

## PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025, commencing at 7pm in the Village Hall.  
*Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, December 2025 Meeting Pack.*

### Present:

Chair: Cllr Janice Muckian. Cllrs: Alison Bourne, Lizzie Falconer, Iain Lamont, Roy Mawford, Irene Mitchell, Jane Ranzetta and Chris Robinson. Eight members of the public.

### Opening Statement by the Chair:

The Chair began by welcoming everyone and introduced herself explaining to all present that this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of minute taking only and that after the minutes have been approved this recording will be destroyed. The Chair reminded all that this is not a public meeting, but a meeting of the Council held in public. Members of the Public were respectfully asked to maintain silence during the Council's deliberations and not to approach the Councillors. Councillors were requested not to engage with Members of the Public when Council is in session. All were asked to ensure that their mobile phone was on silent and were reminded to treat all present with respect.

### 1. Apologies and approval of Absences

The Clerk reported that Cllrs Domoney and Sherman were not present and had sent their apologies.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

The Clerk reported that Cllrs Ranzetta and Muckian had each declared interests in Planning Matters. Cllr Robinson had updated his Register of Interest to include that he is now a Trustee of the Hub. The Clerk invited Councillors to declare any interests, none were declared.

### 3. Requests for Dispensations

The Clerk reported that he had received no further requests for dispensations.

### 4. Appointments

Cllr Ranzetta told the Chair that she would like to be considered for the position of Vice-Chair

**Motion:** that the Parish Council appoints Cllr Ranzetta as Vice-Chair.

**Proposed:** Cllr Muckian **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Cllr Ranzetta said that she was willing to be added to Bank Mandate

**Motion:** that the Parish Council adds Cllr Ranzetta to Bank Mandate.

**Proposed:** Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

The Chair volunteered to be the Parish Council (PC) representative on The Guildhall committee.

**Motion:** that Cllr Muckian be the PC representative on The Guildhall committee.

**Proposed:** Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

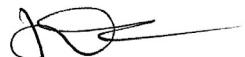
### 5. Approval of Minutes

To approve as accurate minutes of the October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025 meeting of the Council

**Proposed:** Cllr Lamont **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson voted against.  
Cllr Mawford abstained.

To approve as accurate minutes of the November 6<sup>th</sup> 2025 meeting of the Council

**Proposed:** Cllr Lamont **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson voted against.



## **6. Public Participation Session**

The Chair reminded Members of the Public of the protocol for this session. Those who wish to ask a question or make a statement have three minutes. Matters raised must concern business on the agenda or local matters. If a question cannot be answered tonight Members of the Public should contact the Clerk with their name and contact details and will receive a written response within 28 days. She explained that the Standing Orders of the Council are clear that this public session is for ten minutes and that it is at the discretion of the Chair whether further time is allowed or the session shortened.

A Member of the Public asked whether the directional signs were going to be re-introduced to Water St. The Chair said that the signs had not been re-introduced because the Traffic Survey had shown that the signage made no appreciable difference. Removing the signs reduced the amount of signage clutter in the village. Should a Councillor wish to re-introduce the signage the matter could be discussed.

A Member of the Public read out a letter from the organisers of the Christmas Event. The Organisers of the Event wished to make it known that they were very disappointed that a Parish Councillor had, in their opinion, appeared to have used the event to contest the rejection of their application for Planning Permission. They said that information contained within the relevant document was incorrect in stating that the PC was organiser of the Christmas Event. The organisers of the Christmas Event wished to make it clear that at no point had they asked the PC to host the event and that they are collecting money on behalf of the Community Council, a charitable body, who will ring fence any funds for this event for next year. The Chair replied that she considered it unfortunate that some misinformation concerning the PC had been put in the public domain. The Chair invited all other Cllrs to comment. No Cllr commented except Cllr Mitchell who expressed her hope that the event be a success.

## **7. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair informed Councillors that:

### **Green Willows Footpath**

The Clerk has been notified by Suffolk Highways that a construction order has been raised for the Green Willows footpath. The contractor has 14 weeks to deliver the onsite works. We have made the Suffolk Street Light Team aware of this so that they can co-ordinate with their Highways colleagues.

### **Parish Council Vacancy**

With regards to the vacancy on the Parish Council, we have been informed by Babergh that there has been a call for an election. At least ten Members of the Public have written to Babergh requesting an election.

- a) Notice of election will be published and displayed on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December
- b) Nominations will commence Monday 15th December, closing on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December
- c) Polling day will be Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January

Further details including registration details, proxy and postal voting will be published on the PC website.

Should there be only one candidate the cost to the PC of the election will be several hundred pounds. Should there be more than one candidate the cost to the PC will be in the region of £2,000.

Babergh has advised the PC that the PC must decide whether it wishes:

- a) Poll cards to be issued as soon as practicable; or
- b) Poll cards to be issued only after the election is confirmed as contested; or
- c) Poll cards NOT to be issued even if an election is requested and contested.

The Chair explained that the additional estimated costs of Poll Cards is £1,500 explaining that a motion to decide whether or not Council wishes to approve this additional expenditure had been unfortunately omitted from this evening's Agenda. She asked Cllrs present to indicate how they wished to proceed explaining that should they wish Poll Cards to be issued the Clerk would be requested to exercise his discretionary power to spend up to £1,500 to ensure the proper running of the Council.



The Clerk explained that should Option B be chosen that Poll Cards will be delivered between Christmas and New Year or in the first week of January.

Cllr Ranzetta commented that Poll Cards would be excellent publicity for the upcoming election and likely increase turnout.

Cllr Falconer asked whether Council could afford the cost. The Clerk replied that in the context of the annual expenditure of the PC the financial consequences were not significant.

In answer to a question from Cllr Mitchell the Clerk explained that for the village poll on the 20mph scheme concerning which Poll Cards were not a possibility the PC had produced a leaflet distributed by volunteers to publicise the poll.

All Cllrs indicated by show of hands that they wished Poll Cards to be issued should it become known that the election is contested.

#### **8. Local Authority Councillors' Reports**

District Cllr Maybury spoke very briefly of her and District Cllr Clovers report:

- a) Owners of listed buildings can now improve their energy efficiency by installing secondary glazing or replacing windows on Grade II listed buildings where they have previously received Listed Building Consent. Both permissions are subject to certain conditions.
- b) The Call for Sites is in progress in preparation for Babergh's new Joint Local Plan.
- c) The public consultation period concerning Local Government reorganisation is now open and closes on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2026. There are differences of opinion concerning the savings that are achievable. She noted the postponement of the Mayoral Elections.
- d) The Better Recycling 5 bin system is expected to go live on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026. Each household will retain their original black bin for refuse only (not food waste). The blue bin will be used for glass, tetrapak cartons, metal tin cans/foil and all types of plastic, the new green lidded bins will be used for paper and card only. Each of these 240 litre bins will be collected on three weekly rotation. In addition, households will be supplied with a 25 litre food caddy which will be collected weekly. Collections will be on the same day of the week. Garden waste collections will continue as usual. For households where standard issue is not suitable there will be the option of 180/140/50 litre bins plus different coloured sacks.
- e) Despite objections from various parties, the changes to the Melford Rd Junction in Sudbury development are scheduled to go ahead from mid-January 2026 at significant cost believed to be upwards of £250k.
- f) Suffolk is presently enduring a serious outbreak of bird flu. The closest being Lawshall at present. Dogs being walked on footpaths close by should be kept on leads. Any dead wild birds should not be touched and reported on the Defra helpline 03459 33 55 77. Owners of poultry should disinfect hands and footwear before tending. She urged all to be careful.
- g) Since the launch of the pink bin scheme 14 tonnes of unwanted electricals have been recycled.

Cllr Maybury explained that she had used her locality budget to support repairs to a bus in Great Waldingfield used by those with mobility issues, to help establish a Family Safe Space in Lavenham Church and offered £400 to help maintain the trees in Lavenham which required urgent safety work.

The Clerk explained that County Cllr Lindsay was unable to attend having been specifically asked by another PC to attend their meeting.

The Clerk reported that County Cllr Lindsay had also drawn Cllrs attention to the public consultation concerning Local Government Reorganisation. He had also reported that Suffolk Archives has received a grant of £139,107 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a new project called Beyond Labels: Celebrating Disability which aims to shine a light on the lives achievements and challenges of people with disabilities in Suffolk. Beyond Labels will collect and preserve personal stories - as well as the histories of organisations, schools, and charities that support disabled people - to create a record that celebrates disability while sparking conversations about inclusion, accessibility, and equality. There will be a free public exhibition at The Hold in Ipswich which will run from February to May 2026 to celebrate the stories collected through the project and encourage greater awareness and empathy across Suffolk.



