



ALDWICK PARISH COUNCIL

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Chairman: Cllr Guy Purser Clerk: Heather Knight

Minutes of the MEETING (474) OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Held on **Tuesday 23rd September 2025 at 7.00pm** in the Council Chamber

Present: Cllrs Purser (Chair), Bence, Gotheridge, Huntley, Patel, Sapsed and Thas

In attendance: H Knight (Clerk)

The meeting opened at 7.00pm.

75. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received, and reason approved, from Cllr Buckley (personal reason), Cllr Rufey (personal reason), Cllr Warden (personal reason) and Cllr Basford (personal reason).

76. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

77. Minutes of the Council Meeting of 22nd July 2025

It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22nd July 2025 were a correct record and that the Chair sign them.

Clerk's Report and Actions

Min. 41, Bus Shelter, Aldwick Road: The new approach window had been installed in early September. The contractor also successfully removed the small graffiti mark on the departure window, at no cost.

Min. 56, Blue Plaque for R C Sherriff: The owners of the Sandmartins premises had given the plaque to the R C Sherriff Trust. The Clerk had been liaising with the Trust about the possibility of the Parish Council being custodian so that it would return to Aldwick. The Trust board was sympathetic but hadn't yet made a final decision as Trustees wished the plaque to be part of a forthcoming exhibition in November. Further update would follow in due course.

Min. 61.1, West Meads Access Protection Line (APL): The APL had been implemented and although numerous vehicles still parked there, it had deterred much of the parking over the footpath, leaving much improved and safe movement of pedestrians/buggies etc.

Min. 61.2, West Meads planter and precinct tidy up: This had taken longer to implement than anticipated but was completed in early September. The precinct had been cleared of weeds, planted beds tidied up, and the area now looked much more cared for. The West Meads Residents Association contact was very pleased and had thanked officers and the Council for arranging this. Cllr Bence mentioned that he had liaised with Arun DC officers about the car park clothes recycling container, another concern of West Meads RA, as it was frequently overflowing, attracted fly tipping and was rarely emptied: ADC had advised him that this would be removed. The Clerk reported that the Deputy Clerk had also been liaising with ADC about this and had been told it was unlikely to be removed but could possibly be repositioned.

Min. 61.3, Allotments – Vegetation/hedge removal: The contractor had removed the hedge and bramble overgrowth and dug over the site across several days, completed 18th September. The results were good, with the plots concerned now much more manageable.

Min. 63.1, Office blinds and Min. 63.2, Office flooring: The new blinds had been installed and the carpet steam cleaned, providing a refreshed, cleaner workspace and improved window screening.

Min. 68, Councillor IT Security Policy: The Clerk had circulated a printed copy of the final policy to each Member, with a cover sheet to sign confirming receipt.

Min. 42, 17.06.25 Redundant Property Disposal: All IT equipment needing decommissioning and/or destruction had now been removed. Two surplus monitor screens had been donated to Rose Green Infant School, a quantity of general paper had been recycled and 20 bags of confidential waste had been appropriately removed. There remained still some office furniture to be disposed of and considerable ongoing work reviewing archive files to reduce paperwork held.

Playparks improvements: Arun DC had received UKSPF funding to provide items of inclusive play equipment and was installing sensory play panels at Rose Green play area from September onwards.

78. Any such matters as the Chairman may wish to bring to attention

The Chair had nothing specific to report.

79. Adjournment for public speaking

There were no public present.

80. To receive reports from the District Councillors and County Councillors representing Aldwick

C.Cllr Bence updated members on the Local Government Review (LGR). A meeting today had formally agreed the business plan submission to go to Government. The collective district council preference had been for Option 2B for a coastal south/west unitary, however the final decision made was Option A, for a north/east unitary.

D.Cllr Bence advised that there had unfortunately been unavoidable delay in implementing the new pipe extension to the Aldwick beach storm drain.

D.Cllr Patel reported that he had followed up a resident enquiry referred to him by Parish Council officers Regarding charges made for public to use the toilets at West Park, which were transferred from Arun DC to the café business. Arun DC had advised that the lease did not preclude the business owner charging. The Clerk confirmed that telephone calls had been received about being charged and having to obtain a code from the café staff before being able to use the toilet. There had also been a concern raised regarding accessibility of the disabled toilet, which also needed a code from staff, despite having a Radar key. A member of the public had written reporting that his medical condition made it very difficult to be delayed in getting access, and he had resorted to relieving himself in the trees. Members were very concerned to hear this, and disappointed that as had been their concern at planning consultation stage, the toilets were no longer a free and fully accessible public amenity.

