

Methwold Parish Council Meeting
Monday 19th January 2026 at 7.30pm
21 Room, St George's Hall Complex, Methwold

Present:

Councillors: Cllr French (Chairman), Cllr Grassick (Vice Chairman), Cllr Riches, Cllr Thomas, Cllr Minkler, Cllr O'Ware, Cllr Rodriguez.

Cllr Storey – Norfolk County Council

2 members of the public

Clerk

The Chairman wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially good to see Cllr. O'Ware.

2. Apologies from Cllr Horton and Cllr Senior were received and accepted.

3. Declarations of Interest (In accordance with S31 of the Localism Act 2011) and requests for dispensations. The Chairman has an interest in an item, notification of tree work, approved 2025.

4. Cllr Riches proposed to approve the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13th November 2025 as a true record of the meeting, seconded by Cllr Grassick – APPROVED, the Chairman signed the minutes.

Cllr O'Ware & Cllr Rodriguez abstained as not present at the last meeting.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes not included on the agenda but for information only. Anglian Water – Can we ask them to give the cost in our bill for tankers in Eldens Lane, how much is this costing a week? Anglian Water are not consultees for any new developments, therefore even when there is no capacity to manage additional effluent in the usual way, they have no say as to whether the infrastructure can cope.

6. Open Forum for Public Participation

An opportunity to hear from members of the public, Borough, and County Councillor.

Cllr Storey – Happy New Year and hope you all have a successful year. Local elections – my understanding is that Norfolk County Council would like the elections to go ahead in May which is only right and proper, I feel they should go ahead. NCC have carried out a lot of work on the Local Government Reorganisation. I believe we will hear the government's position by the end of January, there is far too much uncertainty and still more questions than answers which is not satisfactory.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/67898/Local-government-reorganisation>

The Norfolk & Suffolk Mayoral elections will take place in 2028, Unitary Elections is due in 2027, time seems to go on and you should have the opportunity to choose who you want. When the Local Government Reorganisation goes ahead there will be no Borough Council or County Council and the new set up will be based on the one, two or three Unitary Authority.

Recent cold snap NCC Roads 2 operations in 24 hours, they grit 2200 miles of roads, the 58 grit lorries have names which have been suggested by schoolchildren, they have GPS on most vehicles and have auto spread to ensure equal and even spread of grit at all times. Disappointing that footpaths are not gritted anymore. Government will issue additional funding to highways, NCC have put forward that this should be done more quickly in a cold snap.

NCC Budget meeting on 17th February – this is to set out a balanced budget for the forthcoming year, there are deficits across the country for councils and it looks like there will be cuts in services going forwards, although that has not been formalised yet, it looks like there will be a 5% council tax base increase, but NCC are working hard to bring this figure down. The consultations that the residents of Norfolk put forward are going through various systems and consultations and I hope some of them will find their way into the budget.

Resident – another water leak near Cock Corner, this is being repaired tomorrow with two-way traffic lights on the High Street.

Stoke Road has a lot of water running down towards the turning to Northwold, it is thought this could be due to a blocked gulley, Clerk to report.

7. Reports: To update and consider the recommendations made at the Open Spaces Working Group on 9th December 2025.

7.1 Cllr O'Ware proposed for trees at the Post Office and Hall/old social club site to remain the responsibility of the parish council, these will be included on the tree survey and maintenance programme, Cllr Minkler seconded this motion – APPROVED. Three quotes have been received to cut back the two very overgrown trees outside the post office and the 9 trees at the back of the old social club, these trees have caused a lot of problems this year with leaves blocking gutters.

Post Office trees – Quote A = £1050 Quote B = £2020 Quote C = £ 800.00

9 Poplars – Quote A = £ 2775 Quote B = £3750 Quote C = £ 2800

All had the same spec. Tree Officer has given permission for the work to be done.

Cllr O'Ware proposed to accept Quote C to cut back the post office trees, and Quote C to pollard the 9 trees at the old social club, Cllr Grassick seconded the motion – APPROVED.

NCC are running a scheme to purchase trees and hedging at a reduced rate, the parish council have been discussing planting a hedge along the back of the recreation ground where the metal fence once was, the cost to purchase 125 hedge plants is £52.50, two packs would be required to stagger the plants in two rows, however, applications end on the 20th February 2026, a volunteer has come forward to help plant the hedge and a councillor volunteered to collect the plants on Saturday 14th February 2026, the parish council discussed, Cllr Thomas proposed that 2 packs are purchased at a cost of £105, Cllr Minkler seconded the motion – APPROVED.

7.2 Update on the 3 Millennium tree plaques – The trees were planted in 2000, some months ago a parishioner asked about the plaques for the Millenium trees, a councillor did some work and identified the trees, as they were Millenium trees they would have been planted in 2000, we have managed without plaques for a quarter of a century, the cost to purchase the plaques depends on size - £156.97 or £178.97 + VAT, they cannot be fixed to a tree and would need something to fix the plaques to at additional cost, the members discussed and felt that this is not a priority at this time, why was this not thought of when the trees were planted? Cllr Minkler proposed not a priority and do not proceed with plaques for the Millenium trees, Cllr Rodriguez seconded the motion – APPROVED. If anyone in the parish like to contribute towards the cost of the plaques, please contact the Clerk.

7.3 Update and next steps for the repair to the village cross railings – Quotes are now with the insurers and awaiting a decision. The delay has been because of waiting for the traffic management costs, Highways will be asked to remark the junction to make it a lot clearer. Waiting for the go ahead from the insurance company.

7.4 Resident sent a proposal for the parish council to provide, fund and run an enclosed dog exercise area on the land behind the church – wildflower meadow, Open Spaces have discussed the proposal which would require high fencing, dog bin, running water, secure gate, booking system, planning for change of use, the cost to the parish council to set this up was estimated at between £7700-£12800, the parish council have no legal framework to operate a commercial enterprise, there are similar commercial facilities already in existence locally. Cllr O'Ware proposed that the parish council do not proceed with this dog exercise area proposal, Cllr Riches seconded the motion – PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7.5 Cllr Thomas proposed that the repairs as identified as required in the Annual Play equipment report are undertaken, cost £1550 + VAT, Cllr Riches seconded the motion – APPROVED.

7.6 Quote for surface under the cradle swing identified in the annual play equipment inspection as requiring replacing – waiting for quotes, Cllr Grassick to meet contractor who did the original surfaces on other areas on 3rd February 2026.

7.7 Cllr Riches proposed to accept subscription for clerk to join Parish Online - £ 70.00, Cllr Thomas seconded the motion – APPROVED.

7.8 Cllr Rodriguez proposed to accept the increased £10per hour (5 hours) Surveyor costs to complete stage 2&3 for the churchyard wall, Cllr Grassick seconded the motion – APPROVED.

The headstones which are around the walls in the churchyard will need to be removed while the work to the wall is being done, then headstones replaced next to the wall. From first discussions with a stonemason this will be extremely expensive to do, Quotes are being obtained and will be bought to a future meeting once Open Spaces have studied them. The headstones need to be removed so that the wall can be seen, and the amount of work required to repair the wall can be assessed and then quotes obtained for the repairs to the wall. The parish council feel that they need to take another look at the project and the potential costs, a meeting will be arranged with the Churchwarden and Diocese architect.

8. Finance:

8.1 Accounts Update – Bank Reconciliation

Opening balance on Spreadsheet 1st April 2025	£4,962.24
Add Receipts	£117,652.04
Less Payments	£100,034.03
Balance on 30 th December 2025	£ 22,580.25
All Bank Account Totals	
Current Account total on 30th December 2025	£22,580.25
Tracker Account total on 30th December 2025	£30,809.47
Saver Account (CIL & S 106) total on 30th December 2025	£60,457.98
Emergency Reserve Fund 30th December 2025	<u>£26,107.73</u>

Total

£139,955.43

Interest paid for quarter is £341.49.

8.2 Cllr Minkler proposed approval of payments, Cllr Grassick seconded the motion – APPROVED.

8.3 Insurance – the council discussed in detail and prefer to remain with the current insurance company, we currently have two claims in progress. Cllr Thomas proposed to accept £3483.46 + VAT for 3-year contract, Cllr Grassick seconded the motion – APPROVED.

