

UNAPPROVED DRAFT1

Widford Parish Council

Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Ordinary Meeting
Tuesday 18th November 2025 at 7.30pm in Widford Village Hall



PRESENT: Cllr Mike Allen (MA) Chair; Cllr Andy Djemal; Cllr Mark Rome (MR);
Cllr Josh Warren (JW)

Six members of the public, County Cllr Eric Buckmaster

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.35pm.

ACTION

25.093 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Ian Collins: Away **ACCEPTED**
2. Others: Neighbourhood police

25.094 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

1. Interests

None declared. Noted: Cllr Mike Allen has an interest in Playing Field matters, being a trustee. Noted: Cllr Ian Collins has a DPI because his wife has the Closed Churchyard maintenance contract.

2. Dispensation requests:

None

25.095 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 2nd September 2025 are a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes

**Clerk/
MA**

25.096 Police report

The police report for October was received and noted for Widford and neighbouring parishes:

WIDFORD: 1 x attempted burglary

WARESIDE: 1 x criminal damage – hare coursing; 2 x fly-tip

HUNSDON: 1 x criminal damage – hare coursing

MUCH HADHAM: 1 x fly-tip (industrial waste)

25.097 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman reported that complaints had been received about parking on the verges adjacent to the Village Hall when events are in progress. He was also interested to know if there is any Section 106 funding being held by EHC in a Widford pot. The Clerk noted that any unused S106 money will either be allocated to another project or returned to the developer.

MA

The Chairman also said he had received a quote for mowing Benningfield Green at £85 + VAT 6 to 8 times a year as necessary.

25.098 Reports by County and District Councillors

No District report received.

County Cllr Eris Buckmaster's written report was received and is included as an appendix to these Minutes. Cllr Buckmaster drew attention to items including the 2026/27 budget survey, local government reorganization including the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) office being disbanded, and Unitary and Mayoral Authorities. He also noted the ongoing quarry consultation. Also discussed was the need for staggered signs for the wall of the old

railway bridge at Widford station which has been the site of yet another accident.

25.099 Planning

1. New Applications:

3/25/1455/HH	15 Benningfield Road: Two storey side and single storey rear extension, front porch extension, removal of existing chimney and installation of permeable driveway.	RESOLVED: No comment	Clerk
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2. Decision Notices. For information only, the following were noted:

3/25/1032/HH	1 Lilley Wood Lane: Erection of outbuilding to replace original.	GRANTED
3/25/1012/HH	The Croft, Nether Street: Close boarded boundary fence.	GRANTED
3/25/0182/FUL	Youngs Little Acre: Retention of a welfare unit and a turkey preparation building. APPEALED Ref 25/00060/REFUSE	Appeal awaited
3/24/1495/FUL	Land at Bourne Lane : APPEALED Ref 25/00043/REFUSE	Appeal awaited
3/25/1414/HH	The Croft, Nether Street: Demolish rear extension and conservatory. Construct single-storey front, side, and rear extensions. Roof and chimney removal, replace with gable roof with front and rear dormers.	REFUSED
3/25/0815/FUL	Access off Medcalf Hill: Improvements and temporary upgrades to an existing agricultural access off Medcalf Hill (B1004).	WITHDRAWN
3/25/0901/OUT	Priory Farm: Outline application with all matters reserved except access for the demolition of the Doe Shed and erection of single self-build dwelling and associated infrastructure.	Awaited
3/25/0460/FUL 3/25/0461/LBC	Priory Farm Barns: Conversion and partial re-building of agricultural buildings into two residential dwellings; Landscaping and carparking.	GRANTED
3/25/0480/OUT	Land South of Levenage Lane: Outline planning for 8 houses.	Awaited
3/25/0231/FUL	Wilmoor: Demolition of outbuilding. Erection of dwelling incorporating air source heat pump, landscaping and creation of access.	Awaited

1. Other planning matters, including items received too late for the agenda:

1. **Late applications:** None
2. **Land for sale and Bourne Lane access.** Ongoing concerns regarding the land and access in question were noted. It was agreed to keep this as a running agenda item until the matter is resolved.

