



ALDWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Aldwick Parish Offices, 88 Pryors Lane, Aldwick, West Sussex. PO21 4JF

Tel: 01243 263330 E-mail: office@aldwickparishcouncil.gov.uk

Chairman: Cllr Guy Purser Clerk: Heather Knight

Minutes of the MEETING (479) OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Held on **Tuesday 20th January 2026 at 7.00pm** in the Council Chamber

Present: Cllrs Purser (Chair), Buckley, Gotheridge, Rufey and Thas

In attendance: H Knight (Clerk)
1 member of the public

The meeting opened at 7.00pm.

The Chairman welcomed all, and explained the fire evacuation procedure in the event of the alarm sounding.

160. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received, and absence and reasons approved, from Cllrs Huntley (personal reason), Patel (personal reason), Pinnelli (work commitment), Basford (personal reason), Warden (personal reason) and Bence (District Council commitment).

161. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

162. Minutes of the Council Meetings of 16th December 2025 and 6th January 2026

It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes of the ordinary Council Meeting held on 16th December 2025 and the minutes of the extraordinary Council Meeting held on 6th January 2026 were a correct record, and that the Chair sign them.

Clerk's Report and Actions

Min. 137 - Councillor Surgery: Reminder, Friday 30th January 2026, 10am-12noon, Chair covering – as a regular event, last Friday of the month, Members to please check their availability for 27th February 2026.

Min. 137/124.1 – Grounds Maintenance Contract: Time constraints, staff leave and workload prevented a January agenda item. This would be on the February agenda instead, which was the same timeframe as last year. A large number of contractors of varying sizes and location had been approached to provide quotations against the schedule of work.

Min. 137/124.2 - Christmas Tree: This was ultimately a pleasing display although there were some issues with stability, requiring repositioning, and with interrupted electricity supply, requiring two call outs by a local electrician to reconnect supply. The tree service contractor had telephoned this week, with useful dialogue around issues to be aware of or improve on, and was keen to work with the council again in 2026. They were processing the refund for equipment ordered but not needed, in the region of £700. The company offers early bird discounts peaking in June, plus returning customer discount, therefore this will be brought to Council as soon as practicable in the new financial year. Research into costs for permanent recessed anchor points will be undertaken for consideration.

Min. 137 - Telephone/Internet service: The council's phone/internet provider had brought forward auto migration from copper wiring to digitised service, which was implemented on 9th January 2026. A number of 'teething' issues arose in the following week, with loss of phone connection and printer scanning for several days. Zen will issue a credit note, and all service was now resumed. Contract costs with the new service should be cost neutral. A new Zen compatible router had had to be installed (free with contract). The Council had only had a new router some 18months previously unfortunately, now redundant. The Clerk has negotiated a 50% refund with the Council's IT provider.

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

None were raised.

164. Adjournment for public speaking

The Chairman welcomed a member of the public, who was attending to observe and was considering applying for co-option to the Council to fill a vacancy. The member of public introduced themselves and gave some personal background and reasons for wishing to apply.

The Chairman thanked the member of public and confirmed that the Clerk would forward a co-option application form.

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

Cllr. Bence (District & County) was unable to attend.

D.Cllr Purser reported briefly on Arun DC matters: Local Government Review (LGR) was a key topic, communications on this had been disseminated to parish/town councils and circulated. The Government's decision on its chosen option was anticipated soon; District councillor briefing sessions had taken place recently on items such as Bathing Water Quality, the Alexandra Theatre renovations.

166. Committee Meetings

The Minutes, reports and recommendations of committee meetings were received and noted, as detailed below:

166.1 Planning Committee

The Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 6th January 2026 were received.

166.2 Staffing Committee

The Minutes of the Staffing Committee Meeting held on 6th January 2026 were received, noting that annual salary reviews had been conducted, and recommendations made for council consideration.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Committee recommendation that the Clerk/RFO salary be moved by 1 spinal column point to SCP 33, and the Assistant Clerk salary be moved by 1 spinal column point to SCP 17, both backdated to 1st April 2026, as budgeted for 2025/26.

