Clerk's Report – September

Finance

- The second instalment of the 2026/27 precept of **£20,914** has been received. Following receipt, £20,914 was transferred from the Unity Current Account to the Deposit Account
- Interest received into the Deposit account for the second quarter of 2026 was **£478.71**.
- The external audit invoice was received. The Council had previously approved an anticipated charge of £315 excluding VAT; the actual invoice received was **£210 excluding VAT** and included in September payments.
- A VAT reclaim of **£254.12** for the period 1 July to 30 September 2026 has been submitted to HMRC.
- Quarter 2 Budget Update: The financial summary and Scribe reports show the Council's budget and reserves position as of 9 October 2026. Overall expenditure remains within the annual budget, although a small number of headings require monitoring. Total reserves are £55,797.80, with a General Fund balance of £63,779.32. The Clerk has prepared a more detailed report for Councillors to note the current position and any material variances.
- West Meon & Warnford Sports Club: the Clerk requested the annual rent for this year. The request has been forwarded to their treasure to initiate payment.

Corporate Purchasing Card: Unity Trust Bank does not provide a conventional debit card with the Council's Business Current Account. It instead offers a Corporate Purchasing Card in partnership with Lloyds Bank. The card would be issued to a named cardholder and, if approved, it is proposed that this would be the Clerk/RFO. The Council can set appropriate transaction and spending limits.

The card would provide a practical means of making payments where bank transfer is unavailable or inconvenient and payment terms are immediate, for example purchase of small items such as stationery, bulbs etc. Use of the card would remain subject to the Council's existing financial controls and approved budgets/delegated authority. Receipts would be retained and transactions reconciled through the normal accounting process in Scribe. If approved, the Financial Regulations will need to be updated to reflect the agreed arrangements. **For resolution.**

Governance

Parish Council legal/property documents: The Clerk has been contacted regarding historic Parish Council deeds and legal/property documents currently held by Charles Wheeler Bennett.
The documents were originally placed with Charles Wheeler Bennett in connection with property/lease matters. As they are land agents rather than the Council's solicitors, consideration should now be given to their longer-term custody.

The Council does not currently have a solicitor with whom it would necessarily wish to lodge these documents. Options include returning them to the solicitors who previously held them, identifying an

alternative solicitor/legal service with appropriate local-government property experience, or considering another secure storage arrangement.

Before any transfer, it would be useful to obtain a full inventory of the documents currently held to determine those to be held by solicitors versus potential Hampshire Archives.

External Audit 2025/26: The external audit has now been completed by BDO LLP. The External Auditor confirmed that Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR were in accordance with Proper Practices and that no other matters came to their attention giving cause for concern regarding relevant legislation or regulatory requirements.

One administrative matter was identified. Box 11 of the Accounting Statements had originally been answered "No"; the AGAR was returned for amendment and has now been corrected. The auditor confirmed that the Accounting Statements do not include trust transactions.
The completed External Auditor's Report and AGAR were published on the Parish Council website and noticeboard by the Clerk. **For noting.**

Community

Remembrance Sunday: Following the resolution at the September meeting, and in consultation with Cllr Davies and Cllr Fowler, the Clerk ordered a wreath and Tommie lamp-post signs. Both have now been received.

Cllr Fowler will provide an update at the meeting on the arrangements for Remembrance Sunday, including any further arrangements required for the day. Councillors are asked to consider and agree any outstanding practical arrangements.

Christmas: Christmas tree arrangements now need to be agreed. In addition to the usual provision, councillors are asked to consider whether a tree should be placed at The Cross, particularly following the carol singing held there last year and if additional lighting or decorations should be purchased for Christmas 2026. **For resolution.**

Community liaison: Following the September meeting the Clerk the agreed description of the role was distributed to Councillors, who were asked to contact their allocated community organisations, introduce the liaison role and agree an appropriate level and frequency of future contact.

Updates are requested on progress, together with any issues that councillors feel should be brought back to the Council. **For update and to agree any further actions.**

Winter Preparedness: With winter approaching, it would be useful to review areas where preventative action may be required in the parish. This could include grit/salt bins, paths and access routes that may become hazardous during prolonged rain or icy conditions, known drainage or surface-water problem areas, and trees or other potential storm risks.

For assets or infrastructure belonging to HCC or another authority, the Council's role would principally be to identify and report concerns. Councillors are asked to identify any areas requiring inspection and agree how and when the review will be completed. **For resolution.**

National Emergency Briefing: Information regarding the National Emergency Briefing has previously been circulated following a suggestion from a former councillor. Several screenings have taken place elsewhere, often organised by community or environmental groups, but it does not appear to have been identified in West Meon.

The Council is asked simply to consider whether there would be any local interest in sharing the information or exploring a community screening. **For consideration.**

Road Traffic & Safety

Nursery – SID or warning sign: The Clerk contacted Hampshire County Council who confirmed that a school/nursery warning sign can be installed near the nursery. Due to the limited verge space, there is only one suitable location, approximately 100m east of the nursery**,** with no suitable location identified on the western approach.

This is also the location HCC identified for the proposed SID. If a warning sign is installed on the existing post, the SID could not also be accommodated there. Further advice was sought from HCC regarding the relative effectiveness of the two options. HCC advised that, on balance, a SID used effectively is likely to have more influence on vehicle speeds, whereas a static warning sign has the advantage of displaying its message continuously.

