

Cowfold Parish Council
Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 13th October 2025
commencing at 7.45pm in the Allmond Centre

Cllrs Present	Reading - Chair Payne	Clark Howell Thorpe	Harsum Dittmer
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Clerk - Trevor Parsons and one member of the public.

Meeting opened at 7.30 pm

Two planning applications were raised by the Chairman being:-

DC/25/1477 - Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension.
Decision – Neutral

DC/25/1435 - Construction of a ramp to connect the existing front entrance to the public
footpath to facilitate wheelchair access. Decision -Neutral

There were no questions from the public and the Ordinary Meeting commenced at 7.45pm.

10.25.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Towle, Fisher and Bennison.

The Clerk informed the meeting that Maria French has decided to step down from the Council.
Before a new councillor is sought, a skills audit will be undertaken to establish the gaps we have
as a Council which will be requested as part of the next co-option.

10.25.2 Declaration of Interests

None declared

10.25.3 Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting and Updates on Actions Agreed

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved by Councillors and duly signed by the Chairman. Actions agreed are stated in the Clerk's report 10.25.5

10.25.4 District and County Councillors Report

Cllr Lambert (HDC) reported:

All four local Neighbourhood Plans (including Cowfold) were "made" at the recent HDC meeting.

Central Government has made changes to Water Neutrality rules and HDC are looking for clarity as to when the new rules will apply.

Cllr Knowles (HDC) reported:

Sussex Wildlife Grant Scheme is now open

[Nature Recovery Award | Sussex Wildlife Trust](#)

Horsham Leisure Services questionnaire is now open.

[Help shape leisure services in Horsham District | Horsham District Council](#)

Raised a concern that if CPC leave discussions regarding the Community Benefit Scheme until it is clear permission will be granted then we are in a weaker position to ask for more.

[Community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon energy infrastructure: working paper \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK](#)

Councillor Payne (WSCC) reported:

WSCC was extending the Community Food Hub initiative.

[Community-food-hub](#)

WSCC are working to improve the transport network across West Sussex and Surrey. By making it safer, easier and more convenient to walk, cycle, use public transport and improving the standards of our roads. Below is the link to the public consultation.

[A24 Worthing to Horsham and Dorking Transport Improvements | Your Voice West Sussex](#)

£15.6m has been pledged to the WSCC Skills Bootcamps

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

You can now borrow potentially life-saving blood pressure monitors free of charge from all 36 libraries in West Sussex. High blood pressure (or hypertension) is a leading cause of heart attacks, strokes and other diseases, but it is a treatable condition and early detection is key. The

easy-to-use blood pressure monitoring kits can be borrowed for up to three weeks by local library members and used at home to check blood pressure daily.

[A loan that could save your life! - West Sussex County Council](#)

10.25.5 Clerk's Report

Oak Tree Acorn Avenue. An email was received from the solicitor acting for CPC regarding the tree with a suggestion of a constructive response to Keogh's Solicitors. Councillors agreed to instruct the Clerk to email our solicitor agreeing with her responding in line with her suggestion.

Ash Tree Acorn Avenue. We await consent from HDC to remove the tree.

Pond. No new action has been taken since the last meeting. Cllrs Clark and Harsum have agreed to look at low-cost regeneration options from sources available in the village.

EDF Solar. The Clerk has emailed EDF with the questions raised by Councillors at the last meeting and await their response.

Code of Conduct Training undertaken online.

Hatching. The Clerk and Cllr Towle met with Steve Battem to arrange appropriate hatching to ensure that access to the recreation ground by emergency services is always available. This work has now been completed.

Community Asset Transfer. The Clerk has written to HDC submitting our expression of interest to transfer ownership of the car park and land in Holm Oaks to CPC.

Councillor Training. Roles and Responsibilities training was undertaken on 22nd September. WSALC has arranged a countywide virtual meeting on Thursday 6th November available to all councillors who were unable to attend.

The Clerk and Cllr Towle met with Devine Homes at St Peters School with other affected parties. An update on plans was presented and Devine Homes have offered the new car park to the Diocese of Chichester (who own the St Peters School site) and the nine new allotment plots to Cowfold Parish Council. Both areas will be registered with separate title numbers.

10.25.6 Grant Applications

Two grant applications were received from St Peter's Church. The first application for £56 towards funding the cost of hiring the Allmond Centre for their harvest supper. Unanimously approved by Councillors.

The second application was for £800 to assist with 12 months Cowfold Village Hall hire for Church Mice Toddler Group. Councillors considered the application and agreed to grant £400 to cover the remainder of our financial year. Councillors understand that further grant funding would be sought after April 2026 but are looking for CMTG leaders to consider a small rise in the £2 pw charge and to look at other grant funds available.

10.25.7 Review of Working Groups

Changes to personnel in working groups was discussed and the new groups are as follows:

- **Planning** - Jake Fisher, Steve Reading and Trevor Parsons
- **Finance** - Steve Reading, Connie Towle, Mick Clark, Jake Fisher and Trevor Parsons
- **Personnel Committee** - Steve Reading, Connie Towle, Mick Clark and Kate Howell
- **Open Spaces** – Peter Harsum, Mick Clark and Olivia Bennison
- **Tree Wardens** – Peter Harsum
- **Greening Cowfold and footpaths** – Peter Harsum and Olivia Bennison
- **Allotments** – Connie Towle and Jake Fisher
- **Roads and Transport (including streetlights)** – Kate Howell and Felicity Thorpe
- **HALC, WSALC & Inter Parish** – Steve Reading
- **Neighbourhood Plan** – Jake Fisher, Peter Harsum and Paul Dittmer
- **Website** – Steve Reading and Paul Dittmer
- **Youth and Older Communities** – Connie Towle and Felicity Thorpe

10.25.8 Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

A new **Standing Orders** [Policies – Cowfold Parish Council](#) were agreed at the November 2024 meeting. Little has changed since and Councillors agreed to adopt for a further 12 months.

10.25.8 - Review of Financial Regulations

Our current Financial Regulation Section 6.10 states:

6.10. The RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the agenda for the meeting, together with the relevant invoices, to the council {or finance committee}. The council {or committee} shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself, shall authorise payment by resolution. The authorised schedule shall be initialled immediately below the last item by the person chairing the meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting.

However with online banking and dual authentication, our present arrangement is that during the month of say September, the Clerk will create payments which are authorised by a Councillor signatory the next day to pay invoices including bills & maintenance, my salary (&

HMRC), payments to the caretaker and facilities management of the Allmond Centre etc and then at the next ordinary meeting say October, Councillors will ratify the payments made in the previous month.

I propose 6.10 is re-worded as follows.

The RFO will create payments through Lloyds Bank Online Banking which are authorised by a Councillor signatory the next day to pay invoices including bills & maintenance, salary (& HMRC), payments to the caretaker and facilities management of the Allmond Centre. At the next ordinary meeting, Councillors will ratify the payments made in the previous month.

In addition 9.1 states: *Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed.*

I propose 9.1 is amended to

9.1. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk and the Allmond Centre Facilities Manager and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £100 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed.

These changes were unanimously adopted by Councillors.

10.25.9 Cowfold Vision Documents & Business Plan

Our Councillor training event highlighted the need for a Vision Document and Business Plan for Cowfold Parish Council. This is even more urgent now that unitary authorities are on their way. The Clerk provided examples of other Parish business plans and Cllr Payne offered to draft a Plan for CPC which will link with the made Neighbourhood Plan and IDP.