81. Co-option

An application for co-option to a vacant council seat had been received, however the applicant was unable to attend this meeting due to work commitments. On the proposal of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED** to defer the item to a future meeting so that Members could meet the applicant.

82. Committee Meetings

82.1 The Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 5th August and 11th September 2025 were received and noted.

83. External Audit Report - Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for Year End 31st March 2025

Members considered and noted the signed External Audit Report and Certificate. The Clerk reported on the conclusion of the external audit by Moore. An incorrect point had been made in their covering letter regarding the dates of commencing the Public Rights period. The Clerk had responded and Moore had since apologised for the error, and would be providing a revised covering letter.

The Report and Certificate confirmed that following review of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR the information provided by the Council was in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. The Clerk advised that the Notice of Conclusion of External Audit had been published as required. Members thanked the Clerk for the work and time spent on the process.

84. Amenities:**84.1 Summer Play Activities**

The Clerk's Report was noted, which summarised the free play scheme and free skateboard coaching with some data on attendance. Three play scheme dates had had to be cancelled due to inclement weather or staff absence. The play scheme had experienced some issues at the West Park site with high numbers, underage children being left and equipment not being returned. Both contractors would be happy to return to Aldwick in 2026. The Clerk had asked for public feedback via the Council's newsletters. Some very positive feedback about the skateboard coaching had been received, none so far regarding the play scheme. A Member suggested a questionnaire might be worthwhile. Members discussed the two offerings and were pleased to note both had been generally popular. A Member commented on some negative parental feedback they had received regarding the play scheme activities. It was noted that there should be around £3,700 unspent budget for 2025-26 and £1,700 in Earmarked Reserve 328 Youth Activities. Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to budget for providing both schemes in summer 2026, and that the Clerk investigate the potential for booking some dates at other school holiday periods and for adding Queens Field Park (West Meads) either as well as or instead of West Park. The Clerk would report back to a future meeting.

84.2 Grounds Maintenance Contract

Members reviewed the contracted service and it was **RESOLVED** to extend the one year contract due to end on 31st March 2026 by a further one year from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027, as provided within the terms. It was noted that the contract terms provided for a price increase of the CPI percentage for October of the previous year. There were no suggestions for the winter planting schedule, other than the existing guidance suggestions within the contract appendices.

The Clerk reported that Minutes from 2019 had revealed that the previous grounds maintenance arrangements had included the raised brick planter at West Meads shopping precinct. Members **RESOLVED** to utilise the variation schedule of the current contract for the contractor to provide a cost for maintaining this planter.

84.3 Bench at Dark Lane Beach Entrance

Members noted that a resident had complained in previous years and more recently about the public seating at the Dark Lane beach entrance, one of which was in poor condition, and which are regularly unusable due to being covered by beach stones. This is a seasonal/tidal issue and it was noted that in order to keep the seats accessible, reasonably regular stone clearance is necessary. In the past Arun DC has undertaken this on an ad hoc basis, however, they had recently advised that the seats are not their responsibility. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk had attempted to establish ownership of the seats and beach area without success, and Cllr Purser had also liaised with ADC officers. It therefore appeared that the Parish Council may need to decide whether to accept responsibility for the seat and if so whether to absorb costs for keeping seating accessible as well as maintained. In discussion there were mixed views as to how to proceed. It was **AGREED** that Cllrs Bence and Purser, as District Councillors, would revert to Arun DC officers to pursue the possibility of ADC clearing the stones, as had been done previously. The matter would be reported back to Council in due course.

84.4 Christmas Tree

The Clerk's report was noted. There had been some issues with the temporary anchor points in 2024. The Clerk had therefore investigated alternative options with WSCC Highways for either installing permanent recessed anchor points or a tree stabilised on a purpose made stand with fixing stays and ballast. For permanent anchor points, a licence would be required for a suitably competent civil engineer to establish suitability of the ground, followed by an additional licence to permit the works. Given the time available for undertaking the necessary work this required, and likely high costs, this was not viable for 2025 but could be researched for future years.

Quotes had therefore been sourced from 5 companies providing a complete package to supply, install and remove a 20' Christmas tree. Of 3 responses received, one of which was for an artificial tree, there were options for either a plain, lit, or decorated tree. A quote had also been received from the Council's usual supplier for supply and delivery only of a 20' real Christmas tree, however this would require additional contractors to provide installation/removal and lighting, and would involve the same

problems regarding use of temporary anchors. It was noted that costs for this year were likely to exceed the budget allocation of £1,800.00

Having considered the quotes and available options, it was **RESOLVED** to purchase a complete package for the supply, installation, lighting, and de-installation of a 20' Norway Spruce provided by Pines and Needles, at a cost of £2,604.05 + VAT, with the Clerk to investigate a potential discount incentive for a future 3 year agreement. It was **RESOLVED** to agree the resulting overspend, anticipated in the region of £800, on the Christmas Project budget code 4500, with any shortfall to be met from general reserves.

84.5 Remembrance Day and Lt Prior Commemorations

The Clerk sought confirmation that Members wished to proceed with budgeted arrangements for the small annual service on Armistice Day. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk proceed with arrangements, ordering of 3 wreaths, the bugler having been provisionally reserved already, and that light refreshments would be available in the Parish Council rooms after the service. Cllr Thas kindly offered to provide some home-made cakes, other provisions would be purchased by the Clerk.

The Clerk also sought confirmation of whether the Council wished to mark Lt Prior's death at the Dark Lane site on the on 22nd December anniversary. It was understood that the RAFA Bognor Regis branch intended to do so, and the Council may wish to partner with them again. It was **RESOLVED** that this would be observed. Cllr Purser offered to contact the RAFA branch and RBL branch regarding their plans.

84.6 Wildflower Meadow, The Oaks, Aldwick

Cllr Gotheridge gave a brief update further to his initial discussion with Arun DC about a potential wildflower area near the playground at The Oaks (Min. 61.3, 22.07.25 refers). Arun DC had confirmed that the site would be included in their 2026 wildflower planting programme, and would be seeded shortly.

85 Finance:

85.1 Financial Reports, Cashbook reconciliations

Members received cashbook reconciliations for cashbooks 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 to month ending 30th June 2025, and confirmed that these agreed to bank statements.

Members received cashbook reconciliations for month ending 31st July 2025 for Cashbooks 1, 2 and 3, noting agreement to bank statements. The Clerk reported that owing to a processing query on Cashbook 4 accounts (credit card), Cashbooks 4 and 5 were not yet available. Members reviewed the available cashbooks and it was **AGREED** that these would be re-presented for signing off as a full set of accounts including Cashbooks 4 and 5 at the next meeting.

85.2 Income & Expenditure reports

Members received and considered the Income and Expenditure report compared to budget to Q1 month ending 30th June 2025.

85.3 Community Safety Partnership Grant

The Clerk reported receipt of the Community Safety Partnership Grant of £1,130.00 relating to the Skateboard Coaching sessions.

85.4 Precept Instalment

The Clerk reported receipt of the £60,954.50 1st instalment of the precept in September.

86. Replacement Computer/s

Members considered the quotes and options from the council's IT provider for a new laptop and/or desktop computer for the Deputy Clerk. This was due to the current laptop and desktop being non-compatible with Microsoft 11, and therefore would not be supported by MS software updates from October 2025. Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that a new Dell laptop only would be purchased as quoted, at the approximate value of £725.71 + VAT (pricing fluctuates) and the set up/install fee of £570.00 + VAT, provided by Pronetic Ltd.

87. Solar Panels – Pest Exclusion Mesh

Members considered the quotations and Assistant Clerk's summary report for the supply and installation of pest exclusion mesh around the roof solar panels. This had been agreed as an action in early 2025 but postponed until after bird nesting season. It was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from Solar Panel Protect at a cost of £595.00 (ex. VAT). It had been established with the solar panel installer that the method and equipment used would not interfere with the solar panel installation or performance.

88. Website Accessibility Compliance

Members considered the report from the Council's website provider, ProcessMatters2, regarding compliance with the updated regulations Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 and the Public Sector (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. ProcessMatters2 had tested the Council's website against the new requirements and made necessary changes with one exception. In order to meet the requirements and ensure accessibility of uploaded documents, it was recommended that a full Adobe Acrobat licence was necessary. It was **RESOLVED** to accept the report recommendation that ProcessMatters2 continue to upload council documents to the website but at the increased monthly cost of £50 (ex. VAT), to cover the cost and work of using Adobe Acrobat.

89. Website – Interactive Parish Map

As this was not urgent or statutory, It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item to a future meeting

90. Grove House Surgery PPG Christmas Fair

Following their successful summer fair, and positive feedback on the Council's participation, Grove House Surgery Patient Group were planning a Christmas Fair for 29th November and had invited the Council to join in again. The Clerk and Cllrs Purser and Huntley had attended and engaged with a number of residents and stallholders. It was **RESOLVED** to confirm that the Parish Council would join the Christmas Fair. The Clerk and Chair were both otherwise engaged so unavailable. Cllrs Huntley and Sapsed said that they would cover the event, with any other councillors welcome to join for part or all of the period (time to be confirmed).