The difficulty with the SID is that it would need to be removed every two weeks. There is currently no alternative suitable nearby location, and HCC has advised that simply switching it off while leaving it in place is likely to reduce its future impact.

Councillors are therefore asked to determine which option would provide the most appropriate outcome for this location. **For resolution.**

20's Plenty: Information provided by Cllr Jerry Pett and Cllr David Small regarding the 20's Plenty campaign has been circulated. If councillors wish to explore this further, consideration could initially be given to community interest rather than committing to expenditure. For example, whether residents would be willing to display wheelie-bin stickers or similar awareness materials, what the likely costs would be and whether those costs would be met by residents or the Parish Council. **For consideration.**

Open Spaces, Trees & Assets

Pétanque court : SDNPA Planning Service has provided written confirmation that the proposed pétanque court does not require a planning application and is considered permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 12, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

SDNPA has also confirmed that the Council may enter into an arrangement for West Meon & Warnford Sports Club to manage the day-to-day running of the facility without affecting that permitted-development position, provided ownership remains with the Parish Council and the Council retains overarching responsibility. The planning issue having now been resolved, councillors are asked to consider the next stage of the project.

One quotation has been received to date and further contractors should be approached to get a better idea of funding required. The Clerk has received a letter from the West Meon & Warnford Pétanque Club setting out its views on funding and has been circulated to councillors.

When considering funding, councillors should note that this project was not included within the approved 2026/27 budget. Any Council contribution should therefore be considered alongside the final project cost, external funding opportunities, existing commitments and the appropriate level of reserves. **For resolution.**

Biodiversity – autumn planting: Following the September meeting the Clerk ordered bulbs for autumn planting and these have been received.

Cllr Griffith has reviewed proposed planting areas and shared with council members. This has identified the bank alongside the entrance path to the cricket pitch as a potentially suitable location for spring bulbs and wildflowers. Areas around the trees near the entrance from Church land and the school area have also been identified.

Cllr Fowler and Cllr Main had previously agreed to progress planting at The Cross during October. As we are now in October, councillors are asked to confirm the locations to be planted, who will co-ordinate and undertake the work, whether any additional plants are required and whether any ground preparation is necessary. **For resolution.**

Village Hall Car Park and Land Survey: Following advice from HALC Legal Services, the scope of the survey was clarified to ensure the work would provide the information needed to understand the historic land boundaries in relation to the current car park, access and adjoining buildings, and to support the Village Hall's proposed move to CIO status and any subsequent legal advice.

The revised scope was sent to the two surveyors already approached; Vertex Surveys Ltd and Terrain Geomatics. A third quotation was then obtained from Meon Survey Partnership for comparison.

Quotations received:

- Vertex Surveys Ltd – £850 + VAT, plus approximately £40 + VAT OS mapping.
- Terrain Geomatics – £1,185 + VAT.
- Meon Survey Partnership – £1,450 + VAT.

All three will take the available historic conveyance documents into account. The main differences are in the level of detail and reporting provided.

Clerk's recommendation: Terrain Geomatics, as their proposal appears to provide the clearest combination of measured survey work and professional interpretation of the likely boundary position. **For resolution.**

Flood Defence – CIL funding: The Chair received notification from South Downs National Park Authority regarding the Council's CIL funding application relating to the weir and associated structures.

More than 400 projects were assessed against available funding of £2,096,940.11. West Meon Parish Council's application was not put forward for funding on this occasion. SDNPA has indicated that the proposal may be reconsidered in a future funding round. Councillors are therefore asked to decide whether the Council wishes to resubmit the application when the next opportunity arises. For resolution**.**

Play Area Annual Inspection: The annual inspection identified several issues with the Multi Play equipment installed in 2024, including missing bolt covers, a potential finger-entrapment point on the platform and separation of the tunnel section. The tunnel separation was assessed as a moderate risk and requires attention. The Clerk contacted Creative Play, the original supplier, a quote has been received £550 + VAT. The play equipment guarantee of two years has ended, the quote covers labour and travelling expenses. The Clerk to request a quote from Infinity Playgrounds to complete the work and present back to council at the next meeting, for resolution. **For information.**

Autumn Tidy Up: The contractor has confirmed they will carry out the autumn tidy-up of the recreation ground, including the car park and children's play area. A date has not yet been confirmed. **For information.**

Correspondence:

Lighting East End Village: The Clerk was contacted by a resident. The lighting opposite Hall House has dropped the light shines on the field and should light the whole road. The Clerk raised the Issue with Lights On in Hampshire, report number 204996. **For information.**

Upper Meon Benefice Service: The Clerk responded to Rev Forrest regarding the invitation, explaining that due to prior commitments the Council was unable to attend the service. The Clerk and Cllr Fowler will, however, attend the meeting on 10 October at Warnford Village Hall.

White lines: a resident expressed their concerns about the absence of white road markings between Doctors Lane and the area opposite the pub. The resident was advised that the Parish Council had previously raised the matter with Hampshire Highways, both last year and again recently, update to be provided at the meeting by Cllr Davies. They were encouraged to submit an individual report through the Hampshire County Council reporting portal, as further reports may help demonstrate the level of local concern. **For information.**