



Clerk's Report – July and August

Co-Option: The Clerk has published the poster on We Are West Meon social page, website and noticeboard. No one has enquired about the positions. ***For noting.***

Finance

Clerk's Overtime: The Clerk has addressed action items that have taken outside contracted hours during July and August, including obtaining and reviewing quotations, attending site visits in relation to the pétanque project, preparing discussion papers and supporting documentation for Council consideration, and drafting/reviewing policies arising from the Internal Auditor's recommendations.

Council is asked to approve payment of 4 hours' overtime at the Clerk's normal hourly rate.

Receipts and Payments: The Clerk contacted Hampshire County Council regarding invoice 3612146742, which was paid in July. HCC incorrectly issued the invoice (should have been for Hambledon Parish Council). A credit note has been raised and £1020.00 has been credited back to West Meon Parish Council Unity Current Account.

Ratify Payments: The Clerk under delegated authority (Financial Regulations 6.9) paid: -

- Dean Tutt Garden Services – final instalment of £577.50 (zero rated VAT), following an inspection by the Clerk and Chair of the works carried out.
- Winchester City Council for the Play Inspection and End of Life Assessment of Play Equipment: £136.00 (ex VAT).
- salary and pension: standard working hours.

CB Reid / Xeinadin: CB Reid has confirmed it is transitioning to the Xeinadin brand. There will be little change to the service received by the Council; the main changes will be Xeinadin branding, website details and email addresses. CB Reid Limited remains the legal entity providing services to the Council. Invoices will continue to be issued by CB Reid Limited under the Xeinadin brand. There is no change to payment arrangements or bank details, and payments should continue to be made to CB Reid Limited.

The Clerk will update contact details as new Xeinadin email addresses are introduced. The Clerk has also provided CB Reid with the HMRC authorisation code required for them to act as the Council's PAYE agent.

Grant Funding in Excess of £500: The Clerk has prepared a discussion paper, circulated to council members, to support the Council's consideration of grant requests in excess of the Council's usual £500 grant limit.

The paper outlines the current arrangements and considers how larger or exceptional applications might be assessed, including:

- the level of supporting information required;
- evidence of community benefit and financial need;
- the applicant's reserves and other funding sources;
- whether match funding or contributions from other organisations should be sought;
- how exceptional awards could be considered without changing the Council's normal £500 grant limit; and
- the importance of recording the Council's reasons for any decision.

As the Council does not currently hold the General Power of Competence, any grant award must be supported by an appropriate statutory power. Where no specific power is available, use of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (currently £116.0 per elector) would need to be considered with care, ensuring that the expenditure is lawful, proportionate and provides a clear benefit to the local community.

Council is asked to consider the discussion paper and agree how requests for grant funding more than £500 should be dealt with in future.

External Audit: The BDO external audit is due to be completed by the end of August. The Clerk has checked the position and BDO has confirmed that it is currently working through its files. The external audit payment has been presented as part of the invoices to be authorised this month. The fee is expected to be £315 plus VAT. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit and External Auditor's Report and Certificate must be published by 30 September 2026. ***For noting.***

SAAA – Digital AGAR Portal: SAAA has advised that a new Digital AGAR Portal is expected to be introduced for the 2027 AGAR submission. Use will initially be voluntary, with the portal expected to become the primary submission route and potentially mandatory from 2029. The Clerk has reviewed and updated the Council's contact details on the Small Authority Portal as requested. ***For information.***

HR

2026/27 Local Government Pay Award: The Local Government Association (LGA), acting on behalf of the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services, has confirmed agreement on the 2026/27 local government pay award.

The settlement provides for a 3.3% increase in pay rates and allowances with effect from 1 April 2026, covering the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027. Employers are being encouraged to implement the increase as soon as possible.

For parish and town councils, the NJC settlement will inform the annual update to the NALC salary scales. Although the annual NJC salary point values are now available, the hourly rates normally published by NALC are calculated separately using NALC's methodology and working-time assumptions.

The Council should therefore await publication of the updated NALC salary scales before confirming the revised hourly rate applicable to the Clerk.

The Clerk's contract also provides for an annual salary increment from 1 April, subject to satisfactory performance. The appropriate salary point and revised hourly rate will therefore be confirmed once the updated NALC scales are available.

Council is asked to note the 2026/27 pay award and the position regarding the updated NALC salary scales.

Community

Headon View / Village Hall Car Park: The Chair and Clerk met with a Headon View resident regarding regular use of the Village Hall car park. The resident explained that they rent a garage at Headon View which is currently unusable due to a broken door, and that limited parking availability is contributing to use of the Village Hall car park.

The Clerk has contacted Winchester City Council to seek an update on the garage repair, clarification on use of the parking bays at Headon View; and confirmation of ownership and possible future use of a small parcel of adjacent land for additional parking. A response is currently outstanding. ***For noting.***

Upper Meon Benefice: Langrish Church will hold its final service before closure in September. Following this, the churches of East Meon, West Meon and Warnford will form the Upper Meon Benefice.

