

MINUTES OF MEETING OF CULWORTH PARISH COUNCIL
held on Thursday 14th November 2024 at 7pm in the Village Hall

Present:

	Andrew Wilby (AW)	Chairman
	Stuart Rolt (SR)	Vice Chair
	Martin Rowling (MR)	Councillor
	Jose Rowling (JR)	Councillor
	Catherine Ruffley (CR)	Councillor
	Andrew Field (AF)	Councillor
(8 present)	Gary Denby (GD)	Parish Clerk

Public: Cllr Alison Eastwood (AE) WNC

Welcome to members and parishioners by AW.

1. Apologies received:-
Cllr David Mumford (recent knee operation)
2. Councillor declarations of interest & dispensations in the following agenda items:
AW with regards to 14.3 below.
3. Receive minutes of the meeting held on **12th September 2024** as an accurate record of the Parish Council official acts and decisions Proposed by JR, seconded by AF and agreed by all Councillors present. 14.7: Verify that the CAB donation is achieved **GD**.
4. **Public Concerns** (prior notice to the the Chair or the Parish Clerk is recommended)
 - 4.1 AE reported upon her follow-up meeting with HS/2 a couple of days ago. Alison's appointment as Vice Chair of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) may significantly curtail her availability for future Parish Council meetings. However, she continues to be very willing to assist the Parish Council in matters that concern it.
westnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=556
5. **Matters Arising** from previous Parish Council minutes
 - 5.1 Ref 4.2: Consideration of the siting of the football nets on the field over the winter
AW has written to John Mullins-Blyth inquiring of any preferences. No response to date.
 - 5.2 Ref 5.5: Clerk's letter to Tree Tops requesting an update to their previous reporting
Carried forwards **GD**
 - 5.3 Ref 5.6: Update on The Hill Field signage for Entrance / Exit
Thanks were expressed to CR for her assistance with the hand-written Entrance – Exit signs now installed at the field entrances.
 - 5.4 Ref 5.8: Completion of outstanding burial ground registrations (Brookes; Marshall).
Completed by the Clerk with the assistance of JR.
 - 5.5 Ref 5.1: AW was surprised at Council's decision to not move the Vehicle Activated speed Sign (VAS) to its alternate post position. It is easy to exceed the 30 mph limit when travelling downhill. SR proposed that the sign be moved on occasion, seconded by CR and agreed by all Councillors present.

6. Consider the Safety Inspection report from The Play Inspection Company

Councillors were forwarded the Annual Inspection Report for the Culworth Play Park on 2 November 2024, performed by The Play Inspection Company. Matters arising:-

6.1 State of equipment is good – nothing is dangerous, or in need of significant repair

6.2 Suggestions with regards signage – both Play and Gym areas

A revised and enlarged laminated sign has been installed besides the Play Park entrance gate (see [APPENDIX A](#)).

6.3 Suggestions with regards the wooden gates and fencing – a low risk of entrapment

The Council awaits the fitment of a self-closure mechanism. Given that adults should always be accompanying small children, it is upon those adults to avoid accidental entrapment of small fingers.

6.4 Other small issues

The boundary fencing behind the Play Park in poor condition will kindly be replaced by the Well Cottage householder, prior to planting of the native species hedging besides it.

The vandalised small stays comprising the picket fence require replacement.

7. Consider Clerk's report-back from N-CALC AGM (May 2025 elections prep'ns) alongside N-CALC's 2024 Membership Survey results

On 5th October the Clerk attended N-CALC's AGM at Moulton (see [APPENDIX B](#)).

Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (N-CALC) is a subscription body that provides services, training and audit functions to local Parish and Town Councils.

Their AGM actively encouraged councils to prepare for the May 2025 elections, to ensure there are sufficient Parish Councillor candidates to have democratic elections. This is always a challenge for the smaller villages and it incurs a cost, which should be properly covered by their budget and Precept demand upon local ratepayers.

The bi-annual N-CALC membership survey in June 2024 included some salient issues, as reported in their eUpdate for Sep-Oct 2024, circulated to Councillors on 28 September:-

- The gender balance among councillors remains consistent with previous years, with 64% male and 35% female respondents. The age distribution shows a notable increase in councillors aged 65-74, rising from 30% in 2022 to 34% in 2024. Employment patterns indicate a slight decrease in full-time employment, with 28% of councillors working full-time compared to 32% in 2022, whilst a slight majority of councillors (52%) are retired. In 2024, 85% of councils reported attendance between 0 to 5 members of the public, an increase from 71% in 2022.*
- Councillors are driven by a variety of motivations, with the primary reasons being to contribute to the community (83%) and to influence local decisions (47%). Other significant motivations include commenting on local planning applications 11 (35%) and helping bring about improvements through local projects (66%). These motivations highlight the councillors' commitment to enhancing the quality of life in their communities.*
- Websites and noticeboards remain the most used forms of communication, with 99% of councils using websites and 100% using noticeboards. Social media has a strong presence as well, with 67% of councils utilising it, marking a slight increase from 66% in 2022. The increase in email bulletins (32%) and the use of magazines or newsletters (76%) also suggests that councils are broadening their communication strategies to reach a more diverse audience.*
- The most common barriers to training attendance in 2024 included the timing of courses (23%) and the costs involved (7%). However, a striking 66% of respondents reported no barriers to attending training,*

a notable increase from 53% in 2022. This change reflects improved accessibility to training programs and greater engagement in continuous personal development.

- In 2024, 23% of councils expressed interest in providing additional services, such as verge maintenance, streetlighting, and local bus services. Despite this, a significant 77% of councils stated they had no interest in expanding their service offerings, perhaps reflecting concerns over resource limitations or the complexity of these roles. Asset ownership was another key area, with 16% of councils expressing interest in owning assets like community buildings, or open spaces. While a majority (72%) were not interested in acquiring additional assets, the survey shows there is still a notable minority that sees asset acquisition as a potential area for growth.*

8. Consider Parish Council meeting dates for 2025 (7 or 8 or 10 meetings)

The Clerk provided Councillors with three schedules for possible meetings in 2025, ranging from the current pattern of bi-monthly (six per year), to monthly with August and December being the obvious exceptions (ten per year). The Clerk suggested that the latter permits better responsiveness of council to issues as they arise, and for easier bills payments. The former is open to additional meetings for unexpected planning applications; it also requires an additional meeting to prepare for the council's audit.

SR proposed the 7-meetings option on the 1st Thursday of each 'odd' month, excepting January (delayed) and with 3rd April in addition for the preceding Annual Parish Meeting. This was seconded by AF with five Councillors in favour, 1 abstention and one absent. This is shown in APPENDIX C [circulated to Councillors on 15 November 2024].

9. Report-back on HS/2 liaison Group meeting on 25 October

SR reported on a good turnout of about a dozen people, with the HS/2 team presenting effective slides on current progress and plans, answering the questions raised effectively. Their efforts to attend on-line meetings on alternate months is much appreciated.

There will be civil engineering for another two years, after which actual track laying and its paraphernalia can start (brought up the track laid to date, not via the road system).

SR reported upon AE lobbying for the better use of the service road upon the project's completion (an effective bypass for certain areas). AW agreed to liaise with AE on this.

10. Correspondence received by Councillors

- 10.1 18 Sep: N-CALC mini eUpdate 13/09 – Local Plan delay; N-CALC membership survey
- 10.2 18 Sep: Reduction of cricket field boundary fence over-growth by MR
- 10.3 23 Sep: WNC September newsletter from your OPFCC
- 10.4 23 Sep: WNC Town & Parish Briefing Edition 28
- 10.5 23 Sep: WNC Plan to improve social housing services
- 10.6 23 Sep: N-CALC mini eUpdate 20/09 – Local elections 2025; Tesco applications
- 10.7 23 Sep: WNC New mountain bikes provide further opportunities to try cycling
- 10.8 23 Sep: WNC Council Director and Monitoring Officer announces retirement

- 10.9 1 Oct: WNC Community engagement – Pharmaceutical needs assessment
- 10.10 1 Oct: WNC Lifeline transport service set to expand thanks to funding
- 10.11 1 Oct: N-CALC eUpdate Sep/Oct – **Membership survey results**
- 10.12 1 Oct: WNC Wantage Park pre-planning consultation

