



Parish Clerk: Mrs Gail Robinson

Email:

clerk@weasenhamparishcouncil.gov.uk

Invitation to Attend

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING will be held at the Community Building, Weasenham (off Massingham Road) on

Tuesday 19th May 2026 at 6.30pm

All persons whose name appears on the Electoral Register have a statutory right to speak and vote at the meeting. The electors may give others who attend, the opportunity to speak.

The meeting is open to everyone.

AGENDA

1. To record the names of those present
2. To receive apologies for absence
3. To approve the minutes of the last APM held on Tuesday 20th May 2025
4. Chairman's Report—Mr Tom McClenaghan, Chairman of Weasenham Parish Council
5. Reports from village organisations (Order to be agreed by the Chairman)
6. Report on the management of the Community Building
7. Report on the footpaths in the village
8. Parishioners Questions
9. Date and Time of Next Annual Parish Meeting

WEASENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk: Mrs Gail Robinson

Website: www.weasenhamparishcouncil.org

Telephone: 07594 410101



Annual Report of

Weasenham Parish Council 2026

&

Invitation to the Annual Parish Meeting

19th May 2026

Commencing at

6.30pm in the Community Building on the Recreation Ground

Off Massingham Road

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2026

Dear Resident,

It gives me great pleasure to bring you my Chairman's Report for 2026. It really doesn't seem like 12 months since the last one! In September 2025, we had a change of Chairman. Martin Romanovsky resigned from the Council and I was elected to replace him as Chair. Once again, many thanks to Martin for all his work and input during his time on the Council. We now have four Councillors, including myself: Councillor Jackie Hargreaves, Councillor Jenny Tidman and our newest member, Councillor Peter Jackson. I'd like to thank all my fellow Councillors for giving up their time to help make our village a better place to live. My thanks also go to our Clerk, Gail Robinson for supporting us and keeping us on the right lines. We should also take a few minutes to remember those residents that we lost from our Parish in the last 12 months.

Let's take a quick look at specific projects and work undertaken over the last year.

Achievements

- The greatest achievement has been the resurfacing of the car park at the Recreation Field. This work was undertaken by Haller Builders and it's an excellent job. No more cars sinking in the mud and much safer under foot. This, together with the new fence lights installed in 2024, make the car park a much safer and better looking area.
- The old container at the Recreation Field received a fresh coat of paint, which helps it blend in a little better with its surroundings. It's still an 'old container', but it's watertight and affords us additional space to store some Council property. Many thanks to those in the community who gave up their time to help with this task.
- You may remember the old bench that sat beside the container. It's actually quite an historic bench as it is a commemoration of the coronation of King George VI in 1937, but over the years it had fallen into a state of disrepair and become unusable. Furthermore, the original brass plaque had become detached from the bench and had disappeared. No sooner had we mooted the idea of restoring the bench, when we received a very generous offer from Ian Bishop of T&B Blasting. Ian offered to sandblast the metalwork on the bench,

Budget Summary 2026-2027

Ground Maintenance	£5,960.00
Grass cutting, miscellaneous ground work and maintenance.	
General Expenditure	£8,334.00
E.g. Insurance, legal advice, audits, NALC, Scribe	
Community Building & Recreation Field	£1,695.00
E.g. Electricity, water, fire extinguisher service, RoSPA	
Communications	£430.00
WIX website, newsletters and annual report, printer ink	
Staff Costs	£9,328.00
Clerk's salary (incl. anticipated pay rise) HMRC/NIC, travel	
Parish Reserve	£3,000.00
Emergency contingency	
Estimated Expenditure	<u>£28,747.00</u>
Minus Estimated Income	£3,670.00
Total Budget	<u>£25,077.00</u>
Estimated Bank Balance at Year End	£2,659.02
Shortfall & Precept for 2025/2026	<u>£22,417.98</u>

Based on a D Band property, this represents an increase of £16.16 per year or £0.31 per week. Bands A, B and C will pay proportionally less, and Bands E, F, G and H will pay proportionally more.

the 2025-2026 audit, which is just about to commence. We may shortly be in a position where we will have two annual audits ongoing simultaneously with £10,000 set aside to pay for them.

