



## **SOUTHMINSTER PARISH COUNCIL**

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### **Minutes**

#### **The Meeting of Southminster Parish Council**

**20<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 19.00, held at Memorial Hall, High Street, Southminster Essex.**

**Present:** Cllr Cleary, Cllr Fluker, Cllr Harrold, Cllr McKee, Cllr Mische, Cllr Pratt, Cllr Wilcox and Cllr Wyn-Davies.

**In Attendance:** J Jeffery (Parish Clerk/RFO) and 7 members of the public.

#### **25/201 Apologies for absence.**

There were none.

#### **25/202 To receive and approve Minutes of the Parish Meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025.**

Cllr Fluker informed that he would not support the minutes, having taken advice from the LGA, Cllr Fluker did not feel the confidential report had been recorded appropriately.

Cllr Wilcox informed that he would not support the minutes.

Cllr McKee abstained from voting.

Cllr Pratt proposed acceptance of the minutes from meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025, seconded by Cllr Cleary. Cllr Harrold, Chair used his casting vote.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025 were duly signed.**

#### **25/203 To receive and note any declarations of interest:**

To disclose the existence and any nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. Other Registrable Interests and Non-Registrable Interests relating to items of business on the agenda having regard to paragraph 9 and Appendix B of the Code of Conduct for Members.

(Members are reminded that they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting.)

Item 25/208 Cllr McKee – Pecuniary Interest – Allotment Holder.

Item 25/214 Cllr Mische – Community Hall 2 – Non-Registerable Interest

#### **25/204 Public Session – Opportunity for Members of the Public to speak regarding items on the agenda only**

Restricted to 15 minutes across both public sessions.

Mrs Neall read the following email which has been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting.

Unfortunately, we were unable to attend the Parish Council meeting on Monday September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, but we have been told that Cllr Fluker proposed an increase to the Allotment rents of 5% for the coming year, 2025/2026 – Agenda item 25/184.

This goes against decisions already made by the Parish Council.

It has been accepted that Allotment reserves must be maintained at £2000; if they fall below that figure then an increase in the rents may be considered. The reserves currently stand at £2995.34p, so there is no need for an increase. It has never been satisfactorily explained how the figure of £2000 was determined, having been increased from an original figure of £500. **(Ref minutes 16-09-2024 - 24/204 )**

It has been established that one's years notice must be given for any rent increases. As the rents are due in less than 2 weeks time, there can be no further increase until October 2026 for the year 2026/2027.

Any increase is to be in line with inflation which currently stands at 3.8%, so an increase of 5% is out of order.

It has also been proposed that the Allotment holders should be responsible for the clerk's wages for the time taken to process allotment rents and attend allotment meetings. The clerk is employed as the Council's Responsible Financial Officer, so collecting any monies due to the council must be one of her duties, as does taking minutes at meetings. The clerk's salary is more than covered by the precept, in fact the amount budgeted for her salary always exceeds the amount she receives each year, with the balance going into the council's reserves. Allotment rent money should therefore not be used towards her salary.

I respectfully request that all Councillors look back at decisions already made regarding the way Allotment rents are determined and accept that there is no justification for any increase at this time.

**25/205      Planning**

Week ending: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2025

25/00840/OUTM PP-14155702

Outline Planning application with all matters reserved except access, for up to 200 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), including affordable housing, ancillary infrastructure, public open space, play space, and sustainable drainage.

Land Adjacent Romans Farm Chase and Mill Road Burnham-On-Crouch Essex

Southminster Parish Council recommend the REFUSAL of planning permission for the following reasons, Sustainability, no footpaths, it is not a sustainable location.

Impact on highways, education and health care.

It was commented that Essex County Council Highways are not listed on the application as a statutory consultee, The Clerk was requested to email planning to ask why.