- 10.13 3 Oct: Rural services Network: bulletin with funding digest
- 10.14 7 Oct: WNC market Square grand opening Sat 19 October
- 10.15 7 Oct: N-CALC mini eUpdate 04/10 – Building beautiful places
- 10.16 7 Oct: WNC successful in defending appeal against major housing offences (HMOs)
- 10.17 9 Oct: Sovereign Compliance: No win No fee (safety of children in school playgrounds)

- 10.18 14 Oct: New Parish Council **Financial Regulations (2024)** from CALC
- 10.19 30 Oct: Proposed **meeting dates for 2025** (avoiding Thu Film Club in village hall)
- 10.20 30 Oct: WNC extends bluetongue restrictions
- 10.21 30 Oct: WNC newsletter from PFCC
- 10.22 30 Oct: WNC residents urged to access vital winter financial supported
- 10.23 30 Oct: WNC changes to parish boundaries taking effect in 2025 elections
- 10.24 30 Oct: WNC health and well-being survey 2024, by 9 Dec 2024
- 10.25 30 Oct: N-CALC mini eUpdate 25/10 – Pay award announced
- 10.26 30 Oct: WNC purchase of iconic Corn Exchange completed
- 10.27 30 Oct: N-CALC Training Newsletter- responding to planning applications 8 November
- 10.28 30 Oct: WNC: Thousands celebrate Market Square grand reopening
- 10.29 30 Oct: WNC: Town & Parish Briefing Edition 29
- 10.30 30 Oct: WNC new developments sites thanks to more government funding
- 10.31 30 Oct: N-CALC mini eUpdate 18/10 – NALC website
- 10.32 1 Nov: Clerk investigations on **Scribe as an on-line Parish Accounting system**
- 10.33 1 Nov: N-CALC mini eUpdate 01/11 – Six months to go (elections)!
- 10.34 4 Nov: End of year report for the Play Park by the Clerk to HS/2 (funding requirement)
- 10.35 6 Nov: Play Park Annual Inspection report by the Play Inspection Company (Poole)
- 10.36 6 Nov: Church clock service (Cumbria Clock Co) – £220 owing; another visit required
- 10.37 6 Nov: N-CALC Training Newsletter – Nov 2024
- 10.38 7 Nov: External Auditor, informal comments to date
- 10.39 8 Nov: N-CALC mini eUpdate 08/11 – National Insurance impact
- 10.40 11 Nov: Street light electricity renewal quotations from Clear Utility Solutions
- 10.41 13 Nov: Options to rectify day-burner street light (No8) next to the church
- 10.42 13 Nov: N-CALC Training - Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106

11. Arrangements of a working party to install the native species hedgerow

JR reported that the saplings have been received from the Woodlands Trust and are temporarily 'heeled-in' on their allotment. We await the repair of fencing and improved weather, before we can arrange for a working party to install them, likely to be January.

12. Possible positioning of goal post(s) on The Hill Field. Installed, relocatable.



13. Updating the Standing Orders to include a revised Complaints procedure

Carried forward **GD**.

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

- 14.1 2024/5131/PND: Prior notification determination for a general purpose agricultural building to store fodder and implements, including winter housing for livestock at Culworth Grounds Farm, Banbury Lane OX17 2HW. No consultees.
- 14.2 2024/4814/TCA: Reduction to 1x silver birch at Westward Cottage, High Street OX17 2BD by 15 Nov. No comments from Councillors.

- 14.3 2024/4270/FULL: Addition of 5 solar panels to south facing side or rear extension. Battery storage to be installed in garage at Old Wells, The Green OX17 2BB by 18 Oct. No comments from Councillors.
- 14.4 2024/3779/TCA: Reduce canopy of 1x Beech tree at 1 Queens Street OX17 2AT. No Objections 1 Oct.
- 14.6 2024/2800/OUT: Extension to existing barn to form living accommodation for pub owners and / or staff at The Red Lion, High Street OX17 2BD by 1 July. Councillors supported this application. Pending.
- 14.6 2024/2589/FULL: New agricultural barn, new track and access to land adjacent to Peas Furlong, Sulgrave Road by 14 June. Councillors Objected to this application on grounds of its dangerous access on the brow of a hill within a National Speed Limit (60 mph) area. Pending.
- 14.7 2024/2101/FULL: Construction of 4 bedroom dwelling, double garage and vehicle access on land adjacent to Barley Hill, Sulgrave Road. Supported by Council. Approved 18 Sep.