10.25.10 Representative Reports

10.25.10.1 Finance Committee

- **Update and Ratify payments made since last meeting**

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

Treasurers Account – Payments made in September 2025

01/09/2025	Horsham DC	£112.64	Dog Bins
01/09/2025	Steve Rolfe	£455.00	Litter picking
03/09/2025	Ace Landscapes	£439.20	Grass Cutting – July
03/09/2025	Mulberry LAS	£18.00	AGAR Assertion 10 training

05/09/2025	Lloyds Bank	£5.17	Bank Charges
10/09/2025	4The Youth	£2,702.70	Youth club provision
15/09/2025	Sigma Payroll	£34.10	Payroll Services
16/09/2025	Ace Landscapes	£439.20	Grass cutting – August
16/09/2025	Ace Landscapes	£1,426.80	Hedge Cutting
16/09/2025	Ionos Cloud	£12.60	IT services
17/09/2025	Horsham DC	£42.10	Recycling
23/09/2025	Millbrook	£300.00	Bus shelter seating
24/09/2025	Ionos Cloud	£18.65	IT Services
25/09/2025	Clerk Salary	£1,564.74	September Pay
25/09/2025	HMRC	£518.33	PAYE & NIC
25/09/2025	Connie Towle	£819.00	Facilities Mgt & Caretaking
26/09/2025	Business Stream	£100.74	Water annual fees

Allmond Centre Account – Payments made in September 2025

10/09/2025	SPR Heating	£720.00	Boiler Service & new water filter
16/09/2025	EDF Energy	£270.63	Electricity
16/09/2025	Maple Electrics	£585.60	Electrical repairs
19/09/2025	Lloyds Bank	£4.25	Bank Charges
23/09/2025	Business Stream	£171.50	Water
25/09/2025	Connie Towle	£333.48	Cleaning
25/09/2025	Toby Mothe	£50.00	Window Cleaning
26/09/2025	Business Stream	£125.69	Water
29/05/2025	BT	£24.29	Broadband

Bank Balances as at 30th September 2025 are:

Lloyds Bank --Treasurers Account	£42,136.94
Lloyds Bank – No 2 Allmond Centre	£ 828.75
Lloyds Bank – Instant Access Account	£61,783.67
Lloyds Bank – Greening Cowfold	£ 2,644.18

Subsequently, £40,000 has been placed on a fixed rate deposit for a period of six months.

- **Draft budget 2026/2027**

The Finance working group are making final amendments to the budget plan for 2026/2027.
The next meeting is set for Monday 27th October 2025 at 7.30pm at the Allmond Centre.

- **Interim Audit**

The half-year internal audit was undertaken on 8th October and the report has made three recommendations of best practice which have now been applied by the Clerk.

10.25.10.2 - Open Spaces – including Cowfold FC

Cllr Harsum reported that the Football Foundation grant application was making progress.

1. Pitch Power report – PH to complete
2. Two representatives of the Grounds Management Association Level 1 football online course, evidence will be required, PH already qualified so just one more person to the training. This short course costs £74 for non-members/£52 for members and the certificate of completion will need to be submitted to the Foundation prior to the release of any grant. Cllrs Reading and Dittmer have both agreed to complete the course.
3. A signed Grass Pitch Maintenance Agreement pro forma if we don't have a sufficient lease or licence.
4. Evidence of partnership funding
5. Educational Establishments and Town & Parish Councils applying for the Fund will also need to complete a Grass Pitch Service Level Agreement (SLA) to demonstrate the community's usage on their sites.

Cllr Harsum attended a meeting with the football club and requested he receive a copy of the minutes of their meeting to report to the Parish Council.

10.25.10.3 - Road & Transport

Cllr Howell attended the Sussex Air Quality Conference at Brighton University on 9th October. In general air quality has improved in Sussex, which is thought to be the result of the increase in electric vehicles, (in Cowfold we have seen a reduction in emissions of NO₂). With an increase in vehicle weight, however, there has been an increase in small particle emissions which will be monitored going forward.

The research discussed revealed that poor air quality leads to increased rates of diabetes, stroke, cognitive decline as well as asthma & lung disease, and that risk is on a par with smoking. Children and the elderly are particularly affected.

It was noted that there has been an increase in pollutants from log burners, even authorised

stoves can emit 300 times the levels of traditional central heating. Parishioners are urged to restrict the use of log burners, especially on days when there is little or no wind to disperse the fine particles.

10.25.10.4 - Allmond Centre

Nothing to report

10.25.11 Date of Next Meetings : Monday 10th November 2025

Monday 8th December 2025