**Planning Decisions**

Week ending

**FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Appeals Advised**

**Site Address:**

**Proposal:**

**Application Ref:**

**Appeal Ref:**  
**Appeal Start Date:**  
**Site Address:**  
**Proposal:**  
**Application Ref:**  
**Appeal Ref:**  
**Appeal Start Date:**

**Appeal Decisions**

**Appeal Reference:** APP/X1545/W/25/3367409

**Proposal:** Application for planning permission to create 36no. One, two, three and four bedroom houses and maisonettes, associated landscaping, roads, parking and drainage infrastructure, plus a new area of public open space and the addition of a footway to the east side of Vicarage Court.

**Address:** Glebe Meadow, Land East of Vicarage Court, Southminster, Essex

**APPEAL DISMISSED**

**25/206**

**Finance Matters: -**

- a: To receive and approve payment and receipts reports for September 2025, proposed by Cllr Cleary, seconded by Cllr Pratt.
- b: To approve payments and to sign cheques, proposed by Cllr Pratt, seconded by Cllr Cleary.
- c: To receive and approve the budget status for to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025, proposed by Cllr Pratt, seconded by Cllr Cleary.
- d: To receive and approve the Bank Reconciliation Statement to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025, proposed by Cllr Pratt, seconded by Cllr Cleary.

A discussion was had regarding debtors, the Clerk informed that all outstanding debtors are shown on the reconciliation statement. It was commented that invoice numbers are shown instead of names due to GDPR. Members asked that a confidential report is produced listing names of debtors.

- e. To receive and approve Ear Marked Reserves  
To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary.

Cllr Fluker proposed that 334 EMR Events £8231.00 is moved to 324 EMR General Development Fund, seconded by Cllr Mische, agreed. Cllr Fluker commented that Cllr Mische could make a bid to the General Development Fund to use the monies towards the new community toilet building.

**RESOLVED: 334 EMR Events £8231.00 is moved to 324 EMR General Development Fund**

**25/207**

**Supplementary Estimates, Virements, Procurements Exemption and use of reserves.**

- a) **Supplementary Estimates** – There were none
- b) **Virements**

Request of virement from cost centre 4720/270 Community Development Fund to Cost centre 5060/120, New Community Building Project, the sum of £5141.40 to pay an invoice for the measured surveys and specialist surveys/investigations associated with the new community building project, to discharge conditions.

Proposed by Cllr Wilcox, seconded by Cllr Mische, agreed.

**c) Procurement Exemption**

A discussion was had regarding the forensic investigation.

There was also a discussion regarding the newly installed fence at Glebe Meadow/King George V Memorial Field. The Clerk informed that quotes for the fence had been obtained whilst she was on annual leave. Cllr Harrold informed he had contacted 3 businesses, 2 quotes were obtained, and one did not reply, The amount invoiced for works carried out was £1,302.00. This was carried out whilst the Clerk was on annual leave due to the matter being time sensitive. It was reported that 8 fittings had been missing at time of installation, the contractor is aware. Cllr Fluker asked that the method statement is circulated.

**d) Use of Reserves – There were none.**

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary.

**RESOLVED: Virement from cost centre 4720/270 Community Development Fund to Cost centre 5060/120, New Community Building Project, the sum of £5141.40 to pay an invoice for the measured surveys and specialist surveys/investigations associated with the new community building project, to discharge conditions**

**Cllr McKee left the meeting at 7.34pm.**

**25/208 Allotments  
Rent 2025/2026**

Cllr Harrold, Chair rules that new information justifies reconsideration.

15<sup>th</sup> September 2025, PCM 25/184 Resolution: An increase of 5% to allotment fees for year 2025/2026.

Cllr Harrold informed that he had received an email from a resident which has been circulated to all Members. Cllr Harrold proceeded to pass the floor to Cllr Fluker.

Cllr Fluker informed that at the time of his proposal at last meeting, it was his understanding that there was £2000.00 in the allotment's reserves, however it transpires tonight that it is nearer to £3000.00.