25.100 Finance

1. Report of the Council's accounts at 30th September 2025

Finance Summary to 30 th September	£
Opening cashbook balance 31 st July	37,144.70
Plus: income to 30 th September	9,164.57
Minus: expenditure to 30 th September	2,029.59
Balance available to Council at 30th September (cashbook balance)	44,279.68
Unpresented cheques/payments	0.00
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 30th September	44,279.68

RESOLVED: that the Accounts Statement to 30th September 2025 be approved.

2. Bank reconciliation 30th September 2025

Cashbook balance £44,279.68 Unity Bank balance £44,279.68

RESOLVED: to agree the bank reconciliation as presented

3. Performance vs budget at 30th September 2025

The Clerk's detailed report on the performance vs budget to 30th September was received.

Income: Budget £18,565 Performance to 30th Sept £18,170

Expenditure: Budget £29,962 Performance to 30th Sept £ 9,829

The income/expenditure surplus to 30th Sept is £7,980 against -£11,397 deficit budgeted.

Summary: Opening cashbook balance 01/04/25	£35,939
Cashbook Income to 30/09/25 Gross	£18,170
Cashbook Expenditure to 30/09/25 Gross	<u>£ 9,829</u>
Cashbook balance 30/09/25	<u>£44,280</u>

RESOLVED: The performance report to 30th September be accepted as presented.

4. List of payments.

RESOLVED: to approve the list of payments as presented by the Clerk

All expenditure made under the General Power of Competence.

Clerk

		Gross	VAT incl
Mrs J English	Litter picking October	150.00	
Clerk	Salary October	495.60	
HMRC	PAYE	123.80	
HMRC	Employer's NIC	30.36	
TP Jones & Co LLP	Payroll July-September	64.40	10.73
Unity Trust Bank	Service charge October	6.00	
ICO	Annual Data Protection fee	47.00	
PCC	New churchyard maintenance grant	850.00	
Mrs J English	Litter picking November	150.00	
Clerk	Salary November	495.40	
HMRC	PAYE	124.00	
HMRC	Employer's NIC	30.36	
Clerk reimburse	Printer paper	5.99	
Unity Trust Bank	Service charge November	6.00	
Recoverable VAT included			£ 10.73

5. Draft budget 2026/27

The Clerk presented a draft proposal for the 2026/27 budget which was considered by the Parish Council. Also included were budget forecasts for 2027/28 and 2028/29. It was agreed to budget for increasing the precept by 5% annually.

Clerk

A parishioner questioned why the precept was being increased when the Parish Council had a 2025/26 bank balance forecast that is considerably higher (by £24k) than the 50% of expenditure minimum as recommended in the Clerk's presentation. The Clerk explained that a running balance of 50% of annual expenditure should be maintained to ensure the PC's ability to meet its financial obligations. The parishioner also noted that the precept is also about 50% higher now than it was 5 or 6 years ago. The parishioner was concerned that this could be challenging for some council tax payers of limited means.

The Parish Council explained that community services once supported by East Herts Council have been lost, for example the litter picking subsidy that now continues at the Parish Council's expense of £1,800 pa. The Parish Council is also responsible for the maintenance of the Closed Churchyard at a current cost of £1,240 plus contingencies for tree safety and boundary wall maintenance. The Parish Council also now supports the maintenance of the new churchyard and the maintenance of the Playing Field with annual grants of c. £2,250 pa. The Parish Council has also taken responsibility for the Village Archive and will be paying for new display cabinets to be located in the church once the refurbishment has been

completed next year. The New Homes Bonus that was paid annually by EHC for some years has also now ceased, the last payment of £5,699 being received in 2019. The Parish Council pointed out that in the forecasts up to 2028/29, the bank balance was maintained at the 50% of expenditure level. It was also noted that the Parish Council's costs have continued to rise with very little income opportunity. The Parish Council continues to be as financially responsible as possible. In the interests of transparency, it was agreed that an explanation of the Parish Council's financial circumstances, including the precept, should be written and published in the Village Magazine.

MA

25.101 Correspondence: The list of correspondence was noted as it appeared on the Agenda:

- Citizens Advice: Volunteer flyers
- Gilston Community Forum

25.102 Village Reports

1. Village Hall

1. No issues to report. The next pub night is on 21st November.

2. Playing Field

1. The Chairman reported that the grass and hedges continue to be maintained satisfactorily.

MA

3. Allotments

1. The solar powered is efficient when working but requires a great deal of continuous maintenance.
2. The feasibility laying on of mains water is still being investigated.

IC

4. Closed Churchyard.

1. No issues to report. The last cut for this year has been done.

IC

25.103 Highways, Footpaths and byways

1. Footpaths and PRoW.

1. FP1; Stile replacement remains to be actioned by Nicholas Maddex.

IC

2. Nether Street kissing gate: The second gate reported as having a rotten post is with the land owner and HCC Rights of Way.

IC

3. Footpath gate and ditch: Organisation of the necessary work is still to be undertaken.

IC/MA

2. Highways and footways

1. Update on Enforcement issues by Greenacres: The Chairman said there has been no progress and there is little prospect of a satisfactory resolution. However, the matter will remain on the agenda for monitoring with photos being taken for evidence of flooding when it occurs.

MA

2. TRO 28745 Wareside Road closure notice was noted.

3. Other parish matters and concern

1. **Defibrillator management.** All ok. It was noted that there should be a phone number to call if used.

25.104 Village Archive

1. Rackline Archive cabinets quote.

RESOLVED: To accept the Rackline quote and place the order. Delivery to be agreed with the PCC in 45 months. Agreed that a deposit may be necessary to secure the quoted price. The Clerk to liaise with Dinah Findlay/PCC.

Clerk

2. Archive Policy. RESOLVED: To agree the revised wording and amendments.

3. Archive Loan agreement WPC/PCC.

RESOLVED: To ratify approval of the final version. The Clerk and Dinah Findlay signed the agreement.

25.105	Benningfield Green		Clerk/ MA
1.	Grass maintenance. The Chairman reported that he had received a quote of £85 + VAT for cutting the Green up to 7 times a year as required. It was agreed to accept this price.		
25.106	Change to .gov.uk domain and email address. Councillors are working on setting up their new email addresses.		ALL
25.107	Urgent matters and other matters received too late for inclusion on this agenda: Two matters raised in an email by Cllr Ian Collins:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fly tipping: No support from councillor or Police Crime Commissioner regarding fly tipping. Next steps to raise with Police re their conduct in permitting uninsured drivers after interventions. Bourne Lane. Latest chat is that an application to have stabling and horses is incoming. The council need to block access from Bourne Lane. Councillor to be asked to escalate for action. Local residents are also chasing but I think PC should get involved in this aspect as there is a risk of traveller incursion from illegally appropriated council land. 		

The meeting suspended at 9.02pm for public comments.

A parishioner brought an update on the current Gigaclear position.

The meeting was restored to order at 9.05pm

25.108	Items for future agendas:		Clerk
1.	2026/27 draft budget to be finalised - January meeting		
2.	Archive storage expense		
25.109	Date of next meeting – all in the Village Hall		Clerk/ MA
1.	Ordinary Parish Council Meeting Tuesday January 6th at 7.30pm		
2.	Calendar of meeting 2026: Agreed. January 6 th ; March 3 rd ; April 7 th (Annual Parish Electorate); May 5 th ; July 7 th ; September 8 th ; November 3 rd ; January 5 th 2027		

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.08pm.

Signed..... Dated.....

APPENDIX A

E Buckmaster County Councillor Report Nov 2025

Decision process underway for Hertfordshire's Local Government Reorganisation

Over the course of the next few weeks, councils across Hertfordshire will make decisions on which unitary authority model they support.

Following the Government's invitation to councils in two-tier authority areas to submit plans for local government reorganisation, the county council, all ten district councils, and the Police and Crime Commissioner have been working collaboratively to develop and review options.

Councils agreed to detailed modelling of three different options, with two, three or four new councils being created with varying geography, population and approach to services. This evidence-based approach was agreed by all 11 councils and the potential options will now be considered democratically by councillors in each council. This process also takes into account feedback from the public engagement that took place across Hertfordshire in September.

Each council will provide the opportunity for councillors to debate the merits of

each option before deciding which of the three options they believe will offer the best opportunities for local residents and partners.

The joint submission will be made to Government by 28 November and will include evidence to support the three unitary model options. The document can be viewed at: www.hertfordshire-lgr.co.uk. A decision is expected from the Government in summer 2026.

Annual Survey of Hertfordshire's Parish, Town and Community Councils now open until Sunday 23 November 2025

We have invited all Parish and Town Councillors and Clerks to take part in the Annual Survey of Hertfordshire's Parish, Town and Community Councils – a key opportunity to help strengthen the relationship between Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Local Councils. The survey remains open until Sunday 23 November 2025.

We've also included a few questions about the Annual Meeting held on Friday 12 September for feedback to help us shape future events. Last year's survey highlighted areas of success, but also room for improvement. With the work that's been underway, we're looking to see progress reflected in this year's responses.

You can view the survey at this link here: [2025 Annual Survey of Hertfordshire's Parish, Town and Community Councils \(collectively known as Local Councils\)](#) Results will be available early December 2025.

Lead Local Flood Authority update

Cappell Lane, Stanstead Abbotts:

- Detailed design of the leaky dams was completed in July 2025.
- An ecological survey has been conducted on an area of the watercourse and has determined that there are active badger setts.
- We have applied for a licence to work within the vicinity of these setts and are waiting to hear the outcome of the application.
- We hope to start construction of the leaky barriers in December, dependent on the licence being approved.

Hunsdon Alleviation Scheme:

- The team have found a product we believe could be provided as part of the flood kit to act as a barrier in front of driveways. This product is not currently on the market, but we are working with the providers to ensure we can secure it as soon as possible. We hope this will be within the next couple of months.
- Clearance works will be carried out on the watercourse in December. This is dependent on permits being granted.
- Following this, works are planned to bring the culvert to a maintainable condition. This will include any identified civil work that is needed on the ordinary watercourse.
- Finally, it is hoped that work to re-line sections of the watercourse where it is a brick culvert will be carried out next financial year. However, this is dependent on all other works being carried out.

Pilot Flood Kits in Communities

Stanstead Abbotts & Hunsdon

- All community flood kits have been delivered.
- Please see our good news story on this project here: Hertfordshire County Council is expanding its Flood Kit pilot scheme | Hertfordshire County Council
- We are now opening up a second phase of the scheme where communities can register here: [Hertfordshire Flood Kit Application form](#) [Hertfordshire Flood Kit Application form](#)

Flood Investigations in Sawbridgeworth:

Site visits have taken place in Bullfields and Hoestock Road and meetings with residents affected by surface water flooding arising from heavy rainfall. This is with a view to undertake joint investigations by both HCC and Thames Water to examine the drainage systems, look for blockages and, if required, to design solutions to help protect from future incidents.

Hertfordshire Schools Shine as Finalists in National Music and Drama Education Awards

Hertfordshire is proud to be known as the county of opportunity—and once again, Hertfordshire Music Service (HMS) has been named a finalist in the prestigious Music & Drama Education Awards 2026.

These national awards celebrate the outstanding contributions of schools, educators, and organisations that enrich lives through music and drama. At a time when both performing arts and education have faced unprecedented challenges, HMS has continued to deliver exceptional work and support thousands of learners of all ages. These nominations are a chance to recognise and celebrate that commitment.

This marks the third consecutive year HMS has been recognised for its inclusive and innovative approach to music education. This year's nomination recognises a collaboration with Hertfordshire's Virtual School, which works to ensure high-quality educational outcomes for children and young people in care.

The nomination is for the Rocksteady Award for Progressive and Inclusive Music Education, highlighting the 'HertsArts' programme. This initiative empowers young people through music and demonstrates the life-changing impact it has on some of Hertfordshire's most vulnerable children and young people.

Applying for primary, junior and middle schools in 2026

The process for applying to primary, junior and middle schools in Hertfordshire opened on 3 November 2025.

If your child is due to start primary school or move on to a junior or middle school next year, make sure you apply for a place in good time.

The easiest way to apply for a school place for September 2026 is to

visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions and complete the online application form.

Online applications can be amended at any time before the closing date, and you can access your school offer before allocation letters are received and accept your school allocation online.

Last year, 99 per cent of parents applied this way and found the system quick, easy and secure.

The public engagement is running on the first stages of developing the new Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire. This is an engagement on the proposed draft vision and objectives and an opportunity to understand residents' priorities.

The link to the engagement is letstalktransport.hertfordshire.gov.uk/localtransportplan

The engagement will run from Friday 7 November for six weeks until midnight on Friday 19 December 2025.

