

Cowfold Parish Council
Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 15th September 2025 commencing at 7.45pm in the Allmond Centre

Cllrs Present	Reading - Chair Towle – Vice Chair Harsum	Payne Fisher Clark	Lynn Lambert (HDC) from 8.15pm
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Clerk - Trevor Parsons and twelve members of the public.

Meeting opened at 7.45pm

09.25.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Howell (CPC), Cllr French (CPC) and Cllr Knowles (HDC)

09.25.2 Declaration of Interests

No Interests declared.

09.25.3 Approval of Minutes of last meeting and updates on agreed actions

The minutes of the last meeting was unanimously approved by Councillors and duly signed by the Chairman

09.25.4 Public Participation

There was no public participation, all members of the public were present to listen to EDF presentation.

09.25.5 Co-option of new Councillors

The application forms from three members of the public, who are all known to the Council, offering to co-opt onto Cowfold Parish Council to fill the three vacancies were emailed to Councillors prior to the meeting.

A vote was taken by Councillors on each application and Councillors voted unanimously to co-opt Paul Dittmer, Felicity Thorpe and Olivia Bennison onto the Parish Council with immediate effect.

09.25.6 Matters arising.

09.25.6.1 Oak Tree Acorn Avenue

A report was sent to our solicitor to forward to Direct Line in June 2025 recommending a significant prune and regular maintenance rather than cutting the oak tree down. The clerk has recently emailed our solicitor for an update.

09.25.6.2 Ash Tree

Planning permission to remove the Tree Preservation Order from the ash tree has been submitted to HDC to remove the tree. If HDC approve the order, the tree will be removed.

09.25.6.3 Pond

The Clerk met with Sussex Wildlife Trust with a view to re-establishing the pond requiring expert advice to avoid damaging wildlife. A plan is being formulated, and the Clerk is looking to engage with Greening Cowfold to move this project forward.

A contractor recommended by Sussex Wildlife has provided a quotation to restore the pond at a cost of £10,000. We understand that a grant of £5,000 is possible from Sussex Wildlife. Councillors agreed to continue with the project providing a further £5,000 of funding can be secured.

09.25.7 EDF Renewables – Picts Lane Solar Farm

Representatives from EDF Renewables addressed Parish Councillors with an update on their plans to apply for planning permission to install solar panels and battery storage on land between the village and Picts Lane. The link below provides access to the Consultation including the timeline for completion.

[July-25-Picts-Lane-Consultation-boards.pdf](#)

Councillors were updated on traffic and transport where it was acknowledged that there would be up to 16 HGV journeys in Picts Lane each day for the second to fifth month of the project delivering all the materials to site. Thereafter volumes will reduce to around 2 HGV journeys per day.

EDF advised Councillors that all Biodiversity Net Gain obligations will be met on-site from rewilding the “no build areas”. All existing public rights of way will be retained although some may be temporarily closed during the proposed construction.

One of the changes since the open day was the relocation of the proposed battery storage to the centre of the site in order for it to be further away from housing.

A Community Fund will be opened which will be operated by a Community Liaison Group run by local people.

The formal application for the solar panels and battery storage is expected to be submitted to Horsham DC for approval by the end of 2025. At which point the Parish Council would consider the application and submit Consultee Comments.

The consultation remains open to the public who can email pictslane@edf-re.uk or call 07577 987130 to discuss their concerns.

09.25.8 District and County Councillors Report

District Councillor Lyn Lambert arrived at the meeting after the EDF Presentation and reported:

- All four Neighbourhood Plan's in the Horsham District succeeded at the Parish level referendum and will be "made" at HDC Council meeting on 8th October 2025.
- There will be a Jobs and Skills Fair on Saturday 27th September 2025

[Horsham District Jobs and Skills Fair | Horsham District Council](#)

- Horsham District Council would write to the Planning Inspectorate to ask them to reconsider their position on the Local Plan in view of the imminent changing planning regulations which will repeal the Duty to Co-operate.
- An enforcement notice was issued and served on site today in relation to the unauthorised dance school at Kent Street, which was previously the subject of planning application DC/25/0658 which is currently at appeal.

County Councillor Sarah Payne reported:

- Skills boot camps are available to people 19 years and over who live or work in West Sussex.

[Skills Bootcamps - West Sussex County Council](#)

- The Fire Service consultation closes on 22nd September 2025.

[Have your say on West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Plan - West Sussex County Council](#)

- WSCC only received 6,000 responses from the public out of a population of 900,000 which was disappointing.

09.25.9 Code of Conduct training

The Clerk reminded Councillors to attend the online Code of Conduct training on 2nd October 2025.

The venue for Councillor training on Monday 22nd September at 7.30pm has changed from Allmond Centre to the Reading Room in Cowfold Village Hall.

09.25.10 Adoption of IT Policy

The new Cowfold Parish Council IT policy document was emailed to all Councillors prior to the meeting to be read and adhered to. Councillors voted unanimously in favour of its adoption.

09.25.11 Cowfold Football Club

A meeting took place between Cllrs Reading, Towle, Harsum and Fisher (on behalf of the Council) and members of Cowfold Football Club to discuss the Parish Council's wish to implement new charges for all football clubs who wish to use the adult pitch on the Recreational Ground and for the discussion of the Terms and Conditions for the Use of the Pitches to be finalised and agreed upon. The previous Pitch Maintenance proposal offered by the Council was declined by Cowfold FC.

Consequently, the Parish Council will work with the Football Foundation to access the grants available to be able to maintain and bring the pitch up to Football Foundation Standards. The Parish Council will apply for all the funding and do all the assessments and once the Grants are awarded, we can calculate the Pitch Fee going forward for each use to ensure we can maintain the funding amounts we need to contribute in years 3,4,5 and 6 when the grant is reduced by 33.3% every 2 years.

To reduce matchday parking congestion Cowfold FC have received permission to use available spaces at Farren Court.

Until funding is secured and new agreements are formalised, Cowfold Football Club have agreed to an increase in changing room charges from £13 per hour to £14 per hour.

The Clerk has emailed the Chairman of Cowfold Football Club with the minutes of the meeting together with a request to respond to the initial new terms and conditions of pitch usage.

Following the installation of six electric vehicle charging points behind the Allmond Centre the emergency access to the Recreation Ground has changed from the gate north of the Allmond Centre to the south gate access by the playground through removable bollards.

ACTION: The clerk to seek quotes for permanent hatching grid next to the bollards to stop cars blocking the entrance.

ACTION: Cllr Harsum to proceed with the application to the Football Foundation for grant funding.

09.25.12 Streetlights

Cllr Clark raised the issue of the streetlights as he is concerned that the current lighting is not adequate and the lights in the village should better light the streets. Cllr Clark suggested an appraisal of the current provision.

Balanced against this was the view that Cowfold is a rural location where streetlighting is less prevalent.

Cowfold Parish lights are already maintained under the WSCC streetlighting PFI dating back to March 2010. The cost that the Parish incur is the recharge from WSCC to maintain the lights on their behalf. The Parish also pays for its energy through the PFI, which is also recharged annually in arrears and presented as part of the annual maintenance charge.

Cowfold Parish was charged £52.75 per unit for 24/25 and 28.71p per KW/h for energy – last year's invoice was £3,131.76 ex VAT for the 37 lights that Cowfold Parish own. This breaks down to £1,951.75 for maintenance and £1,180.01 for energy. This includes all the services including unlimited replacement bulbs, cleaning, testing, supply repairs that are provided to WSCC under the Streetlighting PFI.

In July, 2025 WSCC informed the Parish Council that the cost to the Parish to convert 36 bulbs to LED would be £12,954.65 producing an energy cost saving of £766.41 pa.

With the Neighbourhood Plan and IDP now approved it was suggested that residents be asked what improvements can be made to the village and this could include the question whether there is adequate streetlighting in the village.

The cost of any new lighting would be met by an increase in precept.

09.25.13 Grants

This item will be moved to a meeting later in the year.

09.25.14 Community Asset Transfer

Horsham District Council has written to all parish councils in the district asking them to submit an expression of interest if they wished HDC assets in their parish to be transferred to them.

The Recreation Ground car park including the EV charging zone and a small plot of land south of Holms Oaks are currently owned by Horsham District Council. Cllr Lambert (HDC) informed Councillors at this is not a request to transfer but an indication to HDC that if the terms of the transfer are acceptable, then the Parish Council would like the opportunity to take on these assets. A basic survey of the car park would need to be undertaken to understand the cost of taking on the car park and the EV Charging area before agreeing to do so.

Cowfold Parish Councillors voted unanimously to submit the expression of interest to HDC to transfer both assets to Cowfold PC

09.25.15 New furniture for Allmond Centre

Cllr Towle proposed the purchase of 7 new tables (with a trolley) and 30 new chairs for the Allmond Centre to replace the current furniture. The cost of the tables and trolley would be £1,267 and the chairs £862. The quotes and pictures were circulated before the meeting.

Councillors voted unanimously to proceed with the purchase of the tables and trolley but would like more time to consider which chairs to buy.

09.25.16 Correspondence received including offer of willow tree

14/07/2025 - Concern over the state of oak tree planted between A272 and playground looks in poor shape due to lack of watering.

16/07/2025 - Email from National Grid regarding refurbishments to overhead line between Lovedean and Bolney.

17/07/2025 - Concern of hedge protruding into Henfield Road making the footpath impassable. - now cut back without Council intervention.

05/08/2025 - Email from Sunninghill Construction who are building social housing for Saxon Weald to meet up to discuss whether they can assist with any small projects.

04/08/2025 - Resident has requested seating at the bus stop heading southbound. WSCC licence has been approved and now working on a solution.

13/08/2025 - New road names signs installed for Bolney Road and Henfield Road.

19/08/2025 - Countrymans no longer offer grass cutting and hedge cutting services. James Botting (formerly of Countrymans) has set up a new company and his offer to continue the service for the remainder of 2025 has been accepted. A full review of grass and hedge cutting will be undertaken before the 2026 season.

21/8/2025 - Email from resident regarding legality of post box toppers. As this is Royal Mail property I referred them to the PO.

22/08/2025 - Received an email from a resident claiming to be in Lower Beeding Parish but received a voting slip for the neighbourhood plan. She is liaising with HDC to resolve.

4/9/2025 - Email from resident complaining about the standard of grass cutting in Thorndean. Replied advising that WSCC cut the verges, that the ground was wet and hopefully the next cut will be of a better standard.

08/09/2025 - Email from resident asking about the Potters Development. Replied for more information.

11/09/2025 - Email received from resident to request support for a TRO from the Parish and local County Councillor to install signs warning motorists of hedgehogs in the area. Cllr Payne (WSCC) advised the meeting that she had given this support and the application had been submitted to WSCC.

09.25.17.1 Finance Committee

Councillors were provided with a list of payments prior to the meeting and ratified all the payments below.

Treasurers Account – Payments made in July and August 2025

01/07/2025	Horsham DC	£112.64	Dog Bins
07/07/2025	Lloyds Bank	£4.25	Bank Charges
10/07/2025	Hedgehog Heaven	£200.00	Greening Cowfold
10/07/2025	Document Options	£36.77	Scanning Petition Signatures

10/07/2025	South West Play	£36.00	Playground Repairs
15/07/2025	Sigma Payroll	£34.10	Payroll Services
15/07/2025	WSCC	£3,758.11	Strteetlighting
16/07/2025	HDC	£17.00	Recycling
23/07/2025	Business Stream	£43.96	Water
24/07/2025	CM Print	£329.00	NP Banners and flyers
25/07/2025	Clerk Salary	£1,522.72	July Pay
25/07/2025	HMRC	£493.08	PAYE & NIC
25/07/2025	Connie Towle	£819.00	Facility Mgt & Caretaking
01/08/2025	Horsham DC	£45.00	Dog Bin Clean
01/08/2025	Horsham DC	£112.64	Dog Bins
05/08/2025	Moore Stephens	£535.50	External Audit Fees
05/08/2025	Lloyds Bank	£4.25	Bank Charges
07/08/2025	Steve Rolfe	£455.00	Litter Picking
12/08/2025	Rialtas	£243.60	Support & Maintenance
15/08/2025	Sigma Payroll	£34.10	Payroll Services
18/08/2025	Horsham DC	£17.00	Recycling
26/08/2025	Clerk Salary	£1,733.22	August Pay & backdated increment pay
26/08/2025	HMRC	£618.95	PAYE & NIC
26/08/2025	Connie Towle	£819.00	Facility Mgt & Caretaking
28/08/2025	Inios Cloud Ltd	£15.65	IT Services

Allmond Centre Account – Payments made in July and August

14/07/2025	The Range	£4.99	Cleaning Products
16/07/2025	EDF Energy	£160.25	Electricity
21/07/2025	Lloyds Bank	£4.25	Bank Charges
24/07/2025	RMK PAT	£96.00	Electric Testing
25/07/2025	Connie Towle	£358.48	Cleaning & Products
28/07/2025	BT	£24.29	Broadband
28/07/2025	Toby Mothe	£50.00	Window Cleaning
12/08/2025	Tectonic	£18.00	AC Website Services
19/08/2025	EDF	£189.63	Electricity
18/08/2025	Lloyds Bank	£4.25	Bank Charges
22/08/2025	Co-op	£17.05	Cleaning Products
26/08/2025	Connie Towle	£303.48	Cleaning
26/08/2025	Toby Mothe	£50.00	Window Cleaning
26/08/2025	Booker	£20.39	Cleaning Products
29/08/2025	BT	£24.29	Broadband

Cowfold PC Bank Balances as at 28/08/2025

Lloyds Bank – Treasurers Account	£2,085.91
Lloyds Bank – No 2 Allmond Centre	£1,519.19
Lloyds Bank – Instant Access Account	£20,063.66
Lloyds Bank – Greening Cowfold	£2,642.72
Lloyds Bank – Fixed Rate Deposit	£50,000.00

At the end of September 2025 Cowfold Parish Council will receive the 2nd half of the precept from Horsham DC amounting to £41,025.

Draft Budget

The Clerk informed the meeting that a finance committee had taken place to consider the budget for 2026 / 2027. A further meeting will take place before submitting a recommendation to the full council on the level of precept for the financial year 2026 / 2027.

09.25.17.2 Neighbourhood Plan

The referendum for adoption of the Plan was held on 4th September 2025 and the result was 307 in favour and 32 against, therefore the Neighbourhood Plan is duly adopted which will be ratified by HDC at their meeting on 8th October 2025. After this point Cowfold Parish Council will seek the views of residents on village improvements.

09.25.17.3 Roads & Transport

1) Community Highways Scheme Application ref 2500446 in respect of the proposed crossing on Bolney Road was submitted to WSCC Highways. We await their decision.

2) The petition, including 1,904 signatures supporting the proposal for reducing speed limits to 20mph in the village centre and 40mph to the Parish boundary was also submitted to WSCC. On the advice that WSCC were undertaking an Accident Prevention study on the A272 & A281 that would be likely to include actions including speed reductions CPC did not pursue a CHS for the speed reduction. WSCC Highways have indicated that we would not hear the outcome of their investigation until the end of the year.

3) Following the competition at the school, the winning artwork converted to signage has been put up around the village. Subsequently, CPC received a complaint from WSCC about one of the signs that showed a 20mph speed sign where the current speed limit is 30mph. This sign has been removed and it is hoped that the artwork can be amended so that the sign can be reinstated. The school has asked for additional funding to rework the sign should making adjustments to the sign itself not be possible.

4) Blocked drains on the A281 between the Co-op and entrance to Thornden. In the past such blockage has led to flooding and damage to property in the village centre. The issue has been reported to WSCC ref 906980.

09.25.17.4 Open Spaces

No report other than the meeting with the Cowfold FC covered in item 09.25.11

09.25.18 The Allmond Centre

August 2025- bookings down this month due to summer holidays but there are a lot of bookings for the next three months.

Lower Beeding and Handcross FC are hiring out the changing rooms for each training session and home game which is brilliant and Cllr Towle has secured parking at Farren Court for all Football Home Teams and officials so relieving the pressure on the car park and Fairfield Cottages.

The Welcome Club and Youth Clubs are all returning from their summer breaks this week and we are all looking forward to their return!

The Summer Cafe was a success, especially on sunny days, with a lot of support for the Cafe to continue. We had many locals and a lot of passing trade pop in. Cllr Towle worked tirelessly to secure her five-star hygiene rating for the next three years which is well deserved.

Councillors unanimously agreed to increase the hourly charge fee from £13ph to £14 ph.

09.25.19 Date of Next Meeting: Monday 13th October 2025

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.