

RATTLEDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 29th April 2025 at 19:30 in Rattlesden Village Hall

Draft Form duly approved on: _____ Chair signature _____

Present: Cllr. Tony Edwards (Chair), Cllr. Sarah Osborne (Deputy), Cllr. Richard Osborne, Cllr. Howard Knight, Cllr. Dan Jewers, Cllr. Richard Osborne, Cllr. Dave Goodlad

In Attendance: County Cllr. Penny Otton, Parish Clerk Nick Skelhorn and one member of the public.

Absences: Apologies were received from District Cllr. Nicky Willshire.

2025/046 Declarations of Interest

The Clerk, Nick Skelhorn, declared an interest in planning application DC/25/01452 (item 7 on the agenda) which relates to his property.

2025/047 Minutes of the Last Parish Council Meeting

It was collectively resolved that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 25th March 2025 be approved as a true record of events.

2025/048 Public Comment and Questions on Agenda Items

A query was raised concerning the payment of cemetery fees which the clerk clarified.

2025/049 County Councillor's Report

The Council received Cllr. Otton's report. Cllr. Otton confirmed she has passed on feedback from Anglia Water about the ongoing leak on Woolpit Hill (Anglian have confirmed it is not from their asset) and was seeking Highway's input, that options for reporting speeding in Hightown Green are being considered, and that works are planned to improve mobile reception from O2 customers from the existing telecommunications mast.

2025/050 District Councillor's Report

The Council received Cllr. Willshire's report. Cllr. Willshire was not in attendance and no comments were raised.

2025/051 Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

051.1 'Minute 033 'CC Report' Replacement of Highways signs has been delayed until summer '25.

051.2 'Minute 037.3 'Banking Controls' There remains ongoing Issues of Councillor's not being able to access the Council's online accounts preventing multi-party authorisations from being established. All payments are reconciled against bank statements which Councillor's review and approve each month. The Clerk is to call TSB again.

051.3 'Minute 038 'Allotments (Jubilee)' The lease has been executed and the Council awaits banks details from the Jubilee Allotment Society to credit the approved £500 start-up grant (general reserves).

051.4 'Minute 040 'Works (various)' Clarity from AW on the easement width remains outstanding. The strimming works at St. Nicholas have been conducted.

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2025/052

Planning

052.1 April Applications: DC/25/2025 (Allerton House, Lower Road) Erection of two story extension including landscaping – no Council consensus was relayed to the Clerk (who was not copied into any correspondences due to his interest) before the consultation deadline (18th April), however, it was confirmed in the meeting that no objections had been raised; DC/24/03848 (Hayward Farm, High Town Green) Conversion of domestic outbuilding to form residential Annexe – no objections; DC/25/01731 (3 Jacobs Meadow) Tree Works – Fell 1 No. Scots Pine (T1) and Fell 1 no. Laurel (T2) – no objections.

052.2 Applications Approved/Rejected in April: DC/25/00723 (Hall Farm Cottage, High Street) Removal of damaged sole plates and replacement with new and repair/reinstatement of associated wall using lime plaster / wool board – Granted 9th April 2025.

2025/053

Finance

053.1 Financial Report: The Clerk's financial report up to the 31st March 2025 was received.

- Current account balance = £317
- TSB deposit account (general and earmarked) = £25,736.69
- Dudley deposit account (CIL funds) = £68,031.68

The Clerk reiterated that general and CIL reserves remained high (albeit progress was being made) and that strategies should be considered to utilise funds appropriately.

Explanation was also provided on various April budget discrepancies (i.e. High grounds spend reflects painting railings (2nd instalment), high grant spend the £5,000 grant to the Community Shop, high cemetery receipts due to settlement of outstanding debts and high deposit interest reflecting the annual credit on the Dudley (CIL) Deposit account.

053.2 Payments Schedule: The schedule of payments for April 2025 totalling £8,355.10 was presented to the Council and duly approved (this including one CIL grant payment of £5,000 to the Rattlesden Community Shop to partly fund refurbishments and the second instalment (£1,000) for repainting the riverside railings.)

Should a member of the public wish to view any supporting documentation in relation to the above please contact the Clerk.

053.3 Year End (2024-2025) Summary: Evaluation was given on annual budget performance – a £6.7k overspend on the grounds budget being a planned investment of general reserves to deliver community benefit and a 6.5k overspend on Fixed Assets (SID solar conversions) to deliver longer term savings (no new batteries) and improve health and safety (no need to swap batteries). Draft AGAR figures (i.e. movements of reserves / asset values / salaries / debts) were also presented for Councillor ahead of population of the formal paperwork and subsequent Council sign-off.

053.4 Proposed 2025-2026 salary reviews: As fully detailed in the Clerk's Financial Report, the clerk sought approval for proposals to increase the Clerk salary in-line with updated NALC fees scale (£0.64/hr increase) and an uplift to the Warden salary to reflect the revised National Living Wage (£0.77/hr increase). The Clerk also highlighted how the Clerk's salary would, as of April '25, be subject to NI Employee Contributions. The Council collectively approved the recommended adjustments.

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053.5 Final 2025/2026 Draft Budget: The Clerk presented the updated 2025/2026 draft budget. Alterations since the January issue were communicated – an increase to salaries as per minute 2025/053.4; Additions to the Grounds budget to encompass extra grass cuts; a revised Waste budget to reflect an unanticipated BMSDC reduction due to a new charging structure; s.137 budget updated to 833 electors and confirmation of the actual carried forward reserve balances. The Council collectively approved the amends and finalisation of the 2025/2026 budget.

2025/054 Allotments (Jubilee)

The Clerk confirmed formally (as approved via email) proposed minor amends to the final draft of the Jubilee Lease (i.e. the addition of a dedicated orchard area due to restrictions on tree planting over the UKPN easement and revisions to wording to better capture/formalise the presence and obligations of said easement) and that engrossments had been prepared, issued and signed copies received. The signed copy was presented to the Chair for countersignature, with approval of the whole Council given. The Council expressed their thanks to Cllr. S Osborne for her input and to Mrs D Minns for spearheading the creation of the Jubilee Allotment Society.

2025/055 Grants

No applications were received in April nor other matters raised by Members.

2025/056 Works

056.1 Birds Green Bench: The Clerk confirmed that he was still awaiting a response from both UKPN and Anglian Water (confirming the proposed placement in the vicinity of their assets).

056.2 Bus/Bottle Bank Shelters: The Clerk confirmed he had yet to receive an update from Mr L Patterson.

2025/057 Neighbourhood Plan

The Council conducted a high-level review of the potential benefits and detractors of pursuing a Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst notable benefits were identified by councillors (ability to legally influence local development, protection of local character, increased CIL funding contributions) notable reservations remained (resource / cost implications of pursuing, potential to create community divisions). The Council agreed that more knowledge was required for an formal decision to be made, the collection of which was delegated to Cllrs. R Osborne and D Goodlad.

2025/058 Rolling review of Council policies and procedures – 04 Meetings – Reporting Protocol

The Council approved the policy in its current form save making an amend to ensure it was clear that sufficient notice was required before any reporting request to ensure all policy requirements could be enacted / attendees made aware.

2025/059 Matters to be brought to the attention of the Council

059.1 Jubilee Fields Works: Cllr. Edwards proposed more water bags for the larger trees in Jubilee Field and topping the grass around the remaining trees to suppress weeds. The Clerk was tasked with obtaining quotes.

059.2 New Dog Waste Bins: Cllr. Edwards confirmed as of today (29th April) BMSDC had approved the 2 x new bin locations and the relocation 1 x bin in the requested locations.

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059.3 Verge Cutting: Cllr. Morley commented how highway's verge levels were rapidly increasing, and a cut should be considered imminently. The Clerk confirmed that he was awaiting a second quote back from a Mr. T Shepperd.

059.4 Gliding Club: Cllr. Goodlad confirmed the upcoming meeting of the Gliding Club that he was planning to attend.

059.5 Clerk Printer: Councillors collectively noted issues with the output quality from the current Council printer. A budget of up to £200 was approved for a new one to be obtained (subject to final Council review / approval).

2025/060

Next Meeting:

The date and time of the next meeting is Tuesday 27th May 2025 at 18:15 in the Village Hall (earlier time to accommodate the Annual Parish Council Meeting which will follow at 19:30).

The meeting closed at 20:46

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