the proposal to house 1,250 asylum seekers at RAF Barnham. However, Cllr Andrew Smith is better placed to report to the meeting on this issue as a WSC councillor.

6.3. Funds have been confirmed by SCC to keep bus services 70 and 73 running until April 28.

6.4. He had an update on the issue of drainage at The Street. This was still held up in the legal process - the landowner's agent and SCC were still negotiating the details, in particular compensation payable to the landowner. However, the intention remained to undertake the works this financial year (ideally before the winter) and £450,000 of funding is ring-fenced for the work.

7. Report from West Suffolk Councillor

7.1. Cllr Smith had been contacted by the Daily Telegraph on Thursday, 25 June asking for a comment on a press release from the Home Office about housing asylum seekers at RAF Barnham. He had no knowledge of the press release but was contacted by other news organisations during the day including the BBC, ITV and the Guardian. Cllr Smith had told them that he could not comment until he had seen the press release. Having seen the press release, he had subsequently spoken to the BBC and ITV. He had also been part of a discussion about the proposal on GB News.

7.2. The proposal is to house 1,250 single male asylum seekers aged 18-65. WSC had convened an urgent meeting to form a collective view. The motion to object to the proposal had been passed unanimously. Barnham had a population of 584 when last measured in 2021, a Village Hall, a Church and a Primary School. There is no shop. WSC's objection is not to the people who it is proposed will be housed at RAF Barnham, but the lack of amenities and its proximity to Barham.

7.3. WSC is setting up a Steering Group. Cllr Smith and Cllr Cliff Waterman will lead and will invite participation from other Cllrs and council staff as appropriate.

7.4. Cllr Smith was asked by a member of the public present about the level of cooperation between WSC and Breckland Council given that services that may be impacted are in Norfolk as well as Suffolk (availability of GPs and Dentists as an example). Cllr Smith agreed co-ordination would be sensible but as the site is in Suffolk, WSC should take the lead. Cllr Smith was unable to confirm when WSC will receive a response from the government.

8. Parish Councillor Reports

8.1. Cllr King:

8.1.1. Playing Field: Cllr King reported that he had spoken to a trustee of the Playing Field charity and his understanding is as set out during the public section of the meeting.

8.2. Cllr Sullivan:

8.2.1. Village Groups: nothing to report

8.3. Cllr Francis:

8.3.1. Community Development: nothing to report.

8.3.2. Suffolk Parish Councils group on speeding and safety: nothing to report. Cllr Francis has been advised that e mails and updates are directed to her now that Peter Clarke has left the Council.

8.3.3. Support Our Buses: see Cllr Richardson's report.

8.3.4. Bus Stop outside The Swan: Cllr Francis believes it will be about a year before the bus stop is put in place.

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

8.3.6. Village Hall car park lease: Cllr Francis and the Clerk have asked for a call with the owner's land agent.

8.3.7. Churchyard – grass cutting: grass cutting is undertaken by volunteers about every 3 weeks. Prospective volunteers should contact Cllr Francis.

8.3.8. Emergency Plan: Cllr Francis is progressing this.

8.3.9. Noticeboard: the Village Hall have carried out some repairs. No further work is required. Cllr Francis will send the Village Hall committee an e mail thanking them.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

Cllr Francis also wanted to give the Council's thanks to Peter Clarke for his valuable service on the Parish Council.

9. **Planning**

9.1. As a result of his conflict of interest Cllr Hines left the meeting for this Item. The Council discussed the application: Cllr Sullivan and Cllr Francis were of the view the Council should object to the application because the property is outside the Settlement Boundary. Cllr King believes the Council should also object to the application on this basis and also on the basis that a 2 bedroom bungalow does not fit in with the surrounding properties, and the Council should also take into account the views of the members of the public given at the meeting.

The Council (except Cllr Hines) unanimously AGREED that the Council's response will be to object to the application. The Clerk will draft a response to the application for the Council to submit to WSC.

Cllr Hines returned to the meeting.

9.2. Cllr Smith was asked to clarify for the meeting what an application being 'called in' means: if a Parish Council objects to the application but the Planning Officer recommends approval the application will be delegated to a panel for consideration. If the Parish Council objects to the application and the Planning Officer also recommends objection, the application will be rejected without further consideration by WSC.

