

Minutes of West Dereham Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Parish Council Minutes

Thursday 5th February 2026 at 7:00 pm at
West Dereham Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: Cllr Nick Drew – Chair, Cllr Andy Challen – Vice Chair, Cllr Stuart Glover, Cllr Ann King and Cllr Mark Norton – Locum Clerk/RFO – R Shaw, CC Brian Long and 3 members of the public were present.

Apologies for absence - Cllr Keith Gore

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED.

In accordance with LGA 1972, schedule 12 10(2) (b) which states that business must be specified.

26. WD 01 Welcome from the Chair and to receive Apologies for Absence. (LGA 1972 s 85(1))

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received for Absence from Cllr Gore

26. WD 02 To Receive Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda and consider any requests for dispensation. (Localism Act 2011 s 31 s33)

None Received

26. WD 03 To Approve and Sign the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Thursday 8th January 2026

(in accordance with standing order 12a)

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting dated Thursday 8th of January 2026

Proposed: **Cllr Challen** – Seconded: **Cllr Drew** – All Agreed -Minutes duly signed by the Chair.

26. WD 04 To Receive Reports from County Councillors and Borough Councillors. (5 minutes each)

County Councillor Mr Brian Long started his presentation explaining his absence for the last meeting due to being unwell, but he is now on the road to recovery. He still has funding available for Community Groups. To see if you qualify for these funds, please check the Norfolk County Council website for further details. There was a small discussion in regard to the Devolution process and the details around the delays and postponement of Elections in West Norfolk this year. The Devolution process now look like it will continue in 2027 / 28.

Signed _____

Dated _____

26. WD 05 Open Forum for Public Participation: an opportunity to hear from members of the public.

(15 minutes only in total)

There was no input from the public at this juncture of the meeting.

26. WD 06

Items to note: Locum Clerk has now achieved access to the Unity Bank - Housework has begun clearing old Payee's and Members.

Scribe has been cancelled and will not renew in 2026. All data has been downloaded and saved on file should it be required.

Masson Sealy has been thanked for their continued support, and another set of labels has been requested due to the change in contact number. – New Label has been received and fitted to the sign in the playpark by Cllr Drew.

The PC now has a landline number set up of 01366 666782. This is a cost-effective way of dealing with calls as there is no longer a need for separate equipment, top ups or contracts.

Mr Robin Goreham has been instructed as the internal auditor for the 2025/26 accounts at a cost of £65.00 – as minute – **Jan 12.4**

Informed VH of the change of Room hire for future meetings – All agreed – 26/01/26

Items Noted

Agenda Items

26. WD 07 To Update – Complaint – Loral Hedging – Hilgay Rd/ Basil Rd Junction – **All**

Cllr Drew has been in contact with the Highways contact, and it has been noted that two letters of action have been sent to the owner of the Hedges and Highways have received no response.

This will now be followed up by Highways, and they will update the Parish Council with news when they have more information.

26. WD 08 To Discuss and Review the Website – Renew or Rebuild – Clerks Report – **All**

The Clerk presented a report to Council on the current condition of the Parish Council Website and suggested that it be updated to comply with modern standards. See report Annex.1

After some consideration the council resolved for a new website to be built by the Clerk with input from all councillors

Proposed: **Cllr Challen** – Seconded: **Cllr Drew** – All Agreed

Reports.

26.WD 09 Playground –

- Reports received – A Report was emailed to the council with items to address after the publication of the agenda – The seat bases – in hand, contractor instructed, Gate closure being a little slow to close – Councillors discussed current temperature as a possible cause. Also, mould / lichen growing on some of the equipment – Cllr Drew suggested a clean at the next inspection meeting which is to be held of the weekend of 7th of February 2026.
- To Resolve a date for the meeting of the Parish Council and the Playground Working Group. The suggested date will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Contractor has been contacted and given go ahead for pads to secure benches and to procure and install Millenium Trees as agreed – Information only.

Signed _____

Dated _____

26.WD 10 Open Spaces – To Note – Contractor has been contacted and instructed to procure and install Millenium Trees as agreed – As above in 26 WD 09

Tree guards were discussed as missing in the asset register check held in January – PJ Homes have these stored for future use.

26.WD 11 Cemetery – Clerks report circulated to councillors prior to meeting.

The Clerk read out a report on the work done so far – see Annex.2

Dates to be sent to councillors to hold a cemetery meeting specifically to reassess the current action plan – **Clerk to Action**

Borough Councillor Peter Hodson entered the meeting at 19.52 (7.52pm)

BC Hodson was asked if he had anything to report – He discussed that he had a small amount of Community finding available and briefly enquired if the Parish Council were Assertion 10 ready.

Cllr King has completed the training on this subject for Audit in 2026 and the council is in a good place with a little more to achieve.

26. WD 12 Planning Consultations

New Planning Application Consultations received from the Borough Council/NCC.

None.