A special service to mark the formation of the new benefice will be held at East Meon Church on **Sunday 4 October at 10.30am**. An invitation has been received and circulated to council members; it would be appropriate for West Meon Parish Council to be represented.

On **Saturday 10 October**, representatives from the three parishes are invited to a consultation and planning day at Warnford Village Hall. The event will be hosted by Fr Tony and led by a diocesan priest specialising in church revitalisation.

The morning session will seek views from representatives of the wider community on how local churches can remain relevant and make greater use of their buildings and resources. Parish Councils, Village Halls, schools and other community organisations have been encouraged to take part.

Council is asked to agree representation at both the special service on 4 October and the consultation and planning day on 10 October.

Grants

Grant Applications: The Clerk has received two grant applications for consideration.

Home-Start Hampshire has applied for a grant of **£400**. The organisation provides practical help, friendship and support to families with at least one child under five, with the aim of preventing crisis and family breakdown. Home-Start Hampshire operates across East Hampshire and the New Forest; within the Meon Valley area it supported **59 adults and 77 children** over the past year. One West Meon family has received support during the year and one volunteer lives in the parish. The grant

would contribute towards the cost of supporting a family, including staff and volunteer infrastructure, training and practical items and activities for families. Home-Start Hampshire previously received a grant of **£325 from the Council in April 2023**.

Citizens Advice Winchester District has applied for a grant of **£225** towards strengthening its core advice service. The charity provides free, independent advice on matters including welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment and consumer issues. During the last year, **14 West Meon residents** contacted the service for help with **85 separate advice issues**, most commonly relating to welfare entitlements, energy and housing. The funding would contribute towards training, specialist advice services and community outreach. Citizens Advice Winchester District previously received a grant of **£220 from the Council in May 2025**.

Council is asked to consider both grant applications and agree whether to award funding.

Open Spaces and Assets

Damage to The Cross Flint Wall: Damage has been reported to the brick and flint wall at The Cross, believed to have been caused by a vehicle. The vehicle has not been identified.

Gallagher Insurance Brokers have been notified and advice requested regarding cover, the claims process and requirements for obtaining quotations for an appropriate traditional repair. The policy excess is £250. To progress the claim, two independent like-for-like quotations will be required. Quotations must include details of materials, installation, plant/access, disposal and VAT status.

Council is asked whether to proceed with the claim.

Holm Oak – Tree Works: Tree Assist has confirmed that residents of The Cross may continue to park overnight during the works. However, the road will need to be kept clear of vehicles between **08:00 and 15:00 on both working days**, so residents will need to move their vehicles before 08:00.

Tree Assist will provide signage and barrier tape to clearly mark the section of lane that will be unavailable during the works. A Risk Assessment and Method Statement will be provided nearer the time.

The date for the works has not yet been confirmed. Confirmation is awaited from Sapling Arboriculture as to whether the tree may be felled while the appeal remains outstanding.

Council is asked to agree arrangements for notifying affected residents and to consider dates, once we have confirmation that the felling can go ahead.

Recreation Ground Disturbances: Over the summer, incidents at the Recreation Ground have been reported, including goals, seating and other equipment being moved onto the leased school pitch, access to the locked tennis courts and interference with padlocks. Equipment has not always been returned after use, leaving others to move and secure it.

This raises safety concerns, particularly around unsecured goals, it may also indicate a need for informal sports provision for young people during the school holidays.

A community message has been issued asking users to respect the facilities and inviting them to contact the Clerk with any requests. None have been received at time of writing.

Council is asked to note the incidents and consider any further action or communication.

Ragwort: The Chair and Clerk removed ragwort from the Recreation Ground, including the verges around all three fields. Several plants had already gone to seed.

Autumn/Recreation Ground Tidy-Up: The Clerk has contacted Will Hillier Garden Services to schedule a date for late September. The scope of the work to be undertaken is yet to be confirmed by council. The Clerk proposes a thorough seasonal tidy-up to include: -

- strimming of all the banks and verges around the Recreation Ground, strimming the bottom field (area highlighted for the school);
- area outside the tennis courts
- banks to the slide
- weeding the car park;
- strimming and tidying the banks and areas outside the Village Hall

Council is asked to consider the above and agree a scope of works.

Pétanque Court: Cllrs Fowler and Griffith met with the West Meon pétanque team to discuss the planning position.

- **Planning:** The previous planning permission includes a non-material amendment that remains current and was completed by West Meon & Warnford Sports Club. As the revised proposal is simplified and differs from the previous application, the Clerk has submitted the new drawing to SDNP Planning and requested confirmation as to whether a further planning application is required.

