CULWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes for the Meeting of Culworth Parish Council

Held at 7pm on Thursday 8th January 2026 in the Culworth Village Hall

Meeting opened at 19:02. Welcome to members and public.

Those present:

Andrew Wilby (Chair)	AW	Andrew Field (Vice-chair)	AF
Amy Harrison	AH	Clive Waller	CW
Jose Rowling	JR	Rob Stuart	RS
Peter Coville (Clerk)	PCov		
Alison Eastwood (Ward councillor)	AE		

Members of the public:

Phil Staniford	PS	(departed at 19:47)
Ginny Staniford	GS	(departed at 19:47)
Martin Rowling	MR	

1. Apologies received

Catherine Ruffley (CR) was unable to attend due to transport issues.

2. Councillor declarations of interest & dispensations in the following agenda items

None noted or indicated.

3. Receive minutes of the meeting held on **13th November 2025** as an accurate record of the Parish Council official acts and decisions.

Three changes were noted:
Section 7.1 – "Fast" signs and "These" corrected.
Section 14.3 – Village Hall replaces Forge Coffee.

Minutes proposed by **RS**, seconded by **AH** approved unanimously. Will be signed by Chair once corrected.

4. Receive reports and minutes from the **Annual Parish Meeting** held on 3rd April 2025 **(GD)**.

These were submitted to the council during the week by the previous Clerk – will be reviewed and discussed at next meeting before the next Annual Parish Assembly.

5. **Public Concerns** (prior notice to the Chair or the Parish Clerk is recommended)

5.1 **RS** was contacted regarding concerns about 2 ash trees on the church grounds that are leaning over.
JR noted that these are the responsibility of the Diocese of Peterborough who have confirmed to her that they are in the process of dealing with them via their Land Agent.

5.2 Member of the Parish contacted the Clerk regarding **damage to Banbury Lane** and Culworth High Street due to road closures and repairs by HS2/WNC.
JR attended the recent HS2 meeting at Forge Coffee and will be attending a Zoom with them (with **AE**) on 16 January. HS2 are already planning to excavate the gullies to reduce flooding at Lower Thorpe. **AE** and **JR** will raise road issue at next meeting. **AE also suggests that parishioners write to WNC pothole team as the future road closure of Banbury lane may be an ideal time to fix issues**.

5.3 **Dog Waste Bins**

CW noted that the dog waste bins are full.
Clerk to call Marcus Young and chase emptying bins. **PCov**

6. **Matters Arising** from previous Parish Council minutes
6.1 Review and decision on new Village Signs based on quotations distributed **AF**

There was some discussion around sign design and materials. Concerns were raised regarding lettering being durable (cast vs stuck on). It was decided to agree the following and then delegate the final decision to AF and the Clerk to enact:
- Wording "Welcome to Culworth. Please drive safely."
- Colour – black and white
- Font – as per quotes
- Budget – Maximum £1,500 (including fitting)
- Design – keep it simple decided on no art.

See what Eydon signs are made of **AF**
Discuss materials used with Edge signs and Fast signs - **PCov**

Order signs – **AF** and **PCov**

Also decided to look at installing planters or planting flowers under the existing poles.

Proposed **RS**, Seconded **CW** Approved unanimously.

6.2 Review and decision on quotes for Street Light and pole replacement **AF**

AF has received a quote from J Leeding for the pole replacement at £1,200 plus VAT. **AF** reassured the council that this is a very reasonable price. Additional costs will include removing and replacing the lamp head.

Proposed that **AF** be authorised to proceed with street light pole replacement on this basis.

Proposed **JR**, seconded **AH** approved unanimously.

6.3 Report on progress of Tree Survey works **RS**

RS Tree surveyor has been ill which has delayed final production of the report. When this is done all of the relevant data will be entered on Parish Online. **RS** had prepared a short report on two trees that required immediate attention being an Ash Tree in the Hill Field and a beech/oak tree with a broken limb in the burial ground. This was discussed and the following actions agreed:
- Determine whether PC insurance will cover **RS** (who is qualified) performing some of the work **PCov**
- Submit TPO approval request for work on the above 2 trees **PCov**
- Obtain quotes for work if necessary **RS**

A budgeted programme of work for 2026 and 2027 to be agreed once final report prepared – next meeting.