91. Councillor Surgeries

With public engagement in mind, Cllr Purser proposed that in addition to any public events such as the Christmas Fair, the Council host regular 'surgeries' for public to meet one or more Members. During discussion members were supportive of the proposal, depending on individual availability and dates. It was **RESOLVED** that the surgeries would be held in the meeting hall on the last Friday of each month, starting from January 2026, and that Cllr Purser would cover the first one on 30th January 2026. Cllrs Huntley, Thas and Sapsed indicated they may be available for this or following dates.

92. Display of Aldwick Paintings

The Clerk had circulated copies of several prints of Aldwick locations found in the 1st floor storage area. These were by local artist S Kidd, who had provided the illustrations on the Parish Millennium Map. Members were asked for views on having these framed and displayed in the building foyer, which would be a fairly low cost. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the cost of framing and displaying the 4 prints, to be funded from the Chair's Allowance.

93. Arun District Council Consultation: Proposed Road Closures Policy

Members received and considered the draft policy, noting the extended consultation deadline of 24th September 2025. No formal response was felt necessary on this occasion.

94. Representatives to External Bodies

There were no reports presented.

95. Payments for authorisation

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the List of Payments for Authorisation, as shown below, and that the payment schedule be duly signed by two Members:-

ProcessMatters2/David Chaffe	£120.00
Chichester Payroll Services	£15.00
Heather Knight / Alison Colban	£2,735.16
HMRC	£1,025.10
Nest Pension Service	£273.80
Octopus Energy	£13.68
Barclays Bank	£9.34
Wagner Renewables	£144.00
Castle Water	£13.08
Barclaycard	£2,596.61
Sussex Views Magazine	£120.00
Zen Internet Ltd	£68.40
Monkey Nuts Ltd	£103.20
Perry Turner-Hogg	£913.08
39 Youth Club	£4,031.00
Regnum Blinds Ltd	£368.40
Pronetic Ltd	£42.00
H Knight / A Colban	£2,532.28
HMRC	£903.61
Nest Pension Service	£245.05
Chichester Payroll Services	£15.00
Castle Water	£3.46
Barclays Bank	£8.98
South Coast Skate Club CIC	£2,260.00
Perry Turner-Hogg	£913.08
Monkey Nuts Ltd	£103.20
Octopus Energy	£11.41
Castle Water	£143.43
Castle Water	£8.62
JS Garden Services Ltd	£2,400.00
Moore	£504.00
GW Shelter Solutions Ltd	£401.56
Barclaycard	£259.61
Sussex Views Magazine	£120.00
Restore Datashred	£96.00
Pronetic Ltd	£84.00
Conway Cleaning	£80.00
Castle Water	£8.31
Castle Water	£11.05

96. Correspondence

The Clerk highlighted some items of correspondence, as follows:

- WSCC email 19.09.25 detailing forthcoming highway improvement works at Chalcraft Lane, Bersted (*forwarded*)
- WSCC and ADC September news releases on Business Case for Local Government Reorganisation (*forwarded*)
- ADC email 15.09.25 details of consultation on Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 2026/27 – deadline 12.10.25 (*forwarded*)
- ADC emails, details of consultations on 2026/27 budget setting and Community Safety Survey and PSPO consultation
- NALC CEO Bulletin 28.08.25, annual analysis of parish/town council tax levels
- West Sussex Rivers Trust, email 11.09.25 detailing presentations resources and links relating to river pollution (*forwarded*)
- Bognor Regis Town Council, invitations to Mayor's Civic Reception (Chair attending) and

Remembrance Sunday Ceremony (Chair and Vice Chair attending)

- Residents: 2 emails complaining about flags placed by persons unknown on streetlights and fencing in Aldwick. Clerk had responded and advised accordingly.
- Resident: Letter concerned at not being able to easily access the disabled toilet at West Park; Writer's medical condition meant quick access was needed, but the toilet is kept locked and a code has to be obtained from the café. *(Name provided but no address, so no response possible).*
- Publication: Clerks & Councils Direct, September 205 issue 161.

97. Date and time of next Council Meeting

Tuesday 21st October 2025 at 7.00pm (if no preceding Planning Committee), or approximately 7.15pm (if preceded by short Planning Committee at 7.00pm).

The meeting closed at 8.57pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATED