

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF CULWORTH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
held on Thursday 11th January 2024 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall**

Present:	Andrew Wilby (AW)	Chairman
	Stuart Rolt (SR)	Vice Chairman
	Martin Rowling (MR)	Councillor
	David Mumford (DM)	Councillor
	Nancy Guinness (NG)	Councillor
(7 total)	Gary Denby (GD)	Parish Clerk
Public:	Cllr Alison Eastwood (AE)	West Northants Council (WNC)

1. Apologies received: None.
2. Councillor declarations of interest & dispensations in the following agenda items: None.
3. Receive minutes of the meeting held on **9th November 2023** as an accurate record of the Parish Council official acts and decisions. Proposed by SR, seconded by DM and agreed by all Councillors present.
4. **Public Concerns** (prior notice the the Chair or the Parish Clerk is recommended)

AE reported upon proposals for electric scooters in Northampton operated by Voi:-

People across West Northamptonshire are being asked to share their views on the public e-scooters, to support councillors who are scrutinising the effectiveness of the scheme.

As part of West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) Scrutiny process, the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee is seeking people's feedback on the scheme, which is currently operated by Voi and WNC in the Northampton and Moulton areas.

The Committee is looking for evidence into the opportunities and issues around the e-scooter scheme, which has been running in the town since 2020.

At their recent meeting (4 December), Scrutiny members decided to establish a task and finish group on the issue, to include WNC colleagues and representatives from various organisations to establish a course of action.

Residents are now being encouraged to give the Committee their views on the e-scooters scheme by [completing a short survey](#). The deadline for comments is Thursday 11 January.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-public-e-scooters-west-northamptonshire>

WNC is also looking to develop a network and a directory of Welcoming Spaces across the county for old, young and needy in times of extreme cold. There is a grant available to suitable schemes. This led to a discussion of various village groups which achieve this on an informal basis, including the Saturday morning coffee mornings, lent lunches and the likes. The meeting concluded that there is no current market for this within the village.

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-living-support/looking-welcoming-spaces>

5. **Matters Arising** from previous Parish Council minutes
- 5.1 Ref 6.1: Update on concluding the CHFT account; return of unused funds for Phase 2

The **Community Hill Field Trust** committee is due to meet shortly, with its current Chairmen John Duggan intent on standing down at the end of March 2024. The committee comprises three trustees who represent the Parish Council (AW), the Village Hall and the Cricket Club. The trustees co-opt a Chairman and a Treasurer to facilitate its running. The Parish Council has a role in helping to find a new chairman; also to assist in the committee's direction as it considers options for a replacement village hall.

5.2 Ref 10: Letters concerning the release of the Football field

The Clerk has returned a letter to **Solicitors Farrer & Co**, acknowledging the change of ownership of the football field to the Heseltines at Danvers House; also relinquishing its use by the Parish Council. AW has spoken informally with Rupert Heseltine, who explained that the purchase was to deter development on the site; that they would like to use the plot to increase bio-diversity for the village, including insects living in the stone wall. Councillors considered that the current goal posts should be readily removable, perhaps for use by the CHFT **AW?**

6. Update on **Adult Gym and Children's Play Areas improvements**

6.1 Ref 7.1: Update on planting of trees / shrubs around the perimeter

MR reported that the trees have been ordered from The Woodlands Trust but nothing has been heard since; March is too late to plant them. The second batch should have arrived in October – November. Councillors agreed to chase the order and arrange for them to be delivered in October 2024, if still available **NG**.

6.2 Ref 7.2: Update on the next edition of the village newsletter

AW will clarify whether this is proceeding; it needs to advertise for a village volunteer to manage its ongoing production.

6.3 Ref 7.3: Update on the final part of the HS/2 grant application

The Clerk has contacted Emma Rose at the HS/2 Funds Team. She has reinstated the link for us to claim the final £9,000 of our HS/2 grant awarded on 29 Nov 2022, which remains unaffected by the cancellation of Phase 2a of HS/2. The Clerk has tested the link and it requires a Local Completion Report (8 pages, due mid July 2023), which Michelle Koster appears to have kindly completed on 5 October 2023 (fully?), including a couple of photographs of the installed equipment. There is also a Final Expenditure form to be completed by the Clerk **GD**.