#### **9. Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Group**

The Secretary of the LNP Review Group spoke of the recent informal meeting of the Review Group with the Cllrs describing it as very useful.

The Secretary reported that he had responded to questions raised with him by Cllr Mitchell and believed these matters now resolved. Cllr Lamont asked the Secretary to confirm that the revised LNP needs to follow the JLP. The Secretary said that the two would run in parallel with timing of the JLP uncertain but that yes the LNP must wait until the JLP is settled. The Secretary of the LNP Group explained that the budget had been prepared through discussions with the relevant professional advisors. Cllr Lamont noted that the estimates of costs were similar to those incurred for LNP2. The Secretary explained that the Questionnaire would now be redrafted for the PC to consider. He aimed to make this a 'good draft' that the PC would be able to accept.

Cllr Mitchell thanked the Secretary and the Group for engaging with her thoughts concerning the Questionnaire saying that she was looking forward to the next draft. Cllr Mitchell and the Secretary agreed that the new LNP would need to be in compliance with the new JLP.

The Clerk explained to Cllrs that at the Council meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025 the LNP Group submitted a request for an interim budget, without timescale, of £15,000. This had been approved and included in the Reforecast 1 for 2025/26.

He told Cllrs that the spend to end October is £1,210.

He tabled the whole project budget noting that as explained by the LNP Group this is based on information and explanations available as at October 2025 and that as with any budget as circumstances change the budget may need to change and timings of spend may alter.

The Secretary described the Clerks summary as fair adding that the estimates were based on submissions, in writing, from the professional advisors and that no contingency had been included.

Cllr Mitchell said that she wanted to ensure that the Group had the resources to complete the project without unnecessary obstacles and suggested an amendment to the draft motion to add the words 'it is recognised that costs may change over the period of preparation of the Plan'.

**Amended Motion:** The budget proposed by the LNP Group of £33,535 for the completion of the revision of the 2016 LNP is accepted. It is recognised that costs may change over the period of preparation of the Plan. All expenditure on the revision of the LNP beyond that approved at Council Meetings held on 5<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 must be approved by Council at future Meetings.

**Motion to amend Draft Motion:** **Proposed:** Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

**Vote to pass Amended Motion:** **Proposed:** Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

#### **10. Planning Register**

The Clerk told Cllrs that Babergh continues to approve applications to fell trees contrary to the recommendations of this Council. He reported that the three appeals to the Planning Inspector (Toll Cottage, the Rectory and the proposed Wellness Centre) remain undetermined.

#### **11. Planning Applications**

**DC/25/5094** Path Cottage, 84 High St, Extension to rear of property and replacement of garden shed.

Cllr Lamont told Cllrs that this property is Grade II listed and in the Conservation area. He said that the proposed extension design has been the subject of several iterations, pre-application advice has been taken with the Heritage Officer and substantial changes made as a result of the recommendations.

The proposed extension is to replace a rear lean-to with an extension to the side and behind the property.



Cllr Lamont told Cllrs that the Planning Group considered that the garden is a good size, so this extension does not overdevelop the plot and that the proposed extension will appear subservient to the current building. Consequentially the Group considers that the proposal complies with the Lavenham Neighbourhood plan policies D1 Design and Character and D2 High Quality Design and Joint Local Plan policies LP03 - Residential Extensions and Conversions and LP19 - The Historic Environment.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/5094.

**Proposed:** Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Cllr Muckian left the room and Cllr Ranzetta chaired the meeting.

**DC/25/4981** The Bays, Bears Lane. Upgrade the building fabric and to add a small extension at the front connecting the house to the ancillary building. To the rear the building is to be extended by 1.2m onto the patio, and the roof pitch lowered.

Cllr Lamont explained that this property is not listed but is in the Conservation Area. It is the last property on this street in the conservation area. The properties either side are of a similar age and construction.

He told Cllrs that this application is very similar to application DC/23/02493 (Remodel bungalow, upgrade building fabric and erect front link extension to ancillary building) which was approved.

The proposed link extension will have more impact on the street scene as it is taller but not significant. The rear view cannot be seen from the street or any listed building and the change is modest. The neighbouring property has been subject to a similar development.