15. Audit and Accounts

- 15.1 27 Sept: Received 2nd half Precept of £19,000; current account balance £39,449.68
- 15.2 17 Oct: Received VAT reclaim for 2023024 of £15,723.48, current balance £55,033.93
- 15.3 Received National Grid Wayleave for Culworth school transformer enclosure: £5.10
- 15.4 Consider Parish accounts review for Q2-Q3 Apr – Sep 2024. See APPENDIX D.
- 15.5 Consider use of cloud-based Scribe for PC accounts and burial ground invoicing
The Clerk suggested that the on-line aspect of this system takes-away the reliance on a specific computer system to hold the information (though regularly backed-up).

It is specifically geared towards Parish Councils and can quickly generate the required reports for internal and external audit. It also facilitates an organised approach to documenting the Burial Ground plots. It will not provide immediate time and effort savings. However, it does increase the professionalism of the Parish Council and better facilitates the transfer to the next Parish Clerk, when that day inevitably happens.

Its data is held online, so can be made accessible to all members of the Parish Council's Finance Committee. Its costs are based upon the council's Precept, presently £1,000 for the first year, then around £700 for the second and subsequent years.

The adoption of Scribe was proposed by SR, seconded by AF and agreed by a majority decision **GD**.

- 15.6 Review of Clerk hours expended for Q1-Q3 Jan – Sep 2024. See APPENDIX E.

15.7 Consider findings of External Auditor's report for 2023-24

The Parish Council awaits the formal completion of audit by PKF-Littlejon [received 30 Dec]. Interim findings were distributed to Councillors on 7th November. They comment upon the delayed reporting and upon a technicality (a box was incorrectly ticked).

15.8 Adoption of the new NALC Parish Council Financial Regulations (2024)

The Clerk has customised the new N-CALC Financial Regulations 2024 For England to local requirements, distributing them to Councillors for consideration on 14 October 2024. They include the provision of a local Finance Committee which can consider a draft budget and make recommendations to Council (5.6), and can duly authorise regular payments (7.6) which are reported to the next meeting (7.8).

the new regulations do not permit a corporate credit card or trade account to be opened (10.3), nor should personal debit or credit cards be used for expenses over £250.

Adoption of the new regulations was proposed by SR, seconded by JR and agreed by all Councillors present. To be uploaded to the Parish Council web site **GD**.

15.9 Consider a **first draft budget** for 2025-26

This is included in APPENDIX E, being 'hot off the press' and the Clerk's first attempt at something that may be suitable for 2025-26. It is open to Councillors' revision, and that of the Finance Committee (AW SR DM GD).

15.10 Consider the renewal of the electricity contract with Yu Energy, from 8 Feb 2025 Carried Forward. Moreton Pinkney parish are keeping to an annual renewal at present, anticipating that prices may further stabilise and reduce.

15.11 Receive quotation from AJR for replacement street light outside of the Old Rectory: £795

JR recalls that lamp No8 just besides the church gate (the permanently-on light) was replaced by the council's former contractor. It had been damaged by the thieves stealing lead from the church roof, hence being so memorable. Whilst this SOX unit has a white light, it is clearly not a modern LED unit, but an elongated glass tube.

AF agreed to look into this., whether it might be best to replace it with a modern LED lamp along with that outside The Old Rectory (receiving a discount) **AF**.



15.12 Approve the Parish Council payments listed below proposed by SR, seconded by AF and agreed by all Councillors present. To be signed-off by **SR and AW**:-

Description / Power	Amount	VAT	Total
Cartwright Landscapes mowing of Greens and other areas on 2 nd , 23 rd September (C45686) and 25 th October (C45784) <i>Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10</i>	£133.50 £66.75	£26.70 £13.35	£240.30
Roger Smith mowing of Burial Ground 12 Sep;; strim BG 13 Sept; Mow-strim Play Park 12 Sept (Inv 775); mow BG 3 rd & 23 Oct; strim BG 17 Oct; Mow-strim Play Park/Gym 3 Oct (Inv 788) <i>Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10</i>	£90.00 £114.00	- -	£204.00
The Play Inspection Company safety inspection report 2 Nov 2024 <i>Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10</i>	£175.00	£35.00	£210.00
Cumbria Clock Company service of Parish Church clock 1 Nov 2024 <i>Parish Councils Act 1957, s.2</i>	£185.00	£37.00	£222.00
Gary Denby Parish Clerk gross remuneration and expenses (9 weeks) including home office expenses 12 Sep – 13 Nov 2x A3 laminated posters for Play Park	£582.12 £64.35 £2.00	-	£648.47

<i>Local Government Act 1972 Appointment of Staff s.112</i>			
Yu Energy Street lighting electricity charges 01 – 30 Sep 2024 (DD) 43.5 p/day standing; 27.08 day 27.08 night p/kWh (Inv 02004977) Highways Act 1980, lighting functions s.98	£101.11 £14.35	£5.06 £0.72	£121.24
Yu Energy Street lighting electricity charges 01 – 31 Oct 2024 (DD) 43.5 p/day standing; 27.08 day 27.08 night p/kWh (Inv 02079218) Highways Act 1980, lighting functions s.98	£109.24 £15.11	£5.46 £0.76	£130.57
Grant to British Legion for Remembrance Day 11 poppy wreath.	£25.00	-	£25.00

15. Items for the next Parish Council agenda: None.

16. Date of next meeting: **MONDAY 13th January at 7pm** (set Precept) in the village hall.

Meeting closed at 9.10 pm

.....
Chairman

.....
Date

APPENDIX A: REVISED NOTICES INSTALLED



APPENDIX B: REPORT-BACK on N-CALC AGM held on Sat 5 Oct 2024.

Attendees: Cllr Gary Denby, Woodford Halse; Clerk to Moreton Pinkney, Preston Capes and Culworth; Cllr Katherine Lewis, Moreton Pinkney

All Parish Councillors of all positions are due to stand-down for re-election next May 2025. In the part, Daventry district has done one third of its Councillors per year, no longer. Thus the N-CALC AGM of 2024 was to inspire and invigorate councils to prepare for and to recruit prospective Councillors for 2025.

The first session was an approach to BUILD-A-COUNCILLOR: what makes the ideal candidate; who are we looking for to make-up active and involved local town and parish councils? The second session was a Q&A session, sharing local experience in bringing local elections to the for, in the minds of our electorate?

From parish elections in this year, there is a stark reality that one third to one half of all our Councillors are NOT likely to stand again for office. Some of this is an ageing demographic; another is those who stayed-on whilst the Unitary Council became established, may now consider their jobs done! Unless Councils act now, they are likely to have a 50% shortfall in active Councillors, come next May!

There are numerous 'features' that we are seeking in our new and active Councillors, including:-

- Availability and willingness to read the parish papers
- To be contactable, preferably via email (not a legal requirement)
- To participate in Council business and its committees
- To be enthusiastic and willing; to stay awake in meetings and present themselves appropriately
- To avail themselves of the transferable-skills training available to them

During the Q&A Session, there was a suggestion that these aspirations might be added to the top of the **Councillor's Code of Conduct** document, which every Councillor is required to sign upon their election.

It is the responsibility of each Parish Council to ensure there are sufficient candidates to fill the positions available, preferably twice the number in order to give the public a genuine and democratic choice.

- ✓ Can each current Councillor invite one more potential candidate to stand for election?
- ✓ Has the Parish Council's web site been updated, to make it easy to find what we're looking for in Councillors?
- ✓ Has the council a current list of all its recent activities and its current projects, in order to entice the public to come forward; to show that local councils really do benefit local people?

The starting pistol has now fired... The May elections are only 200 days away...