ACTION: CLERK

10. Application for Grant by the PCC of St Mary's Church

10.1. The Council considered the balance of the grant request from the PCC of St Mary's Church. The Clerk reported that the Council had previously approved the grant request for £400 in respect of fuel and servicing of the mowers. The grant request for the Noticeboard had been rejected. The grant request for the gate to the Churchyard and gate posts (£250) and fence renewal of part of fence (£200) had been held over to allow the Clerk to check with SALC that the Council had the authority to make those grants. SALC having confirmed that the Council did have the right to approve those elements of the grant request the Council unanimously AGREED to approve those elements of the grant request.

11. Speed Indicator Devices batteries

11.1. The Clerk reported that the batteries for the SID need replacing. Replacement batteries had been identified at a cost of £57.99. The Clerk had checked 2 alternative suppliers but both were more expensive. As such, the Council unanimously AGREED that the Council should proceed with the purchase of the 2 replacement batteries at £57.99.

ACTION: CLLR FRANCIS

12. Clerk's report

12.1. The Clerk reported that:

12.1.1. Defibrillator: the Clerk is liaising with Cllr Richardson and the Locality Grant offices at SCC regarding the grant for a new cabinet for the defibrillator and electrode pads. The cost will be covered by SCC Councillor Locality Grants either 100% or very close to it. The Clerk has obtained 3 quotes. The best value is the existing supplier, WEL Medical (who the Clerk understood had provided a good service to date). WEL Medical's quote is £524.30 plus VAT and shipping costs of £10.95. The Council unanimously agreed to proceed with the purchase.

12.1.2. Councillors: WSC had not received a request from 10 residents for an election following the resignation of Cllr Peter Clarke. The Council could co-opt additional councillors.

12.1.3. Update on grants: See above regarding the grant to the Church. The Bowls Club has raised approximately 87% of the funding required. Work is underway. The Club is holding an Open Day to which all are welcome.

12.1.4. Playing Field: see earlier reports and comments in the public section of the meeting.

12.1.5. Councillor Training: Cllr King has attended 2 sessions of 'Councillor Basics training' run by SALC.

13. **Finance**

13.1. Asset Register: the Clerk reported that the Asset Register will need to be updated following the purchase of the new Defibrillator cabinet and electrodes.

13.2. Banking arrangements: Cllr Francis explained that former Councillor Peter Clarke needs to be removed from the Lloyds Bank account mandate following his resignation. Cllr Sullivan is a Limited Signatory on the bank mandate for approving payments and he needs to be a Full Signatory for all matters the Council may want to operate with the bank account. The Council needs 3 councillors who are Full Signatories for all matters. The requisite Lloyds Bank form has to be completed and authorised by the Council.

The Council needs a third Councillor to be a Full Signatory for when one of the existing 2 authorised signatories is unavailable.

It was agreed by the Council that the requisite paperwork would be completed and submitted to Lloyds Bank, and that Cllr Hines will be added to the mandate.

13.3. To approve income and expenditure from 1 May 2026 to 30 June 2026: the Councillors had previously been provided with details of income and expenditure for this period and a Budget Update report. The Cllrs reviewed and there were no comments.

13.4. To approve payments and receipts: the Councillors had been provided with details of payments and receipts. The following payments were approved:

Invoice reference	Detail	Online payment/ direct debit/cheque	£
1	Reginald Hockley (Compost)	Online	34
2	Vertas (Playing Field grass cut March, April and May 26)	Online	478.33
3	Administration	Online	834.63
4	SALC (Internal Audit fee)	Online	226.80
5	Vertas (Playing Field grass cut June)	Online	159.44
6	Vertas (Playing Field grass cut July)	Online	159.44

5	Lloyds Bank charge	Direct debit	4.25
6	Lloyds Bank charge	Direct debit	4.67

14. Date of next meeting

14.1. The Councillors approved Thursday, 3 September 2026 as the date for the next meeting. The Clerk confirmed that the dates for all future meetings this financial year are on the website.

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

15.1. Legal and personnel issues: none

Signed as a true and accurate record

..

Councillor Bren Francis (Chair)

2 September 2026