To consider the recommendations made at the Finance Committee meeting on 9th December 2025 and 8th January 2026

Notification received from Barclays that the parish council bank account will be switched to Barclays Business bank account from February 2026. Charges will be applied, continue with Barclays but monitor charges.

8.4 Cllr Riches proposed approval of Draft Budget 2026/27, Cllr Thomas seconded the motion – APPROVED.

8.5 The Precept is worked out on the number of Band D properties in the parish, there are 646.8 Band D houses. The parish council are making improvements to the parish, an increase to the Precept is required to continue with these improvements, the amount proposed is approx. £29.50 per year or £2.46 per month for a Band D house. A well-known supermarket meal deal is £3.85 with a loyalty card. Cllr Grassick proposed to approve the increase to the Precept for 2026/27, Cllr Thomas seconded the motion – APPROVED.

The council hold funds in reserve for unforeseen events, emergencies or specific earmarked projects, a Financial Reserves policy is used to track funds and allocations.

9. Planning:-

9.1 To receive planning decisions:-

25/00227/TREECAG1 - Trees located at the front of the property growing towards the road including species such as cherry, box elder and cotoneaster. Cut back growth above the wall back in line with the wall (up to 1 meter) and reduce height to maintain clearance from BT and power lines. Remove declining / mostly dead box elder and replant with a rowan 11 Old Feltwell Road Methwold THETFORD Norfolk IP26 4PW Tree Application - No objection 7 November 2025 Delegated Decision

25/01581/O Outline Application for construction of self-build dwelling and approval of access 17 Brook Lane Brookville Thetford Norfolk IP26 4RQ Application Refused 26 November 2025 Delegated Decision.

25/01585/O Outline Application for construction of self-build dwelling and approval of access 17 Brook Lane Brookville Thetford Norfolk IP26 4RQ Application Refused 26 November 2025 Delegated Decision. 25/01651/F Variation of Condition 2 attached to 24/01147/F: Single storey link extension, part conversion of stables and alterations to dwelling. Ivy Cottage 30 Holders Lane Brookville Thetford Norfolk IP26 4RE Application Permitted 26 November 2025 Delegated Decision.

25/00273/TREECA 9 Poplar trees located on the boundary of the old social club require pollarding Methwold Social Club 18 High Street Methwold Thetford Norfolk IP26 4NT No objection to the works proposed. 10th December 2025

25/00274/TREECA The two trees in front of the post office at St Georges Hall Complex are ornamental prunus. They require pruning to improve light into the building. GP Surgery St Georges Hall 16 High Street Methwold Thetford Norfolk IP26 4NT No objection to the works proposed. 10th December 2025

25/00289/TREECA Box, Buddlia, Elder shrubs, Ash and Lime x2 – Remove Church of St George Crown Street Methwold Norfolk No objection to the works proposed. 10th December 2025.

25/01688/CU The proposal seeks full planning permission for the conversion of an existing residential annex into a first floor self-contained flat 14 The Avenue Brookville Thetford Norfolk IP26 4RF Application Refused 18 December 2025 Delegated Decision.

25/01803/DM Demolition of 6 dwellings and associated structures at no.s 19-29 (Odd numbers only) at Herbert Drive, Methwold, Thetford, IP24 4PY Land At 19, 21, 23, 25, 27 And 29 Herbert Drive Methwold Thetford Norfolk IP26 4PY DM Prior Approval Req/Grant 22 December 2025 Delegated Decision

25/01756/F HOUSEHOLDER: Garage conversion to new living and utility space (GF) along with a new bedroom space (FF). Internal and external alterations 2 Hythe Views Close Methwold THETFORD Norfolk IP26 4FD Application Permitted 23 December 2025 Delegated Decision

25/00077/TPO 2/TPO/00465:T1 Oak Fell. T2 Lime Fell. Resident has had numerous complaints to council about these trees. Both have been pollarded and the resulting epicormic growth is proving a nuisance to the resident. He has requested to fell them, at his own cost. 1 Gordon Fuller Close Brookville. TPO Decision Refuse. 15th January 2026 Delegated Decision

9.2 To receive planning applications.

9.3 To consider planning applications received after the agenda was published.

Feltwell: Feltwell Quarry, Lodge Road, Feltwell, IP26 4DR: Non-compliance with conditions 8 (landscaping), 17 (restoration scheme) and 18 (aftercare scheme) of permission reference C/2/2017/2017 to enable the implementation of a final scheme of restoration.: The Lyndon Pallett Group Limited. This is understood to be to put the quarry back to its original state.

