

SOUTH WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Finance Committee meeting held at 7pm on Wednesday 7th January 2026 in the Parish Council Meeting Room

1. **Present:** Mr S Scales, Mr P Bland, Mr H Hofmeister, Mr M Narborough, Mrs T Banks, Mrs M Albinson, Mr A Evans, Mrs T Carney, Mrs T Cornwell (Clerk) and Mrs M Kirby (Assistant Clerk).

Apologies: Mr S Wells, Mr D Goddard, Mr R Williamson, Mr T Porter and Mrs D Gotts

2. **To confirm the minutes of the last meeting 9th October 2025:** These were proposed as a correct record by Mr Narborough, seconded by Mr Hofmeister, with all members in favour, they were signed by the Chairman.

3. **To record declarations of interest, personal or prejudicial:** Mrs Banks declared an Interest as she is an Allotment Tenant.

4. **To receive questions from the public:** None present.

5. **To discuss the three-quarter year accounts:** Mr Scales confirmed that all members had been provided with a detailed printout of the finances and explained that he would be going through these section by section. He explained that the figure in the spend column should be approximately three quarters of the Budget. He said that the total spend for the three-quarter year was slightly over at £85,888.10 against a budget of £123,785.00, however, this includes several one-off items and items paid for using Parish Council CIL Funds.

Mr Scales then went through the items referring to the following:

Administration - Salaries and Expenses – OK, slightly over, however, this was expected due to the NALC pay increases which have also impacted on the National Insurance and Pension Contributions.

General Admin – OK; Repairs and Maintenance – OK; Utilities – OK; Telephone/Wi-Fi – A bit high, but once we are out of our current contract we will shop around and hopefully secure a cheaper deal; Internet Charges/Online Backup – A little over but OK; New Equipment - £1,169.59 is the cost of the new chairs; Subscriptions and Insurances – Over but OK, these are both one off payments; Audit Fees – £1,200.00 against a £1,000.00 budget is a bit up as the Parish Council has now moved into the intermediate charging bracket, £150.00 has been paid to Mrs Elizabeth Manning for carrying out the Internal Audit 2024/2025; Courses/Rates - £1,935.81, this one-off payment is for the Business Rates, these have seen a significant increase set by the Borough Council, however, a rebate from the Borough Council has been applied for; Solar

Panels/Maint/Refund Hire – The figure of £6,007.35 is the cost of the new Solar Panels at £5,792.35 and the Maintenance Contract charge of £215.00; Bank Charges – The figure sits at £259.34. It was said that £14,266.26 against a budget of £16,050.00 is OK as it includes several one-off payments and the Solar Panels paid for via Parish Council CIL Funds shown in red.

Allotments – OK, Contract out Work - £760.00 against a budget of £250.00 is over but includes money paid to BMAC Garden Services for various jobs such as Plot clearance and the work to install the new rear Fencing; Water – A bit high but OK, the Water supply is currently turned off for the winter; Repairs and Maintenance – The figure of £1,599.94 against a budget of £1,500.00 is over but includes the new Fencing along the back boundary, Paint and the cost of the new Water Tank, which will be installed in due course; With Rental Income received at £4,550.00, and a CIL transfer in of £781.55 for the Grass Maintenance costs, It was said that the Allotments sit at £2,462.51 in hand which is good.

Bus shelters – OK, New Bus Shelters – The total cost of £31,133.00 has been paid for via a transfer in from the Parish Council CIL Funds, shown in red; leaving a figure of £527.00 for maintenance against a budget of £500.00 which is OK. The new Bus Shelters are looking really good and are a great improvement to the Parish.

Cemetery – OK; Grass Maintenance - £2,612.14 is under budget; Business Rates/Refund - £260.00 is the refund of a Burial Plot no longer required, this has now been resold. Fees have been received at £12,685.00 and with a CIL transfer in of £1,542.94 for the Grass Maintenance costs leaves a balance of £10,486.34 in hand which is good.

Churchyard – OK, Grass Maintenance - £1,654.29, against a £2,000.00 budget is OK; Repairs/Maintenance – The figure of £10,973.65 is for the ongoing Church Wall Repairs, this has been paid for along with the Grass Maintenance via a transfer in from the Parish Council CIL Funds, shown in red; leaving a figure of £3,358.27 against a budget of £3,000.00 which is OK.

Footway lighting – Supply and Maintenance – OK, this sits at £13,872.90 against a budget of £24,000.00, Mrs Cornwell confirmed that after information received from the Borough Council's CIL Team, future Lighting Maintenance costs can be paid for via the Parish Council's CIL Funds as long as it is placed as Highway Maintenance on the appropriate CIL Form. Members agreed that this was very good news; Insurance - £961.07, is a one-off payment; New Lighting Column/LED - £14,476.51, with a £18,443.19 transfer in from PC CIL Funds for the new Avon Road area upgrades and K & M Maintenance charges.

Litter – OK; Wages – This is under budget but should be countered with the Village Hall wages which is slightly over; Trade Bin – The figure of £1,266.20 is a

one-off payment; The end figure of £8,434.98 against a budget of £13,700.00 is good.

Open Spaces – Contract out Work – The figure of £5,175.50 includes £1,200.00 to Jex Plant for the Pond Survey, payments to Andrew Foreman for the New Bench and Litter Bin installations and money to BMAC Garden Services for various jobs; Grass Maintenance – £5,252.56 against a budget of £6,000.00 is OK, Mrs Cornwell once again explained that after confirmation from the Borough Council's CIL Team, future Grass Maintenance costs can be paid for via the Parish Council's CIL Funds as long as it is placed under the Open Spaces heading on the appropriate CIL Form, it was said that this would save a large amount of money; Repairs and Materials – The figure of £2,027.74 against a budget of £500.00 includes the Dyke Clearance at The Green and the purchase of some materials; Servicing Dog Bins – £1,943.40 is a little high, however, this bill is fully paid; Tree Surgery – A little high, however, it was confirmed that in the future this can also be paid for by Parish Council CIL Funds; New Equipment/Works – The figure of £21,638.50 includes the cost of the new Trod and the new School Play Equipment for North Wootton Academy and South Wootton Junior School; With a transfer in of £34,119.52 from Parish Council CIL Funds, the end figure sits at £7,728.91 against a budget of £12,300.00 which is good.

Wootton Park – Contract out Work – OK, Currently sits at £60.00; SW Share of Expenses – An invoice from NWPC will be due at the end of the year, for items such as Grass Cutting and Insurance; Pavilion Repairs/Maint £5,973.53 against a budget of £870.00 is the cost of the new Pavillion Shutters paid for via Parish Council CIL Funds; Dog Bins – OK, slightly over at £647.76, however, this is a one-off payment; New Equipment - £1,517.18 is the cost of the new Pavillion Noticeboard, which has now been recredited via Wootton Park funds; Tree Surgery £4,000.00 against a budget of £3,700.00 is high, however, all items from the Tree Survey are now complete; Pest Control/Inspection Fees – OK, an invoice from Nurture Landscapes for the Inspection fees is due; Total spend so far £8,850.68, with a £5,712.00 transfer from PC CIL Funds, the figure of £3,138.68 against a budget of £9,035.00 is good.

Village Hall – Wages and Expenses – A little high but include the increased National Insurance and Pension Contributions (This also relates to the Litter Warden wages which is under budget); Repairs & Maintenance – £19,000.99 against a budget of £8,500.00 is high but includes £1,728.11 to Rentokil, the installation of the new Litter Bin and Slabs at £675.00, £1,250.00 for the replacement Hot Water Tap, £7,516.00 for the Air Conditioning Units paid for from PC CIL funds, £340.00 for the replacement Committee Room Door, £140.00 for the new Litter Bin, £80.00 for the replacement Guttering, the new Fire Door at £780.00, the Emergency Lighting at £460.00, the new Noticeboards at £359.00, some small repairs to the Guttering, the Monthly Cleaning bills and the Alarm and Solar Panel Maintenance; Trade Bin – The figure of £1,514.50 is a one-off

payment; Utilities – OK, a little under budget which is good, possibly due to the new Solar Panel Battery Packs; New Equipment – The figure of £1,729.17 against a budget of £500.00, includes the new Pre-School Tables, New Works – The figure of £31,297.95 includes the cost of the New Solar Panels, the Village Hall Dusk till Dawn Lights, the Bin Store and the Car Park Resurfacing; With a total spend of £70,990.98 against income of £19,976.00 and a transfer in from Parish Council CIL Funds of £42,516.03, leaves a figure of £8,498.95 against a budget of £5,170.00 which is high but OK as it includes several one off items and improvements which have all been discussed fully and agreed by the Parish Council.

Miscellaneous – The £500.00 donation has been paid to SWiB, and a £200.00 donation has been paid to West Norfolk Befriending.

Income: Bank Interest - £2,680.92 against a budget of £4,000 is lower than expected but is due to the Borough Council now paying the Precept in two stages, one in April and one in October; Wayleaves - £0.00; Meeting Room Hire - £4,822.50 against a budget of £5,000.00 is good; Solar Panel Income - £1,803.54; making a total of £7,752.11 against a budget of £8,500.00.

Mr Scales confirmed that the nett total sits at £85,888.10 against a Budget of £123,785.00 which is OK, bearing in mind that this includes several one-off items and several items paid for using Parish Council CIL Funds and with future Lighting Maintenance costs and Grass Maintenance costs being paid for via the Parish Council's CIL Funds, things will look better for the end of the year.

With all members happy, **Mr Hofmeister proposed that the Finances are a correct record of the three-quarter accounts; this was seconded by Mr Narborough with all members in favour.**

6. To set the Precept for the year 2026/2027: Mr Scales referred back to the detailed Budget Monitoring Sheet and explained that members would be going through the Budget 2026/2027 column on the right-hand side of the sheet.

He explained that he and Mrs Cornwell had spent a lot of time looking at the figures and had subsequently put together a budget for consideration.

Some of the figures are known and can be easily projected, however, other items such as Cemetery Fees and Hire Fees are more difficult to predict.

Mr Scales went through each of the headings in detail making references to items that had been slightly amended (increased or decreased), and new items which have been included such as £1,000 for two new laptops under the General Admin, New Equipment heading and £10,000 for posts, hedging and the removal of the Cemetery Bank under the Cemetery, New Works heading.

Mrs Cornwell explained that Mr Goddard had raised a few questions regarding the Finances via email and she went on to explain the reply she had given to him as follows:

With regards to Salaries this year 2025/26 the forecast for the Salaries will fall short of the requirement, at the time of Budget setting last year we did not know how much the NALC salary increases would be or the increase in the Employer National Insurance contributions. This year we will be over budget in the region of £6000. This would have increased the 2025/26 budget to around £69,000 should we have known.

All Policy members at their meeting in November 2025, received a full breakdown of all staff members increases, (which come into effect from 1.4.2026) including predicted Pensions and NI contributions, we have therefore allowed for a small contingency should hours need to be reviewed during the financial year from 1.4.2026 - 31.3.2027.

Mrs Cornwell went on to explain that this year she has been able to forecast more accurately the salary requirements, including the National Insurance contributions and the Pension contributions that the Parish Council are liable for, thus giving a more accurate figure hopefully. Under that budget of £95,050.00 we have also increased the budgets for Telephone/Wi-Fi, Internet Charges/Online back-up, Insurances, and Rates.

