Croughton Parish Council
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CROUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Croughton Village Hall
Monday 9th November 2026 at 7:30pm

MINUTES

Present:
Councillor Steven Caldwell (Chair)
Councillor Vee Griffiths
Councillor Graham Judd
Councillor Susan Relf

In attendance: Alan Youel (Clerk/RFO), 1 member of public

The meeting opened at 19:30

26/189	Welcome announcement from the Chair.
26/190	To receive and approve apologies for absence. Cllr Zoe Greenfield **Resolved:** To approve apologies from Cllr Zoe Greenfield
26/191	To receive and approve for signature the Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12th October 2026. **Resolved:** To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on the 12th October 2026, subject to amendments: **26/174 1.** Goldsby to Golsby & **26/188** Middle Lane to Mill Lane
26/192	**ACORN Community Fund – Croughton and Evenley Parishes** Members received a presentation from Charlie Lywood and Alister Veitch of Acorn Bioenergy regarding the proposed ACORN Community Fund, which will provide £20,000 per annum for an anticipated 25-year period to support local community projects. The representatives advised that the project was working through the final pre-commencement conditions, with construction anticipated to begin in February/March 2027. The community fund is expected to be established before construction begins, with local representatives appointed to a working group to oversee the allocation of funds. The working group is expected to comprise eight or nine members from the local community, including three volunteers from Croughton. Acorn emphasised that, although it would provide a policy framework, terms of reference and appointment arrangements, the group would have autonomy over funding decisions. Potential areas of support could include education and local infrastructure, but the intention was to allow the local group to determine priorities. The fund would provide £20,000 annually, index-linked over the anticipated 25-year life of the project. Unspent annual allocations could be carried forward. Acorn would administer the fund, provide a website

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	and secure online application process, and arrange publicity and application materials for local distribution. Applications would be considered by the working group, which is expected to meet approximately three times a year, with an initial meeting in person and subsequent meetings potentially held online. Acorn advised that it would provide the necessary liability insurance for the working group and that arrangements would include a policy framework, terms of reference, appointment letters and provisions relating to conflicts of interest. The first grants are anticipated to be awarded in January 2028. Members were also offered the opportunity to visit the Astwick site.
26/193	To receive members' Declarations of Interest under the Council's Code of Conduct related to business on the agenda. (Members should disclose any interests in the business to be discussed and are reminded that the disclosure of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is required, and that the member should withdraw from the meeting room during the transaction of that item of business). *None declared*
26/194	**Public participation session:** *No representations from members of public present*
26/195	**Matters Arising – Clerk's Report** To note any matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda, for report only. **Basics of Allotments Training – Clerk's Report** Members received and noted the Clerk's report following attendance at the Basics of Allotments training on 27 October 2026. The report highlighted recommendations for reviewing allotment rules and tenancy agreements, plot inspection procedures, health and safety, maintenance priorities and waiting list management. **Resident Request – Pedestrian Crossings** The Clerk updated Members on a request received from a resident for safer pedestrian crossing points in the village, particularly for children and families travelling between the school, Puddleducks Nursery and the church, and for pedestrians accessing the Co-op, where there is currently no pavement. Suggestions included a traffic-light-controlled crossing near the school and zebra crossings at either end of the village. **Action:** To refer the request to the Traffic Working Group for consideration and to report back to the Council. **Playing Fields – Request for Use by Brackley Athletics** The Clerk updated Members on an enquiry from Brackley Athletics regarding the potential use of the village playing fields for seven-a-side football on Saturday mornings between 10.30am and 1.00pm. The enquiry included proposed hire fees, grounds maintenance requirements, access and conditions for regular use. Cllr Griffiths advised that the playing fields are not the responsibility of the Parish Council and that bookings are managed by the Croughton Playing Fields and Village Hall Committee. **Action:** The Clerk to provide the requester with the Village Hall Committee's contact details.
26/196	**Financial matters:** Balance of accounts as of 30th October:

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Community Account	£7,369.25
Premium Savings Account	£156,693.95
Total	£164,063.20

Bank Reconciliation and Bank Statements
The RFO explained that access to the Council's bank accounts remained unavailable due to outstanding changes to the bank mandate. The bank statements were therefore not available prior to the preparation of the agenda. It was also noted that the statements received from Barclays were not aligned, with the Current Account statement dated to 30 October and the Premium Savings Account statement dated to 22 October.

At the September meeting, Members had queried the difference between the balances shown in the accounts and the bank reconciliation. The RFO explained that the Premium Savings Account balance in the balance of accounts table differed from the statement balance because the statement only covered the period to 22 September, rather than 30 September. Consequently, internal transfers between accounts were not reflected in the Premium Savings Account statement at the time of reconciliation.

The RFO advised that the September bank reconciliation was being re-presented using the Council's traditional reporting method, while recording the outstanding concerns regarding the information available and the reconciliation.

1. To approve the Bank Reconciliation for September & October 2026 (see separate document).

Resolved: To approve Bank Reconciliations for September & October 2026

2. To ratify and approve payments and payments due:

Description	Reference	Payee	VAT	Total
Water (Allotments)	DD	Wave	£0.00	£45.00
Water (Cemetery)	DD	Wave	£0.00	£9.00
Clerk Salary Mth 7	BACS	A Youel	£0.00	£617.03
Clerk Salary (Tax, Employer NIC, Mth 7)	DD	HMRC	£0.00	£207.33
Phone	Debit card	Vonage	£1.71	£10.25
Mobile phone SIM	Debit card	Smarty	£0.00	£6.00
Broadband	DD	Gigaclear	£7.88	£47.30
Newsletter Printing	BACS	Texprep (28092)	£0.00	£64.20
NCALC	BACS	Training	£9.20	£55.20
Npower	DD	Electricity	£21.66	£454.88
Royal British Legion	BACS	Donations	£0.00	£50.00
Microsoft 365	Debit card	Office Equipment	£14.16	£84.99
TOTAL			**£54.61**	**£1,651.18**

Resolved: To approve payments listed above totalling £1,651.18

3. To note receipts for September 2026:

Description	Reference	Payee	VAT	Total
Allotment rent	CC	Plot 3	£0.00	£20.00
Allotment rent	CC	Plot 26	£0.00	£20.00
Allotment rent	CC	Plot 18	£0.00	£20.00
Allotment rent	CC	Plot 25	£0.00	£10.00

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Allotment rent	CC	Plot 10	£0.00	£20.00
Allotment rent	CC	Plot 20	£0.00	£20.00
VAT Reclaim	CC	HMRC VTR	£727.94	£0.00
Allotment rent	CC	Plot 16	£0.00	£20.00
Allotment rent	CC	Plot 8	£0.00	£20.00
TOTAL			**£727.94**	**£150.00**

4. Accounting Software

The RFO presented three options for specialist accounting software to support the Council's financial management, reporting and transparency. Members noted the potential benefits, including reducing the risk of human error, improving budget monitoring and project management, managing loan repayments and assisting with the preparation of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

The initial and ongoing costs of each package were considered, with Members acknowledging the financial commitment involved.

The three options and associated costs were:

- **Easy PC Accounts:** £114 annual subscription.
- **Scribe:** £329 initial cost, plus £41 per month.
- **Rialtas:** £524 initial cost, plus £422 per annum.

Resolved: To use Scribe Accounts, with funding from Chairmans Allowance and spare allocation from Training cost centre

26/197 **Budget Setting 2027-28**

Cllr Griffiths presented suggested revised budget figures per category for review taking account of expected changes and inflationary pressures. Members considered the second draft budget and potential precept demand for 2027/28. Scribe to be added in office equipment.

Members discussed the possibility of the Parish Council providing a Christmas tree for the village, following recent discussions with residents and previous Council discussions. Support efforts of the Residents' Committee is making arrangements for Christmas 2026. Members suggested including a new budget line for Christmas decorations in the 2027/28 budget £40.

The RFO shared 2026/27 earmarked reserves noting previous virements to allotment wall rebuilding category

The Chair noted that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts still required suitable allocation, need to be identified in budget.

Resolved: Cllr Griffiths to forward the updated figures to the RFO to compile a final draft for presentation to December meeting

26/198 **Planning Applications currently relevant to Croughton:**

1. 2026/3832/HH - 20 Portway Drive Croughton NN13 5NA - First floor extension above an existing ground floor garage conversion, replace a front window and a rear window with a window and door set

Resolved: No comments

2. 2026/3693/TCA - The Old Rectory 5 High Street Croughton NN13 5LT - T1 Ash Reduce lateral spread all round by approximately 2.5m to relieve end weight on heavy structural limbs. T2 Magnolia Reduce by

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	2m T3 Lime Crown reduction by 4m in height and 2m on lateral spread. T4 Lime Fell over mature tree with Ganoderma all round base, major die back **Resolved**: No comments **3.** 2026/3616/S73 - Land to the West of A43 Buckingham Road Evenley NN13 5GH - Variation of condition 26 (Biomethane and Carbon Diox HGV Movements) to increase the cap from 6no. to 12no. daily HGV movements to ensure and maximise operational efficiencies to planning permission 2024/5352/MAF [The construction, operation and decommissioning of a renewable biomethane gas generation facility with associated infrastructure and works including highway access, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements] **Resolved:** To submit a formal consultation response to West Northamptonshire Council raising concerns regarding the proposed increase in daily gas tanker movements from 6 to 12, the impact on road safety and nearby residents, and the need for clear, effective and enforceable traffic management measures under Condition 25, including monitoring and control of all HGV movements to and from the site
26/199	**Defibrillator Purchase and Location** The Chair provided an update on the proposed purchase and location of a new defibrillator. The Working Group will contact the Co-op to explore the possibility of siting a defibrillator at the premises. Members noted that the funds currently raised amount to approximately £4,000
26/200	**Wreath Purchase and Remembrance Service** The Chair confirmed that the previously approved £50 allocation would be paid to the Royal British Legion towards the purchase of the wreath, with the remaining balance donated to the Poppy Appeal. Members expressed their thanks to Martin Hacon for laying the wreath on behalf of the Parish Council
26/201	**Village Christmas Tree** Members noted that a local community group is currently organising the village Christmas tree and discussed the Parish Council's potential support for the initiative
26/202	**Allotment Wall Rebuilding Project** The Chair provided an update on the project, including the revised quotation obtained by the Clerk from the contractor, Furlong & Higgs. The contractor had not indicated any restrictions on the commencement of the works. Members noted the previously confirmed Public Works Loan Board borrowing approval and discussed the next steps towards progressing the project. Members considered the need to formalise the contract for the works, including whether the design surveyor should be engaged to advise on the appropriate contract documentation, insurance requirements and associated arrangements. Members also discussed the previously proposed appointment of AB Design Solutions to project manage the works on behalf of the Parish Council, for which a fee proposal had been received. **Resolved:** To suspend Standing Order 3.x to allow the meeting to continue for a further 15 minutes. **Resolved:** To accept Furlong & Higgs' revised quotation, subject to obtaining appropriate contract advice and the preparation and agreement of formal contract documentation. **Action:** The Clerk to contact Furlong & Higgs to establish what form of contract they anticipate using for the works and clarify their requirements.

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	Action: The Clerk to liaise with the design surveyor regarding advice on the appropriate contract arrangements, including insurance requirements. **Action:** The Clerk to contact AB Design Solutions to confirm the Council's intention to proceed with their previously proposed project management role and request advice on the necessary next steps, subject to confirmation of their fee proposal.
26/203	**Return of the Allotment Pocket Park from the Village Hall Committee** The Chair advised that further discussion was required with the Village Hall Committee regarding the proposed return of the Allotment Pocket Park to Parish Council management. **Action:** The Clerk to contact the Village Hall Committee to obtain copies of the relevant management agreement and associated documentation and invite representatives to attend the next Parish Council meeting to discuss the arrangements and future management of the Pocket Park
26/204	**Traffic Working Group** No update was available from the Traffic Working Group. Members considered the resident's request for safer pedestrian crossing points in the village, particularly for children and families travelling between the school, Puddleducks Nursery and the church, and for pedestrians accessing the Co-op, where there is currently no pavement. Suggestions included a traffic-light-controlled crossing near the school and zebra crossings at either end of the village. **Resolved:** To refer the request to the Traffic Working Group for consideration and to report back to the Council. The Chair
26/205	**Allotment Working Group** Members agreed that the Clerk's report following the Basics of Allotments training should be forwarded to the Allotment Working Group for consideration. The Clerk updated Members that allotment invoices for the period 1 October to 31 March had been issued by email, with some payments already received. Two invoices remained to be sent by post. **Action:** Cllr Griffiths to share the training report to the Allotment Working Group
26/206	**Bus Shelter** No update
26/207	**Bench Renovation – Mill Lane** Members noted a request from a resident to undertake refurbishment works to the bench at Mill Lane. Further details of the proposed works were not available
26/208	**Consultations** **HGV Traffic Seminar – Police Liaison Officer (PLR)** Members noted the invitation from NCALC for Police Liaison Representatives to attend an online webinar with Northamptonshire Police on Thursday 19 November 2026, from 6.00pm to 7.00pm via Zoom. **Action:** The Chair to attend the webinar on behalf of the Parish Council
26/209	**To receive items to be included in the next agenda**

The meeting closed at 21:44

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