MINUTES

Fulford Parish Council
Full Council Meeting

Thursday 12th March 2026
Meir Heath and Rough Close Village Hall

Present:
Cllr Carol Baskin
Cllr Karen Deeth
Cllr Alec Sandiford (FPC & SBC)
Cllr Janet Crossley
Cllr Anthony Meredith
Cllr Stephen Green
Cllr Derek Brindley
Cllr Penny Meakin (Had to leave before the meeting began)
Cllr Andrew Lovatt
Cllr Paul White
Cllr Teri Bryce
Cllr Gareth Brunt (Chair)
Cllr Susan White

In attendance:
Mrs Gemma Keiher-Knapper (Clerk/RFO)

Ian Hill, Chairman of Meir Heath and Rough Close Village Hall

Meeting started at 19:15hrs

194/26 **Public Participation**

The Chairman of the Meir Heath and Rough Close Village Hall addressed the meeting and explained that he had recently requested an informal meeting with the Chairman of the Parish Council to resolve issues that have been ongoing for approximately three years. He reported that the meeting had been constructive and that both parties had discussed the history of the lease and licence arrangements relating to the Village Hall.

The Village Hall Chairman explained that, as Custodian Trustee, the Parish Council cannot own or operate the premises; its role is limited to holding and safeguarding the deeds.

He further informed the meeting that he had compared the fees charged by Fulford Village Hall for a pre-school to help establish an appropriate level of charges. Based on that comparison, the estimated cost would be approximately **£600 per month**. However, the Village Hall Committee is proposing to charge **£400 per month**, which would provide the Parish Council with access to the premises **365 days per year**.

The Village Hall Chairman also explained that the Committee considers it **non-negotiable** that the **"Schedule of Permitted Use"** be removed from the agreement. The Committee believes that retaining this clause would allow the Parish Council unrestricted use of the premises for any purpose. The Chairman further stated that he believed the position taken by the solicitors on this matter was incorrect, particularly given that the Parish Council had begun its booking earlier that evening when, in his view, both parties should be acting openly and honestly.

A Councillor asked what would happen if the Parish Council did not accept the Committee's proposal. The Village Hall Chairman responded that he did not need to answer that question and added that if the Parish Council did not wish to proceed with the arrangement, it would need to find somewhere else.

The Village Hall Chairman also advised that the hall is currently experiencing **more bookings than in any previous year**, although the Parish Office itself cannot be hired out to other users.

Finally, the Chairman explained that when the licence was originally established, the Parish Council had an associated loan to pay for the Parish Office building which ended in **2012**, the same year that the licence arrangement concluded. The Village Hall Committee believes that, following the end of the loan repayments, the Parish Council was expected to continue making equivalent payments to the Village Hall Committee. The Committee estimates that, had this occurred, the total amount paid to date would be approximately **£38,000**.

Ian Hill left the meeting at 1925hrs

195/26 **Apologies.**
Cllr P Meakin and SCC Cllr Sean Bagguley.

196/26 **Declarations of interest and dispensation**
None.

197/26 **Register of interest**
The Chairman reminded all Parish Councillors to update their disclosable pecuniary interests up to date in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

198/26 The following **minutes** and action points were approved:

a) Fulford Parish Council Meeting, Thursday 12th February 2026.
b) Action Points from Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, Wednesday 25th February 2026.
c) Action Points from Community Awards Working Group Wednesday 25th February 2026

199/26 To receive a **Report** from the Police (if available).
The PCSO was running late, and it was uncertain whether he would be able to attend the meeting.

200/26 To receive **Report** from:

a) Stafford Borough Councillors (if available).

Cllr Alec Sandiford informed the meeting of the following:

- The Solar Farm Application is due to be reviewed.
- The Travellers have left the travellers' site.
- The Stoke on Trent Plot off Grange Road is due to have a decision over the next couple of weeks.
- The Wood is with Enforcement and Legal.
- Managed to get fly-tipping signs for Grange Road, Grindley lane, Hilderstone Road and Street Scene will be dropping some spare ones at the Parish Office.
- New bins at Saverley Green and Stallington are due to be installed very soon.
- V12 parking vehicles on the grass verges is ongoing.
- Road sweeper has visited Blythe Bridge, Meir Heath, including Gridley Lane.
- Personally cleared out the grid outside SpringCroft.
- Required photos of Fulford Park to request SBC give it a revamp.

Cllr Mike Dodson did not attend the meeting.

b) County Councillor (if available).

Cllr Sean Bagguley gave his apologies.

201/26 **Clerk's Report** (See attached).

- The Parish Wardens' job lists were approved.
- Still awaiting Street Light upgrade bill.
- Christmas Event booking not confirmed for Meir Heath and Rough Close Village Hall, so decided to enquire with St Francis again.
- Newsletter articles are now due in.
- Blythe Bridge Allotments meeting didn't go well as nobody attended, but it was snowing, so the Clerk advised she would try again with an on-site meeting.
- Clerk informed the Meeting that the office chair has been disposed of because it was broken.
- Old folders found in the office which Councillors have taken away to read to advise on:
  Hilderstone Road Folder – Cllr Meakin
  Fulford Conservation Area – Cllr S White
  Fields in Trust – Cllr Noblett

202/26 **Accounts/Finance:** Fulford Parish Council approved:

a) February 26 Bank Reconciliation.
b) Feb/March 26 Payments list (See attached).
c) 2025-26 Virements

d) Cllr A Meredith proposed that all recipients of Grants this financial year should be requested to provide receipts as proof of purchase, and the Parish Council agreed.

203/26 To consider **Planning Applications** received (See attached).
There were no comments for the following planning applications:
25/41503/FUL, 25/41660/HOU, 26/41902/PAR and 26/41902/PAR.