7. **New matters arising**
7.1 Re-siting and ongoing financial support for defibrillator **All**
The defibrillator will be resited to the old phone box. AReynolds will hook up the Defibrillator for approx £200. **AF** will rehinge cabinet to fit the box. **JR** noted that AReynolds will need to provide official certification once reinstalled.

Porposed to proceed on this basis. Proposed by **AW** seconded by **AF** approved unanimously.

7.2 Culworth Trail thanks **JR**

JR made a small present on behalf of the PC to Ginny and Phil Staniford in appreciation of their work on the Shopping Trail. Approved unanimously.

7.3 Tree planting of Woodland Trust trees **JR**
RS noted that this was all completed between Christmas and New Year.

7.4 Ward report from Councillor Eastwood
AE reiterated that the purpose of Ward councillors attending parish meetings is to try and highlight key issues and cut through the large amount of emails and social media posts from WNC. **AE** encourage all to contact WNC or respond to consultation surveys.

WNC Budget
In next 2 mths WNC are consulting on their 2026 budget. Currently there is a £50m shortfall mainly due to a lack of central funds and increasing costs of Social Care. £20m of savings have been identified but £30m remains. WNC propose to fund this partly through:
- 4.99% Ctax increase
- Further increasing green bin charges
- Increasing the amount and scope of parking charges (eg Towcester etc) with a knock on effect on access to businesses etc

65% of the WNC budget goes towards Adult Social Care; School Transport and Housing. WNC is also considering bringing housing repair services back into the council to save money. It turns out that outsourcing to profit making entities does not always save money. **MR** suggested that road repairs should also be brought in house.

Local plan
A revised Local Plan (the document that drives planning policy across WNC) is being drafted. Every Village is going to be asked to expand – it has been indicated that for Culworth this will mean **17 new houses**. **AE** s**tated that it is very necessary for the village to respond** to influence the Plan. Consultation starts on 26 January for 8 weeks.

Planning department issues
WNC planning department has major process and efficiency issues and the current level of service is poor. The department has significant manpower and leadership issues. PAS (The Planning Advisory Service - https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/about/about-us) are coming in to conduct a root to branch review. **AE** requested that **parishioners feed any comments on planning to her** and she will submit them to the process. **MR** compared historically excellent SNorthants planning department to the current one and concluded that WNC are not up to the job.

7.4 **GENERAL THANKS**
Many people have recently donated time and effort to the Parish. The Council would like to thank as many as they can here:
- Rob Stewart and helpers for planting all 150 of the Woodland Trust Trees
- Ginny and Phil Staniford and all their helpers for the excellent Christmas Shopping Trail event
- Catherine Ruffley for turning the christmas tree lights on and off every day in whatever weather over the festive period.
- Andrew and Sam Field for installing the tree and lights
- Amy Harrison for organising the Saturday Coffee morning on 3 January
- Martin Rowling for the metal support tube for use with future Christmas Trees

8. **Culworth Burial Ground update** (if any).
None noted.

9. **Community Hill Field Trust** (CHFT) update **AW**
The planning documents have been drafted for the new building and the VHT site. These need to be reviewed, discussed and the applications submitted.

AW proposed that the Council request the partners in CHFT to begin the formation of a management committee for the Hill Field facility. CHFT will be fully engaged in the planning, funding and construction elements. An independent group is needed to consider management structure, link w/ Church, the uses of the building and likely wider village events programme, required equipment and detailed internal layouts – and then continue to manage it once it is complete. **Any member of the community is welcome to be involved in this.**

10. **Discussion of submitted proposal for 2026 Culworth Christmas Trail event** – Parish Council role and requests. **GS/PS**

PS gave a brief overview of the event in 2025 and the proposal for next year. The event was a great success with nearly 1,000 visitors. The volunteers were very helpful and well received. The proceeds (after costs and "hold-back" funding for 2026) will be split between the Church and the School as advertised. All those organising have submitted areas for improvement in 2026.

