



WEASENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Serving
Weasenham Saint Peter and Weasenham All Saints

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting Held on Tuesday 21st January 2025 at 7pm At Weasenham Community Building

Weasenham Parish Council welcomes the public and press to its meetings. The public and press can address the Council during the Public Participation sessions. The law does not permit members of the public and press to take part in the debates.

1. To record the names of those present

Cllr M Romanovsky – Chair, Cllr T McClenaghan – Vice Chair, Cllr J Hargreaves and Cllr J Tidman. All Councillors present.
G Robinson – Clerk and RFO
7 Members of the public

2. To accept apologies for absence

County Cllr M Kiddle-Morris
District Cllr R Hunter-Clarke

3. To receive declarations of interest

Cllr McClenaghan declared an interest on item 6e.

To allow time for public participation

A parishioner asked for an update regarding the 2023/24 external audit. It was noted the Parish Council has no update to give at this time as the auditor has not completed their task.

A parishioner thanked Councillors for getting rid of the tractor tyres that were an eye sore on the playing field. Cllr Romanovsky noted it was Cllr McClenaghan that had taken the lead on this project. The parishioner also thanked Councillors for the removal of the other smaller tyres that needed to be removed which were removed at the same time.

4. To receive a report from District and County Councillors

Councillor reports were displayed on the website prior to the meeting.

5. To approve the minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council meeting held Tuesday 26th November 2024 and Matters Arising

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Cllr Tidman proposed that the minutes be signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed. It was **resolved** to sign the minutes.

6. Finance

a. To receive bank account balances of the Parish Council as of 15th January 2024

Account name	Balance
Weasenham Parish Council Community Account (WPCCA) *****23	£2,267.27
Solar Fund Account (SFA) *****26	£5,459.29
Weasenham Parish Council Savings Account (WPCSA)*****36	£16,347.13

b. To receive details on income received since the last meeting

Payee	Detail	A/C	Payment type	Received
Private Hire	CB Hire 16/12/24	23	Online credit	£5.00
Private Hire	CB Hire 3/1/25	23	Online credit	£5.00
Interest	SFA 2/12/24	26	Online credit	£76.60
Interest	WPCSA 2/12/24	36	Online credit	£5.97
BDC 15/1/25	PP grant for bench	23	Online credit	£746.00

c. To approve payments made prior to the meeting in line with the budget

Payee	Detail	A/C	Payment type	Total Amount Payable
S2 computers	IT - December	23	DD	£65.00
Eon Next	Electric	23	DD	£118.59
Anglian Water	Water rate	23	DD	£25.09
S2 computers	IT- January	23	DD	£65.00
Eon Next	Electric	23	DD	£135.29
Steward Safety Supplies	Annual visit to CB, fire equips checks	23	BACS	£30.00

d. Transfers between account

Bank Transfer from ...	Bank Transfer to ...	Date paid through PC current A/c	Amount Trf	Project Details
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	12/08/2024	£110.86	Village Pump chains; Exp - JL
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	17/10/2024	£873.00	Concrete Pads; front/rear at the CB - G. Haller Builders PPB paid balance.
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	18/10/2024	£2751.70	Car Park Fencing (Noel Powley Landscaping)
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	17/10/2024	£1194.00	Car Park Lighting - (Wensum Valley Electrical)
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	3/12/2024	£253.95	General Waste/Dog waste Combination Bin - Glasdon Part of INV SI895786
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	24/10/2024	£109.00	Microwave oven for CB John Lewis Cllr. McClenaghan Exp
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	24/10/2024	£85.99	New Basketball hoop + board - Cllr. McClenaghan Exp
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	31/05/2024	£301.98	New Ink-tank Printer - Cllr. McClenaghan Exp
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	11/11/2024	£420.00	Emergency fix on Water Leak G. Haller Builders
PC Solar A/c *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	Agreed 30/1/2024 at last budget	£9000.00	Project to set-up Parish Reserve; approved by Solar A/c Mgr. (MY)
PC Solar Account *****926	PC Savings A/c *****136	To be paid January/ Feb 2024	£180.00	Project Removal of Tractor Tyres at Playing Fields - Lodge Tyres

e. To consider and approve amounts for payment

Payee	Detail	A/C	Payment type	Amount Payable
Cllr McClenaghan	Defib battery- Defib store – exp claim	26	BACS	£246.00
G Robinson	Wage & WFHA – Dec	23	BACS	£483.09
HMRC	PAYE/NIC	23	BACS	£120.80
G Robinson	Wage - Jan	23	BACS	Nationally agreed Clerk pay increases backdated to April 2024
G Robinson	Wix domain exp claim 14/2/25	23	BACS	£12.46
Cllr McClenaghan	Screwfix graffiti remover exp claim	23	BACS	£11.99
Cllr McClenaghan	Lodge tyres exp claim	26	BACS	£180.00

Cllr Tidman proposed that items 6 c, d and e be agreed. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed.

Cllr McClenaghan noted that when the new Parish Council accepted the responsibility for the management of the Solar Fund, the Councillors had been led to believe that the Solar Funds could be used for any Parish Council expenditure, including running costs. Cllr Romanovsky recalled a PCM in which Cllr Atterwill, had explained to parishioners that the Solar Fund money can be used for any purpose agreed by the Parish Council. However, we now know this is not best practice as the funding will eventually disappear. Our early interpretation meant that some Solar Fund money was legitimately transferred for Parish running costs. The solar fund account manager is aware of this and is pleased that we have now moved away from that practice. With immediate effect, the Solar Fund will only be used for projects and the precept money will only be used for running costs. It has taken time for Councillors to understand this fully. The Solar Fund manager understands this change in Council practice and has stated that the transfers made earlier in the financial year from the Solar Fund to the Parish Council current Account do not need to go back.

- f. To consider financial net position
This was displayed on the Parish Council website prior to the meeting.
- g. To agree the 2025/26 Parish Council budget
Cllr Romanovsky read out the budget figures for 2025/26:

Ground maintenance	£6050.00	Estimated expenditure	£32,661.64
General expenses	£5930.00	Estimated income	£440.00
Community building and recreation field	£1895.00	Total budget	£32,221.64
Communications	£520.00	Estimated bank balance at 310325	£12,010.26
Staff costs	£8,766.64	Shortfall & precept requirement	£20,211.38
Parish Reserve	£9,500.00	Precept 2024/25	£16,996.44
Total expenditure	£32,661.64	This represents an increase of	£3,214.94

This represents an increase of 18.9%

Ground Maintenance – an extra £1600 will come from Solar Fund to cover the remaining cost. The Ground Maintenance contract will be awarded at the confidential part of the meeting.

Cllr McClenaghan reported: Many hours have gone into creating the budget for 2025/2026. The Clerk and all Councillors have met in person and communicated by email to present as accurate a budget as possible and one that carefully considers the tax burden on Parishioners.

We are in the final stages of negotiating a new grass cutting contract. Through a combination of stopping cuts on ground that doesn't belong to us, slightly reducing the frequency of cuts in some other areas and by using money from the Solar Fund

to cover the cost of cutting the Village Green, we have managed to significantly reduce the burden on the Precept.

It has been suggested by a Parishioner that “the Council is now going to rip off the Solar Fund” to pay for grass cutting on the Green. We don’t see it that way. We see it as a pragmatic way to use money that is available to the community and for us to cover necessary expenditure, whilst at the same time minimising the tax paid by every resident in the village. It should also be noted that before making this decision, the Solar Farm Account Manager of the funding body was consulted and asked for his view. His reply was “I would agree that both projects (grass cutting on the green and tree work on the green) are of community benefit and therefore fine to be supported with funds from the solar fund”.

We have also made savings in the budget for next year by ceasing to subscribe to two Council associations. We will now only subscribe to the Norfolk Association of Local Councils. We have removed funding from the Democracy aspect of the budget. This is money that is set aside *in case* we need to have a Parish Council election. We agreed that rather than have everybody pay for something that *might* happen, we would rather utilise funds from the Parish Reserve, *if* it happens. We are also negotiating a new IT support contract, which we hope will come into effect in the summer, and which will reduce expenditure in that area.

Unfortunately, despite our concerted efforts to minimise expenditure, the Precept is still going to rise by 18.9% in the next financial year. Why? Because of audit costs.

Weasenham Parish Council, along with all other councils, must have an Internal Audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes. We passed that audit this year and it cost under £200. We also must have an External Audit, which is carried out by accountants, PKF Littlejohn. This audit serves to provide independent assurance that the council’s financial statements and governance processes comply with legal requirements and adhere to proper standards. The purpose is to ensure transparency, accountability, and public trust in how the council manages public funds. The cost of a basic Limited Assurance audit is under £500, however, we set aside £1500 in the budget. We passed this Limited Assurance process this year.

If the story ended there, the Precept may well have been reduced for this coming year, but it doesn’t.

Every Parishioner is perfectly within their rights, within a particular timeframe, to go through the Council’s accounts and raise objections with the Auditor. This year a Parishioner done just that and raised 38 objections. These objections must all be assessed, categorised and investigated. This is done at a cost of £426 per hour. During a conversation with the Auditor towards the end of last year, we were advised that we should budget for 10 hours of investigation. That’s a total of £4260. This cost must be picked up by Parishioners. Not only have we had to find money in this year’s

budget to cover this unexpected cost, but we must also think about next year. To that end, we have taken the decision to budget £3000 for next year. This is more than seven times what it needs to cost and double what we had set aside for this year. Ultimately, this has resulted in an increase in expenditure, over this year and next, to the tune of £5760. Through due diligence in other areas, we have managed to limit the actual increase in the Precept to £20,211.38 but it still represents an increase of 18.9% and by comparison, an increase in Council Tax for a D-Band property of £20.34 per year, or 39 pence per week.

There will be some that say that if mistakes hadn't been made, there would have been none to find. The Council does not argue that point. The three Councillors who took over from the Interim Council had absolutely no experience in running a Council. We had two changes of Clerk. We also had no access to our bank accounts for the first few months of our tenure and were reliant upon Breckland Council looking after our financial affairs. Yes, undoubtedly, minor errors of administration have been made, but they are simply that and in some cases just a few pence difference with no inference of corruption, fraud or any other issue of a serious nature.

In response to the 38 objections contained in a 12-page letter, the Council responded with 27 pages of clear explanation of every point. The audit system allows for an objector to withdraw objections if they feel that their points have been satisfactorily addressed. The Auditor will still consider the withdrawn objections, but their withdrawal will help to reduce the investigation time and, therefore, the cost to the Parish. To date, to the best of our knowledge, no objections have been withdrawn.

The Auditor has not yet completed their final assessment, so we will not comment further at this time on the nature or necessity of the objections. However, we felt it important to provide this information at this time in order that you can understand why we are required to set aside £3000.00 in 2025/2026 for audit fees.

The Auditor's report will be completed by the time the Annual Report is published in May, and we will report their findings. It will then be for you, the public, to decide if the additional cost was well spent or not.

Cllr McClenaghan proposed that the budget should be agreed, this was seconded by Cllr Tidman and all agreed.

h. To agree the 2025/26 Precept requirement

Cllr Hargreaves proposed that a precept of £20,211.00 should be requested. This was seconded by Cllr Tidman and all agreed.

- i. To consider quote for website updating and to bring accessibility compliance up to date

Cllr McClenaghan noted that the website is not in good condition and needs to be improved to make it compliant. A quote has been provided and the company providing it is confident of having the rebuilt website up and running during February. The funding for this will come from the Solar Fund (as resolved earlier at item 6d). The quote is for £165.00. The contractor is an accredited website designer and is used by many councils in Norfolk. The Clerk is responsible for maintaining the website, but the Clerk's training does not, and has not, extended to website design and creation.

It was proposed by Cllr McClenaghan to go ahead with this website upgrade. This was seconded by Cllr Tidman and all agreed.

7. Land and Planning

- a. Consider planning applications – no matters to consider
- b. Receive planning decisions – no matters to consider

8. To consider decisions made during the month via email/phone call to be ratified at the next council meeting

- a) To approve the removal of tyres from the recreation ground at a cost of £180.00 The Parish Council sought 3 quotes and only 2 companies responded. The additional vehicle tyres from other areas of the village were removed for free.

The Council are grateful to Ian Pearce for relocating all tyres to a single collection point in the car park.

It was proposed by Cllr McClenaghan to approve this decision made during the month via email/phone call. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed.

- b) To approve the purchase of a defibrillator battery.
Cllr McClenaghan noted that the last power bar on the defibrillator was flashing indicating that it was down to the last 15% so as this is an essential piece of equipment it was urgently replaced.
It was proposed by Cllr Tidman to approve this decision made during the month via email/phone call. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed.

- c) To approve the notice to cancel the existing IT support package and appoint a new contractor from 1st July 2025
Cllr Romanovsky noted that the price with the current contract has constantly increased so an alternative service provider was found. The Parish Council is not leaving the current contract prematurely, and will wait until the end of June to move to the new provider to avoid incurring a financial penalty.

Cllr McClenaghan proposed to approve this decision made during the month via email/phone call. This was seconded by Cllr Tidman and all agreed.

9. To discuss matters relating to the Community Building and Playing field and approve way forward

- a) To consider the purchase of plates and jugs for the community building by a Councillor.

Cllr McClenaghan noted that for events serving plates and jugs were needed, which are not held in the Community Building at the moment. Cllr McClenaghan proposed that a maximum of £30 is spent of these items. This was seconded by Cllr Tidman and all agreed.

- b) To note and discuss the recreation ground hedges, in view to having them cut before 1st March 2025 to maintain a suitable height

Cllr Romanovsky noted that there have been some concerns about the hedges around the recreation field. In the past the landowner of the adjacent land has kindly cut the hedges when they have done their own. Having contacted the landowner, he has agreed to cut his side and our side at the same time. This work needs to be done outside of the bird nesting season. Suitable weather providing solid ground will dictate when the work will be carried out.

Cllr McClenaghan proposed that this offer should be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed.

10. To discuss matters relating to other community projects

- a) To consider playing field equipment and grants

Cllr Tidman expressed that she would like to get grants for new play equipment and to have a play area all fenced off to stop dog fouling in a play area. Dog fouling on the field has been a problem. Cllr Romanovsky noted that dog fouling is a problem in other parts of the village too.

It was felt the play equipment needs to be grouped together again as at present they are too far apart. It was agreed that they should be grouped together. Quotes obtained could include to move equipment to group existing equipment, however this might not be cost effective so it might be better to start again with new equipment.

Cllr Tidman will report back at PCM when information about grants/quotes is available.

11. To consider changing the number of newsletters from 4 quarterly newsletters to 2 half year newsletters – Newsletter January, Chairmans Report May and Newsletter September

Cllr McClenaghan proposed that the Parish Council move to three publications during the year and discussed why the Parish Council originally had five publications to start with. This reduction of publications would save the Parish Council £90.00. This was seconded by Cllr Tidman and all agreed.

12. All items of correspondence were circulated prior to the meeting. To discuss correspondence and any items requiring an action

It was noted that all items of correspondence were circulated prior to the meeting. No items of correspondence required an action to be considered at the meeting.

13. To approve updated Standing Orders in line with the 2022 revised model document

Cllr Tidman proposed that the Standing Orders circulated prior to the meeting, which are based on the 2022 model document be adopted with the next consideration of them being January 2026. This was seconded by Cllr McClenaghan and all agreed.

14. To consider an additional FOI tab on the Parish Council website, that publishes all FOI's

Cllr Romanovsky noted that Breckland District Council displays their previous FOI requests, along with the responses, all with identifying information redacted and wondered if this is something to consider adding to the Parish Council website. Cllr Romanovsky noted that this may be of interest to other parishioners.

This will be from now on, and no previous FOI information will be added to the website.

It was proposed by Cllr McClenaghan that an additional FOI tab should be added to the website for FOI requests and responses with personal information redacted. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed.

15. To receive an update on the new defibrillator

Cllr Hargreaves explained that a new defibrillator has been installed at Lamberts Close and training has been given. The defibrillator is on the communal rooms building and a sign will be put up indicating where it is. Councillors are very pleased with the location. The defibrillator now belongs to the Parish Council. The electric supply is being paid for by Victory Homes. Cllr Hargreaves was thanked for getting this for the village, and thanks was given to Victory Homes for purchasing it. The Parish Council will now take on the maintenance for the defibrillator. A spare set of pads have also been provided.

To allow time for public participation

A parishioner asked about the grass cutting consultation. What areas are going to be cut? Cllr McClenaghan read out:

Recreation ground 15 cuts, Green 10 cuts, churchyards 10 cuts (about every 3 weeks), Millennium sign will be fortnightly. This takes into consideration the advice taken from grounds maintenance contractors. If these cuts are not enough then the Parish Council will go back to the contractor to revise the contract. Neither the NCC area nor Anglian Water area will not be cut at Parish Council expense. All areas will be monitored. This issue was briefly discussed with the parishioners. Ad hoc cuts of the churchyards can be done for a funeral if necessary. Another parishioner asked if the views of villagers was taken into consideration in relation to the grass cutting survey that had been completed earlier in the year. Councillor McClenaghan confirmed that the results of the survey were used to inform Councillor decisions relating to grass cutting areas and frequency.

16. To receive items for the next agenda

- Appoint fuel allotment trustees
- Report back on items from the closed session
- Quotes for the car park area
- Quotes for any other Playing Field improvements
- Quotes for playground equipment
- To decide a new location for the old dog waste bin.

17. To confirm date of next meeting 18th March 2025 7.00pm and Former Highway Charity 6.45pm

Councillors noted the details of the next meetings.

18. To resolve on the moving into a closed session, on the grounds of confidentiality in accordance with the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960 s.1(2)

It was proposed by Cllr McClenaghan that the meeting move into a closed session. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed to go into closed session.

- a) To agree the grass cutting quotes for the forthcoming season and to award contract if sufficient quotes received
After considering all the quotes and information received, Cllr Tidman proposed that Norfolk Grounds Maintenance be awarded the 2025 grass cutting contract. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed.
- b) To consider the Clerk's annual review
It was proposed by Cllr McClenaghan that the Clerk should receive an annual review. This was seconded by Cllr Tidman and all agreed. It was agreed the Chair, and another Councillor would undertake the annual review at a mutually agreed date and time.
- c) To consider Clerk's back pay from 1st April 2024 based on Local Government Services Pay agreement 2024/25 (October 2024)
It was proposed by Cllr Tidman that the Clerk should be awarded back pay from 1st April 2024 based on the Local Government Services pay agreement 2024/25. This was seconded by Cllr Hargreaves and all agreed. It was **resolved** to consider the Clerk's net pay once the figures had been added to the payroll system. These figures will be brought to the next meeting for ratification.