25/4150/FUL Fulford Parish Council requests that Cllr Dodson call in the application to be seen by the Planning Committee because of the large size of the proposed development.

204/26 **Report** from Fulford Parish Council Chairman.
Cllr G Brunt informed the meeting of a recent incident in **Meir Heath** involving three young girls, which has raised concerns among local residents, particularly elderly members of the community, regarding their safety.

205/26 **Neighbourhood Plan.**
Fulford Parish Council approved V1.2 to be submitted to Stafford Borough Council for comments. Fulford Parish Council approved the survey results article to go into the next issue of the Parish Newsletter. Councillors submitted lists of local businesses in their Wards to write to invite to a Business networking and Neighbourhood Plan evening Monday 15th June at 1930hrs at Fulford Village Hall. The next meeting is Thursday 16th April at 10am location tbc.

PCSO arrived at 1950hrs and confirmed that the incident from the Chairman's report was an isolated incident and the individuals will be dealt with. The PCSO encouraged that all residents should go about their daily lives as normal and always report any concerns.

The PCSO discussed other problem issues in the Parish, which include dangerous parking outside Meir Heath Primary School and littering, especially Special Brew cans, it was encouraged to always make reports.

The Chairman thanks the PCSO for attending and providing a report

206/26 **Health and Safety.**
Nothing reported.
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207/26 **Stallington Residents Meeting.**
Fulford Parish Council approved Cllr A Sandiford heading the meeting to inform the residents what work he has done so far. The Parish also agreed that it is not appropriate to invite Green Belt Management Company, as they have already been given ample opportunity to address the residents' concerns. The Clerk confirmed Cllr Bagguley's attendance, but no response has been received from the MP, Dr Allison Gardner.

208/26 No policies to approve.

209/26 **Devolution** updates
Public consultation has now gone live. The Parish Council approved that a response be submitted confirming that the Parish Council's preferred option is the **North–South** route.

210/26 **Councillor Updates/Items**:
Cllr S White has carried out a litter sweep in Saverely Green and would like to thank the residents for helping.

The Clerk informed the meeting that Cllr Meakin wished to arrange a litter pick along Hilderstone Road, and if anyone is interested, please make contact with her to arrange a date and let the Clerk know so that it can be advertised and the Parish Wardens can assist if available.

Cllr A Sandiford also informed the meeting that Street Scene will replace Street Name Signs if they are damaged, please send photographs to Cllr Sandiford of any signs that require replacing.

Confidential Items to be discussed at the end of the meeting if Public and Press are present.

211/26 **Request to gift the Windmill Grade II Listed Building to the Parish**
Fulford Parish Council approved writing to Stone Gate to request that they consider gifting the Grade II Listed Windmill to the Parish Council. Cllr P White was against this decision because of the financial burden it would place on the Parish Council.

212/26 **Community Awards**
Monday 7th September at 1830hrs at The Windmill Public House, bi-annual Community Awards Ceremony for the following categories:
Business of the Year
Young Person of the Year
Neighbour of the Year
Service to the Community
Councillor of the Year
A budget of £1000 was set to cover awards, a banner and a buffet. How to vote will be advertised in the Parish magazine, and Cllr A Sandiford will help to create an online voting system for residents to nominate.

213/26 **Meir Heath and Rough Close Village Hall Licence Fee for the Parish Office**

The Chairman asked Cllr P White to confirm whether his wife was a member of the Village Hall Committee. Cllr P White responded that his wife was not a member of the Village Hall Committee.

Cllr K Deeth challenged this response, stating that she had been present at a Village Hall meeting where Cllr P White's wife had been voted onto the Committee and that the Village Hall minutes also recorded this.

Cllr P White replied that his wife had not signed any paperwork since that time and therefore was not a member.

Following consideration, the Parish Council voted that Cllr P White had a **conflict of interest** in relation to the matter being discussed and requested that he leave the meeting.

After some debate, during which Cllr P White stated that he believed the decision was incorrect, he requested that it be recorded in the minutes that **he left the meeting under protest at 20:30 hrs**.

The Parish Council considered the advice received from **NALC**, **Legal and Support Staffordshire**, and other relevant guidance. Following the discussion, the Council voted **not to agree to the proposed increase in the licence fee** and to vacate the Parish Office.

Members also discussed concerns that the Parish Council do not feel welcome at the Village Hall. It was noted that several Parish Council representatives for the Village Hall had stepped down for this reason. Councillors further noted that, due to the ongoing level of animosity, the Parish Council has a **duty of care to its employee, the Clerk**, and should not require them to work in an environment where relations have become strained. Councillors acknowledged that the Parish Council had spent approximately **three years attempting to rebuild the working relationship**, but unfortunately, these efforts had not been successful.

The Parish Council therefore **resolved to vacate the Parish Office at Meir Heath and Rough Close Village Hall by the end of March 2026**.

Cllr P White opened and closed the door to the meeting room but remained outside.

It was further **resolved to relocate the Parish Office to office space at Trade Locally, located at the bottom of Grindley Lane**, at a cost of **£200 per month**, inclusive of electricity and internet, which is considerably less cost to the taxpayer than staying at the Village Hall.

The Parish Council also agreed to request copies of relevant policies that, according to the **Charity Commission**, should be held by the Village Hall Committee.

In addition, the Parish Council agreed to submit a **Freedom of Information request** to obtain details of certain hiring fees paid during the **2025–2026 financial year**, in order to ensure transparency and to confirm that there are no conflicts of interest in relation to payments and bookings taken, and the Village Hall is openly available for hire.

214/26 Items for **next Agenda.**

215/26 To **confirm Date**, Time and Location of next meeting.
Thursday 9th April 2026 at a location to be confirmed

Meeting Closed at 2055hrs

Signed **Date** **Position**