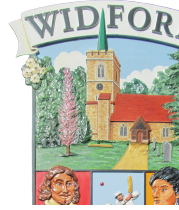


Widford Parish Council

**Minutes of the Widford Parish Council Ordinary Meeting
Tuesday 3rd March 2026 at 7.30pm in Widford Village Hall**



PRESENT: Cllr Mike Allen (MA) Chair; Cllr Ian Collins (IC); Cllr Andy Djemal;
Cllr Mark Rome (MR)

To 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 7.30pm.

ACTION

26.018 To receive and approve apologies for absence

1. Councillors: Cllr Josh Warren (work) **APPROVED**
2. Others: Susie Brickwood; Helen Giles

26.019 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

26.020 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 27th January 2026 are a true and accurate record. The Chairman signed the Minutes

**Clerk/
MA**

26.021 Police report

The police report for January was received and noted for Widford and neighbouring parishes:
WIDFORD: No reported crimes
WARESIDE: 1 x business burglary; 1 x Attempted burglary
HUNSDON: 1 x Theft from motor vehicle
MUCH HADHAM: No reported crimes

26.022 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman thanked Cllr Ian Collins for clearing the path by the allotments. He also announced that there will be a meeting the coming weekend to clear the ditch. An appeal for volunteers to be made on the village Facebook.

MA

26.023 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 some items, particularly noting that 94% of children got their first choice for secondary school places. Also noted were plans being progressed to improve the safety at the "crash corner" by the old railway bridge. Fooding problems by the old Jolly Waggoners pub are being investigated, although Cllr Buckmaster said this was outside his area, being under County Cllr Mark Pope.

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26.024 Planning

1. New Applications:

3/26/0095/HH	9 Benningfield Road: First floor side extension, conversion of existing garage into habitable space, replacement of garage door with window and dining room window with patio doors. RESOLVED: <i>No comments.</i>	
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Clerk

2. Decision Notices. For information only, the following were noted:

3/25/0182/FUL	Youngs Little Acre: Retention of a welfare unit and a turkey preparation and storage building APPEALED Reference: 25/00060/REFUSE <i>Awaiting more information on the enforcement action that is being implemented.</i>	APPEAL DISMISSED
3/24/1495/FUL	Land at Bourne Lane: Change of use of land to a glamping site. APPEALED Ref: 25/00043/REFUSE	Appeal awaited
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
3/25/0480/OUT	Land South of Levenage Lane: Outline planning for 8 houses.	Awaited

1. Other planning matters, including items received too late for the agenda: **NONE**

1. Late applications: NONE

2. Land for sale and Bourne Lane access. Ongoing concerns and action regarding the land and access in question. This to be kept as a running agenda item until the matter is resolved.

IC

26.025 Finance

1. Report of the Council's accounts at 28th February 2026

Finance Summary to 28th February		£
Opening cashbook balance 31st December		38,145.36
Plus: income to 28 th February		0.00
Minus: expenditure to 28 th February		<u>2,544.27</u>
Balance available to Council at 28th February (cashbook balance)		35,601.09
Unpresented cheques/payments		<u>0.00</u>
Bank balance: reconciled with bank statement at 28th February		<u>35,601.09</u>

RESOLVED: *that the Accounts Statement to 28th February 2026 be approved as presented.*

2. Bank reconciliation 28th February 2026

Cashbook balance £35,601.09 Unity Bank balance £35,601.09

RESOLVED: *to agree the bank reconciliation as presented.*

3. Performance vs budget at 28th February 2026

The Clerk's detailed report on the performance vs budget to 28th February was received.

Income: Budget £18,565 Performance to 28th Feb £18,436

Expenditure: Budget £29,962 Performance to 28th Feb £18,465

The income/expenditure surplus to 31st Dec is £879 against -£11,397 deficit budgeted.

Summary: Opening cashbook balance 01/04/25	£35,939
Cashbook Income to 28/02/26 Gross	£18,436
Cashbook Expenditure to 28/02/26 Gross	<u>£18,774</u>
Cashbook balance 28/02/26	<u>£35,601</u>

RESOLVED: *The performance report to 28th February be accepted as presented.*

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Itemised details of the 2025/26 performance against the budget may be viewed on the Parish Council website, <https://widfordparishcouncil.gov.uk>

4. List of payments.

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

Clerk

All expenditure made under the General Power of Competence.

		Gross	VAT incl
Mrs J English	Litter picking February	150.00	
Clerk	Salary February	495.60	
HMRC	PAYE	123.80	
HMRC	Employer's NIC	30.36	
Unity Trust Bank	Service charge monthly	6.00	
Mrs J English	Litter picking March	150.00	
Clerk	Expenses February/March	18.65	
Clerk	Salary March	495.60	
HMRC	PAYE	123.80	
HMRC	Employer's NIC	30.36	
Clerk reimburse	MS365 licence annual	104.99	
Clerk reimburse	Defib Shop: Defibrillator cabinet door	175.80	29.30
TP Jones & Co	Payroll services October-December 2025	64.40	10.73
TP Jones & Co	Payroll services January-March 2026	64.40	10.73
Unity Trust Bank	Service charge monthly	7.00	
Recoverable VAT included			£ 50.76

26.026 Village Archive

- Rackline order update:** 50% deposit paid to Rackline. Now with the PCC to advise Rackline when delivery can be made, anticipated this summer.

26.027 Correspondence:

- The list of correspondence was noted as it appeared on the Agenda:
- Cllr E Buckmaster: 25/HME/1662a Fault report update 401004859690: Railway bridge wall (26.029.2.2)
 - Damaged defibrillator case (26.029.3.2.1)
 - Email about a possible collaboration with the village of Cosuenda in Spain (26.029.3.3.1)
 - CPRE: Consultation on NPPF Review (26.024.3.3)

26.028 Village Reports

1. Village Hall

- No issues to report. Decorating has been completed. The pub night was well attended.

2. Playing Field

- The Chairman said there is nothing untoward to report. The insurance cost has gone up. The new maintenance programme has improved usability of the field. Upgrade options to the play area are being explored.

MA

3. Allotments

- No issues reported.
- Mains water supply: Feasibility continues to be explored by the committee. The Clerk asked whether grasscutting cost is to be reimbursed – Cllr Ian Collins to check.

IC

Clerk/
IC

4. Closed Churchyard.

- No issues to report. Maintenance programme will start soon. The church entrance path has been upgraded but unfortunately has not been edged.

IC

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- 26.029 Highways, Footpaths and byways**
- 1. Footpaths and PRoW.**
 1. Allotments footpath gate and ditch clearance: Work is in hand IC
 - 2. Highways and footways**
 1. Update on Enforcement issues by Greenacres: No update or change on the issue. MA
 2. Accident at the old railway bridge wall: Cllr Eric Buckmaster's reported that HCC are looking at repair liability and that measures to improve safety are being investigated.
 - 3. Other parish matters and concern**
 1. Nether Street railing repairs: he Chairman agreed to pursue with the HCC officer and to get a price for suitable repairs. MA
 2. **Defibrillator management.** The Clerk reported that a new cabinet door has been ordered. It will be delivered to the Chairman who will make the repair. Clerk/MA
 3. **Other matters:** Invitation to collaborate with the Spanish village of Cosuenda. It was agreed to decline the invitation. Clerk
- 26.030 Benningfield Green**
The corner of the Green has been damaged by vehicles. Cllr Collins agreed to take photos. Action to prevent further damage to be considered if there is an ongoing problem. IC
- 26.031 Change to .gov.uk domain and email address.** The Chairman said his new email is up and running. Ongoing with other councillors. The Clerk agreed to resend TEEC contact and details to Cllrs Collins, Rome and Djemal. ALL Clerk IC/MR/AD
- 26.032 Urgent matters** and other matters received too late for inclusion on this agenda:
None raised.
- The meeting was not suspended for public comments*
- 26.033 Items for future agendas:** None raised Clerk
- 26.034 Date of next meetings – all in the Village Hall**
April 7th Annual Parish Electorate (not a Parish Council meeting) Clerk/MA
May 5th Annual and Ordinary Parish Council Meetings
July 7th; September 8th; November 3rd; January 5th 2027
- There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.46pm.

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

APPENDIX A

E Buckmaster County Councillor Report March 2026

Local Flood Risk Measures Update

Cappell Lane, Stanstead Abbots Construction of the leaky dams is completed. We are assessing the success of the dams via the monitoring installed at the culvert and will be completing inspections throughout the year.

Hunsdon Alleviation Scheme Clearance works were carried out on the watercourse in December. We are currently waiting on an update from our Highways team on these works.

Flood Kits in Communities The second phase of the scheme is still open for communities to sign up. You can register for the scheme via our Hertfordshire Flood Kit Application form. [Hertfordshire Flood Kit Application form](#). The application is open until 31st March 2026.

Consultation still open. Central Government invites Hertfordshire residents to have their say

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on Local Government Reorganisation

Residents and organisations across Hertfordshire are being urged to have their say on proposals to change the structure of local government in the county

In February 2025, the Government invited councils to submit proposals for local government reorganisation to simplify local government and reduce costs. The Government has today (5 February 2026) launched a seven-week statutory consultation on the proposals.

In Hertfordshire, there are currently two types of council delivering services (although parish and town councils also operate in some areas):

- District/borough councils provide services such as social housing and homelessness support, leisure services, town planning, street cleansing, waste and recycling collections, community and cultural centres, and council tax and business rates collection.
- The county council is responsible for services including children’s social care, education (including special educational needs), libraries, highways, recycling centres, public health and trading standards

Under the Government’s plan, these councils will be replaced by new unitary councils that will deliver all services currently provided by the county council and the district/borough councils. Following a series of engagement events for residents and stakeholders, plus an online survey, Hertfordshire’s 11 councils, together with the Police and Crime Commissioner, submitted proposals for two, three and four unitary council models for the Government to consider. Full details of the three proposals, including business cases, financial analysis, maps showing the proposed boundaries, and a link to the Government’s consultation are available at: www.hertfordshire-lgr.co.uk

Paper copies of the Government’s consultation will also be available in council receptions and in Hertfordshire libraries. The Government’s consultation will close on 26 March 2026.

National recognition for Hertfordshire County Council’s pioneering tool to support adults with learning disabilities

Hertfordshire County Council has been shortlisted for a Municipal Journal (MJ) Achievement award in the Innovation in Reducing Health Inequalities category for its pioneering frailty risk assessment tool.

The innovative approach taken by the county council allows social care teams to collaborate with adults with learning disabilities and the people who know them best to assess the risk of frailty from the age of 18 rather than 65, when it is usually assessed.

The tool measures risk across a range of areas including physical health, hospital admission rates, support needs, and likelihood of a fall and determines a rating of mild, moderate, or severe. The council’s social care teams can then make necessary onward referrals, adjust care plans, and implement interventions to proactively reduce risk, improve health outcomes, and protect independence.

Hertfordshire County Council has been shortlisted for two prestigious national awards for its innovative work to help more people live more independently for longer and improve support for carers.

The Connect and Prevent development programme was shortlisted for a Local Government Chronicle (LGC) award in the Health and Social Care category and a Municipal Journal (MJ) Achievement award in the Digital Transformation category.

The shortlisted programme is designed to ensure older and disabled adults receive the support they need as early as possible, devising and implementing innovative new ways to prevent, delay and reduce the need for long term care, helping people to live full and independent lives. As well as providing better outcomes for people the programme has helped tackle rising demand and cost pressures in adult social care which is projected to save the county council £24.8m.

