

Fornham St Martin cum St Genevieve Parish Council

APPROVED Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 4th September 2025 at 7.30pm
in Village Hall

Councillors present: Clive Last (CL) Chair, John Rushman (JR) Vice Chair, Paul Butler (PB) and Linda Leong-Son (LLS)

In attendance: Locum Clerk Justin Hook (JH), Hannah Cuthbertson, All Saints Resort (HC) and 5 members of the public

PUBLIC FORUM

Resident from Lark Valley Drive

Raised concerns over hedges along the Lark Valley Path growing high and overhanging his garden. He has a 2m hedge inside this, but these hedges are up and above, and overhanging his property. They have been inspected by SCC but do not meet the requirement for work. Council suggested resident has always had the right to trim them back to his boundary, but at his own cost.

ACTION: Clerk to liaise with SCC / Rebecca Hopfensperger (RH) to see if anything further can be done to escalate.

David Yates from the church shared the following updates:

After complaints, the foot paths on the Fairways estate were finally jet washed, into the roads. A further formal complaint led to two road sweeps. The gulleys have since been cleaned and the weed sprayer has been round.

Hannah Cuthbertson from All Saints Resort shared the following updates:

There was an understanding that some of the extras at the lodge site would be allowed under permitted development, but were not, hence the applications for variations. After some kit was stolen and tee's vandalised, the gates and CCTV were deemed appropriate measures.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Chairs welcome & apologies for absence.
The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, especially Cllr Richard Nicholls and Cllr Derek Brown, Chair and Vice Chair from Fornham All Saints Parish Council.
Apologies received and accepted from the Clerk who is on sick leave, Cllr Mahon, County Cllr Rebecca Hopfensperger & District Cllr Sarah Broughton.
2. To receive any Declarations of Members' Interest.
None received.
3. Approve and adopt two sets of minutes from Council meeting 24th July.
Council resolved to approve the two sets of minutes and the Chair signed them.
4. To receive County & District Councillors reports.
None received.
5. To welcome members of Fornham All Saints Parish Council, and to discuss the potential of combining the two Fornham Parish Councils to create one Parish Council covering the three Fornhams. Councils to discuss benefits, possible pitfalls and next steps moving forwards.

The Chair introduced the notion of merging the three Fornham Parish Councils into one new Council, responsible for the three villages. Both current Parish Councils had spoken warmly of the idea and a next step was for both councils to invite the other council to their meeting to allow open and transparent discussion. In line with Local Government Reorganisation, joining

the parishes ought make them more streamlined and productive, with new powers available and more authority potentially fed down from the new unitary authorities.

Cllr Rishman suggested together we are stronger and to keep things simple, matching the notion of combined unitary authorities. He praised Fornham All Saints (FAS) for the way in which they are making their village look more presentable, and how FSMSM is looking a little untidy, and agreed the sharing of knowledge and ideas would be good.

Cllr Last mentioned the benefit of scales of economy. He was very keen to be as open and transparent with these talks, having engaged with a contact at WSC. There will be a second meeting in FAS. The idea is not to amalgamate the villages, but create an authority that operates over the top, giving more 'oomph' when dealing with SCC, and more say on local issues, esp. planning. WSC approved the Local Plan on 14th July and immediately ruled for a December reconsult. The proposed 765 homes per year in West Suffolk increased significantly to 1200 new homes per year. 55% of those will be in/around Bury and as the closest villages to BSE, it becomes a major issue to us, so it really is time to be pulling together. The previously rejected proposal for a settlement of 1200 homes on Hall Farm will no doubt be put forward again.

Cllr Rushman added that a lot of the new Cllrs were businesspeople, and that previously not much was done, but the new council is very forward thinking and wants to see progress. Spending is being reviewed, and many of the spends are similar and could be amalgamated. Planning, especially with regards to All Saints Resort, would also be easier.

Cllr Nichols (FAS) understood all the points, and suggested FAS were open to the idea. Streamlining, economies of scale, common purchase power and sharing ideas, all cited as benefits, but also conscious of potential backlash from residents who don't like change. He felt there was a lot of merit to the idea.

Cllr Brown (FAS) had mixed feelings and initially thought to keep them individual, but identified struggles in FAS to fill vacancies and sometimes be quorate for meetings, with little or no interest for new Cllrs. One more Cllr vacancy could cause the council to fall over so he is keen to stay and make a positive difference. He could see the value of shared information and economies of scale, plus a greater pool of Cllrs with time, energy and enthusiasm.

Cllr Last added that the PC has a duty to local businesses as well as residents, including the pubs the hotel, cafes, the business parks, and sometimes there must be compromise between residents and businesses. Would a bigger authority attract more interest?

Cllr Brown added that a bigger area would create a bigger agenda, therefore longer meetings. The Clerk advised that potentially there would be committees created i.e. planning or finance, which then meet separately and either make decisions or report finding back to full council.

In summary, both councils to continue to consider. FAS to invite FSMSG to their meeting on October 21st, and all meetings / minutes etc to be shared online for full transparency.

ACTIONS: Clerk to arrange invite to October meeting in FAS, contact WSC to enquire about get out clauses if, for example after two years it wasn't working, create an indicative combined budget to present to both councils, arrange a meeting with Ben Smith of WSC.

David Yates from the church added that for 25 years (until 2 years ago) the two village churches had operated in such a way with combined PCC, one council, two churches, and that it all worked very well.

6. Banking update.

The Locum Clerk now has full access to the banking, and has changed the mailing address and updated emails etc. Former Cllr, Naomi Steward has been removed from the mandate as has the Clerk temporarily, whilst on sick leave.

7. Planning applications for consideration;

- i. DC/25/1245/VAR. Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of DC/23/0622/VAR to enable the use of amended drawings which illustrate additional essential infrastructure installed at the site (drawings 519BPE1, 519P1, 519P2, 519P3, 519P4 and 519P5). All Saints Hotel, The Street, Fornham St Genevieve, IP28 6JQ.
Council showed disappointment at the principal of retrospective applications, preferring a more robust full initial application.
Cllr Rushman questioned the conditions that the lodges were for holiday makers not the commercial use they are being contracted as.
The Master Plan was discussed, not being a complete document.
HC advised that it is a working plan, with new ideas as the hotel reacts to growth. They now employ 150 staff and have a 92% occupancy, with gym membership rising from 600 members to 1200, hence the plans keep evolving. What they are seeing though is that these visitors are venturing out and spending money in the locality i.e. 3 Kings, Lucys.
Council resolved to APPROVE the variations.
- ii. DC/25/1290/FUL. Planning application - a. workshop extension, b. detached single storey building for car valet services.
Lancaster BMW, Thetford Road, Fornham St Martin, IP31 1SX.
Council resolved to APPROVE this application.
- iii. DC/25/1247/FUL. Planning application - two walls at entrance of site and steel entrance gates.
All Saints Hotel, The Street, Fornham St Genevieve, IP28 6JQ.
Council resolved a vote of NO COMMENT on this application.

8. Finance.

Council to consider and approve the following;

- i. **Council resolved to approve outstanding invoices & payments.**
- ii. Council noted payments received for July & August.
- iii. **Council resolved to approve the bank reconciliation for July & August.**
- iv. **Council reviewed and resolved to approve the budget vs spend to date.**

9. Highways, footpaths and trees.

- i. Action on overgrown pathways in the village.
Clerk has received three quotes for the works:
Wayne Jarvis & Sons - £4,850 + Vat for the main stretch and day rate £700+Vat for smaller items (est. 2-3 days)
Top Garden (recommended by RH) - £1280 +Vat
DM Tree & Landscaping - £5650 +Vat
The Clerk advised that Wayne Jarvis is SCC approved and that Top Garden is currently working for Great Barton PC. The Clerk has walked the jobs with the other two contractors, but not Top Garden.
Council resolved to appoint Top Garden to do the works, based on a site visit with the Clerk to clarify spec and expectations as well as approval from SCC.
- ii. Highways signage audit and cleaning plan.
Council resolved to defer until the major hedge work is complete, then review.

10. Bend in road signage – Fornham St Genevieve.

The Clerk shared email correspondence between SCC Highways and RH, asking RH to raise a customer report, so that SCC Speed & Safety Team could be involved.

The question was raised if the junction could have cats eyes to make more visible at night.

ACTION: Clerk to liaise with RH for direct contact for Speed & Safety Team.

11. Clerks update

- i. Defib & The Circuit registration – new stickers for unit
Defib now registered with The Circuit, Cllr Mahon on board. **ITEM CLOSED.**

- ii. VAS batteries & relocation
New batteries purchased from Amazon, much cheaper than direct, unit moved and new batteries working well. **ITEM CLOSED.**
Clerk advised an agreement had been made with Matthew Kemsley to pay him £75 per year towards the cost of charging the VAS batteries. This was paid in 2023, missed in 2024 and unpaid 2025 also.
Council resolved to continue this arrangement for 2024 & 2025.
- iii. Gov.uk domain & email update
Domain set up and Clerk to help Cllrs get their emails going. Next steps to phase out gmail account and move website onto new domain.
- iv. Bugle advertising
Invoices sent, over £1400 already received. **ITEM CLOSED.**
- v. Website update
Clerk has been making little tweaks to make the website more appealing, removing old content and making more of the news section. A bigger project is required to improve functionality and have a complete overhaul.
- vi. Traffic light on Tollgate
Clerk Reported and since been cut. **ITEM CLOSED.**
- vii. Pavement issues bottom of Barton Hill, and bus stop by BMW garage
Clerk has raised issues, no improvements as yet. Unrelated, but it looks like the landowner has trimmed some of the hedging along the pavement opposite BMW.

12. Volunteering group

Council to discuss setting up a volunteer group, to carry out minor works around the village. Clerk advised that a number of villagers responded to the Bugle advert to become part of a volunteering group.
The SCC Community Self Help Scheme gives access to training so that works can be carried out on the Highways, which then also gives insurance cover. Free PPE is available, as well as monies for tools and equipment purchase.
ACTION: Clerk to look at dates for training.

13. Grass cutting and maintenance throughout the village and King Georges playing field.

Council to try and understand who is responsible for what, what is being done and at what cost.
WSC are cutting the playing field at a cost of £1567.76 for 12 cuts in 2025.
Tilbrooks are maintaining the roundabout, verges around and verges down from the roundabout to the Woolpack, price is meant to include basal growth, at £591.30 per month (17 cuts per annum).
Clerk advised that Top Garden had also previously quoted for both of these works.
Council resolved to have a full review in 2026 before the next grass cutting season begins, to include regular maintenance works as well.

14. Parish Matters.

- i. Weekly & monthly play park inspection reports.
Council to receive update and discuss procedure moving forwards - Clerk currently sending monthly report to Cllr Rushman, and Cllr Rushman completing weekly visual inspections.
Council discussed monthly WSC reports and weekly visual reports completed by Cllrs. The visual reports were not a requirement by the insurance, but seen as a good practice.
Council resolved to review the monthly report at meetings and to carry out and record fortnightly visual inspections.
Cllr Rushman has already visited site with a handyman to review some of the required

works.

Cllr Butler suggested creating a sinking fund for the improvement works to the playground.

The Clerk advised that there is already £2,000 in the reserves earmarked for playground maintenance.

It was suggested to consider removing the trim trail, as that is where much of the rotten timbers are, and it appears unused.

ACTION: Clerk to add to October agenda.

15. NJC Salary Pay Award 2025/26.

Council to discuss revised NJC pay scales for Clerk and Locum Clerk. Scale 25 increasing from £18.72 to £19.32 per hour, effective from 1st April 2025.

Council resolved to approve the increase to the Clerk and Locum Clerks pay scale, backdated to 1st April.

16. Remembrance Day

Council to discuss the purchase of a wreath, on behalf of the Parish Council and responsibility for laying it.

The church would invite council to the service, where an opportunity is given to lay a wreath.

Council resolved to purchase a wreath.

17. Councillors reports and items for future agenda.

- i. Speeding in the village – Cllr Mahon
No report given.

18. Correspondence.

- i. Tree felling on the golf course
Clerk advised resident that a tree felling license was in place.
- ii. Notice boards & All Saints Master Plan
Clerk advised resident he was responsible for notice boards and forwarded the All Saints Master Plan.
- iii. Thanks from the Church, noted.
- iv. Thanks from the Village Hall, noted.
- v. Thanks from the Ladies Club, noted.
- vi. Speeding in the village
Ongoing communication following on from Police attendance in the village.
- vii. Broken noticeboard
Clerk visited site, no visible issues.
- viii. High level field gate not being locked and damage to gate
Cllr Last & Cllr Rushman attended. Council do not appear to have keys to the high-level barrier.
ACTION: Clerk to investigate.
- ix. Resident letter concerning councils donation to the church, and not spending on pavements etc in the village.
David Yates confirmed that every penny has to be raised in the village and that no money is received from the church commissioners.
Cllr Butler stated that the village church is a big part of village life and that the council is right to support it.
Cllr last had sent a written response.

19. Date of next meeting.

Next meeting to be held on Thursday 9th October 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting closed to the public 9.58pm.

To be signed by the Chairman at the next meeting of the Parish Council, Thursday 9th October.

Signed: *Clive Last*

Date: 9th October, 2025