6.4 Ref 7.4: Development of a joint Risk Assessment associated mitigating measures **GD**

A Risk Assessment is required by our insurers, particularly if a claim is to be made for any reason. The Clerk produced a 2-side outline of such a thought process in June 2023, shared with the Chair and Vice Chair. This needs to be considered more widely and its proposed mitigating measures discussed with those likely to be affected, such as the Cricket Club or the CHFT. A meeting has yet to be orchestrated **TBA**.

6.5 Ref 7.5: Progress with regards costings for child safety fencing **GD**

Councillors considered what is required, including two self-closing gates: one for pedestrians and a wider one for mowing equipment. The Clerk will seek the contact details for Paul Lewis, who installed the fencing pictured in last month's minutes for Moreton Pinkney Parish Council **GD**.

6.6 Ref 7.6: Progress with regards public signage **GD**

The Clerk is to print and laminate a draft design for temporary display (Appendix A of September 2023 minutes), including its use by '**Small Children Only**'. Something similar needs to be placed upon the Adult Gym equipment, including '**At your own Risk**'. Speaking of which, opinions were shared that this equipment offers no resistance against muscle usage, they just free-wheel or flop about. Thus they serve no use as a cardio-vascular or strengthening exercise. Komplan are to be contacted, querying whether the resistance loading has in fact been set at all **GD**.

7. **Correspondence received by Councillors**

- 7.1 12 Nov: N-CALC mini eUpdate 10/11 – Email scams
- 7.2 12 Nov: PLR Update – November 2023
- 7.3 15 Nov: WNC new campaign to recycle electricals

- 7.4 4 Dec: WNC seeking views on the development of its tree strategy
- 7.5 4 Dec: N-CALC course on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 on 5 Dec
- 7.6 4 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate 24/11 – Funding to repair roads
- 7.7 4 Dec: WNC commitment to tackling Vaping
- 7.8 4 Dec: Parish Online Newsletter #45
- 7.9 4 Dec: WNC Town and Parish Briefing – November 2023
- 7.10 4 Dec: WNC Choir Festival – a royal wedding performer 30 March 2024
- 7.11 4 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate 17/11 – Remembrance Sunday; Government reshuffle
- 7.12 4 Dec: WNC plans for a waste and resources strategy

- 7.13 20 Dec: WNC Town and Parish briefing – December 2023
- 7.14 20 Dec: WNC requests support in promoting their Budget Consultation
- 7.15 20 Dec: WNC Draft Budget 2024/25 consultation
- 7.16 20 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate 15/12 – Training News
- 7.17 20 Dec: Greatworth T update
- 7.18 20 Dec: Northants Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's December 2023 newsletter
- 7.19 20 Dec: WNC launches grants to support rural business growth
- 7.20 20 Dec: Parish Online Newsletter #46
- 7.21 20 Dec: WNC launches a 2nd round of grant funding to create volunteering opportunities
- 7.22 20 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate 08/12 – No Precept Referendum (for Parish Councils)
- 7.23 20 Dec: WNC outlines future office plans

- 7.24 24 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate 22/12 – Budget consultations
- 7.25 29 Dec: N-CALC course on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 on 30 Jan
- 7.26 29 Dec: WNC have your say on public e-scooters

- 7.27 2 Jan: Resignation of Councillor John Mullins-Blyth due to family & work commitments
- 7.28 10 Jan: N-CALC Training Newsletter – January 2024
- 7.29 10 Jan: Updated draft of the Parish Council budget for 2024-25

8 **Updates on the Parish Council Burial Ground (Brookes and Marshall)**

MR is in possession of the Parish Council's Burial Ground register, in order to keep it up to date (he is also Churchwarden to St Mary's church, Culworth). Jose Rowling is kindly assisting the Clerk with local organisation of Burial ground activities, liaison with local families and the likes. The Clerk is becoming familiar with associated correspondence and charges.

- Arrangements have recently been made for a Memorial Stone for **Colin Haywood** through Banbury Memorials for £158.
- Arrangements are being made for the burial and graveside committal of **Anne Brookes** through John White Funerals for £332.
- Funeral Partners have queried the addition of an inscription upon the **Ruby Humphris** memorial for £35.

9 H/S 2 local construction development update (Forge Coffee on Thu 18 Jan)

Haidee Williams of the HS/2 Engagement Team is arranging for a public drop-in session to be held at The Forge cafe on Thu 18th January, between Noon and 2pm. This is an opportunity to receive an update of construction work in the area and for villagers to ask questions. The Clerk to send the details to Mrs Rowling for distribution via the village email list **GD**.

10. Planning (items available at wnc.planning-register.co.uk + Advanced Planning + Parish)

- 10.1 WNS/2023/6671/FUL-LBC: Partial demolition of existing garage and its replacement with an extension housing a ground floor bedroom at Myrtle Cottage, Sulgrave Road OX17 2AP by 5 Oct. No objections raised by MK and JB. Decision pending.
- 10.2 WNS/6992/TCA: Leylandi hedge removal due to public pavement access issues. No Objections.

11. Audit and Accounts

- 11.1 Ref 12.1: Clerk's contract of employment; registration with Pensions Regulator & PAYE Carried forward **GD**
- 11.2 Ref 6.1: Update on VAT recovery for the Cricket field and Play Field expenditures Carried forward **GD**
- 11.3 Ref 13.1: Report-back on the meeting of the Finance Committee on 7 Dec 2023

The FIRST draft budget was discussed and it was considered appropriate to maintain the current level of Precept demand, in order to set-aside £10,000 towards match-funding for the new, replacement village hall, alongside other inflationary increments **GD**.

- 11.4 Ref 12.6: Overview of the Parish Accounts for Q1-Q3 to 31 Dec 2023

The Cash balance spreadsheet for 2023-24 has been updated to 31 Dec 2023 and has been reconciled against the bank statements. Verified and signed off by AW, reporting:-

- **£36,963.88** in the Unity Trust T1 current account
- **£6,737.06** in the Unity Trust Saver account for CHFT
- **£494.68** in the Unity Trust Saver account for the Play Park**

** include accidental cheque deposits for the burial ground, using the paying-in book

- 11.5 Consideration of a budget for 2024-25

A revised draft is included in APPENDIX A, which includes a 2.7% rise in the Precept demand to **£38,000**. The Parish Council's cash assets at 31 Dec 2023 are **£44,196**.

Of the £25,307 audited VAT expenditure for 2022-23, only £10,793.47 has thus far been reclaimed. None of the £16,007.76 of the exceptional VAT expended in the year to date has been reclaimed. Once this is accomplished, the Parish Council's reserves will be reinstated by £30,000 to provide effective cash assets of **£74,196** on 31 Dec 2023. This must cover operating contingencies and assets reserves; it may also contribute towards match-funding for grants being applied for the new village hall. We may also be successful in receiving the final £9,000 of the HS/2 grant allocated to the village.

AW commented that over the past two years the parish has spent the best part of £250,000 in grant monies upon the cricket field and play park assets; also the modernisation of most of the street lights to lower energy versions. It is therefore prudent for the Parish Council to retain a strong contingency for the phase 2 development of the CHFT (replacement village hall) [£50,000 might be made available].

11.6 Agreement upon the level of Precept demand to submit to WNC

SR proposed to set the **WNC Precept Demand for 2024-25 at £38,000**, seconded by DM and agreed by all Parish Councillors present. The Clerk is to advise WNC **GD**.

11.7 Consider Parish Council meeting dates for 2024

The Clerk suggested the meeting dates shown in APPENDIX B. These go beyond the traditional odd-month meetings, to facilitate easier payments to contractors in the summer and to allow easier planning by Councillors in the Spring-Summer season.

Councillors removed the suggested February and June meetings, but retained the dual Parish Assembly followed by Parish Council meeting in April. Hence 7 meetings were scheduled for 2024. the Village hall is to be notified **GD**.

11.8 Consider Yu energy street lighting electricity contract for 36 months at £5,046.53 pa at 43 p/day standing; 30.56 p/kWh [current annual renewal was about 20% of this]. The Clerk has queried this, but without a response to date. It was agreed that the Clerk will seek clarifications upon this for the next meeting **GD**.

11.9 Ref 12.8: Updates to the Parish Council Asset Register (+play equipment, bin & bench) Carried forward **GD**

11.10 Ref 12.9: Consider options for gaining interest on reserve monies. Carried forward **GD** with £20,000 of reserves seeming to be an appropriate deposit.

11.11 Consider and approve the Parish Council payments listed below, proposed by Aw and seconded by SR and agreed by all Councillors present:-

Description / Power	Amount	VAT	Total
PKF Littlejohn invoice SB2023336 for external audit 2022-23: limited assurance review and additional fees	£420.00 £80.00	£100	£600.00
Texprep invoice 26666 for village 90 newsletters December 2023	£52.50	-	£52.50
Wave Energy water bill for cricket club from 16 Aug – 15 Nov 2023	£40.37	-	£40.37
Grant to British Legion for memorial wreath 11 Nov 2023	£25.00		£25.00
Gary Denby Parish Clerk gross remuneration and expenses (9 weeks) including home office expenses 9 Nov – 10 Jan plus Ryman office supplies	£513.36 £58.50 £17.06	-	£588.92

Yu Energy Street lighting electricity charges 01 – 30 Nov 2023 (DD)	£75.11 £14.22	£3.76 £0.71	£93.80
Yu Energy Street lighting electricity charges 01 – 31 Dec 2023 (DD) 62.8 p/day standing; 18.8 day 13.9 night p/kWh	£78.82 £14.79	£3.94 £0.74	£98.29

13. **Councillors' Comments**

MR reminded Councillors of the village **Litter Pick on Saturday 1st March**, for which equipment the loan of WNC equipment has been arranged.

14. Date of next meeting: **Wednesday 14th March 2024**

Meeting closed at 9 pm

.....
Chairman

.....
Date

APPENDIX A: REVISED DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2024-25

Culworth Parish Council
Expenditures for 2020-2023, budget 2023-4 with Q1-Q3 expenditures to date
DRAFT budget for 2024-25

Expenditure Item		Expenditure 2021-22 Audited	Expenditure 2022-23 Audited	Budget 2023-24	Expenditure 2023-24 Q1 – Q3	DRAFT Budget 2024-25
1	Grass Mowing S96	£1,698	£3,946	£3,000	£1,499.00	£2,500
2	Tree / Footpath Maintenance	£600	£880	£2,000	-	£2,000
3	Subscription NCALC, SLCC + PoL	£397	£456	£500	£328.70	£600
4a	Electricity supply un-metered	£1,245	£2,232	£1,000	£707.59	£1,100
4b	Street light & other maintenance	£2,175	£1,278	£3,000	-	£3,000
5	Parish Council Insurance	£594	£834	£900	£885.07	£1,000
6a	Clerk salary 3.5 hrs / week + hols	£6,473	£6,472	£8,000	£1,490.17	£3,363
6b	Clerk / Office Expenses / Other	£1,296	£969	£4,150	£588.00	£800
6c	Clerk & Councillor Conf / Training	£229	£282	£300	-	£500
7a	Audit Internal – N-CALC + LJ	£485	£200	£552	£207.00	£590
7b	N-CALC acting as DPO	£10	£10	£10	£10.00	£10
8	Village Hall rental	-	£117	£300	-	£300
9	Burial Ground Maintenance	£855	£643	£900	£1,105.00	£800
10	Dog and litter bin maintenance	£1,165	£1,274	£900	-	£1,000
11	Village Newsletter– Sec 137	£519	£400	£250	£185.10	£300
12	Village web site & maintenance – S142 Gov't Info	£296	£220	£0	£101.90	£445
13	Jubilee / Coronation RBL–Sec 137	£244	£1,769	£2,904	-	£25
14	Miscellaneous contingency	£1,517	-	£2,000	-	£2,000
15	Citizens Advice Bureau	£100	£100	£100	-	£100
16	Cricket Field Improvements	-	£114,288	£11,500	£21.21	£100
17	Community Play Park	-	-	£0	-	£8,000
18	Rebuild reserves for new assets			£0	-	£10,000
19	VAT as a refundable expense	£1,358	£25,307		£16,007.76	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (inc VAT):		£21,256	£161,677	£42,266	£23,136.50	£38,533
20	Precept request	£23,500	£25,000	£37,000	£37,000.00	£38,000
21	Burials & Monuments	£331	£331		£490.00	£400
21	Bank Interest: CHFT & PP		£152		£354.06	
22	Community Infrastructure Levy	£2,846	-	£5,540		
23	New Homes Bonus grants, extra			£0		
24	Donations / awards	£303	£130,681		£75.20	
25	VAT refund:	£1,356	£16,428		£10,793.47	
TOTAL INCOME		£28,336	£172,592	£42,540	£48,712.73	£38,400
Excess income over expenditure		£7,080	£10,915	£274	£25,576.23	-£133

**Culworth Parish Council Summary of Predicted Expenditures,
as discussed for 2023-24 budgeting**

The village Precept (collected via your rates) is based on the following figures.
The predicted expenditure will be covered by the Precept plus reserves plus VAT reclaim.

Expenditure Item		Budget	Explanation
1	Grass Mowing	£2,500	Cartwright Landscapes: mowing of green and other areas £63, mow perimeter of cricket field £99, mow The Mound £233 monthly variable frequency + VAT. Long Term Available? A 10% increase in cost can be covered by current budget
2	Tree / Path Maintenance	£2,000	Trees on recognised green spaces, expected safety work.
3	Subs NCALC & SLCC	£600	Useful subscriptions. New Clerk charging 33% of SLCC only.
4a	Yu Energy for street lighting	£1,100	Unmetered, not a Long Term Agreement. Anticipate 10%+
4b	E.On street light maintenance	£3,000	Ad-hoc by AJR in Eydon. 4 units await LED conversion
5	Parish Council Insurance	£1,000	Village assets and public liability. Annual through Hiscox Insurance, includes the play park. Anticipate a 10% increase
6	Clerk / Expenses	£3,363 £372 £428 £500	Clerk 4 hrs/week inc hol at Local Council rate LC1+ SCP point 16 at <u>£16.17 per hour</u> (inc est 10% increase = £3,363) plus contribution towards use of home office facilities £7.15 pw (£372 pa), stationery and postage and extra mileage (£228 pa). Training courses for Clerk & Councillors = £500
7	Internal & External Audit	£600	N-CALC fee for internal audit band 2. N-CALC acts as our Data Protection Officer for a nominal £10 pa.
8	Hall rental	£300	Approximately six meetings per year, £50 a time?
9	Burial Ground Maintenance	£800	Roger Smith: Mow burial Ground £23, Strim burial ground £15 (no longer the football field)
10	Dog & litter bin maintenance	£1,000	Dog bins: Marcus Young, invoice in arrears in January.
11	Village Newsletter– Sec 137	£300	Five issues per year, including printing. Volunteers deliver them.
12a	Village web site hosting, development and maintenance	£300	Maintenance of new 'accessible' web site TBA. Fee for web site registration with ICO Two council-controlled emails for Chair and Clerk TBA.
12b		£45	
12c		£100	
13	Remembrance Wreath	£25	Suggested grant increase from £20.
14	Miscellaneous contingency	£2,000	Contingency for everyday operating costs, none for an election
15	Grant Citizens Advice Bureau	£100	Benefits less affluent villagers and those in sudden difficulties
16	Cricket Field Improvements	£100	Provision for water. Phase 1 completed (excludes any village hall relocation, tarmac parking postponed until the same).
17	Community Play Park	£8,000	Mowing covered in 1 above. Allows depreciation of £75,000 invested over 15 years, plus £1,000 for child safety fencing and £2,000 to RoSPA inspection and repairs
18	Build reserves for new hall	£10,000	To facilitate match-funding for CHFT Phase 2 grant applications
TOTAL BUDGET:		£38,533	From 1st April 2024 onward

Precept requested:	£38,000	A 2.7% increase, continuing set-aside for public building works
31/12/2023 General T1 account	£36,964	Unity Trust
31/12/2023 Saver Acct Cricket	£6,737	Unity Trust with interest
31/12/2023 Saver Acct Play Park	£495	Unity Trust with interest
Net Parish Council assets	£44,196	Unallocated CIL now considered to be zero

APPENDIX B: PROPOSED PARISH COUNCIL MEET DATES FOR 2024-25

**Culworth Parish Council (PC)
Meeting Dates for 2024**

Generally on the 2nd Thursday of the odd months
at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, **unless otherwise stated.**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 2024 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 11th January | Budgeting and set Precept
(9 weeks) |
| 8th February | (Likely co-option of Councillors)
(4 weeks) |
| 14th March | (5 weeks) Pre-cricket season! |
| 11th April | (1st April: Easter bank Holiday)
Annual Parish Meeting then the PC
Review Accounts, prepare for Audit
(4 weeks) - a dual meeting date |
| 9th May | Annual General Meeting of the PC
(4 weeks) |
| 13th June | (5 weeks) |
| 18th July | (5 weeks) |
| | NO AUGUST MEETING |
| 12th September | (8 weeks) |
| | NO OCTOBER MEETING PLANNED |
| 14th November | Draft Budget discussions
(9 weeks) |
| | NO DECEMBER MEETING |

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend