

Cowfold Parish Council

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 14th September 2026 commencing at 7.45pm in the Reading Room, Village Hall.

Cllrs Present	Towle - Chair Howell	Thorpe Goodyer	Clark Harsum Dittmer
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Clerk - Trevor Parsons. There were 12 members of the public present, but no issues were raised.

The meeting opened at 20:06

9.26.1 Apologies for absence

Councillors were advised that Steve Reading has resigned as a Councillor with immediate effect due to work commitments. We thanked Steve for all his time spent as Chairman and Councillor.

Apologies were received from Cllr Payne (CPC) and Cllr Lambert (HDC)

9.26.2 Declaration of Interests

Cllr Towle declared an interest in item 9.26.7 being the grant application from Country Mice.

9.26.3 Election of New Chair and Vice-Chair

Cllr Thorpe proposed and Cllr Howell seconded that Cllr Towle be Chair of Cowfold Parish Council. Councillors voted unanimously in favour of her appointment. Cllr Towle accepted the position and signed the Declaration of Acceptance.

Cllr Towle proposed and Cllr Goodyer seconded that Cllr Howell be Vice-Chair of Cowfold Parish Council. Councillors voted unanimously in favour of her appointment. Cllr Howell accepted the position and signed the Declaration of Acceptance.

9.26.4 Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 10th August 2026 were read and unanimously approved by Councillors and duly signed by the Chair.

The minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 10th August 2026 are still pending as the response to DC/26/0913 is still being prepared.

9.26.5 District & County Councillors Reports

Cllr Knowles reported:

- Local Government Reorganisation has been paused

[Local government reorganisation | Horsham District Council](#)

- Community Climate Fund is open

[Community Climate Fund | Horsham District Council](#)

- Community Grants closes on 30th September. A new tranche will be open shortly thereafter.
- HDC continues to offer a wide range of Health and Wellbeing support

[Health and wellbeing | Horsham District Council](#)

- Gatwick Noise Board meets on 14th October 2026

[Noise & Airspace: Engagement | London Gatwick Airport](#)

- Horsham District Jobs & Skills Fair will be held at The Drill Hall on Wednesday 30th September from 3.30pm to 7.30pm.

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

- Road crossing supervisors will now be issued with bodycams to evidence poor behaviours.

Cllr Roger Noel (WSCC) reported:

I'm going to start with LGR, even though we've all heard enough of this in the past couple of weeks.

Last week's announcement that LGR is to be paused, means that in fact, there are only two local Councils that require a new review, which are West Sussex and Cambridgeshire with Peterborough. Hampshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk have all been abandoned completely. West Sussex' CEO, Leigh Whitehouse, thinks that there are three options left:

Firstly, there could be a quick review from Gov't and we go back to the timetable we were working to last week, but that decision has to be made within a month or so for an election to take place on the same date as District Elections in May next year. Secondly there is an option that the timetable is completely reviewed and we will have one or two years before LGR takes effect. This would mean that we have unitary elections in 2028 or 2029. Or finally, the whole thing is dropped....the West Sussex CEO, thinks that the 'mood music' from Whitehall is that they intend to fix the policy rather than drop it all together, so the CEOs of WSCC and the Ds & Bs are still meeting once a week to continue until another option is announced - or until this schedule becomes untenable, and then they will decide how to move forward. The present organisational plans will have to be changed now anyway, but the worst problem is the effect that this is having on Officers of the District and County Councils involved as they have all been planning their new careers. They now have to alter their career course again. The same, to a lesser extent applies to Councillors themselves; but then we never know when the public has had enough of us until we lose an election! One thing is certain though...Horsham District Council is having elections for their Councillors next May, so yet more campaigning will be starting very soon.

Other changes at West Sussex are that any emails for PROW problems have now changed from the public rights of way reporting page to the 'Report a Problem' page on the West Sussex pages. This begins from 2nd October

On Highways matters, we have also been asked to look out for any signage from road alterations left on the verges by contractors.... the county seems to have lost a few signs and could do with public help to retrieve them! We have also been asked to make the public more aware of the dangers of discarding vapes, so please ask anyone you know who vapes to put them in the correct bins, as there have been a few Vape fires in Crawley over the summer..I think there's one at the Co-op up the road. At the same time, County is rolling out a

programme to stop people putting e-bikes in their houses rather than locking them up outside somewhere...again, in Crawley, there was major house fire after somebody stored their e-bike inside the house. The Fire Service are also offering a free electric blanket testing service if residents want to take their blankets for testing to any firestation...I think the nearest one to here is in Partridge Green for Cowfold residents. Finally there is also an autumn incentive from the Council called 'stop the spark' which has been created to remind us all to take batteries, vapes and small electrical items to recycling centres, and in Horsham, we can call HDC for a collection of just small electrical items for a collection from home. As Joanna will tell you, Horsham is using a separate company now, just for this service.

Two more things: West Sussex have been taking part in the Countywide Climate Change consultation, which Officers are encouraging everyone to take part in in order to not only mitigate climate change, but to adapt to the impacts we are all feeling after this summer. Finally, with your search for a new 'school crossing officer' I have been in touch with the recruitment officers and the volunteers for will get paid £12.65 per hour and in term time only, although spread out over 12 months. Anyone you can find needs to contact scp@westsussex.gov.uk. Crossing patrol officers now need to wear body cameras on top of their uniform to identify drivers who don't stop for the children. Identifying drivers will be part of the training provided by West Sussex before they start their work on the road.

I'm not aware of any progress on the new footpath you identified, but as with all highways matters, I expect it to take some time. Please let me know if you need any other help on Highways, but I'm sure I'll get an email.

One last thing on HALC – everyone should be getting an email this week if the new meeting at Horsham is to go ahead on 24th of this month.

9.26.6 Clerk's Report including actions from previous meetings

Acceptance of Office and Register of Interests for Cllr Goodyer has been sent to HDC. Email address is also set up.

New goals have been ordered from SportsEquip.

The Clerk, Cllrs Towle and Howell had a virtual meeting with Solar UK regarding the Cobwood Solar site west of the village. It was an informative meeting and an opportunity to build relations with the new Community Liaison Group. Solar UK are waiting for the Final Investment Decision (FID) from the Finance Division of Totale Energies at the end of September which funds the whole project. Once approved, it was agreed to have an Open Day in Cowfold and Partridge Green to share the details of the project. It is expected that contract work will be undertaken between April and November 2027 with connection in Q1 2028. Cllr Towle has subsequently emailed Solar UK to obtain clarification of how much the Community Grant will be payable to the Parish Council.

An email was received from Lucy Adams, a former champion skateboarder offering her services to secure funding and develop a new skatepark in the village. Cllr Towle to take the lead on future discussions.

An email was received to advise that the EV points were not working. As these are managed by HDC the complaint was directed to HDC.

9.26.7 Country Mice Grant application

As Cllr Towle declared an interest in the agenda item, she left the room for the entirety of the discussion.

Country Mice Pre-School are undertaking urgent structural repairs to their building in Station Road which may well take until November 2026 to complete. As a result, from Thursday 24th September 2026 they have temporarily moved to The Allmond Centre weekdays between 8am – 6pm.

The rental fee for the Allmond Centre is £16.00 per hour which is far higher than they pay at their current premises. Country Mice management have approached the Parish Council to request a reduced fee. Councillors have discussed the matter following the meeting and, by a majority, agreed a 50% reduction on the standard hire fee.

ACTION : Clerk to email Country Mice to inform them of the decision.

9.26.8 Adoption of Updated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Councillors voted unanimously to approve the latest ST and FR presented by the Locum Clerk

9.26.9 Adoption of Terms of Reference

Councillors voted unanimously to approve the Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee and Working Parties presented by the Locum Clerk.

9.26.10 HALC Update – To appoint two CPC Representatives

Councillor Howell updated the Council following the HALC AGM that did not go ahead in August as planned.

It was agreed that Councillors Clark & Thorpe would represent Cowfold Parish Council on HALC going forward.

A special meeting of HALC is being arranged for the end of the month (date to be agreed) to try to establish a way forward for the association at this critical time of local government reorganisation.

Action : Clerk to email WSALC to request a copy of the accounts for 2024/5 & 2025/6, a copy of 2025/6 AGM minutes showing approval of subscription and to ask are there reserves b/f from previous years? If not, what have reserves been spent on?

9.26.11 Root Barrier – Oak Tree – Update

The root barrier has now been installed. Cllr Clark inspected the site and was happy with the way the contractors had left the ground.