Cllr Fluker informed that he had visited the allotments over the past few days. Pump Mead Allotments are owned by Moat Housing and there are issues causing concern, boundary fences and Japanese knotweed. When Cllr Fluker visited the allotments today, he could see quite clearly that a boundary fence had been pushed back. Cllr Fluker informed there are paving stones that were laid many years ago that need remedial works carried out to avoid a health and safety issue.

Cllr Fluker proposed that there is no increase to allotment rents for Pantile Hill Allotments and that rents are not collected for Pump Mead allotments until such time Southminster Parish Council understand from Moat what our liability is going forward. There is a blue water main pipe lying just beneath the ground, should we get a serious prolonged cold spell, we will have problems with the pipe. Cllr Fluker proposed that Southminster Parish Council write to Moat Housing to state that issues have been identified including the boundary fence and that Southminster Parish Council accept that they don't own the allotment and ask that Moat take control and deal with the issues or as a matter of urgency or transfer the allotments to us. Cllr Fluker stated that he would caution Members that there is a lot of liability and risk at the moment which probably needs addressing. Two incinerators have also been used recently.

Cllr Pratt commented that Southminster Parish Council should tread cautiously there are two issues, the rent and the ownership., Southminster Parish Council have administered rents for in excess of 10 years more like 50 years, Southminster Parish Council can claim title to it. Cllr

Signed by Cllr Harrold, Chair  
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Pratt proposed collecting rents for Pump Mead Allotments. Cllr Fuker responded that a positive risk assessment could not be provided by Southminster Parish Council.

Cllr Cleary commented that he is concerned by not collecting rents.

Cllr Harrold proposed writing to Moat Housing and adding to the agenda for next month, seconded by Cllr Wilcox.

Cllr Pratt proposed taking advice from a solicitor to draft a letter, seconded by Cllr Fluker. The Clerk to obtain a quote within two weeks.

Concerns were raised regarding insurance, Clerk to speak with Insurers.

It was agreed to also write to Pump Mead Allotment Holders to inform rents will not be collected until legal advice has been sought.

**RESOLVED: Clerk to obtain solicitor's quote within two weeks to draft a letter to Moat Housing regarding ownership of Pump Mead Allotments. Allotments to be added to next agenda.**

**Pantile Hill Allotments, no rent increase for year 2025/2026.**

**25/209 To receive recommendations from Performance, Governance and Audit Committee**

To note cancelled meetings 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025.

**Noted by all.**

**25/210 IT Policy**

To consider adoption of draft IT Policy

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary

Cllr Cleary commented that the forensic investigation needs to be concluded before adopting any IT policy.

Cllr Mische commented that she is using Southminster Parish Council laptop as she is not prepared to use her own desktop computer.

Cllr Cleary informed that he would not be using .gov.uk email and would not be using the laptop.

A discussion was had regarding the necessity for an IT Policy. Historically, there has not been one as two computers were situated in the Parish Office and were not mobile. The Clerk informed that the drafted IT Policy has been drafted using a template provided by the National Association of Local Councils, Assertion 10 of next year's AGAR return requires all Parish Councils to have an IT Policy. The NALC template is being used by many councils as a starting point.

Cllr Fluker proposed adopting of the IT policy with the following amendments;

3: Removal of Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy.

15. Amend annually to continuously.

Addition of all Council official business to be dealt with using southminsterparishcouncil.gov.uk emails/platform.

Addition of mobile devices to be allowed to facilitate.gov.uk emails.

Seconded by Cllr Harrold, Cllr Cleary objected.

**RESOLVED: IT Policy was duly adopted.**

**25/211 Laptops/Website and .gov.uk email addresses.**

Cllr Harrold to update

To discuss and review Resolution 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025, pcm 25/082

**RESOLVED:** Eyelid Productions to provide website upgrade and .gov.uk domain name with support.

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary.

It was noted that laptops and .gov.uk has been covered under item 25/211.

Clerk to share information from Eyelid Productions with Cllr Wilcox.