Notices of Decision by Borough Council and County Council

None

26.WD 13 To Review and Update on the appeal submitted for application 24/01769/F (appeal reference - APP/V2635/W/25/3372985).

Planning Appeal: APP/V2635/W/25/3372985

Planning Application (refused) 24/01769/F - Land east of Station Road, West Dereham

To enable sharing of a drainage expert's feasibility assessment between the Parish Council and SOWDAG (a community group), does the Parish Council wish to make a contribution in support of an objection assessment pertaining to Station Road.

This item was discussed and the Chair will report back after a discussion with SOWDAG.

Below are the dates in 2026 for the appeal process.

4th Feb - comments on the drainage plan (the plan, as submitted by the Appellants), to be in by 11.59 pm,

10th Feb - latest date Appellant comments to be in by

10th March - diarised date by the Planning Inspectorate if she determines there is a need to reopen the Hearing. The Planning Inspectorate said she hoped the remaining drainage element could be resolved by exchange of written communication but if there is a need to resume orally, 10th March was pencilled in for that reason.

It was noted the Parish Council's response to the Appellants Drainage Strategy and Maintenance Schedule, as uploaded to the portal 5th January 2026, has been submitted within the due timeframe for consideration by Planning Inspectorate G Pannell. A decision of the entire Appeal is anticipated on or before 10th April 2026

Signed _____

Dated _____

Accounts & Finance including:

26. WD 14 To Note Balance of Accounts on 1st February 2026

To Note Balance of Accounts - 1st February 2026					
Unity Current Account				£24,414.37	
Unity Savings Account				£0.00	
Unity Cemetery Account				£0.00	
Total				£24,414.37	
Payments for Authorisation					
Payee	Goods/Services	VAT	TOTAL	DD/E	Supplier/Service
PJ Home & Garden	237	0	237	EP	PJ H&G - Bus Shelter Refurb - as agreed - Inv 60 -
Bonds Funeral Directors	130	0	130	EP	Bonds FD - Over Payment in November to be reimbursed
HMRC	427.02	0	427.02	EP	HMRC - January Deductions -
Pension SB	228.93	0	228.93	EP	Authorisation Not Required - Information Only.

26. WD 15 To consider/review the payments for February 2026 – Above.

26. WD 16 To Note: money received - A payment of £189.60 was received from NCC after publish date of the agenda and financial information.

26. WD 17 To Note – Mr Robin Goreham, Internal Auditor, has been appointed at a cost of £65 –as mentioned in **26. WD 06**

Invoices due for payment but received after the publication of the agenda may be considered.

Signed _____

Dated _____

26.WD 18 – Administrative –

To Note – Meeting of the Council to assess the Assets on the Councils register took place on Saturday 31st of January 2026

This was followed by an Inspection of the Allotments.

Cllr King Now has access to the bank to view and authorise payments.

26. WD19 To Resolve to move into a closed session, on the grounds of confidentiality in accordance with The Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960, s.1(2) – Nothing to discuss at this meeting

26. WD 20 To receive Items for the next meeting agenda by Noon Thursday 26th February 2026.

26. WD 21 To confirm the date of the next meeting of the Parish Council scheduled for

Thursday 5th March at 7:00 pm at the West Dereham Village Hall

26. WD 22 Close of meeting: - 20:37 (8.27)

Any business to be considered at a Parish Council meeting must be delivered to the clerk for inclusion in accordance with Standing Order 9b. Please use the “Agenda Item Request Form” and include as much information as possible, including any proposal.

Signed _____

Dated _____

Appendix. 1- Clerk's Report

Subject: Website – Stick or twist – To review or renew

1. Purpose of the Report

This report sets out the benefits of upgrading the Parish Council's current website to a modern platform and securing an owned domain name. The aim is to improve accessibility, resilience, transparency, and compliance with statutory requirements, while providing better value and control for the Council in the long term.

2. Current Website Arrangements

The current website is hosted on a legacy platform that offers limited flexibility, functionality, and control. The Parish Council uses the generic domain name supplied by NALC of <https://west-dereham-parish-council.norfolkparishes.gov.uk>. Dependency on this third-party provider restricts the Council's ability to manage its digital presence independently as some items are not clear to alter quickly.

3. Benefits of Moving to a New Platform

a) Ownership and Control

- Owning the domain name <https://westderehamparishcouncil.org> ensures the Parish Council retains full control over its website identity.
- More control over content applied to the website.
- Conforms with Assertion 10 in relation to PC owned Domain.

b) Improved Transparency and Compliance

- A modern platform makes it easier to publish agendas, minutes, financial information, policies, and notices in a timely and accessible way.
- Supports compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code.
- Provides clearer document organisation and search functionality for residents.

c) Accessibility and Usability

- New platforms are designed to be mobile-friendly, allowing residents to access information on smartphones and tablets.
- Improved layout, readability, and navigation enhances engagement for all users, including those with disabilities.