The event in 2026 will be formally supported and overseen by the PC both in order that banking facilities can be provided by the PC and the event can be covered by the PC's liability insurance (to save costs). This was detailed in the proposal submitted to the PC but in essence:
- **GS** and **PS** will act as volunteer organisers on behalf of the PC
- The Parish Clerk will act as key PC contact for the volunteer organisers
- There will be an agenda item at 1-2 PC meetings in the second half of the year to review the safety and organisation of the event including Risk Assessment, Traffic plans (as possible) and financial status. This will ensure that the PC has sufficient overview of event organisation to satisfy insurance requirements.
- The PC will offer banking facilities on a "Trust" basis – holding the moneys for community events separate from PC funds. This will manage any section 137 restrictions on distribution of the funds.
- **GS** will apply to HS2 for a further grant in 2026.

Discussions noted:
- **RS** suggested that the Cricket pavillion could be used for mulled wine – it is reasonably dry after the recent repairs and out of the wind.
- **JR** proposed that 1/3 of the proceeds in 2026 could go towards the new Hill Field structure – perhaps for fitting out.
- Some extra venues are needed for 2026 and if anyone is interested please contact **GS**.
- The aim in 2026 is for the event to be even more artisanal.
- Stallholders must be invited from January for the end of the year which is the reason for the early discussion.

The proposal as set out was proposed by **CW**, seconded by **AH** and approved unanimously. The provision of banking facilities by the PC, holding monies in Trust, as well as repayment of the PLI cost for 2025 of £70 to **PCov** was proposed by **RS**, seconded by **AH** and approved unanimously.

AW proposed that the question of further grant funding by the PC for the 2026 event be moved to the Finance Committee agenda - **PCov**
Provide banking information to **GS** - **PCov**

11. **Hugo Fox** (website) subscription renewal – **PCov**
This is due for renewal at the end of the month. £148.36. This was proposed by **JR** and seconded by **AW** – approved unanimously.

12. **Correspondence** received by Councillors – see **Appendix B**
Noted no comments.

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

13.1 2025/5304/TCA: Works to 1x Birch within a conservation area. Westward Cottage High Street Culworth OX17 2BD. Noted no comments.

13.2 2025/5037/TCA: Works to 10 Trees As per the tree management plan attached to the application/notification – request 2 year extension to previously approved plan. Mountfield High Street Culworth OX17 2BE. Noted no comments.

13.3 2025/4800/TCA: T1 - Conifer - Section fell to ground level. The Stable Cottage Sulgrave Road Culworth OX17 2AP. Noted no comments.

14. Audit and Accounts

14.1 Update of the Unity Trust Mandate additions. Addition of AH; removal of Rebecca Boasman and Stuart Rolt; addition of Peter Coville. **AH PCov (GD)**

The mandate has been submitted. The previous mandate change submitted by AH has been effected. The previous Clerk and 1 other will be removed from the account once the current Clerk's access has been confirmed to ensure that access to the Bank Account is maintained.

14.2 Review, discuss and approve budget and Precept for 2026/27 **All**
The budget was presented by the Clerk. The budget was reviewed from the ground up. VAT has been removed as it is not a budget item but a cash timing difference. The Clerk noted that aspirationally budgets for the PC's capital replacement programmes (such as street lights, playground etc.) should all be based on expected costs over a "life of asset" period and tied to the reserves schedule.

It was noted that the precept had not been increased for 2 years. NCALC indicates CPI running at 4.3% in 2025 (significantly higher in 2024). Therefore it was decided to increase the Precept by 5% to £39,900 for 2026/27. This also supports the PC's ongoing policy of accruing reserves to fund the new Hill field facility.

After a discussion and questions it was decided to approve the PC's budget for 2026/27 as circulated and request the Clerk to submit a Precept request to WNC for £39,900.

Submit precept request **PCov**

Proposed **JR** Seconded **AH** approved unanimously.