#### **25/212          Back Office review**

To receive an update

To receive a software proposal

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary

Cllr Wilcox informed that the working group had met four time to conduct a software review, 3 providers had been sought. Comparative costs have been used for Rialtas, current provider and Scribe.

Bottom line costs for a like for like service moving to Omega with Rialtas which is a requirement for a larger council is £7744.00, set up costs. Scribe set up costs £1097.00.

Monthly cost Rialtas £240.58, Scribe £64.00. The Clerk is happy to switch to Scribe, with adequate training. Cost saving of £6647.00 in the first year, also £2119.00 per year moving forward, being cloud based the data is more secure and not reliant on data being stored on a computer. As the council grows with the new community hub additional modules for facility bookings can be made. There is also an allotments module which is being looked at in more detail, to determine if it could give better value to the council and make life easier for residents than the current process.

Cllr Cleary commented that Asset Management should be included, Cllr Wilcox responded that this can be included as a bolt on to the package.

The Clerk commented that any training would need to be undertaken during her working week whilst in the office.

Cllr Wilcox proposed movement to Scribe from Rialtas at a time that is convenient with the Clerk, seconded by Cllr Fluker, agreed by all.

It was commented that following the resignation of Cllr Melhuish, another Cllr is required to join the group. Cllr Cleary asked for details of future meetings and will aim to join the group.

Cllr Harrold Thanked Cllr Wilcox for the background work regarding the accounts package he had undertaken.

**RESOLVED: Movement to Scribe from Rialtas at a time that is convenient with the Clerk.**

#### **25/213          Highways**

To receive an update.

Members asked that the Clerk write to Essex Highways to ask for a review of Kings Road/High Street, due to safety concerns.

#### **25/214          Clerks Update**

29<sup>th</sup> September 2025 – King George V Memorial Field – exposed wires to streetlight reported, door has now been secured.

Partial rewire to cylinder circuit has been carried out at the Pavilion.

PAT Testing has been carried out at the Parish Room.

Fly Tipping at Pump Mead Garages has been reported to MOAT Housing.

A dumped van at King George V Memorial Field has been reported to Essex Police.

VAT reclaim of £4596.46 has been submitted.

Signed by Cllr Harrold, Chair  
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High Street Toilets reclaim of £1925.11 has been submitted to Maldon District Council  
Fire extinguishers have been replaced at the Pavilion.

Initial Hygiene sanitary disposal contract has now ended; Eco Friendly bins are now provided in the High Street Toilets and Pavilion Changing Rooms.

Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has responded to an invite to attend the Parish Council meeting, he is unable to attend on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025, but I have given details of future meetings, and I am awaiting a response.

Essex Police have been contacted online to request attendance at a future meeting, to date no reply.

Sargent Matt Dalby has been contacted at Maldon Police to request attendance at a future meeting; I am awaiting a reply.

New heaters and manufacturers cages have now been installed in Community Hall 2, Clerk has contacted Fisk to arrange collection of cages previously supplied.

Planning Application 25/00206/OUTM - Blue planning notices – Maldon District Council Planning have confirmed that blue notices represent a revision to the live planning application, the notices are placed to inform the public of this amendment. Contributors may wish to amend, withdraw or send new comments in upon reviewing the new/revised information.

Data Breach, a forensic IT company have been instructed, a partial report has been obtained and circulated to all Members, a further report will be given when the company can access the Global Admin Password. The Police and Information Commissioners Office have been informed.

Annual Rough Sleeper Count for the district was conducted on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025, a nil return has been submitted.

DBS checks have been completed for The Clerk, Cllr Harrold, Cllr Mische, Cllr Melhuish and Cllr Fluker.

Letter regarding overgrown hedge on corner of Kings Road has been sent to homeowner. Letter of support has been sent to Southminster Men's Shed following last month's meeting.

Notice has been given by the Tenant of the Car Park Building, this was confirmed on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025, following publishing of the agenda.

Action Plan as requested has been circulated to all Members.

The Clerk informed that the homeowner on Kings Road who was contacted regarding an overgrown hedge has contacted the office. Their hedge was cut a few weeks back, the Clerk will ask the Parish Warden to assess the hedge issues in Kings Road.

Cllr Fluker asked if any contact had been made from the Information Commissioners Office, the Clerk informed not to date. However, Action Fraud had been in contact and given the Clerk a crime reference number for her personal data breach. Action Fraud will contact the Clerk monthly to review but will wait for the completion of the forensic report before progressing further. Cllr Mische informed that a CCTV camera had been fitted in the Parish Office, has a DPI assessment been carried out, do we have a cctv sticker. Cllr Cleary informed that the camera had been an emergency containment action, and that the device is not recording whilst the Clerk is in the office.

Cllr Wyn-Davies asked that the DBS link is resent to her. A discussion was had regarding the need for DBS checks. The Clerk informed that this was another layer of protection for the Parish Council. It was noted that a Sex Offender cannot be a Parish Councillor, at the present time

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unless it is disclosed, Southminster Parish Council would not be able to check this information. It was agreed that the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee would prepare a policy for consideration by Full Council.

Cllr Fluker asked that a copy of the VAT return is sent to all Members.

#### **25/215            Dist Cllr's Report**

Dist Cllr Pratt informed that he had attended a service of dedication for the Maldon Fields Crematorium.

Dist Cllr Pratt also informed that at District Planning Committee, 550 houses had been turned down in Althorne. The local housing five-year land supply is currently at 2.7 years which leaves the district very vulnerable to speculative planning applications.

#### **25/216            Strategic Development Committee**

To receive an update from Cllr Harrold.

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary.

Cllr Harrold informed that all conditions for discharge are now with Maldon District Council. Cllr Fluker will chase Mr Johnson at Maldon District Council for a decision.

Six contractors, plus one contractor added by Southminster Parish Council have been contacted by Barkers Associates with a view to quoting for car park works. Cllr Harrold informed he is making provisions to suffice remedial work, and he is hopeful that remedial works can start on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025 to satisfy a sufficient start to the project.

#### **25/217            Events Committee**

To discuss adoption of Terms of Reference.

Southminster Parish Council meeting held 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 Ref 24/203, resolved: That an Events Committee is formed as formal committee of Council, both sets of Terms of Reference would be considered by the Events Committee with the final version going to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee for approval. The matters of finance and administration by the Clerk were agreed in principle.

Events Committee meeting held 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025 Ref 023/25/26 The committee agreed that having considered both versions they were still content to agree the version approved by committee in August 2024.

It was accepted that the Terms of Reference had to be approved by Council but bearing in mind the majority of members of the PGA Committee were present at this meeting it was felt that there was no need expend valuable resources and time by sending the document to that committee for approval prior to them going to Council.

Cllr Harrold seconded by Cllr Melhuish proposed that the Terms of Reference dated June 2025 be agreed and that they are presented to Council for adoption.

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary.

To adopt minutes of meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

Health and Wellness Event - To receive an update from Cllr McKee.

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who helped make the Health and Wellness event possible. A special thanks goes to Gordan, Martyn, and Meinir for looking after the teas and coffees, and to John for helping me set up on the day.



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I also want to thank all the attendees and contributors who brought something unique to the event. It was great to see members of the community coming along, engaging with the stalls, and making the most of the resources and information on offer.

One highlight was the work carried out by First Responder John, who took 18 blood pressure checks on the day. From those, 6 letters were issued, and 2 people were advised to have conversations with their GPs. Our ear specialist was also kept busy with ear health checks and cleaning, and the wellness ladies had plenty of good conversations and treatments to offer as well.

That said, it would have been nice to see more footfall overall. Events like this take a lot of time and effort to put together, and of course, entry was free for all. One disappointment this year was that we didn't have any children attend, despite having sports providers ready to run free activities for them.