Culworth Parish Council (PC) Meeting Dates for 2025

**Generally on the 1st Thursday of the odd months
at 7pm in the Village Hall, unless otherwise stated.**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 2025 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

13th January **Budgeting and set Precept
(9 weeks)**

NO FEBRUARY MEETING

6th March **(7 weeks) Pre-cricket season!**

3rd April **Annual Parish Meeting then the PC
Review Accounts, prepare for Audit
(4 weeks) - a dual meeting date**

(21st April: Easter bank Holiday)

15th May **Annual General Meeting of the PC
(6 weeks) (1st May: local elections)**

NO JUNE MEETING

3rd July **(7 weeks)**

NO AUGUST MEETING

4th September **(9 weeks)**

NO OCTOBER MEETING

6th November **Draft Budget discussions
(9 weeks)**

NO DECEMBER MEETING

APPENDIX D: PARISH EXPENDITURES FOR FIRST HALF YEAR 2024-25

The following does not include all mowing expenditures for the year. It includes the full received Precept. All other items (final column) are pro-rata and within budget.

Culworth Parish Council
Expenditures for 2021-2024, budget 2024-25 with expenditures for the year to date

Expenditure Item		Expenditure 2021-22 Audited	Expenditure 2022-23 Audited	Expenditure 2023-24 Audited	Budget 2024-25	Expenditure 2024-25 Q2-Q3 to 30 Sep
1	Grass Mowing S96	£1,698	£3,946	£1,499.00	£2,500	£830.00
2	Tree / Footpath Maintenance	£600	£880	-	£2,000	£522.00
3	Subscription NCALC, SLCC + PoL	£397	£456	£328.70	£600	£306.74
4a	Electricity supply un-metered	£1,245	£2,232	£1,021.01	£1,100	£691.49
4b	Street light maintain & upgrade	£2,175	£1,278	£1,361.00	£3,000	-
5	Parish Council Insurance	£594	£834	£885.07	£1,000	£957.26
6a	Clerk salary 3.5 hrs / week + hols	£6,473	£6,472	£2,773.57	£3,363	£2,199.12
6b	Clerk / Office Expenses / Other	£1,296	£969	£778.06	£800	£233.63
6c	Clerk & Councillor Conf / Training	£229	£282	-	£500	£42.00
7a	Audit Int+Ext - N-CALC + LJ	£485	£200	£707.00	£590	£420.00
7b	N-CALC acting as DPO	£10	£10	£10.00	£10	£12.00
8	Village Hall rental	-	£117	£171.00	£300	-
9	Burial Ground Maintenance	£855	£643	£1,105.00	£800	£770.00
10	Dog and litter bin maintenance	£1,165	£1,274	£1,274.00	£1,000	-
11	Village Newsletter- Sec 142	£519	£400	£302.70	£300	£128.10
12	Village web site & maintenance - S142 Gov't Info	£296	£220	£101.90	£445	-
13	Jubilee / Coronation RBL-Sec 137	£244	£1,769	£0.00	£25	-
14	Miscellaneous contingency	£1,517	-	-	£2,000	-
15	Citizens Advice Bureau	£100	£100		£100	-
16a	Cricket Field CHFT support	-	£114,288	£105.52	£100	£351.56
16b	Cricket Field CHFT funding	-	-	£3,429.00		£8,964.09
17	Community Play Park fund-support	-	-	£75,000.00	£8,000	£2,856.00
18	Rebuild reserves for new assets			-	£10,000	-
19	VAT as a refundable expense	£1,358	£25,307	£16,650.42		£2,748.20
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (inc VAT):		£21,256	£161,677	£107,502.95	£38,533	£22,032.19
20	Precept request	£23,500	£25,000	£37,000.00	£38,000	£38,000.00
21	Burials & Monuments	£331	£331	£1,376.10	£400	£636.00
21	Bank Interest: CHFT & Ppark		£152	£426.30		£348.36
22	Community Infrastructure Levy	£2,846	-			-
23	Play Park grants			£62,614.86		-
24	Donations / awards	£303	£130,681	£130.00		-
25	Recovered VAT	£1,356	£16,428	£10,793.47		-
TOTAL INCOME		£28,336	£172,592	£112,340.73	£38,400	£38,984.36
Excess income over expenditure		£7,080	£10,915	£4,837.78	-£133	£16,952.17

APPENDIX E: CLERK HOURS EXPENDED FOR FIRST HALF FINANCIAL YEAR

At the start of January 2024, the Clerk 'owed' the Parish Council 22 hours in unused time. By the end of September this has reversed to the council 'owing' the Clerk 27 hours in additional hours expended, based upon 4 hours paid weekly. This may balance-out somewhat, with no-meetings in October and December.

[illegible]

APPENDIX F: FIRST DRAFT OF A POSSIBLE COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2025-26

The Clerk suggests it may be possible to 'freeze' any increase on the Precept, keeping it to £38,000, whilst permitting a £1,000 payment for the Scribe Parish Accounting system and a further £15,000 towards building reserves to help match-funding of the next Village Hall.

This is based upon best guess estimates of income and expenditures to the end of March 2025, leaving cash asset reserves of £72,000 to be carried into 2025-26. the second page provides explanations. The third sheet allocates the reserves into those supporting local elections, supporting asset renewals and £45,000 for the new hall.

Culworth Parish Council Expenditures for 2021-2025, budget 2025-26 against estimated expenditures for 2024-25						
Expenditure Item		Expenditure 2022-23 Audited	Expenditure 2023-24 Audited	Budget 2024-25	Expenditure 2024-25 ESTIMATE to 31 Mar 25	Budget 2025-26
1	Grass Verges & Greens Mowing S96	£3,946	£1,499.00	£2,500	£1,152.25	£1,500
2	Tree / Footpath Maintenance	£880	-	£2,000	£522.00	£2,000
3	Subscription NCALC, SLCC + PoL	£456	£328.70	£600	£306.74	£1,600
4a	Electricity supply un-metered	£2,232	£1,021.01	£1,100	£1,454.45	£1,100
4b	Street light maintain & upgrade	£1,278	£1,361.00	£3,000	£1,600.00	£1,600
5	Parish Council Insurance	£834	£885.07	£1,000	£957.26	£1,100
6a	Clerk salary 3.5 hrs / week + hols	£6,472	£2,773.57	£3,363	£3,781.24	£3,436
6b	Clerk / Office Expenses / Other	£969	£778.06	£800	£599.98	£500
6c	Clerk & Councillor Conf / Training	£282	-	£500	£42.00	£500
7a	Audit Int+Ext - N-CALC + LJ	£200	£707.00	£590	£420.00	£500
7b	N-CALC acting as DPO	£10	£10.00	£10	£12.00	£10
8	Village Hall rental	£117	£171.00	£300	-	£300
9	Burial Ground Maintenance	£643	£1,105.00	£800	£1,459.00	£1,600
10	Dog and litter bin maintenance	£1,274	£1,274.00	£1,000	£1,500.00	£1,500
11	Village Newsletter- Sec 142	£400	£302.70	£300	£128.10	£300
12	Village web site & maintenance - S142 Gov't Info	£220	£101.90	£445	-	£1,100
13	Jubilee / Coronation RBL-Sec 137	£1,769	£0.00	£25	£25.00	£25
14	Miscellaneous contingency	-	-	£2,000	-	£1,000
15	Citizens Advice Bureau	£100	-	£100	-	£100
16a	Cricket Field CHFT support	£114,288	£105.52	£100	£396.56	£500
16b	Cricket Field CHFT funding	-	£3,429.00	-	£8,964.09	-
17	Community Play Park fund-support	-	£75,000.00	£8,000	£3,131.00	£8,000
18	Rebuild reserves for new assets	-	-	£10,000	£1,000.00	£15,000
19	VAT as a refundable expense	£25,307	£16,650.42	-	£3,516.25	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (inc VAT):		£161,677	£107,502.95	£38,533	£30,967.92	£43,271
20	Precept request	£25,000	£37,000.00	£38,000	£38,000.00	£38,000
21	Burials & Monuments	£331	£1,376.10	£400	£636.00	£500
21	Bank Interest: CHFT & Ppark	£152	£426.30	-	£348.36	£500
22	Community Infrastructure Levy	-	-	-	-	-
23	Play Park grants	-	£62,614.86	-	-	-
24	Donations / awards	£130,681	£130.00	-	-	£160
25	Recovered VAT	£16,428	£10,793.47	-	£15,723.48	£3,516
TOTAL INCOME		£172,592	£112,340.73	£38,400	£54,707.84	£42,676
Excess income over expenditure		£10,915	£4,837.78	-£133	£23,739.92	-£595