When data showed that strains and stresses on unpaid carers were leading to carer breakdowns that put extra demand on social care services, Hertfordshire County Council teamed up with Newton to work on a solution using advanced analytics.

The result is an artificial intelligence (AI) model that uses what we know about carers to identify

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those that might be at risk of reaching crisis. This enables Hertfordshire County Council and its partners to proactively reach out to carers offering personalised support and guidance, improving their wellbeing, maintaining personalised care for those they support, and reducing social care pressure.

The county council's Adult Care Services worked closely with carers, frontline workers, and community partners to design a collaborative and connected system with unpaid carers at the centre. As a result, over 250 carers have already been positively impacted by the programme, reporting improvement in feelings of resilience and wellbeing following practical advice and wellbeing checks.

Free bus travel scheme announced for care experienced young people

Hertfordshire County Council has announced it will fund free bus travel for young adults, 18-25, who have previously been in its care.

Around 1,000 young people are expected to benefit from the scheme, which will launch in early March and be trialled for 12 months. The scheme will utilise the existing Intalink App to provide a 100% discount on Intalink Connect Tickets, which allows unlimited travel on all buses in Hertfordshire (and some points beyond).

This news comes as councillors agreed to extend an existing council tax support scheme for care leavers, which will raise the age that care leavers will get council tax reimbursed to them from 21 to 25, at a meeting of Full Council on Tuesday 17 February. This and the launch of the council's new [corporate parenting strategy](#) highlights a commitment to those children and young people currently in our care and how the council plans to continue to help them as they enter adulthood.

Hertfordshire pledges support to Ukraine with new aid truck on anniversary of conflict

On the four-year anniversary since the conflict in Ukraine began, Hertfordshire County Council have reaffirmed its commitment by coordinating humanitarian aid being sent to Ukraine.

The articulated lorry, containing medicines, warm clothing, food and much more, is destined for the Sumy region in the north-east of Ukraine.

The truck is the 14th such aid truck sent by volunteers at Herts Fullstop within the county council, alongside partners. This time it will be sent to Sumy Regional Government, in the north-east of the country, with whom the council have developed a relationship.

Air Quality Consultation Hertfordshire County Council is inviting residents, community partners, businesses, and stakeholders to help shape a healthier air future for the county as launches a public consultation on its draft Air Quality Strategy.

Despite improvements in emissions from vehicles and other sources in recent years, poor air quality remains the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK, contributing to around 30,000 deaths each year in England. Short bursts of high pollution can cause immediate health issues, while long term exposure harms our lungs and heart. Air pollution affects everyone, especially children, older adults, and people with underlying conditions. In Hertfordshire we want every resident to thrive with support for those most in need.

In late 2024, the Council engaged with residents across the county to understand the air quality issues that matter most to them. Their feedback has shaped a newly drafted strategy that sets out the county's direction for tackling air pollution and protecting public health in the years ahead.

Find out more about the consultation and have your say at:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/AirQuality26

94 per cent of children have been allocated a place at one of their preferred secondary or upper schools by Hertfordshire County Council.

Applications are slightly down compared to last year with 14,519 applications for Hertfordshire children. 78 per cent gained a place at their first preference school.

Allocations for secondary and upper schools for September 2026, were released, Monday 2nd March.

The number of applications has remained high with 14,519 applications received for Hertfordshire pupils, just 1.25% (184 applications) fewer than last year. In total, including out-

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county applicants, 18,240 applications for Hertfordshire schools were received, again slightly less than last year when 18,445 applications were processed. Satisfaction rates have remained high, with 94.57% of Hertfordshire children offered a ranked school for 2026, almost the same as last year, 94.42%. The percentage of children offered their first-ranked school is higher than last year, at 78.17%, compared to 76.62% previously.

County Cllr Eric Buckmaster, March 2026

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