

Wootton Rivers Parish Council

Website: www.woottonriverspc.co.uk

DRAFT Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 15th of December 2025

1. Present:

Dean Cowley	Parish Council Chair
Clare Bamforth	Vice Chair
David Butler	Councillor
Nick Jones	Councillor
Steve Rawlings	Councillor
Cindy Creasy	Councillor
Shelley Whitehead	Councillor
Julian Beames	Clerk

2. Declarations of Interest and the granting of dispensations.

Councillors were reminded of the Code of Conduct and the need to declare any interest relating to the items on the agenda. There were no declarations made.

3. Agreement of Minutes

The Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings held on the 10th of November 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. Report from Wiltshire Councillor

There was no report from our Wiltshire Councillor

5. Report on Actions Arising from the Minutes Drains and Flooding

- a. The Chair stated that he had been in contact with Nell Light regarding the clearance of the ditch to the south-east of the village. Although a large portion of the ditch has been cleared the section furthest from the canal remains to be cleared. She has agreed that the Council can obtain quotes on her behalf to have the remaining work carried out and the Chair will contact a couple of contractors to obtain them on her behalf, so the work can be carried out as swiftly as possible.
- b. Charlie Woodhead has confirmed that work has now been carried out by the CRT to ensure water can flow unhindered into the canal and so this is now not an issue.
- c. The bottom of Primrose Hill continues to flood due to the grips being blocked behind the immediate verge. The grips are being cleared as far as they can be by the Steward on each of his visits, but this does not stop the flooding as the water has nowhere to go.

d. Footpath/Signage

A response has been received from Stephen Leonard regarding replacement of footpath signage. He stated that signs leading from the metalled road are the responsibility of the highways authority to maintain but that limited resources means this is difficult to address and it is not something they encourage volunteers to address due to the proximity to traffic and also digging in the verge is high risk due to the possibility of contact with underground utilities. The PC can replace the finger part of a sign if it is of the newer type on a plastic post and these can be supplied. It was mentioned by councillor Bamforth that she had a copy of the last survey of signage and that she would forward this to the Chair and Clerk for information and so the current status of signs can be determined.

6. Hare Coursing

Councillor David Butler kindly gave an update on the current situation regarding hare coursing activities in the proximity to the village.

Activity in the immediate area around our village seems to have subsided recently but this may be more due to the recent weather which has made the fields difficult for their vehicles to get onto than anything else. However, there was a recent incident at Everleigh Cattle fencing was cut by the criminals to gain access to a field and this led to cattle escaping onto the road and injury to the cattle when they were hit by vehicles.

Police did come into contact with the criminals at Brimslade when they were caught in the act, but unfortunately there were not able to apprehend them as they made their escape by breaking through a hedge in their vehicle. This close encounter may be a reason they have not been seen locally recently.

Efforts continue with good Police support to patrol the area to both deter and try to apprehend the criminals involved. Local farmers have set up communication methods to pass on information quickly to other farmers and the Police.

Barricades have been placed at certain field entrances, but these have not proved 100% effective, He is therefore looking to replace these where possible with tree trunks which are harder to move than the concrete blocks

If any residents see anything suspicious such as people on land or in vehicles which look out of place, please report it either to David or the Police. If you witness what you believe to be hare coursing taking place, then you should dial 999 and report it as a crime. You should not approach the people involved or put yourself at any risk. David thanked all the villagers for their continued support and concern regarding this matter.

7. Finance

The bank balances are as follows:

Community Account	£2,353.90
Commercial Instant Access Account	£9,325.68

Payments

There were several payments to approve.

- HMRC PAYE tax payment of £381.00
- Clerk's annual salary payment of £1,524.00
- Two bank charges payments each of £4.25 (total £8.50)

The Council resolved to approve all the payments.

There was one up-coming payment to approve which is the last invoice of the year to IdVerde for grass cutting for £280.01. This was approved for payment by the Council.

2026/2027 Budget

The Clerk had circulated prior to the meeting a proposed budget for next year which overall was very slightly lower than this year's budget due to several changes

1. Next year's agreed figure with IdVerde for grass cutting of £1,260 (excluding VAT) is slightly less than we budgeted this year.
2. It was proposed to raise the amount we pay for the internal budget from £35 to £40 as it has not been raised for many years.
3. It was proposed to increase the Clerk's salary by 1.2% to make it compliant with the 2026 National Living Wage requirements for people over 21 years of age. (3 hrs x 52 weeks x £12.71 = £1,983).
4. The budget for the village hall hire fees has been raised by 3.6%
5. Defibrillator – The pads will need to be replaced on the device in 2026 (~£70)
6. The ICO registration fee has been increased to £47 (in line with this year's increase).
7. The recently introduced bank charges which were not previously budgeted for of £51 have been included.
8. The BEAM income has risen again this year, so the expected budgeted income has been raised to £675 (from £600).
9. The budgeted cost of the discontinued Contact newsletter has been removed (-£120).
10. Last year's budgeted Election costs of £300 pounds have been removed from this year's budget.

With regards to the recreation Ground it is anticipated that we will use the remaining £997 from the ear-marked reserves in the Spring for repairs to the fences and gates.

The Council accepted the proposal for the budget as presented and adopted it unanimously.

2026/2027 Precept

Since the accepted budget was less than last years and the expected BEAM revenue had been increased, the precept required for a balanced budget was less than last year's figure.

The Chair suggested that based on the reduced budget requirement, the Council should consider setting the precept at 10% above the figure required for a balanced budget. This would still mean a reduction in the level of the village precept (and therefore the local contribution element paid by households) and he felt this was a 'win-win' situation.

The consensus amongst Councillors was that this was the right course of action, as it would continue build up the Council's reserves to allow for unexpected events or to allow it to allocate funds for projects such as the replacement of the playground equipment in the recreation ground.

Precept Resolution

It was proposed by Councillor Steve Rawlings that the precept figure should be set by the Council at £4,642.00 for 2026/2027 and this was seconded by Councillor David Butler. **The resolution was passed unanimously.**

8. Correspondence Received

None

9. Report on Police Matters

No further information

10. Matters Raised by Councillors or the Public

Pam Connolly had raised the issue of tractor ruts in the Railway field edge path and had asked if these could be addressed in some way. David Butler said that he would try to have it addressed when the weather improved.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on the 23rd of February.

Signed as a true record.....Date
Dean Cowley – Chair