In conjunction with the public engagement, key stakeholders including the districts and borough councils will be engaged with to ensure that they have the opportunity to comment.

Have your say on Hertfordshire's new SEND strategy

Local people are being invited to have their say on an ambitious new draft strategy for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) that has greater collaboration at its core.

(Thursday 6 November), our ambitious draft three-year strategy was approved for consultation by Hertfordshire County Council's Cabinet, who hailed it as a significant step forward in shaping inclusive services for children and young people across the county.

Directly informed by more than 1,000 voices, Hertfordshire's draft SEND strategy is driven by feedback from children, young people and their families, along with professionals from education, health and voluntary sectors. It sets out how the local area SEND partnership - led by Hertfordshire County Council and the NHS Integrated Care Board covering Hertfordshire - will work together over the next three years, reflecting a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The strategy's six key ambitions reflect what families, professionals in education, health and social care sector and those working in voluntary organisations have told us is important to them. The ambitions have been shaped through extensive consultation and designed to make a tangible difference to children and families, delivering better outcomes and service experience:

- Listen, engage, collaborate, evolve: clearer communication and more opportunities for families to share thoughts and ideas. Learning from mistakes and working together to improve services.
- Early identification and support: Children are supported to have the best possible start, with needs identified early and support based on needs, not diagnosis. Families will have support to access advice and guidance available on the Local Offer
- Local provision for children and young people: Children will get the help they need in

- their local school, and those with more complex needs will have specialist support available and more options for college or training as they approach adulthood.
- Aspiration for all: We want every child to feel welcome, supported and able to learn in a place that works for them.
- Preparing for the future: Children are supported to plan for the future with help to understand the options available to them and services will plan for children's next steps.
- Strong foundations: A skilled, trained and supported workforce to communicate with families in an accurate, compassionate and timely manner. Leaders will continuously explore new technologies and seek innovative solutions to make processes more efficient and increase time staff can spend supporting children and families.

The consultation is due to start on Friday 14 November and will run until 6 February. Children and young people, parents and carers, and professionals in schools, health, and social care are invited to share their views to help refine the strategy and identify priorities for action.

- Read Hertfordshire's draft SEND strategy and find out how to take part in the consultation: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/SENDstrategy

Council runs 'Stop Means Stop' campaign to raise awareness of school crossing patrols

As reported by BBC Look East, BBC London, BBC Three Counties Radio, Yahoo! UK and Southend Echo motorists across Hertfordshire are being reminded to stop whenever they are asked to do so by school crossing patrols, as part of the latest Hertfordshire County Council countywide 'Stop Means Stop' campaign. Across the county there is a network of 150 school crossing patrols on hand to help children and their parents cross busy roads before and after school. By law, motorists are required to stop whenever the distinctive 'lollipop' sign – which is clearly marked 'Stop' – is raised.

Body camera footage that showed drivers failing to stop when children were on a zebra crossing has prompted a council to try and raise safety awareness. Hertfordshire County Council has equipped school crossing patrol staff with body cameras to help identify drivers who ignored crossing rules.

UK Youth Parliament

SfYP is currently exploring building on its existing 'voice of young people' opportunities by enabling young people in Hertfordshire to participate in the UK Youth Parliament. This would provide Hertfordshire's young people with a national platform to influence change, complementing and enhancing the existing Hertfordshire-wide SfYP youth councils. Young people aged 11-18 can express their interest now.

- [See full details and find out how young people can get involved](#)

Hertfordshire is a Breastfeeding Friendly county!

Another one joins the Breastfeeding Friendly movement! And this time, our new Breastfeeding Friendly company is also a Best Foods Gold Award recipient. Herts Responsible Food Award celebrates businesses that offer healthier food choices and adopt sustainable practices – a perfect partner scheme with the Breastfeeding Friendly scheme. They both aim to build trust with customers and be recognised for doing the right thing.

2026/27 Budget Survey

as in previous years -there is a survey which will allow the public to have their say and help shape our budget for 2026/27 has been launched.

[The survey appears on our website and will be open until Sunday 7th December. There is also an "easy read" version.](#)

A [press release](#) gives more information. The survey is also being promoted directly to members of our Citizen's Panel, "Have Your Say" and other groups as well as social media.

Eric Buckmaster November 2025