He told Cllrs that the Planning Group considers that the proposal complies with Joint Local Plan policies LP03 - Residential Extensions and Conversions and LP19 - The Historic Environment, and Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan D1 Design and Character and D2 High Quality Design.

Cllr Mitchell asked if any views would be impeded, Cllr Lamont said that none would be. Cllrs questioned whether the height of the roof was being increased and whether the proposed glass lightwell was the same height as the principal building. The Clerk told Cllrs that the height of the roof was not being increased.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/4981

**Proposed:** Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Cllr Muckian re-entered the room and took over as Chair.

**DC/25/4913 24** The Paddocks. Erection of home gym/music room.

Cllr Lamont explained that this application relates to a property that is currently outside the Built Up Area Boundary and so the proposal does not comply with Policy SP03 of the Joint Local Plan 2023. It is not permitted in any of the exceptions listed in policy SP03. It is also adjacent to the Railway Public Right of Way, which is on the northern boundary. A very similar application DC/23/04410 was made for a single storey Garden room of a similar size at the adjacent property 15 The Paddocks (also in a location with the Railway Public Footpath on the northern boundary) and this application was refused.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends refusal of Application DC/25/4913

**Proposed:** Cllr Mitchell **Seconded:** Cllr Lamont **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Bourne voted against. Cllr Robinson abstained.

**DC/25/4906 81** High St, Installation of reversible fire break within the roof space.

Cllr Lamont told Cllrs that the property is Grade II listed and in the conservation area. The proposal is to install a fire safety barrier between this property and the adjoining one as they share a roof space. The Heritage office was consulted as part of pre-application work. The work does not affect the fabric of the building and could be removed.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/4906

**Proposed:** Cllr Ranzetta **Seconded:** Cllr Robinson **Decision:** Approved unanimously.



**DC/25/4957 9 Trinity Gild, Tree Works.**

Cllr Lamont commented that the tree roots are entering the drain.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends approval of Application DC/25/4957

**Proposed:** Cllr Robinson **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously

**DC/25/4687/88 De Vere House, Water St. Extensive Building Works.**

Cllr Ranzetta left the room.

Cllr Lamont explained that there are no clear drawings indicating the existing and proposed building site plans, elevations, room layout, and details of changes to the structure of the building. He told Cllrs that there are fragments of information spread across a number of documents insufficient to give a clear picture of the impact of the proposed changes. These are, he said, dramatic changes to a Grade I listed building and in-depth details of structural changes and all materials proposed, including finishes are required.

The Planning Group noted that the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings had expressed similar concerns and considered that the documentation in its current state is insufficient to assess the impact on the Grade I listed building and the benefit of the changes.

**Motion:** that the Parish Council recommends refusals of Applications DC/25/4687 and 4688

**Proposed:** Cllr Falconer **Seconded:** Cllr Mawford **Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Cllr Ranzetta re-entered the room.

## **12. Clerks Report**

The Clerk reported that the urgent safety work on the trees approved last month has been ordered and will be done very shortly. He will have at least three quotes for a Tree Survey to bring to a future Parish Council Meeting. This will probably be January. One of the builders who quoted for the repair of the Churchyard wall has been requested to do the work.

The Lavenham Community Hub has written to Council detailing various repairs it considers necessary and the PC will be working with them to remedy this. He commented that should the costs turn out to be material that this is of course the sort of thing the sinking fund was designed to deal with.

Draft Leases for the Offices and Toilets have now been received from Babergh Council which make it clear that the Parish Council is only responsible for internal repairs.

### **Forecast, Budget and Precept:**

He told Cllrs that the objectives for tonight are to approve the reforecast for this Financial year and set the Budget and Precept for next year saying that it is important to remember that none of this is making spending decisions. Spending decisions, he said, will be brought to Council in the usual way.

He reminded Cllrs that Council approved a budget for this year with a deficit of £10,000. A year ago our reserves were in a favourable position and so we had been able to budget to use some of those reserves and not increase Council Tax.

He reminded Cllrs that the reforecast approved in September was for a deficit of some £29,000 i.e. an increase in the deficit of some £19,000 with the Interim Budget for the LNP of £15,000 and the legal fees incurred in respect of the Subject Access Requests being the main, but not the only, reasons for that increase in deficit.

Subsequently the LNP Group has informed the PC that only £5,000 is required this year for work on the LNP with the major costs of the LNP now falling into future years. This saving, which is timing only, together with the other items listed in the schedule in the Working Papers, leads to a proposed deficit in Reforecast 2 of £21,000. He asked Cllrs to approve Reforecast 2.



Cllr Robinson said that the Reforecast did not contain the offer of £400 from District Cllr Maybury. The Clerk replied that there would undoubtedly be changes both favourable and adverse between now and the end of the year. As an example, he anticipated that the election will be contested and so the Poll Card cost will be incurred.

**Motion:** To approve Reforecast 2 for the year ended 2025/26.

**Proposed:** Cllr Lamont **Seconded:** Cllr Ranzetta **Decision:** Approved unanimously

He described the setting of the Precept for 2026/27 is dominated by four issues:

- a) The 50% reduction in the Babergh Cleaning Grant for 2026/27 and 2027/28 and its elimination from 31 March 2028. This Grant is currently £13,333 per annum. The 50% reduction reduces Council's annual revenues by about 6%.
- b) The need to fund £33,535 to revise the LNP with Central Government having removed Grant Funding.
- c) The need to spend at least £15,000 on maintenance of trees over the next year with little likelihood of Grant Funding.
- d) Council needs to enter the year ending 31 March 2029 i.e. after all LNP Costs have been incurred with a satisfactory reserves position and with Annual Revenues equal to its Annual Costs so that reserves do not fall further.

The Clerk explained that in many ways setting the Budget for next year is relatively straightforward, the expenditure on many lines is known and is contractually committed to. Examples of this are Cleaning and Street Maintenance, Clerks Wages and the cost of the LNP. He explained each important line in next year's Budget to Councillors saying that he had also prepared an outline budget for 2027/28 which shows that in 2027/28 there is likely to be a loss of some £14,000 which is very similar to the LNP Costs anticipated for that year and so there is a fair chance that we can break even in 2028/29.

He explained to Cllrs that his main message was that whilst the PC's Income and Expenditure for next year is to a very large extent known what Cllrs must consider, consequent of the deficit this year and the proposed deficits in each of the next two years, so three years of deficits, is whether the PC has sufficient reserves. He said that the answer to that is that the PC will only have sufficient reserves if it makes some quite difficult decisions.

He reminded Cllrs that Guidance is that the PC should have Cash Reserves of six to nine months. He explained that Cash Reserves are calculated by forecasting cash balances at each of the next year ends subtracting cash held for other purposes such as the sinking fund and then subtracting cash held on other people's behalf such as the Village Social Fund, Babergh Council for the Community Infrastructure Levy and Suffolk Council for the unbilled street lighting to develop a forecast of PC real cash at each of these future dates. That amount of real cash is then compared to the plan spending in the next year.

He explained that the likely cash balance next March is £370,000 but the sum of all those deductions is nearly £260,000 and so the PC's real cash next March is likely to be about £110,000 or about 7/12 of the £180,000 the PC will spend next year. Seven twelfths of a year equating to 7 months.

He told Cllrs that he had forecasted PC real cash reserves considering four different levels of usage of Neighbourhood Cil and three different levels of Council Tax Increase.

He explained each of the scenarios and told Cllrs that he had put forward two suggestions:

The first is an approach designed to minimise Council Tax Increases.

This approach charges the whole anticipated costs of the LNP and tree work totalling £48,000 to NCIL leaving £9,000 NCIL for other items i.e. village enhancements. The Precept would then be increased by 6% an amount equivalent to the loss of Babergh Cleaning Grant.

In 3 years time Cash Reserves (with similar increases each year) will be 6.4 months. 6.5% will appear as the increase on Council Tax bills. For a Band D Household, the charge will be £132.94 per annum previously £124.79. The precept will be £129,672 as compared to £122,332 in 2025/26.



The second approach is to charge anticipated costs of the LNP and tree work to a combined maximum together of £33,000 to NCIL leaving £24,000 NCIL (as compared to £9,000 under Option 1) for other items i.e. village enhancements.

The Precept would then be increased by 10% an amount equivalent to the loss of Babergh Cleaning Grant and also general inflation.

In 3 years time Cash Reserves (with similar increases each year) will be 7.7 months. 10.5% will appear as the increase on Council Tax bills. For a Band D Household, the charge will be £137.95 per annum previously £124.79. A Band D Household will pay £5 more per annum than under option 1. The precept will be £134,565 as compared to £122,332 in 2025/26.

He described the second approach as the more prudent option as reserves at the end of the period will be in the middle of the 6 to 9 month range not at the bottom of it.

He concluded by telling Cllrs that they may of course amend the motions to put forward other possibilities and drawing Cllrs attention to the Council Tax charged by neighbouring authorities.

Cllr Ranzetta asked if Parish Council precepts were going up everywhere. The Clerk replied that they are because County and District Councils are increasingly in financial difficulty and so are reducing the financial support to Parish Councils and the services offered in Parishes and so transferring costs to Parish Councils.

Cllr Lamont mused that last year the Precept should have been increased. The Clerk replied that the debate last year had been whether to freeze Council Tax or increase it by 3% or so. The £4,000 or so that would have generated was no compensation for cancellation by Central Government of the Neighbourhood Plan Grant which would have been about £18,000.

Cllr Mitchell criticised the lack of long term financial planning a year previously. The Clerk replied that at that time it was not known that we were going to a Neighbourhood Plan costing £35,000 without Government Grants and that Babergh would withdraw the Cleaning Grant. Cllr Mitchell replied that something always comes along.

Cllr Robinson asked whether we could argue with Babergh to reinstate the Cleaning Grant. The Chair replied that a concession had already been obtained. The Clerk said that we were the only PC who had either requested or got a concession. The other Parish Councils had not protested, each being mindful of Babergh's financial position, and so weakening the PC's position.

Cllr Robinson suggested that the PC renege on the contract with the Councils cleaning contractor asking what the implications of such action would be. The Chair replied that the streets would still need cleaning, the Clerk added that damages would be payable and that there was a moral aspect to consider. The Chair suggested that the PC would have difficulty finding a replacement Contractor if it had just broken a contract.

Cllr Mitchell emphasised the need for a satisfactory level of reserves and the need to ensure that funds are available for the Neighbourhood Plan saying that NCIL is designed to pay for enhancements to the village and not provide funds for unexpected costs. She added that a key issue is that the PC spends nearly £19,000 each year on operating Public Toilets in exchange for donations of £2,000 and suggested an amendment to the motion.

Draft Amended Motion:

'Council adopts Option 2. The whole anticipated costs of £33,335 for the LNP are to be charged to NCIL. Council to conduct a rapid investigation of options to reduce costs of providing public washrooms for decision by March 2026, earmark the remaining balance in NCIL for the installation of a toilet payments system until March 2026, set the whole costs of the backlog tree maintenance and survey to the Sinking Fund or general reserves and re-affirm that the Sinking Fund should be £70,000 at 31st March each year from 2026. Council approves the Budget for 2026/27 and accordingly sets the precept for 2026/27 at £134,565.



12 (1) 26 072

Cllr Robinson said that he had suggested introducing charges for the toilets a year ago. He told Cllrs that the Precept increase should be 6% with efforts made to reduce the costs of tree maintenance which he described as ridiculous and other costs which he was certain could be reduced if we all work together.

Cllr Lamont said that the Precept increase should be 14% as the annual losses are too high.

Cllr Mawford agreed that reviews of costs and toilet charging arrangements were sensible but said that the financial benefits of these proposals was unknown and so the Precept should be set considering the current levels of costs and revenues.

The Chair suggested a motion to extend the meeting for 15 minutes so that these matters might be decided at this meeting rather than deferred to next month.

**Proposed Cllr Mawford Seconded Cllr Lamont. Approved.** Cllr Robinson voted against.

Cllr Bourne said that she considered a 10% reasonable but that Cllr Robinson made good points concerning reducing costs. The Chair agreed.

Cllr Mitchell said that she somewhat agreed with Cllr Lamont but feared that a 14% increase in Precept might not encourage efforts at cost minimisation and revenue enhancement.

**Motion to amend Draft Motion: Proposed:** Cllr Bourne **Seconded:** Cllr Falconer **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson voted against.

**Vote to pass Amended Motion: Proposed:** Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Bourne **Decision:** Approved. Cllr Robinson voted against.

**Motions:** To approve Accounts and Receipts and Payments for month ending 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025  
**Proposed:** Cllr Mawford **Seconded:** Cllr Mitchell **Decisions:** Approved unanimously

Meeting ended 9.38pm Date of next meeting – Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026 7pm



J. Muckian  
8/1/26.