West Raynham Solar Fund

We continue to manage the Solar Fund in accordance with the 2015 agreement. Paragraph 4.2 of the agreement states:

The Parish Council will determine the Fund Purposes that will be subject to funding and promotion of any charitable or community projects and purposes within the Area of Benefit (i.e. the boundaries of the Parish Council).

In addition to using funds to cover certain grass cutting costs, as mentioned earlier in this report, last year we opted to make a donation of £200 to the Great Massingham Car Share Scheme from the Solar Fund as it's a community project that benefits residents in Weasenham. We also donated £50 to the Macmillan Cancer Support Charity from the Fund. Although not a charity directed specifically to Weasenham, it was agreed with GrantScape that, unfortunately, some of us will require their assistance as we progress through life.

The Parish received £12,812.66 in June 2025 from the Solar Fund. You can view exactly where the funds are being spent by visiting the Council's website at www.weasenhamparishcouncil.org/solar-fund. And remember, grass roots community groups and volunteers can also apply to the Parish Council for grants for projects that can improve the natural and social environment for the benefit of Weasenham Parish.

Weasenham Solar Farm

You might recall from the Council's November 2025 Newsletter that there is a proposal to build a new solar farm in our Parish on land to the east of Common End (www.weasenhamparishcouncil.org/news). We have heard nothing further on this but will update you when we do.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We invite you to attend the Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 19 May 2026 at 6.30pm. (See back page.)

Tom McClenaghan
Chairman
Weasenham Parish Council

20th April 2026

zinc coat it and then powder coat in a beautiful dark green paint. All this at no charge to the Council. We then replaced the slats with quality Iroko wood, further protected by several coats of teak oil, affixed a new brass plaque, and reconstructed it with new stainless steel fixings. It was then, with the help of some volunteers, relocated to the grassed area near the war memorials, where it is once again being used by local people. Another very generous donation came from local people, Nancy and Brian Pearce. Following a family event, Nancy and Brian donated £180 to the Parish Council. This was used, at their request, to help toward the cost of the bench refurbishment. As a footnote to this project, another local gentleman was browsing antiques at the market in Fakenham towards the end of last year when he came upon, what he believes to be, the original plaque from the bench. He purchased the plaque and then presented it to the Council. It has now been returned to its rightful place on the bench. A huge 'thank you' is due to all those people who donated monies and time to make this refurbishment happen. It just shows what can be achieved when people pull together.

- Back to the Recreation Field, and we have a lovely new pair of 16 foot by 7 foot goalposts, complete with nets. The goals are made of heavyweight steel and are powder coated to prevent against rust. They are portable, manufactured in Great Britain and conform to the relevant British Safety Standards. They were purchased using funds from the Former Highways Surveyor's Land Charity.

What's coming next?

The Council was approached and asked if it would be possible to have some new play equipment on the Recreation Field. Some provisional enquiries were made into potential costs to assess the feasibility of moving forward with the initiative. In early February, we held three consultation sessions in the Community Building and invited people to come and give us their views on the idea of new equipment and, if in favour, what would they like to see. The general view was that the purchase of new equipment was supported by those who attended and others who completed questionnaires. At the time of writing this, three companies have been invited to provide comprehensive quotations for the supply and installation of various similar items of equipment. At the appropriate time, the Council will seek to secure grants to assist in the purchase.

Grass Cutting Contract

The grass cutting contract is reviewed annually by the Council to ensure that we are getting the best value available at that time. For the 2026 season, seven grounds maintenance companies were approached. This number included the contractor, Norfolk Grounds Maintenance (NGM), who held the contract for the 2025 season. The Council were very impressed with NGM, but due to health issues, the owner closed his business in mid-January 2026. The Council wishes him well and thanks him for his service in 2025.