To try and reach as many people as possible, I put posters up in every place I could around the village, including all main entry points into Southminster. The event was also promoted on our dedicated event social media page, the Southminster Parish Council page, and the Southminster Community page. In addition, I had emailed the local school, and Jo, our clerk, also contacted local groups to spread the word.

Overall, I was pleased that we had people through the doors at both the Memorial Hall and The Hive, and that those who came took advantage of speaking with the representatives present.

Looking ahead, I would like to run the event again next year, but with greater support from the wider community. I welcome any feedback or ideas that people may have to help us increase attendance and make the event even more successful.

Finally, if you've seen my social media posts, you'll know we had a great variety of information and resources available on the day, catering to all ages.

Cllr Harrold gave a vote of Thanks to Cllr McKee for her hard work on the Health and Wellness event.

**RESOLVED: All Members agreed to the adoption of Terms of Reference dated June 2025 and adoption of minutes of meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025.**

## **25/218           Footpaths**

To receive an update from Mr Neall.

Mr Neall commented that the fireworks posters around the village do not have a date or time on them.

Streetlight outside Number 8 Kings Road is not working, Clerk to report.

A discussion was had regarding ownership of wasteland on Kings Road and overgrown hedges. It was agreed to ask the Parish Warden to cut the hedge for safety.

It was reported that horses are using the footpath beside Pantile Hill Allotments, concerns were raised that the footpath is narrow and not suitable for horses to pass pedestrians.

A willow tree in the attenuation pond beside the roundabout of Southfield Way/Burnham Road is very overgrown. It is believed to be owned by Essex and Suffolk Water, The Clerk will make enquiries.

**25/219      King George V Memorial Field**

To discuss quotes received for playground maintenance.

To discuss and approve pitch hire agreement.

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary.

The Clerk informed that an email had been received from Maldon District Council with an offer to express an interest in the skate park currently being removed from Promenade Park. Members agreed to not pursue the offer due to expense.

Pitch Hire agreement, agenda for next meeting.

The Clerk informed that three quotes had been sought, one company had quoted, one had sent a pricelist for quotation, and another does not cover the work required.

It was agreed to carry out essential maintenance to the play area; there is currently £5283 in this year's budget. Members discussed the provision of upgrading the play area, further talks to be had when setting the budget for 2026/2027.

**25/220      Southminster Tennis Club**

A request has been received from Southminster Tennis Club regarding the light that looks over the car park next to the bowls club, the light is very bright and gets in the eye line of the players when playing.

A request has been made to point the light in a different direction, put it on a sensor or install a cover.

To discuss and pass any resolution as necessary.

Cllr Fluker commented that this is an operational matter, it was agreed to redirect the light.

**25/221      Public Session– opportunity for members of public to speak on items of mutual interest:**

A resident informed that the Public Right of Way/Footpath from Station Arms Pub to Tattersalls is very overgrown, Clerk to report to Essex Highways. Cllr Fluker commented that Southminster Parish Council could send a quote to undertake the work on behalf of Essex County Council.

It was commented that the hedges from Old Heath to Rose Inn are very overgrown.

A resident asked if turf removed from King George V Memorial Field could be given to Pump Mead Allotments.

Mr Monks asked that the Clerk speaks with Rev'd Peter Begley regarding permission for the civilian war memorial plaque. Mr Monks also informed he had removed the wreaths from the war memorial and secured them to the ground as the wreaths had been secured by others which has now left scuff marks on the war memorial.

A resident commented that he did not feel it was acceptable to pay for playground quotes.

There was a general discussion regarding a planning application for scoping at Stow Maries for 1770 houses.

A resident commented that no more houses should be built, the NHS is at capacity.

It was reported that one of the doors to the old toilet building is open.

**25/222      Date of the next meeting:**

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025 @ 7pm, Parish Council meeting.

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025 @ 6.30pm, Budget meeting

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 @ 6.30pm, Budget meeting

Signed by Cllr Harrold, Chair  
17<sup>th</sup> November 2025

**25/223            Close of business.**  
Meeting closed at 9.39pm.