9.26.12 Access to footpaths on the field behind the playing field

Cllr Howell wrote on behalf of Cowfold Parish Council to object to the land deposit reference CA16 17/25 “Land at South Lodge Estate Lower Beeding”

The notice has only been made known to Cowfold Parish Council in the last few days, when a walker came across it. It was placed in a rarely used entrance to the land in question, being an entrance cited on the A272 in a 60mph zone, shown on the below map as a red star. Most users of the footpaths in that area are either residents living in Cowfold Village, or people who have parked in the car park (next to the playing field) and so arrive on the land at the various entrances off the playing field as shown in red arrows on the map below.

The application is named “Land at South Lodge Estate Lower Beeding” but in fact the land is in the parish of Cowfold not Lower Beeding - as shown on the below map of the Parish boundary published by Horsham District Council. To our knowledge Cowfold Parish Council was not advised about application CA16 17/25 and therefore has been unable to communicate this to parishioners.

In an email dated 1st September WSCC confirmed that the Property Register (which describes the land and estate comprised in the title) for both titles to which this application relates states that the land is ‘South Lodge Estate, Lower Beeding, Horsham’. This is why the application and notice referred to Lower Beeding in the description of the land, rather than Cowfold.

The field to the east of the playing field is the subject of an application for a right of way that is currently being worked on by a member of the community. This application will show that residents have accessed permissive footpaths not shown on the map submitted in the application CA16 17/25 for over 20 years. There are statements from individuals who state that access has been permitted for up to and over 50 years. Furthermore, there is photographic evidence that the landowner has accepted there are footpaths in the area as below, but these permissive pathways are not included in the map submitted in the application CA16/ 17/25 and so it is believed that the map is materially incorrect. The full application for a right of way around the edge of the field to the east of the playing field will be forwarded to the Legal Services team at WSCC in due course.

There are other permissive footpaths in the area covered by the map that have not been marked. As the Parish Council has had little notice we have not been able to gather evidence of which additional footpaths should be marked, but can do with more time.

Access to the land in the Parish of Cowfold is an important aspect of rural life for the community and is underpinned by Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan which states in the Strategic Objectives “Preserve and enhance Green Infrastructure, including open spaces” and “Build on local rural character by: preserving and enhancing access to the surrounding countryside”.

WSCC have now confirmed at Cowfold Parish Council have been added to the list of recipients for any future applications for land deposits in the parish.

Cowfold Parish Council fully supports the application submitted by Cllr Howell for the PROW for the fenced off field behind the playing field.

ACTION : Locum Clerk and Councillors to gather further evidence of residents using the permissive footpaths on this land by way of number of walkers, maps and routes.

9.26.13 Representatives Reports

9.26.13.1 Finance - Update and note payments made in August 2026

Councillors noted the payments made in August 2026 listed separately and were advised of the balances as at 31st August 2026.

Lloyds Bank - Treasurers Account £2,290.69

Lloyds Bank – No 2 Allmond Centre £3,944.76

Lloyds Bank – Instant Access Account £53,027.32

Lloyds Bank – Greening & CIL £8,946.01

The Notice of Conclusion of Audit was noted by Councillors.

9.26.13.2 - Open Spaces

Cllr Harsum has met with Green Thumb and Origin Amenity Solutions for quotes to deliver the first of the football pitch improvements funded by the Football foundation grant. Work to be completed before the end of November 2026.

9.26.13.3 - Road & Transport

1) Bus Stop Improvements

CPC have received plans for improvements to 3 bus stops: St Hugh's Monastery; Jeremy's 2 Farm Shop; Brook Hill. Cllrs Howell and Thorpe will be reviewing the plans and visiting the sites on Thursday to provide feedback to WSCC Highways.

2) Lolipop Lady - Replacement

Cllr Noel is investigating whether there are any plans to recruit a replacement following the retirement of the current lady.

3) Acorn Avenue Road Issue

Complaints received about a hump in Acorn Avenue which has caused damage to undercarriages on cars and passed onto WSCC Highways to prioritise. It is understand work has now been completed to smooth the road surface. Residents will update if problem isn't resolved.

9.26.13.4 - Allmond Centre

The external and internal redecoration of The Allmond Centre is now complete. The changing rooms will be redecorated later in 2026. Our thanks go to Cllr Thorpe for managing the project, Brewers Horsham for donating the paint and to Camilia Botnar whose staff completed all the redecorating.

This is the last Council meeting for the Clerk and Councillors thanked him for his service.

9.26.14 Date of Next Meeting : Monday 12th October 2026