**Culworth Parish Council Summary of Predicted Expenditures,
as discussed for 2025-26 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	£1,500	Cartwright Landscapes: mowing of green and other areas £63, mow perimeter of cricket field £99, mow The Mound £233 monthly variable frequency + VAT. A 10% increase in cost can be covered by current budget. Ppark & BG now below!
2	Tree / Path Maintenance	£2,000	Trees on recognised green spaces, expected safety work.
3	Subs NCALC & SLCC	£1,600	Useful subscriptions. Provision for Scribe online accounts year 1
4a	Yu Energy for street lighting	£1,100	May reduce with new energy certificate. Further investigation.
4b	E.On street light maintenance	£1,600	Ad-hoc by AJR in Eydon. 2 units await LED conversion?
5	Parish Council Insurance	£1,100	Village assets and public liability. Annual through Hiscox Insurance, includes the play park. Anticipate a 10% increase
6	Clerk / Expenses	£3,436	Clerk 4 hrs/week inc hol at Local Council rate LC1+ SCP point 17 at <u>£16.52 per hour</u> (inc est 6% increase = £3,436) plus contribution towards use of home office facilities £7.58 pw (£394 pa), stationery and postage and extra mileage (£106 pa). Training courses for Clerk & Councillors = £500
		£394	
	Clerk / Councillor training	£500	
7	Internal & External Audit	£510	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	£1,600	Roger Smith: Mow burial Ground £23, Strim burial ground £15
10	Dog & litter bin maintenance	£1,500	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	£955	Porting to a new 'accessible' web site. 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	£1,000	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	£500	Provision for water and lease. Phase 1 completed (excludes any village hall relocation, tarmac parking postponed until the same).
17	Community Play Park support	£8,000	Allows depreciation of £75,000 invested over 15 years, £200 for annual safety inspection, plus regular mowing
18	Build reserves for new hall	£15,000	To facilitate match-funding for CHFT Phase 2 grant applications
TOTAL BUDGET:		£43,271	From 1st April 2025 onward

Precept requested: **£38,000** A zero increase, continuing set-aside for public building works

31/03/2025 General T1 account	£2,300	Unity Trust
31/03/2025 Saver Acct Cricket	£0	Unity Trust with interest
31/03/2025 Saver Acct Reserves	£70,200	Unity Trust with interest
31/03/25 Outstanding payments	-£500	March 2025 meeting payments outstanding
Net Parish Council assets	£72,000	

Reserves

Allocation of Culworth cash reserves 2025-26Est. cash reserve at 31/03/26 **£72,000**

	<u>Incremented</u> <u>Current year</u>	<u>Replace</u> <u>after</u> <u>Year</u>	<u>Units owned</u>	<u>Unit cost 2016</u>	<u>Revised</u> <u>Allocation</u>
Estimate, in case of an election call with costs not covered by local elections					£2,000
Planned street pole & light renewal	5 /	25 *	26 *	£900 =	£4,680
Planned noticeboard replacement	7 /	10 *	2 *	£500 =	£700
Planned grit bin replacement	10 /	10 *	0 *	£500 =	£0
Village benches	0 /	20 *	0 *	£600 =	£0
Community Defibrillator	4 /	5 *	1 *	£1,000 =	£800
Vehicle Activated Speed Sign (2018)	5 /	10 *	1 *	£3,500 =	£1,750
Play Park equipment	2 /	15 *	1 *	£75,000 =	£10,000
Reserve for new Village Hall match funding					£45,000
Unexpected contingency pot, 10% of available cash assets; omitting unallocated CIL					£7,200
Reserved funds for CIL, yet to be allocated					£0
Total reserves allocations (a recommendation)					£72,130
Effective shortfall of cash reserves upon those recommended					-£130