The overspend with regards to the Village Hall, is mainly due to Salaries again, in previous years, Mrs Cornwell had not split the NI and IT contributions for the Litter Warden and the Village Hall Caretaker, however, now every expense is split under the separate headings making the heading spend more accurate. Subsequently, the Village Hall Wages has gone up by £2000 which has been countered by the drop in Litter Wages of the same amount £2000.

Mr Scales asked members if they were happy with the explanations given and whether they had any questions or comments to make.

Mr Scales spoke regarding the total precept figure of £127,800.00 (An increase of £4,015.00 on this current year) and explained that with the Tax Base going up this will amount to £69.12 (a decrease of £1.10) per Band D household per year.

Mr Scales commented that once again, Mrs Cornwell had managed the Parish Council's finances very well this year and had made savings where possible and had used the Parish Councils CIL funds wisely.

Mrs Cornwell wished to give credit to Amanda Driver, the Borough Council's CIL Officer, for being approachable, knowledgeable and always happy to give help and advice.

Mrs Banks proposed a vote of thanks to Mrs Cornwell and Mr Scales for carrying out a great job with producing the Accounts and coming up with a detailed Budget.

With all Members happy with the proposed figures, **Mr Scales proposed that the Precept figure of £127,800.00 for 2026/2027 should be accepted, this was seconded by Mr Narborough, with all members in favour.**

New Bus Shelter – (CIL Funds) Outside Acadia House, between 1 & 3 Grimston Road: Mrs Cornwell spoke regarding the proposed new Bus Shelter for locating between 1 & 3 Grimston Road and explained that she had obtained a quote for a Cantilever type Bus Shelter, with a Perch and the South Wootton Parish Council Logo from Able Engineering for £6,140.00 +VAT.

Mrs Cornwell stated that she had informed Able Engineering that concerns had been raised that Street Lighting wires may lie beneath the grass verge at the proposed location, however, Able Engineering have confirmed that these could be easily found and worked around.

Mrs Cornwell explained that she had only gone out for the one quote from Able Engineering as they have provided all the Bus Shelters within the Parish, they are local and reliable, she added however, that due to the price of materials going up – the quotation is only valid for one month.

With all members happy, **Mr Narborough proposed that the Parish Council goes ahead and orders a Cantilever type Bus Shelter, with a Perch and the South Wootton Parish Council Logo from Able Engineering at a cost of £6,140.00 +VAT, for siting at the Bus Stop between 1 & 3, Grimston Road, this was seconded by Mr Hofmeister with all members in favour.**

7. To approve the following Policies: It was confirmed that prior to the meeting, all members had been provided with a copy of the following two documents:

SWPC Operational Risk Assessment
SWPC Financial Risk Assessment

Mrs Cornwell referred to the SWPC Operational Risk Assessment and confirmed that any amendments or additions had been highlighted in red type, which she went on to read through.

With all members happy, **Mr Hofmeister proposed that the Parish Council adopt the amended SWPC Operational Risk Assessment document, this was seconded by Mr Bland with all members in favour.**

Mrs Cornwell referred to the SWPC Financial Risk Assessment and confirmed that any amendments or additions had been highlighted in blue type, which she went on to read through.

With all members happy, **Mr Narborough proposed that the Parish Council adopt the amended SWPC Financial Risk Assessment document, this was seconded by Mr Evans with all members in favour.**

Mrs Cornwell confirmed that both documents are available to read on the Parish Council's Website.

Resignation of Mr Alan Evans: Mr Scales informed members that prior to the evenings meeting, Mr Evans had informed him and Mrs Cornwell of his intentions to retire from the Parish Council at the end of the meeting.

Mr Scales thanked Mr Evans for his contribution to the Parish Council during his thirty years' service and for his knowledge on Planning matters.

He also wished to thank Mr Evans personally for providing him with help and support over the years.

Members wished Mr Evans well in his retirement and said that he would be missed.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.55pm.

8. Date of next meeting: 7pm on Wednesday 8th April 2026 in the Parish Council Meeting Room.