

WESTLETON PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes a **Meeting of Westleton Parish Council** held on **Monday 23 February 2026** at 19:30 in Westleton Village Hall.

Richard Green
Clerk to Westleton Parish Council

MINUTES

26/23 Attendance and apologies for absence

In attendance

Cllr Banks
Cllr Fisher
Cllr French
Cllr Holmes
Cllr Johnson
Cllr Overton
Cllr Turner (Chair)
Cllr Watson
Cllr Webber

Apologies for absence accepted from

Cllr Alexander
Cllr Shearme

Also present

County Councillor Richard Smith (minutes 26/23 to 26/25 inclusive)
District Councillor Paul Ashton (minutes 26/23 to 26/25 inclusive)
2 members of the public

26/24 Declaration of interests

Cllr Watson declared a pecuniary interest in items 26/29(c) "Allotments" and 26/30(d) "NSIPs". The Clerk reminded councillors of Cllr Watson's six-month dispensation granted at the Extraordinary Meeting on 9 February 2026 in respect of the allotments.

26/25 Pre-meeting reports from County Councillor and District Councillor

Cllr Smith reported that the County Council elections are now going ahead following a government u-turn, and he believes there will be significant changes depending on what the electorate decides. He stated that a lot of work has gone into preparations for Local Government Reform (LGR) and feels that it would be a shame for this potentially to be wasted. Cllr Smith further reported that announcements have been made in respect of additional funding for local government in respect of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provisions. Furthermore, the government has stated that it will wipe 90% of the County Council's debt that has been accumulated due to SEND provisions, the deficits and costs of which will continue, meaning that any new unitary authority will face difficult times from the outset.

Cllr Smith announced his retirement after 16 years as a county councillor and commended Westleton Parish Council for its work. Cllr Turner and the entire council extended their gratitude to Cllr Smith for his service to the parish.

Cllr Ashton circulated his report in advance (Appendix 1 to the minutes) and summarised that responses from Suffolk County Council (SCC) and East Suffolk District Council (ESDC) in respect of LionLink are due by 10 March. Cllr Ashton stated his concerns regarding an increase in vehicle movements, the location of haul roads, and provisions for abnormal loads. Overall, he finds the LionLink consultation team to be more constructive than that for Sea Link. Cllr Smith added that SCC's LionLink response is due to be discussed by the Cabinet on 24 February.

Cllr Turner asked Cllr Ashton if timings have been announced regarding the closure of the B1125 at Blythburgh. Cllr Ashton stated that they have not.

Cllr Ashton reported that the consultation on sites to be considered for inclusion in ESDC's new Local Plan is due in the spring, and advised to regard the included sites as outline planning applications. The final Local Plan should be in place by 2029. He added that a planning application in respect of the Sizewell C (SZC) workers accommodation at High Lodge is imminent, and that he has requested that the Parish Council be engaged as a consultee.

Finally, Cllr Ashton stated that new recycling bins are due for delivery shortly, with the new collection schedule due to commence on 1 June.

Cllr Smith and Cllr Ashton both left the meeting

26/26 Public forum

Neither of the members of the public present took the opportunity to speak.

26/27 Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2026 and of the extraordinary meeting held on 9 February 2026 were approved and duly signed by the Chair.

26/28 Matters arising from the minutes

Following the Extraordinary Meeting on 9 February, the Clerk confirmed that the allotment water supply has been paid for and that an installation date is awaited. The tap box has been ordered and delivered to Cllr Watson, and Fairweather Law LLP has been formally engaged to assist in reviewing the lease agreement and tenancy agreement.

26/29 Councillors' portfolio reports

Where available, pre-circulated reports are provided in Appendix 2 to the minutes.

- (a) **Common** – Cllr Shearme circulated a report in advance. Cllr Webber added that adders are now present on the Common, and advised dog walkers to take care.
- (b) **Community Field** – Cllr Holmes stated that there is nothing to report. The Clerk reported that an estimated water bill has been received and that an accurate reading has now been submitted.
- (c) **Allotments** – Cllr Watson circulated a report in advance of the meeting. The allotments will be formally launched at a meeting at 19:30 on 2 March at the Village Hall. Cllr Turner and the Clerk thanked Cllr Watson and Cllr Webber for their efforts in delivering the allotment project. The following were considered for approval:
 - i. An Early Access Agreement was **agreed** substantially in the form presented by Cllr Webber. The Clerk will have the agreement reviewed by Fairweather Law LLP.
 - ii. It was **agreed** to cover the landowner's legal fees up to £500+VAT.
- (d) **Affordable housing project** – Cllr Fisher provided an update on the project and will continue to chase the relevant parties. Cllr Banks queries the removal of an electric fence that had been used to contain pigs.
- (e) **Trees and footpaths** – Cllr Webber stated there was nothing to report. Cllr Turner reported on a complaint received regarding hedging at the Parish Council surgery held earlier in the day. The Clerk will write a letter to the homeowner.
- (f) **Community wellbeing** – Cllr Overton reported that she is continuing to explore the area of community wellbeing, and that this will be better informed once the results from the village survey are available.
- (g) **Village Hall** – Cllr Banks circulated a report in advance. He further mentioned the discovery of historic parish documents in the archive and requested that a discussion item be added for the next agenda to consider methods to ensure the proper protection of these documents. It was also reported that the Village Hall has transitioned to MailChimp for the circulation of its newsletter, which allows a much higher number of recipients.

26/30 Parish matters

Where available, pre-circulated reports are provided in Appendix 2 to the minutes.

- (a) **Community engagement** – The Clerk and Cllr Banks reported on a community engagement initiative. A working group has been established as a joint venture between the Parish Council, the Village Hall, and the Church of St. Peter. A village survey is being drafted and is due for launch at the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 18 May. There are plans to develop a welcome pack for new residents. As part of this initiative, Cllr Turner, Cllr Banks and a representative from the Village Hall will aim to finalise the Emergency Plan before the next Parish Council meeting.
- (b) **Community Self-Help Hub** – Following a discussion, it was **agreed** not to join Suffolk County Council's Community Self-Help Hub scheme.
- (c) **Litter pick** – It was **agreed** to arrange a community litter-pick on Saturday 28 March, meeting at 10:30 at the duck pond. The Clerk will register the event with the Great British Spring Clean initiative and request additional high-vis vests and litter pickers from ESDC. Cllr Banks will ask whether The Crown PH would be willing to provide refreshments to participants.

- (d) **NSIPs** – Cllr Turner pre-circulated a report on Sizewell C and other NSIPs. He summarised that a meeting is scheduled with SZC on 4 March in respect of the B1125 and provided a summary of ESDC’s draft policy on worker accommodation for SZC and other NSIPs. In respect of other NSIPs, Cllr Turner provided an update on the Parish Council’s response to the LionLink consultation and requested input from councillors ahead of the submission deadline on 10 March. The Sea Link planning inspectorate examination is ongoing.
- (e) **Annual Parish Meeting 2026** – It was **agreed** to pursue a new format for the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 18 May. An item will be added to the April agenda for further discussion.

26/31 Planning

- a) A consultee response to the following planning application was considered as follows:

Details	Response
<p>Consulted by: East Suffolk Council Planning ref.: DC/26/0385/FUL Details: Extension of summer house Site: Middle Cottage, Mill Street, Westleton, IP17 3BD Link: https://publicaccess.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=T9OG5BQXGMN00 Response deadline: 5 March 2026</p>	<p>No objection</p>

- b) The Clerk and Cllr Johnson reported on their attendance at the Town and Parish Forum held on 2 and 9 February. The Clerk noted that more than 500 sites were proposed as part of ESDC’s call for sites, and that councillors should be mindful that the sites will include commercial developments as well as housing. It was further reported that the new National Planning Policy Framework will see a “default yes” to applications near railway stations. Finally, the Clerk reported on the production of a Design Code and Developers’ Charter for Suffolk, which should encourage better designed and better quality housing.

26/32 Council finances

- (a) **CIL** – It was agreed to defer discussions on this matter pending the outcome of the village survey.
- (b) **Barclays** – The submission of the closure form was noted.
- (c) **Financial position** – The Parish Council’s financial position correct as at 21 February 2026 (see Appendix 3 to the minutes) was noted.
- (d) **Payments** – The payments listed on the schedule of payments (see Appendix 4 to the minutes) were approved for authorisation.

26/33 Correspondence to the Parish Council

The Clerk reported that all key correspondence has been forwarded and acted upon as relevant.

26/34 Questions to the Chair / Items for the next agenda

Consideration of a contribution to the Westleton Archive Group for protection of historical parish documents (per minute 26/29(g)) and discussion on Westleton’s Emergency Plan (per minute 26/30(a)).

26/35 Date of next meeting

The Parish Council next meets on Monday 30 March 2026.

Meeting closed at 21:10

Signed as approved: _____

Signed by: _____

30 March 2026

Appendix 1 – Report from District Councillor Paul Ashton

Devolution, Combined Authority, Elections and Local Government Reorganisation

- County Council Elections are back on for May 2026
- Leader of Norfolk County Council has withdrawn Norfolk from the creation of a (Mayoral) Combined Authority
- Some delays and delivery challenges arising from both these events

County Council Elections are back on which means the new Norfolk and Suffolk councils (post May 7th) will decide the next steps with the government regarding the Combined Authority. There wasn't time for the current incarnation of Norfolk CC to agree to the Combined Authority so the withdrawal was a little bit performative but clearly an indication of a good deal of dissatisfaction. Suffolk County Council continue to be engaged. Assuming the new County Councils want to proceed with the combined authority there is no reason to believe that the date for the election of a Mayor needs to change from the revised date of May 2028.

The County Council elections mean that there will be an absence of councillor input into the process during the election period. However, officers will still be progressing towards 1 or 3 unitary council(s) as soon as the government announces its decision in March. At the moment it is still assumed that elections to the new unitary councils will take place in May 2027, the unitary councils will shadow the existing councils for about 10 months, the current District Councillors and Borough Councillors will see their terms extended to 31st March 2028 and the new County Councillors will see their terms end on 31st March 2028. The new unitary councils take over on 1st April 2028.

High Lodge Planning Application

- Still waiting for the application to be submitted
- I have asked that Westleton and Darsham PCs are invited to provide comments along with Blythburgh and Bramfield and Thorington PCs who are statutory consultees
- I will help coordinate response across the various parishes if that will help.

Lionlink

- I attended the session at the village hall on Saturday. It seemed well attended. The NGV people seemed engaging but I would welcome feedback on how useful you found it.
- All our responses, including East Suffolk Council, have to be submitted by 10th March.
- I intend to respond as ward councillor as well as provide input to the ESC response
- I will share my response and the draft ESC response as soon as it is stable enough to be shared.

New Local Plan

- The call for sites has completed. Consultation on those sites will commence in the spring. I am unsure whether the SCC elections will impact the precise timing of that consultation. When the consultation comes, it is important to engage with it and ensure issues are raised. I am ready to assist with that.

Budget

- The ESC budget is at Full Council on 25th February for approval. The ESC part of Council Tax is proposed to rise by 2.95%. This is less than inflation that was 3.8% in September – the point at which inflation is taken each year for budget production.

On Demand Bus

- Cllr David Beavan and I are planning to use some of our enabling communities budget to get an on demand bus service running across the Blyth Valley. We have had discussions with Suffolk County Council officers and others and are aiming for go live during this summer. It will initially be a pilot to hopefully demonstrate the viability of the service. We are aiming for more strategic funding to keep the service going but, of course, are aiming for it to be self-financing as soon as possible.

Better Recycling

- Delivery of new bins is underway. It is likely to be a couple of months before your parish receives them. There will be lots of information about the new bins via all sorts of different media and mediums in the coming weeks. The new collections will begin on 1st June. I am personally championing a new mobile app that will tell you which bin on which day, allow you to set reminder notifications, provide information about what goes in which bin. I intend it to be expanded to cover much more including fault reporting, planning and so on in the future.

Appendix 2 – Pre-circulated reports from councillors

26/29(a) – Common – Cllr Shearme:

Firebreaks have been cleared, acid grassland cut, and waste collected. The pond works will take place later in the year when water levels are lower. A work party took place on 21 February to clear gorse.

26/29(c) – Allotments – Cllr Watson:

The deer/rabbit fence is now in place and we await delivery of the gates.

Essex and Suffolk water have marked the spot for the standpipe and water meter. We await a connection date. When it dries out, I plan to dig a trench and add a second standpipe further down the field. How best to store mains water is still up for discussion.

Cllr Webber has been busy editing and re-editing the 2 tenancy agreements. In order to get things moving, ahead of the solicitors completing, we are issuing an early access agreement with plottolders as a temporary measure.

I have been clearing the parking area, but due to the constant rain it is rather messy. Dry weather please!

I have booked the Village Hall for Monday March 2nd at 7.30 for the launch of the allotments.

26/29(g) – Village Hall – Cllr Banks:

- We have submitted our bid to Sizewell and await their decision. As previously mentioned this would cover various items such as windows, storage solutions, tarmac of the carpark and also possible conversion of outbuildings in the rear courtyard.
- The Hall bookings remain strong although some classes/groups are experiencing reduced numbers of attendees. This will continue to be monitored and as always the team are looking at new ways to generate income.
- The Hall hopes to benefit, as all groups do, from the new survey being put together by the newly formed Community engagement group to gauge people's thoughts on how this popular facility can be utilised further.
- The Archives group of volunteers continue to make great strides in cataloguing and storing historical documents the archives room, it was mentioned that certain items uncovered date back as far as 1849, the Trustees are looking at ways to better protect these items for the future.

26/30(d) – NSIPs – Cllr Turner:

Together with the Parish Councils of Blythburgh, Darsham, Dunwich, Middleton, Theberton and Eastbridge, and Walberswick, and District Councillors Paul Ashton, Tom Daly, Katie Graham and Sarah Whitelock, Westleton PC wrote to Sizewell C (SZC), the County Council and the police to highlight concerns about traffic volumes and speeds on the B1125 (see attached). SZC have responded (see attached) and we will meet with SZC on 4 March to discuss.

I drafted a paper summarising the LionLink proposal – it is on the website for residents' use (see attached). I attended a meeting with East Suffolk District Council and other parishes – we were asked our views on the proposal by ESDC to help it draft its response to the proposal. ESDC asked for a summary of the points made during the meeting (see attached).

Sea Link: the Planning Inspectorate examination is ongoing. On behalf of the East Suffolk Communities Energy Partnership (ESCEP) Steering Group, I drafted the attached documents on accommodation/tourism concerns for the deadline 4 (Feb 10). Also attached are ESCEP papers submitted on health and well-being, cumulative impacts and the Benhall Bridge drafted by other Steering Group members. I also attach a paper on transport drafted by myself and others on traffic and transport submitted at Deadline 2 (late last year) and an ESCEP paper written for the ESDC and SCC on the needs case.

Appendix 3 – Financial position

Financial Position – pro forma

Prepared for: Westleton Parish Council

Financial year ending 31 March 2026

Prepared by: Richard Green, Clerk and RFO

Prepared on: 21 February 2026

For the period: 21 January 2025 – 21 February 2026

	Period	Year to date
	£	£
Receipts		
Precept		15,783
CIL		33,997
Internal transfers	90	342,575
Grants		2,510
VAT		3,102
Interest	145	559
Bonfire		1,433
Community Field donations		182
Common wayleave		
Allotments		
Total receipts	234	400,140
Payments		
Community Field		
Maintenance		160
Toilets		684
Water		782
Picnic tables		
Cricknet nets & table tennis table repairs		
Grass cut		125
Hedge cut		
Health and safety		240
Play area repairs		
Renovation of play area		
Shed repairs		990
Carousel		
Misc		63
Total	-	3,045
Common		
Maintenance (RPA)		300
Toilets		125
Path repairs		211
New path		
Misc		87
Total	-	723
War Memorial		
General maintenance		2,303
Total	-	2,303
Council operations		
Clerk salary & expenses	2,003	8,382
Internal transfers	90	342,575
Subscriptions & memberships		246
Hall hire		75
Audit fees		647
Training		273
Website, email, data protection		193
Archive		200
Insurance		1,324
Postage		3
Bank account	5	5
Scribe software		
VAT paid (to reclaim)	708	1,546
Total	2,807	355,469
Parish activities		
Firebreaks		
Allotments	3,505	3,505
Events (Bonfire, Christmas)	157	479
Village maintenance		970
Donations		200
Total	-	5,154
Total payments	6,469	366,693
Cash in hand per cashbook		
Unity Trust Current Account	18,660	
Unity Trust Savings Account	86,562	
Barclays Bank Current Account	-	
Barclays Bank Savings Account	-	
Total	105,222	
Earmarked reserves		
CIL 2024-25	24,675	
CIL 2025-26	33,997	
Community Field fund	10,000	
Common donation	9,288	
Common fund	3,000	
Common RPA unused	3,130	
Total earmarked reserves	84,091	
Total unallocated reserves	21,132	

Appendix 4 – Schedule of payments for authorisation

Schedule of payments for authorisation

Prepared for: Westleton Parish Council
Prepared by: Richard Green, Clerk and RFO
Prepared on: 21 February 2026
For meeting on: 23 February 2026
Agenda item: 26/32

Payee	Details	Amount (net)	VAT	Total	Power
ICO	Data protection fee	52.00	0.00	52.00	Local Government Act 1972, s.142
M P Stephenson & Sons	Firebreaks clearance	180.00	36.00	216.00	Public Health Act 1875, s.164
Country Care Anglia	Allotment fencing	9,578.80	1,915.76	11,494.56	Small Holding & Allotments Act 1908, ss.23, 25

Authorised on: 23 February 2026

Authorised by: _____

Signature: _____