In 2025 the contract, which was the best we could achieve at that time, cost £6,050 (no VAT). This gave us two-weekly cuts of the Recreation Field and War Memorials area, and three-weekly cuts at the Green and churchyards. The cutting season was from 1 April to 31 October. For 2026, we have been successful in securing the services of a company that will cut *all* areas on a two-weekly basis, commencing in mid-March and with a final cut in mid-November, that is, a slightly longer season. The cost of this contract is £5,130 (plus £1,026 VAT, which we reclaim). This represents a saving of over £900 on last year's costs.

Cutting the grass on the Green and the churchyards is not a statutory responsibility of the Parish Council. The former is down to the Green Charity and the latter, the Church of England. The Green Charity does not have a sufficient income to cover the annual costs, and the CofE has refused to cover the costs for the churchyards. For these reasons, GrantScape, the Solar Fund account manager, has agreed that using £3,240 from the Solar Fund to cover these costs is entirely appropriate. The alternative is we add that sum to the Precept for 2026-2027 or we simply stop cutting the grass in those areas.

Budget and Precept for 2025/26

Starting work in December 2025 and continuing into January 2026, the Clerk (who is also the Council's Responsible Financial Officer) and all Councillors worked on setting the new budget for financial year 2026/2027. This is an important task as it's imperative that it is set correctly. A basic breakdown of the budget can be found later in this document. The budget determines the Precept for the Parish. The Precept is a local tax levied by the Parish, from Council Tax paying residents, to cover all village needs in the year ahead. Once the Precept is established, the Parish Council notifies Breckland District Council. That Council then collects the tax on behalf of the Parish Council and pays it to the Parish Council in two instalments throughout the course of the year.

The Precept for Financial Year (FY) 2025-2026 was set at £20,211. Unfortunately, due to ever increasing costs, the Precept for the FY 2026-2027 has had to rise to £22,418.

The Precept could be considerably lower if it were not for External Audit costs. The law dictates that all Parish Councils must be audited. This takes the form of an Internal Audit (IA) followed by an External Audit (EA). The IA is carried out by an independent auditor selected by the Parish Council. This costs in the region of £180—£200 per year. For the FY 2023-2024 no significant issues were identified by the Internal Auditor.

The EA is carried out by a London-based accountancy and business advisory firm (PKF Littlejohn). They are appointed by an organisation called Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA). The SAAA also set the scale of charges for an EA. The Auditor carries out what is known as a Limited Assurance Review (LAR). Simply stated, external audits provide assurance to residents and the Council that the Council's finances are soundly managed, and the annual accounts present a true and fair view of the Council's income and expenditure and its assets and liabilities. The cost of this LAR for Weasenham is £210 + VAT. For the FY 2023-2024, no issues meriting further investigation were noted by the External Auditor.

If the matter had ended there, there would be no further costs and the Precept could be significantly lower. However, every resident has a lawful right to examine the Council's accounts during a specified period each year. They can then raise with the External Auditor any objections that they may have with the accounts. The EA then assesses all objections through a three stage process. For FY 2023-2024, one resident exercised their right and submitted 38 objections. Following a lengthy process (which was still ongoing at the time of the publication of the 2025 Annual Report) the Auditor upheld **one** objection and partially upheld a further **four**. None of the issues covered by these objections would have incurred a cost to the Parish and none were deemed sufficiently serious to raise a Public Interest Report. They were minor administrative issues. Sadly, for all tax-paying residents, this exercise ultimately (i.e. after appeal) cost the Parish £4,419.48 + VAT.

For FY 2024-2025, a further 38 objections have been raised with the External Auditor. However, at the time of writing, due to a significant backlog in work, PKF Littlejohn have yet to complete that audit. Consequently, we have had to 'hold back' £5,000 from the 2025-2026 budget to pay for the audit, whilst also allocating £5,000 from the current year's budget to pay for