14.3 Financial process efficiency - delegate such discussions to Finance Committee for report to Council- **PCov**

14.4 Consider Clerk's hours expended to end of Dec 2025 (handover and New Clerk)
Noted.

14.5 Consider and approve the Parish Council payments listed in **Appendix A**

JR noted that citizens advice payment had not been made for 2025. After some discussion of whether this remains relevant it was agreed to proceed with the payment.

Proposed **AF** seconded **RS** approved unanimously.

15. Changes to Parish Council meeting dates due to availability of new clerk plus agree future dates:

15.1 2 April – suggest 9 April
15.2 14 May – suggest 7 May
15.3 Agree future dates for 2026

Discussed and agreed suggested dates. Further dates for 2026 to be agreed at next meeting.

16. **Items** for the next Parish Council agenda
- Dates and frequency of meetings for 2026
- Tree survey work
- Defibrillator update

17. Date of next meeting: **Thu 5th February 2026, 7pm** in the village hall.

Meeting closed at 9:15pm.

Andrew Wilby 5 Feb 2026

Andrew Wilby, Chairman **Date**

Appendix A – Payments for approval / noting

Description / Power	**Amount**	**VAT**	**Total**
Cumbria Clock Company (21258) – Church Clock Service. *S215 LG Act 1972*	185.00	37.00	222.00
Restrospective invoices – dates are payment dates			
8/12/25 Texprep (27703) – Newsletter printing *Local Government Act 1972, Section 142 Local Gov't Info*	138.70	-	138.70
28/11/25 iPlay (82390) – playpark inspection *S164 Public Health Act 1875*	180.00	16.00	216.00
8/12/25 Keenan Project Design (9193) – Hill Field planning support (CHFT agency agreement) S164 Public Health Act 1875	1,050.00	210.00	1,260.00
8/12/25 Keenan Project Design (9194) – VHT planning support (CHFT agency agreement) S164 Public Health Act 1875	1,500.00	300.00	1,800.00
8/12/25 WNC – supplementary election costs (424003116030) *Council administration*	1,202.50	-	1,202.50
8/12/25 Roger Smith (934) – BG hedge cutting *S215 LG Act 1972*	140.00	-	140.00
19/12/25 Valda Energy Street Lighting charges 1-30 Nov 2025 (DD 19/12) *Highways Act 1980, lighting functions s.98*	b/fwd 14.69 Cons 235.27	0.73 11.76	15.42 247.03

Appendix B – Communications received by Councillors

14 Nov:	HS2 Liaison group notice of meeting 16 January.
14 Nov:	NCALC Training – Planning Nuts and Bolts
14 Nov:	N-CALC mini eUpdate – Review of Proper Practices for Parish/Town councils
19 Nov:	WNC – welcoming spaces leaflet to support Northants residents
19 Nov:	WNC – Town and Parish Conference slides
21 Nov:	N-CALC mini eUpdate – Planning reform
21 Nov:	WNC Town and Parish briefing 40 – conference feedback
28 Nov:	N-CALC mini eUpdate – Conference, ethics and audit changes
1 Dec:	West Northants Citizens advice funding letter
2 Dec:	WNC – developments to Local Plan
5 Dec:	N-CALC mini eUpdate – Local Govt pay and legal advice service
9 Dec:	WNC – Consultations update
11 Dec:	N-CALC – two online briefings early 2026: Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation and Local Nature Recovery Strategy
12 Dec:	N-CALC mini eUpdate – CEO scams
11 Dec:	ONS Community Connections
17 Dec:	Cllr Eastwood - Ward report on WNC budget challenges
17 Dec:	WNC – Parish taxbase numbers for 2026-27 budget
19 Dec:	N-CALC mini eUpdate – Grants for water and transport schemes
22 Dec:	WNC - Update on consultation process for local plan
22 Dec:	WNC – Consultation on Local Transport Plan
23 Dec:	WNC – Budget 2026-27 consultation notification
23 Dec:	WNC – Parish briefing edition 41 – Budget, Christmas and Newsletter
5 Jan:	WNC – App reminder for use to access services and reporting for WNC