

MINUTES OF MEETING OF CULWORTH PARISH COUNCIL
held on Thursday 13th January 2025 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
David Mumford (DM)	Councillor

(7 present) Gary Denby (GD) Parish Clerk

Public: None.

Welcome to members by AW.

1. Apologies received:-
Cllr Andrew Field (AF) Councillor
2. Councillor declarations of interest & dispensations in the following agenda items: None
3. Receive minutes of the meeting held on **14th November 2024** as an accurate record of the Parish Council official acts and decisions. Proposed by JR, seconded by CR and agreed by all Councillors present.
4. **Public Concerns** (prior notice to the the Chair or the Parish Clerk is recommended)
None.
5. **Matters Arising** from previous Parish Council minutes
 - 5.1 Ref 5.2: Clerk's letter to Tree Tops requesting an update to their previous reporting Carried forwards (from 5.2 in July 2024 minutes) **GD**.
 - 5.2 Ref 7: Planning for the May 2025 elections
Various encouragements received from N-CALC correspondence to Councillors.
Clerk needs to update the Parish Council web site with details and forms **GD**.
 - 5.3 Ref 11: Update on installing the native species hedgerow
JR advised that an offer for additional plants has been received from HS/2, from their over-supply. MR has kindly furnished them with a list, to be used for the Diamond Jubilee plantation to fill-in gaps where previous whips have died. We now await their availability, subject to the weather conditions. Perhaps install them on **Saturday 8th March**, to be confirmed? **ALL**
 - 5.4 Ref 13: Update of the Standing Orders to include a revised Complaints procedure
A formality, carried forwards **GD**.
 - 5.5 Ref 15.5: Update on Scribe purchase. Councillors agreed this can be ordered **GD**.
 - 5.6 Ref 15.7: Receive final External Audit report from PKF-Littlejon
Received on 5th December. No surprises (we submitted it late). Charge is £420 + VAT.
Forwarded to the Chair and vice Chair on 30 December. Awaiting upload to the Parish Council web site and a Public Notice of inspection issued **GD**.

5.7 Ref 15.8: 2024 Financial Regulations uploaded to Parish Council web site – completed.

5.8 Ref 6.2: Whilst the new A3 sign has been posted by the entrance gate, its message regards dogs is not large enough: *'Dogs to be kept on a lead at all times. Please clear-up after your dog'*. Parents have been observed letting their dogs loose within the play area. Councillors were in favour of an additional, large 'NO DOGS' sign (tin plate?) to be placed on the gate **GD**. For example, from Seton, vinyl 297 x 210mm at £16.00 whilst on promotion:- www.seton.co.uk/no-dogs-in-playground-area-signs.html#PR029A4ARP



6. Progress Report on Street Light audit, in preparation for new electricity contract. No recent update from **AF**, though JR has seen him walking around looking at the street lights (inclement weather).

7. Concerns over footpath damage to AG1 in Culworth parish **JR**

JR reported (6 Jan) that a resident has alerted the Parish Council to a dangerous problem at the junction of the footpath through the allotment field into their land. She tried to report this through fix my street but it says it is not in WNC area. It is in WNC area as it is within the parish boundary of Culworth. The landowner is very concerned re public safety on what is a fairly well used right of way. This has now been resolved.

8. Consider WNC support for a 'simplified' Mayoral system:- joining WNC + NNC + MK + Luton + Beds to become 'South Midlands Authorities'

In the absence of our WNC Councillor Alison Eastwood, GD was able to provide a summary of her recent comments to a neighbouring parish council:-

There has been an emergency WNC meeting to discuss devolution powers being proposed by the new government (a 196 page white paper at www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper), associated with elected mayoral positions overseeing multiple authorities, with a cabinet representing highways, transport and local business. Better to be part of the process, rather than being assigned without any input or consent? WNC proposed an interest be expressed for alignment with North Northamptonshire Council, Milton Keynes, Luton and Bedford. Subsequently MK does not wish to join us, Luton wants to align with Bedford, but the latter prefers a different authority. WNC + rural councils?

9. Correspondence received by Councillors

- 9.1 16 Nov: N-CALC mini eUpdate 15/11 – survey on possible return of remote meetings
- 9.2 29 Nov: WNC Highways closure on 5 Dec 2024 at Barley Hill – Culworth Road
- 9.3 29 Nov: N-CALC eUpdate Nov/Dec
- 9.4 29 Nov: WNC driving forward improvements to roads in West Northants
- 9.5 29 Nov: N-CALC mini eUpdate 22/11 – Funding Opportunities
- 9.6 4 Dec: WNC draft budget proposals protect services despite funding pressures
- 9.7 30 Dec: WNC Town & Parish Briefing 31 – 20 Dec 2024
- 9.8 30 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate 20/12 – Northants parishes leading the way (.gov.uk)
- 9.9 30 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate 13/12 – Tesco Stronger starts community funding

- 9.10 30 Dec: WNC your money, your say on 2025/26 budget proposals
- 9.11 30 Dec: Opportunity for a wooden Monkey Challenge climbing wall in the Play Park
- 9.12 30 Dec: WNC Trafford Bridge strengthening – not in 2024 (weight limit)
- 9.13 30 Dec: N-CALC mini eUpdate -6/12 – the CEO scam
- 9.14 30 Dec: WNC newsletter from the PFCC Dec 2024

9.15 5 Jan: AW heads-up on CHFT meeting planned for 8th January:-

The Village Hall Committee has a new Chairman in Charlie Timmins, providing support for a wooden pavilion with an extended meeting room at its rear. Such structures are designed to last twenty five years (or significantly longer, ref the current village hall!).

AW and John Duggan have agreed to work alongside the church's PCC, with regards a communal area with excellent acoustics for concerts and the likes. The latter has the support of the Archdeacon. Jon Green (Quantity survey) will assist in running the project, to achieve sensible pricing. A watercolour illustration will be produced, as an aid to understanding the concepts. At its April AGM, the PCC hopes to appoint one of its members to join the Community Hill Field Trust (CHFT).

The Village Hall Trust have requested the return of unspent monies held by the Parish Council, to aid their stop-gap maintenance of the current building during the interim (only fit for medium term demolition and sale of its land):- Peter Coville will liaise with the Clerk **GD**. The overall aim is to increase and diversity amenities open to villagers.

- 9.16 6 Jan: WNC Devolution approach (scanned) from Cllr Eastwood
- 9.17 8 Jan: N-CALC mini eUpdate 03/01 – Happy New Year! No Precept capping
- 9.18 13 Jan: WNC have your say on the future of Northamptonshire

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

- 10.1 2024/5470/TCA: Reduction to 2x mature apple trees, light prune to 1x cherry tree, fell 1x holly tree and 1x cherry tree at Warden House, The Green. OX17 2BB. For info.
- 10.2 2024/5391/TCA: Crown raise and reduction to 1x sycamore tree at 3 Walnut Close OX17 2BJ. For info. Pending.
- 10.3 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. Prior approval required since on the edge of the Edgcote Historic Battlefield 3 Dec.
- 10.4 2024/4814/TCA: Reduction to 1x silver birch at Westward Cottage, High Street OX17 2BD. No Objections 19 Nov.
- 10.5 2024/4270/FULL: Addition of 5 solar panels to south facing side of rear extension. Battery storage installed in garage at Old Wells, The Green OX17. Approved 15 Nov.
- 10.6 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.
- 10.7 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. It may be that the access point has been relocated?

11. Audit and Accounts

11.1 Receive External Auditor’s Report for 2023-24 (30 Dec), approve its publication
This is to be placed on the Parish Council’s web site (audit area) **GD**.

11.2 Review of Clerk hours expended for 2024 (33 additional hours, beyond 4 hours weekly)
This was considered as reasonable by Councillors and included in the payments below.

11.3 **Agree budget for 2025-26**; set the corresponding Parish Council precept for 2025-26

Councillors considered that more frequent mowing of the Play Park may be appropriate in the summer. Therefore Roger Smith is to be approached, whether willing to take this on and its cost **GD**.

The budget as shown in APPENDIX A was therefore proposed by SR, seconded by DM and agreed by all Councillors present. This has a zero increase on the current year, accumulating a further £15,000 in reserves towards new village assets (match funding).

11.4 Consider the renewal options for street lighting electricity, from 8 Feb 2025

There was discussion on whether, with the advent of LED torches and mobile phone torches, villagers might nowadays support a ‘dark skies’ policy. This might save £1,000 pa on the budget (a quarter of that spent on village mowing and maintenance)?

Formal quotations for current electricity supply are being held-up because the energy usage certificate does not match the current mix of lighting heads. This is awaiting completion of the audit process. However, from recent Moreton Pinkney experience, it seems likely that Tomato Energy will have a distinct benefit over the current supplier Yu Energy. The latter keep pestering the Clerk to ‘Press the Renew button’ and when speaking to them, they were asked for a formal emailed quotation (they may no longer be supporting unmetered supplies, as happened with opus Energy previously).

11.5 Agree on current street light repairs – renewals

Councillors agreed that the two broken lamps on Queens Street should both be replaced by modern LED units [20W Ovia Gator LED], as with other more recent units.
oviauk.com/products/gator



11.6 Agree on Parish Council web site renewal with Hugo Fox (by Direct Debit, £119.88 pa + £119.88 for five professional .gov.uk email addresses + VAT). Agreed by council.

11.7 Consider and approve the Parish Council payments listed below, proposed by DM and seconded by SR, agreed by all Councillors present:-

Description / Power	Amount	VAT	Total
Hugo Fox annual hosting of Parish Council web site to 31 Dec 2025 www.culworthparishcouncil.gov.uk together with five associated email addresses by direct debit.	£239.76	£47.95	£287.71

<i>Local Govern't Act 1972, Section 111 Subsidiary powers, discharge of functions</i>			
Texprep newsletters Oct 2024 (27099) and Dec 2024 (27200) <i>Local Government Act 1972, Section 142 Local Government Info</i>	£31.50 £36.90	-	£68.40
Wave water bill for 3 months 16 Aug to 1 Dec 2024 <i>Provide recreation grounds and manage them: Public Health Act 1875</i>	£18.51	-	£18.51
Cllr Martin Rowling expenses for cable ties for hedgerow planting (Screwfix 6 Dec) <i>Open Spaces Act 1906, ss.9 and 10</i>	£3.34	-	£3.34
Gary Denby Parish Clerk gross remuneration and expenses (9 weeks) including home office expenses 14 Nov – 12 Jan 2025 reimbursement of additional 20 hours worked in 2024 <i>Local Government Act 1972 Appointment of Staff s.112</i>	£582.12 £64.35 £323.40	-	£969.87
Yu Energy Street lighting electricity charges 01 – 30 Nov 2024 (DD) 43.5 p/day standing; 27.08 day 27.08 night p/kWh (Inv 02004977) <i>Highways Act 1980, lighting functions s.98</i>	£127.51 £16.00	£6.38 £0.80	£150.69
Yu Energy Street lighting electricity charges 01 – 31 Dec 2024 (DD) 43.5 p/day standing; 27.08 day 27.08 night p/kWh (Inv 02079218) <i>Highways Act 1980, lighting functions s.98</i>	£132.64 £16.79	£6.63 £0.84	£156.90
Grant to British Legion for Remembrance Day 11 poppy wreath.	£25.00	-	£25.00
Transfer of funds to attain some interest, from the current account account to the saver account	£50,000	-	-

12. Items for the next Parish Council agenda

- 12.1 There is a rumour that the A361 to Banbury may be closed for 20 weeks, facilitating carriageway repairs in Wardington (Oxfordshire). Is this true; is AE aware of this?

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

16. Date of next meeting: **Thursday 6th March at 7pm** in the village hall.

Meeting closed at 8.05pm

.....
Chairman

.....
Date

APPENDIX A: PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2025-26

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 Verge & 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 £16.52 per hour (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
	Clerk / Councillor training	£394	
		£106	
		£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 Current year</u>	<u>Replace after Year</u>	<u>Units owned</u>	<u>Unit cost 2016</u>		<u>Revised 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