The Clerk has also asked whether planning permission is required at all, noting that other pétanque terrains in Hampshire have not required planning permission.

- **Estimate of costs:** The Clerk met FieldForm on site, together with Cllr Fowler and a member of the pétanque team. Recommendations on the proposed construction and materials were discussed and FieldForm are preparing an estimate. Playsafe, Ian Doran and J Evans and Haven Gardens have also been approached but are currently unable to provide estimates due to workloads.

A further comparable estimate would be useful so that likely costs can be compared, noting that this is an estimating stage and three formal quotations will be required in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

- **Site Visit to Headley:** Cllr Fowler, the Clerk and two members of the WM pétanque team met with Mike Head at Headly. Details of the visit have been prepared separately.

For consideration under the relevant agenda item.

Village Hall Car Park / Land Survey: Following the legal advice received and Council's decision to clarify the extent and boundaries of the Village Hall car park and adjoining land, surveyors have been approached directly for quotations. They were provided with the legal advice notes and a copy of the 1952 conveyance.

The proposed scope includes reviewing available historic deeds and plans, surveying the car park and associated land, comparing current features with the historic documentation, and producing a scaled plan that can support any future legal or Land Registry work.

Two quotations have been received, from Terrain Geomatics £1185 + VAT - £1975 + VAT (details circulated) and Vertex Surveys £240 + VAT (Desktop exercise), £850 + VAT (Measured Site Survey) both + £40 (+VAT) disbursement.

Geodime, XRS Geomatics and Stolle Surveys are unable to take on extra work at this time, and a response is awaited from Carter Jonas.

Bus Stop: The Clerk was notified that the bus stop required cleaning following an incident involving sickness and broken glass. The area was swept and disinfected. Many thanks to the resident opposite who very kindly provided the cleaning equipment!

For information.

Governance

Policies: The Clerk has prepared the following policies identified in the Internal Auditor's report. Each has been circulated to councillors for consideration and has been adapted from SLCC/HALC templates to reflect West Meon Parish Council's arrangements:

- Investment Policy
- Model Publication Scheme
- Statement of Internal Controls

Council is asked to consider and adopt the policies.

Road Traffic

20mph / Speed Limit Guidance: Cllr Jerry Pett has provided information on Hampshire County Council's current approach to 20mph schemes and wider speed-limit changes.

Key points:

- Hampshire County Council's current 20mph schemes are expected to be delivered through the Community Funded Initiative, meaning the Parish Council would need to meet the costs of assessment and implementation.
- The relevant national guidance is DfT Circular 01/2013 – Setting Local Speed Limits, updated in 2024.
- Important evidence when considering speed-limit changes includes mean vehicle speed and 85th percentile speed.
- Professionally collected traffic-speed data, for example from pneumatic tube counters, is likely to provide stronger evidence when making a case to Hampshire County Council or the Police.
- The Government's Speed Limit Appraisal Tool can be used to support evidence-based decisions on proposed speed-limit changes.
- Cllr Pett noted that other Hampshire parishes, including Upham, have been gathering their own speed data to support requests for lower speed limits.
- The wider guidance indicates that a strong case for a reduced speed limit should be supported by appropriate traffic data, the character of the road and village, accident history and the likely benefits of the proposed change.

- Cllr Pett also advised that Danny Chambers MP is expected to hold rural surgery sessions during the summer recess, which may provide an opportunity to raise wider concerns regarding traffic and road safety in rural villages.

For information. This information has been circulated to the Speed & Traffic Working Group.

Speed Indicator Device (SID) – Research Update: A discussion paper has been prepared to support the Council's consideration of purchasing a Speed Indicator Device.

The paper brings together:

- indicative pricing and specifications from Elan City, Messagemaker and Westcotec;
- battery, solar and data-recording options;
- practical considerations including moving the sign between approved locations, charging and data management; and
- feedback received from other parish councils on their experience of operating SIDs.

The information has been passed to the Traffic Working Group for review before presentation to Council.

For consideration under the relevant agenda item.

Correspondence

Winter X Trail-Running Event – 28 December 2026: The Council has been notified of the Winter X trail-running event starting and finishing in Meonstoke on 28 December. Up to 300 participants are expected, with staggered starts between **08:00 and 09:30**. This is a repeat of last year's event.

The route includes an out-and-back section to West Meon, with a marshal using one space in the West Meon car park until approximately **10:30**. Temporary route signage will be installed and removed following the event.

The organisers have advised that the event will be permitted through the Trail Running Association, with UK Athletics public liability insurance, and that Hampshire Constabulary has been notified.

For information.

Burial of Ashes: The Clerk received an enquiry from a person visiting the UK from overseas who wished to scatter a relative's ashes on an existing family grave at St John's Church, West Meon.

Following consultation with the Reverend, it was confirmed that scattering ashes is not permitted; however, arrangements were made for the ashes to be buried above the existing grave.

For information.