10. Items received for the agenda:

10.1 SAMS2 Report – Cllr Minkler reported the sign was sited in Brookville for 4 weeks, over the public holidays. Figures showed reduced speeds and a slight reduction in speeders, think this is weather related.

The sign is now at Cock Corner facing the academy, stats will be ready next week.

10.2 Cllr Rodriguez proposed to adopt Assertion 10 policy, Cllr Riches seconded the motion – APPROVED.

Review and approval of policies

Cllr Minkler proposed to accept the Continuation of Business Policy, Cllr Thomas seconded the motion – APPROVED.

Cllr O'Ware proposed to accept the review/updates of the remaining policies, Cllr Minkler seconded this motion – APPROVED.

10.3 A letter has been received from the chairman of Methwold Hall Complex Charitable Trust asking for the parish council to take responsibility for the maintenance of the fabric of St George's Hall and the old social club buildings, Methwold Parish Council holds legal title to the properties on trust for the charitable trust, the properties are held for charitable purposes.

As the parish council/Sole Trustee we have a responsibility not to allow the buildings to fall into disrepair, the parish council need to take responsibility for the upkeep of the fabric of the buildings, there was a discussion regarding the situation.

There are cracks in the end wall of the Fenton Room, recently a piece of soffit fell from the Fenton Room end, which alerted the Trust who instructed a surveyor to undertake an inspection of the Fenton Room extension to St George's Hall. This report has advised on remedial work required to stabilise the building, the surveyor suggested a CCTV drain survey which has been done, this has identified repairs to drains which need to be done.

A previous Surveyors report has since been handed to the parish council, this was undertaken in February 2002 with advisories on work required, it is not thought that the recommended work required was undertaken at the time. It is not known why these repairs were not done, no one seemed to know of this report's existence.

Cllr Minkler proposed that the parish council take responsibility for major maintenance of the fabric of the buildings, Cllr Thomas seconded the motion – APPROVED.

Quotes have already been obtained by the Trust to undertake the work required to repair the building. Three builders were asked to quote 2 quotes received and 1 declined due to workload.

Cllr Minkler proposed to accept Quote B £6879.00 + VAT, Cllr Grassick seconded the motion – APPROVED.

Chairman requested an extension to the meeting to finish business.

11. Correspondence

Warren Energy have sent out details of their Community Fund 2026 – all councillors have this information, and it has been passed to Methwold Community Group and the primary school.

Resident request to find out who is responsible for repairing the potholes on the road which runs behind the grass triangle on Globe Street, Clerk has spoken to highways who state it is not a public highway therefore a private matter. The parish council cut the grass on Fair Hill, Lower Green but do not believe they are responsible for the road.

Email received regarding a scheme NCC are running to purchase trees and hedging at a reduced rate, the parish council have been discussing planting a hedge along the back of the recreation ground where the metal fence once was, the cost to purchase 125 hedge plants is £52.50, two packs would be required to stagger the plants in two rows, however, applications end on the 20th February 2026, a volunteer has come forward to help plant and a councillor volunteered to collect the plants on Saturday 14th February 2026, the parish council discussed, Cllr Thomas proposed that 2 packs are purchased at a cost of £105, Cllr Minkler seconded the motion – APPROVED.

12. Chairman's Report – None this month.

13. Further reports and items for the next meeting agenda – 12th February 2026.

14. To pass a resolution (under the Public Admission to Meetings Act 1960 to exclude members of the public and press for the following confidential items:

Meeting ended 9.50pm