

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 26th January 2026 in Charvil Village Hall at 8pm

Present Lee Cripps (acting Chair), Katrin Harding, Pat Sutcliffe, Stephen Lucas, and Mark A'Bear.

Apologies for Absence Narinder Ryatt, and Matt Walker

Absent Jane Hartley

26/8759 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harding stated that she was the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency, and Councillor Cripps lives in Canberra Lake Way and is directly affected by the reserved matters application regarding land west of Park Lane.

26/8760 Open Forum

Two residents attended to listen to proceedings.

Rebecca Brooks from Wokingham Borough Council attended to talk about the bus contracts that Wokingham enters, and the work she is doing to prepare the tender for the next round of contracts beginning in April 2027. Currently, the area is served by two types of bus service: commercial and those contracted by the Borough Council. The commercial routes are 850, 127 weekdays, and 12 (there has been some financial support for evening and Sunday 850 services); the contracted services are 127 on Saturdays, 128 and 129. Having spoken to many stakeholders, the current line of thinking is to split the 128 route into two, with one route running from Reading to Twyford, and the other running from Twyford to Wokingham. This would allow the Wokingham to Twyford leg starting earlier to serve rail commuters and also allow for a more regular and reliable service.

Apaprt from the thorny issue of serving Sonning village, which is not commercially viable, most of the Reading to Twyford part of the 128 could be covered by the current commercial services. It is hoped that timetables for the two services could allow smooth interconnection, and also there would need to be able to have through-ticketing. There was a discussion around how the walking and cycle routes could tie into any new walking routes, and all these things are considered. Rebecca also spoke about community transport, which are often supported by the parishes. The problems with these is they are often over-subscribed, and also, they have recently started straying into the areas covered by other community transport, causing confusion and problems for parishes supporting services serving their residents. She also spoke about demand responsive transport, which would be useful for areas not currently served by regular bus services, but this is too expensive to introduce now. If funds allow in the future, however, the Borough has already done much of the background work. The Chairman thanked Rebecca for attending and she left at 8.40pm.

26/8761 To approve the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of 15th December 2025
These were approved and signed.

26/8762 To note the Clerk's report
This was noted.

Finance

26/8763 To receive and approve the financial reports
It was resolved to approve these which was passed unanimously.

26/8764 Authorisation of Payments
It was resolved to recommend approval of the payments of invoices, which was carried unanimously.
£8.50 to A1 Locksmiths
£132.25 to the Assistant Clerk
£1794.37 to Berkshire Pension Fund
£34.58 to Bowak Ltd
£324 to Drain and Able
£72.01 to Everflow
£88.30 to Grundon
£2640 to GW Shelter Solutions Ltd
£87.09 to the clerk
£36 to the Media Assistant
£114 to Numatic International Ltd
£464.91 to Smartest Energy
£545.17 to SSE Contracting Ltd
£1,783.85 to Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd
£2,605.82 to Tactical Cleaning & Hygiene Services UK Ltd
£162.24 to Tactical Facilities Management Ltd
£36 to Taurus Elite Security
£20.70 to Tim King
£18.60 to Unity Bank
£60.54 to Yu Energy
£5125.92 in Payroll

26/8765 To hear an update on the strategic plan
There was no update, but Councillor A'Bear resolved to convene a meeting.

26/8766 To note the Minutes of the Finance Committee on 12th January 2026
These were noted.

26/8767 To approve the budget recommendation from the Finance Committee and if approved, to note the need to produce an information leaflet for residents
The Chair of Finance explained the rationale behind the increase, in that the Council needed to keep reserves stable, and to enable the Council to improve the village where it can. There was a discussion around why the rise of 9.5% was so much above inflation and whether the Council should look at where it can cut costs as well. It was resolved to accept the increase but to look at moving away from such large increases in the future, if possible, which was passed unanimously. It was noted that the clerk must produce a leaflet explaining expenditure, and to justify the increase in terms of increased ambition.

26/8768 To approve the precept for 2026-27
It was resolved to approve the precept figure which was approved unanimously.

26/8769 To approve the facilities charges as recommended by the Amenities and Finance Committees
It was resolved to approve these, which was passed unanimously.

- 26/8770 To approve the re-appointment of Claire Connell as Internal Auditor**
It was resolved to approve the re-appointment which was passed unanimously.
- 26/8771 To approve a new contract with Edge IT systems for the provision of the finance and amenities software and to decide on the length of contract**
It was resolved to agree a three-year contract, which was approved unanimously.
- Planning, Environment and Highways Committee (PEH)**
- 26/8772 To note the Minutes of 12th January**
These were noted.
- 26/8773 Amenities Committee**
To consider the options for repairing the fence in front of the MUGA and to choose from one of them
After some discussion, the topic was referred to Amenities for further thought and discussion before bringing a recommendation back to Full Council.
- 26/8774 Borough Councillor's Report**
There was no report from either Councillors Akhtar or Smith, but Councillor Harding reported that the final settlement from central government had not been favourable to the Borough and serious cuts would need to be made to balance the budget over the next three years. One area that would be hit hard will be grounds maintenance, and there will be a consultation on which areas would be cut less. It will also be the case that the Borough will be looking to the parishes to work together in some areas. As far as the village is concerned, the shared use cycle path will be swept, and the bushes along the Old Bath Road will be given a hard cut back. Councillor Harding is also trying to deal with issues arising from inconsiderate parking on East Park Farm Drive – some of this is school related but it is causing difficulties for residents.

Items for Consideration

- 26/8775 To note that the Neighbourhood Plan group has received a fact-checking draft of the Examiner's report, and it is still hoped that it will be taken to the Borough executive in February with a view to holding the referendum at the same time as the Borough elections in May**
It was reported that the plan had now passed the Examination Stage, and so the referendum should go ahead with the Borough elections in May.
- 26/8776 To consider concerns about the East Park Farm car park surface near the tennis courts and to decide whether to just monitor, or consult with Wokingham Borough Council, and to note the repair of a burst water main at the East Park Farm car park entrance**
The village warden checks the car park weekly and has noticed a white powder on the top of the bricks in recent weeks. He raised this as a concern because it was ongoing and has checked whether there is any unevenness in the car park surface. The sand between the bricks is no longer there, but this has been the case for some time, and the surface was completely flat in one direction, and if anything, had a very slight ridge in the other direction. It was agreed that, because the evidence is currently inconclusive, the checks would continue and the surface will be checked for unevenness again in a couple of months.
- 26/8777 To consider the Pulse Survey results and to decide who should respond to residents who provided email addresses**
The main themes in terms of safety and cleanliness seem that most people are happy but speeding and dog mess continue to be a problem. Several people complained about the use of acronyms – for example, respondents didn't know what a "MUGA" is, so the Council should try to avoid these going forward.

There was no clear support for specific ideas for small expenditure, and because of the low response rate, the replies provide more questions than answers. It was agreed that to be useful, there need to be more responses, both to help with consultation on specifics, and to provide trends. It was agreed that a paper version would be produced and included in the village magazine, which could then be returned to the hall via the letter box.

26/8778 To note the social media report for January

This was noted.

26/8779 To consider whether the social media assistant should be able to routinely reply to residents who ask questions on social media, or should the Council continue to encourage residents to communicate with the Council on more formal channels

It was agreed that this would be acceptable for information, and only if a question was asked, as it is recognised that people like an immediate response. If the answer requires an opinion that has not already been decided by the Council (ie reflecting official council policy), then the correspondent should be directed to the more formal channels. This will be trialled for three months.

26/8780 To hear an update on the playground repairs and to finalise plans for a grand opening for the playground on 11th February

The repairs to the surfacing at St Patrick's have been completed, and the new net should be installed soon. It was agreed that Pat would open the playground, and there would be a plaque which would thank the those that contributed financially to the project. There would be advertising on social media leading up to the event. The council will provide refreshments in the pavilion, and the event will start at 2.45. The official opening will be at 3.20, at the end of the school day. The school involvement will be that the year six and their reception buddies will be able to have a short play at 1.30, for photos, comments etc.

26/8781 To approve the planting of some screening in front of the playground to reduce the visual impact on nearby residents

After some discussion, Council did not wish to approve this until they were satisfied that the cost, maintenance and location would not be onerous, and until it was clear as to what the commitment made to residents by the Chair amounted to.

26/8782 To hear an update on youth engagement and to receive the report from a meeting with Piggott sixth formers

The report was noted. It was agreed that once the Parish Council had a better idea of future plans, then it would make sense to go back to speak with them again. Councillor Cripps commented that it was interesting that they did not want another skate park because of the trouble and would prefer to have a BMX track. It was also noted the desire for a café, and that this could not be run by the parish council but by an external provider. Councillor A'Bear will write something in the next edition of the magazine to see if anyone in the community could help.

26/8783 To consider whether to appoint a planning consultant to present the Parish case at the Borough planning meeting if the reserved matters application for the west of Park Lane goes before the planning committee

It was agreed to defer this until such time as it is known when and whether this will go to planning committee.

26/8784 To note the Minutes of the Northern Parishes Chairman's Group

These were noted.

26/8785 To note the outstanding action list and to hear any updates

This was noted. It was agreed there was no urgency around hybrid meetings. Advertising the pavilion could go on Twyford Community Hub.

26/8786 To note any agenda items for the next meeting
Streetlighting review.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.10pm

Chairman's Signature