Signed _____

Dated _____

d) Resilience and Security

- Modern hosting solutions offer improved security, regular updates, backups, and protection against cyber threats.
- Reduced risk of data loss and website downtime.
- Greater confidence that the website will remain available for statutory notices and public information.

e) Cost Effectiveness and Long-Term Value

- While there may be an initial setup cost, owning the domain and using a widely supported platform can reduce long-term costs.
- Avoids escalating fees tied to proprietary or restrictive systems.
- Easier for future clerks or councillors to manage without specialist technical knowledge.

f) Cost Comparison:

New Website-

Domain - £7.49 + VAT for the First year and then £19.97 + VAT per year after
Initial purchase price of £27.46 + VAT for the first two years

New Website construction will take approx., 6 to 10 hours to complete (approx. £170).
Web Hosting will cost £95.88 + VAT for the first year

Existing Website –

NALC hosting of domain and platform – unsupported - £70 per year
Hours to rebuild – Approx. 20 plus at a cost of approx., £360

g) Improved Communication with Residents

- Enables timely updates, news items, and community information.
- Supports integration with email notifications or social media if the Council chooses to expand communications.
- Presents a more professional and credible image of the Parish Council.

4. Clerk Administration Benefits

- Simplifies routine updates such as agendas, minutes, and notices.
- Reduces time spent troubleshooting outdated systems.
- Provides continuity during staff changes, as the website is not tied to a single individual.

5. Recommendation -The Clerk recommends that the Parish Council approves the principle of upgrading to a modern website platform with an owned domain name and instructs the Clerk to go ahead with the building of the new website should they deem it a viable alternative.

Signed _____

Dated _____

Appendix. 2 -Clerk's Report: Progress of the Cemetery Action Plan

West Dereham Cemetery

1. Purpose of the Report

This report provides Members with an update on the progress of the Cemetery Action Plan and outlines the current position regarding works and management of West Dereham Cemetery.

2. Background

The Cemetery Action Plan was adopted to address ongoing maintenance requirements, improve safety and accessibility, and ensure the long-term sustainability and respectful management of West Dereham Cemetery. The plan includes both short-term remedial actions and longer-term strategic considerations.

3. Progress to Date

a) Staffing

- Training has been undertaken by both the Clerk and the Locum Clerk to establish a working knowledge of the Cemetery Governance Processes.
- The Diocese of Ely has been contacted to see if there is an offer of financial assistance in regard to maintaining the grounds. The response is that there will be no financial assistance offered.

b) Statutory Administration Provisions

- A digital (spreadsheet) map of the cemetery has been produced and is being fact checked to make sure of accuracy for perpetuity.
- The written Burial Register has been brought up to date as a digital copy, with information taken from the handwritten books available.
- The EROB issued have been listed to show issued documents and a new form has been drafted for future use if adopted by the PC
- Some New forms will be reviewed and added to the existing administrative processes already available.

b) Memorial Safety and Inspections

- Visual inspections of memorials have been carried out as part of ongoing monitoring.
- Any memorials identified as potentially unsafe have been noted, with appropriate actions taken to reduce risk, including temporary measures where necessary.
- Further inspections will continue in line with best practice and available resources.

Signed _____

Dated _____

d) Records and Burial Management

- Burial records have been transferred to a spreadsheet to bring in line with a digital focus. There are a couple of anomalies to investigate in regard to plots and previously somewhat confusing records.
- Bowers Funeral Directors have been contacted by the locum Clerk to ascertain some information, and this will aid in rectifying some issues.
- A review of available plots will need to be undertaken to assist with forward planning and capacity considerations.
- The Burial Records book has been reviewed and contents rearranged into plot order instead of alphabetical order to aid with fact checking.
- There were many folders and loose paperwork, this has now been resolved into just three folders to be reviewed at a later date. 1-Cemetery Records, 2- Cemetery Legal Documents and management documents and 3-Cemetery Other.
- Locum Clerk – Visited cemetery on Sat 31st January and photographed all plots in Burial ground and remembrance gardens – These photos have been added to individual plot folders with the burial records on the laptop as part of the digital process – Still work to complete uploading the written burial records.

4. Current Position of the Project

At the present time, the Cemetery Action Plan is ongoing, with more work to be done.

The Locum Clerk would like to ask the council for a meeting of minds to assess where we are currently and how to move forward.

No major capital works are currently underway at West Dereham Cemetery. Any further enhancements or significant works will require:

- Clear identification of need
- Costings and budget provision
- Council approval prior to commencement

5. Next Steps

- Continue routine maintenance and safety monitoring.
- Keep memorial safety under review and respond as required.
- Consider whether any elements of the Action Plan require updating to reflect current conditions or future needs.
- Report any emerging issues or recommendations to Council for consideration.

6. Conclusion

West Dereham Cemetery is moving forwards and while no significant issues are outstanding at this time, continued oversight is essential to ensure the cemetery remains safe, dignified, and well maintained for residents and visitors.

Signed _____

Dated _____