167. Budget and Precept 2026/27**167.1 Budget 2026/27**

Members considered the previously circulated draft V3 budget 2026/27, including incorporating a Staffing Committee recommendation from its meeting of 6th January 2026 regarding increase to the Clerk/RFO contracted hours. The change in hours would affect only the last quarter of the current financial year but impacted previous versions of the 2026/27 council draft budget, thereby crossing over to decisions around the new budget.

The Chair of the Budget Working Group explained the revisions from the V2 draft discussed in December 2025 to the proposals in Draft V3 Budget 2026/27, as a result of Staffing Committee recommendations. Previously, budget discussions had centred on an additional 10hrs per week future admin support for the office: During the appraisal process and Staffing Committee discussions, this had now been replaced by an increase to the Clerk's hours instead from 25 to 30 per week. The change would increase the total salaries budget code 4000 to £50,000, the Employer NI budget code 4020 to £6,000 and the Employer pension budget code 4030 to £2,510. A reduction of £500 to the Professional Development budget code 4085 was also proposed, reducing this to £1,500.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Staffing Committee recommendation that the Clerk/RFO contracted hours be increased from 25 to 30 per week, effective from 1st January 2026, noting that this would result in an overspend on the current 2025/26 budget: This overspend was **APPROVED**, anticipated as being approximately £1,300 on the salary budget code, with related additional expenditure to the employer tax and pension contribution budget codes. Council also needed to consider whether or not to increase hall hire charges for 2026/27, the recommendation being to make no change.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Budget 2026/27 as proposed in V3, without further amendment, incorporating the increase to Salaries, Employers NI and Employers Pension budget lines, the decrease to the Professional Development budget line, and with no increase to hall hire charges.

167.2 Precept 2026/27

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the resulting 2026/27 precept requirement of £135,349, which represented an 11% annual increase on the previous year. Allowing for the updated, increased, council tax base from Arun DC, this resulted in an annual charge of £25.07 for a Band D property, an increase of £2.66 per annum, or 5p per week, on the previous year.

168. Finance:

168.1 Financial Reports, Cashbook reconciliations

Members received cashbook reconciliations for cashbooks 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 to month ending 31st December 2025, and confirmed that these agreed to bank statements, with two members duly signing these.

168.2 Income & Expenditure report

Members received and considered the Income and Expenditure report compared to budget to month ending 31st December 2025. The Clerk/RFO reported on and explained some overspends / variances: Bank interest, code 4065, was slightly higher than had been anticipated; Salaries code 4000 was currently on track but as discussed under the previous agenda items, would likely be overspent by year end; Public toilets revenue code 4425 was as yet unspent as Arun DC invoices in arrears; Grants, code 4150, was almost spent now that awards had been made; Christmas Projects code 4500 was overspent by £687 but a refund was anticipated which would bring this much nearer to budgeted cost.

168.3 Earmarked Reserves

Members received and noted the Earmarked Reserves report to month ending 31st December 2025. Comment was made about use of the EMR Youth Activities. The Clerk reminded Members that there were discussions to be had around whether to fund activities in spring half term or Easter school breaks. Cllr Thas was developing some proposals for 2026 play activities. An item to consider options and costs would be on the next appropriate agenda for early planning.

169. Staff Training/Professional Development

Members considered proposed staff training and professional development opportunities. It was noted that through the appraisal process and Staffing Committee reporting, there was support for the Clerk to undertake the CiLCA qualification. This now also requires mandatory training sessions. The training sessions could be paid from the current 2025/26 budget, with the CiLCA registration itself being funded from the new 2026/27 budget, thus spreading the cost.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve/ratify the following:-

- CiLCA registration with SLCC, for Clerk, April 2026, cost £495 ex.VAT, funded from 2026-27 Professional Development budget;
- CiLCA mandatory training for Clerk, provided by registered trainer Celia Price Consultancy, commencing January 2026, cost £450 ex.VAT, funded from current Professional Development budget;
- ChatGPT – How to use AI for Council Tasks Faster, 26th March 2026, for Clerk, provided through SLCC online, cost £20.00 + VAT, funded from current Professional Development budget;
- Canva – How to Use Graphic Design Software, 17th February 2026, for Clerk, provided through SLCC online, cost £38.50 + VAT, funded from current Professional Development budget;
- NPPF Reforms and Updates, various dates, for Assistant Clerk, provided through SLCC online, cost £58.50 + VAT, funded from current Professional Development budget.

170. Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Consultation

Members considered the Arun DC public consultation, which proposed changes to the current PSPO when it expires on 31st March 2026. A small extension to the 19th January deadline had been agreed in order for the Council to respond if wished. Members considered the proposals, noting with concern

that the new PSPO proposed removing areas of Aldwick covered by the existing PSPO, and would cover only slightly beyond the towns of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton. It was **RESOLVED** to respond raising Members' concerns around reported antisocial behaviour locally, requesting that consideration be given to the inclusion of West Park, Avisford Park, Queens Field, Aldwick Green and Aldwick Duck Pond, these public spaces being prone to antisocial behaviour/alcohol related issues.

171. Community Bathing Water Group

Members noted the online Community Bathing Water Group meeting between parish/town council representatives with Southern Water, on 30th January 2026, at 6pm. The Vice Chair and the Clerk would be attending. The Chair was unfortunately unavailable for this, therefore another Member could join if wished.

172. Arun District Association of Local Councils (ADALC)

Members noted the online meeting of ADALC on 3rd February 2026, which the Chair and Vice Chair would join late, subject to the Planning Committee meeting finish time.

173. Policies for review and adoption

Members considered and reviewed the circulated policies, following which it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the following :-

- Document Retention Policy
- Policy on Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) – (amended to be for annual review, not six monthly)
- Freedom of Information (FOI) Publication Scheme
- Risk Register

The Clerk confirmed that the Risk Register must be reviewed annually, and to bring in line with a more sensible timeframe would be brought to Council again early in the new civic year.

174. Representatives to External Bodies

No external representation had taken place, therefore no reports were made.

175. 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:-

Method Construction Services	£468.00
Zen Internet Ltd	£63.36
Castle Water	£8.15
Barclays Bank	£8.98
Octopus Energy	£116.93
Copiers & Printers	£216.00
Copiers & Printers	£82.63
Zen Internet Ltd	£3.91
Zen Internet Ltd	£16.08
Castle Water	£8.38
Process Matters	£150.00
Pronetic Ltd	£973.43
SLCC	£24.00
SLCC	£253.00
Monkey Nuts Ltd	£103.20
Perry Turner-Hogg	£913.08
Sussex Views Magazine	£120.00
Business Stream	£41.73
Tyrrell Services Ltd	£316.50
Barclaycard Commercial	£27.59

176. Correspondence

The Clerk highlighted some items of note in correspondence, as follows:

ADC

- CEO updates on LGR and Devolution, emails 24.12.25 parish/town/ADC meeting notes, and email 13.01.26 (forwarded)
- Email 24.12.25 from Group Head Environment & Climate Change, regarding forthcoming changes to Arun's waste collection services (forwarded)

NALC

- 05.01.26 Newsletter and Chair's open letter to town and parish councils (forwarded)

Grant Aid

- Acknowledgements and thank you letters from:
Sage House Tangmere Dementia Support
Girlguiding BR West District
Grove House PPG
4Sight Vision Support
RAFA BR
Armed Forces Day 2026 Committee
KSS Air Ambulance

Sussex Police

- Copy email from NPT Inspector responding to resident complaint/concern regarding recent repeat ASB and theft attempts to Aldwick beach huts – reassuring the resident of what action was possible, and realistic.

Residents

- Copy email referred to above, to Sussex Police regarding what police are doing about the incidents.
- Resident complaining/concerned regarding long term camper vans parking on Marine Drive West – acknowledged and referred to D.Cllr Bence who has responded to the resident
- Resident complaint/concerns about the long term camper vans parking, and being inhabited, on Marine Drive West. Clerk has responded and advised the up to date information on this issue.
- Resident notifying that the public seat outside Aldwick Green was damaged in a recent traffic collision. Clerk has responded, already noted and will potentially bring to council future meeting pending checks on whether any other authority is already undertaking this.

177. Date and time of next Council Meeting

Tuesday 17th February 2026, at 7.00pm

The meeting closed at 8.13pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATED