

DITTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE, HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AT DITTON COMMUNITY CENTRE ON MONDAY 29TH JUNE 2026

PRESENT: CLLRS. N NEWMAN (CHAIRMAN) [FROM 8.00PM], M PORTER (VICE-CHAIR),
MRS M NEWMAN, J COX, MRS A THROSSELL & R WHITE
MRS N GREENAWAY [Clerk of the Council]

86. **OPENING OF MEETING**

The Vice-Chairman opened the meeting at 7.30pm.

87. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

88. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

89. **FINANCE**(a) **Financial Analysis**(i) **2025/26 Month 12**

The financial analysis for the year end was **READ** and **NOTED**.

(ii) **2026/27 Month 1 & 2**

The financial analysis for the first two months were **READ** and **NOTED**.

(b) **Budget Management - month 9 & EOY 2025/26 & Comparison with Previous Years**

A summary of the year's expenditure against the precept income was **READ** and it was **NOTED** that the favourable position at the year end, despite additional expenditure, was due to the continued increase in income from the bar. A comparison of previous years' expenditure was also **NOTED**.

(c) **Card Payment Machine – supplier review**

It was **NOTED** that a comparison of the current card charges and those of alternative suppliers had been undertaken. Three options were considered.

RESOLVED to accept the proposal from Dojo [a subsidiary of the existing company] as this would result in an approximate saving of £5,000.00 per year.

(d) **OSA Expenditure - Kubota Service/Cutting Deck Replacement**

It was **NOTED** that the Kubota had been serviced but the cutting deck could not be repaired so a replacement had been investigated. Four options had been given and it was also noted that the company had offered to bring them out for a demonstration before a decision on a replacement is made. The Clerk advised that there was not a budget for this but there were sufficient funds in an OSA Earmarked Reserve for replacement equipment.

RESOLVED to ask for demonstrations of appropriate new cutting machines before a decision is taken but to approve funds from the Earmarked Reserve be used for to purchase a suitable replacement.

(e) HMRC Increase of Approved Mileage Allowance Payment from 6th April 2026

It was **NOTED** the HMRC tax free approved mileage rate for using a private vehicle on business had increased to 55p per mile from 6th April 2026.

RESOLVED to pay the new rate of 55p for any business mileage reimbursements.

(f) Cyber Insurance Renewal Quotation

It was **NOTED** a quote of £462.16 for this insurance renewal had been received and it was now an essential cover.

RESOLVED to accept the quote and renew the insurance from 26th July 2026.

(g) Gov Asst Subscription

The Clerk reported that she had attended an SLCC AI training event which included a demonstration of Gov Asst. They provide a bespoke AI service for local councils so the information it uses is safe and it can use the councils own statutory documents such as Financial Regulations and Standing Orders when “drafting” documents. She advised she was given a certain amount of free time credits and had used these and found the service to be very useful. She reported this program is widely used by many local councils and it is much safer than using publicly accessible AI such as chatgpt. She said “top up pay as you go” credits can be purchased for £35 or £65 or via a subscription. She asked permission to purchase a top up as AI was now a useful tool if used wisely and it would be preferable to use this “safe” bespoke provider.

RESOLVED the Clerk may purchase the necessary top up to continue to use this service.

90. **APPROVAL OF BACs & DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENTS FOR YEAR – 2026/2027**

RESOLVED to approve the current list of regular payments to current suppliers and contractors by Direct Debit and BACs as listed in the Full Council Agendas.

91. **INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

A new draft investment strategy was circulated. It was **NOTED** that this needs to be approved before the next internal audit visit.

RESOLVED to defer approval until the Chairman had had chance to review the document fully.

92. **REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS** [DPC last review June 2025, NALC last update May 2024]

The current version of the Parish Council’s Financial Regulations were circulated and reviewed. It was **NOTED** that a review of the amended NALC model and DPC’s Financial Regulations was undertaken in 2025 and the DPC Financial Regulations were amended and approved in July 2025.

RESOLVED following a review no further amendments are recommended to the current Financial Regulations.

93. **REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS** *[DPC last review July 2025, NALC last update May 2025]*

The current version of the Parish Standing Orders were circulated and reviewed. It was **NOTED** that a review of the amended NALC model and DPC's Standing Orders was undertaken in 2025 and the DPC Standing Orders were amended and approved in July 2025.

RESOLVED following a review no further amendments are recommended to the current Standing Orders.

94. **PHOTOCOPIER CONTRACT**

It was **NOTED** that the current contract would end in September 2025. The Clerk had obtained proposals from three different companies for a new contract including the existing company.

The three proposals were considered and the quarterly lease fee and included copies were compared. It was **NOTED** that each proposal included a "booklet" maker that would enable to the council to produce its own printed copies of the gazette should it decide not to have it printed externally in the future

RESOLVED to accept proposal C from Smart Office Solutions and terminate the current contract with NCS.

95. **AIR CONDITIONING FOR PARISH OFFICE**

The Clerk reported that the main office and her office had been unbearably hot in the recent heatwave. It was acknowledge these two rooms, like the Don Carman Hall have a lot of windows in direct sunlight which doesn't help with controlling extreme heat and cold. The Don Carman Hall had recently had air conditioning units installed and this had made a tremendous difference. The Clerk advised a quote had been obtained from the same company to install units in the main office, Clerk's office and council chamber. It was agreed it would not be worthwhile installing in the chamber as it is rarely used during the day and is not so affected by the heat. However, it was agreed that it would greatly benefit the staff in the parish office and hopefully enable more efficient working in the heat and also provide heating in the winter if required.

RESOLVED to accept the quotation from All Chilled to supply air conditioning units in the main parish office and clerks office at a cost of £4207.79 plus VAT.

96. **DITTON GAZETTE REVIEW**

(a) Review of Advertising Rates

RESOLVED not to change the rates.

(b) Quality/Content

The Clerk advised it was not easy getting sufficient, suitable articles to include and she had to chase regular contributors to get copy in time for print deadlines. This pressure would be eased if the council chose not to have it printed and delivered in the future.

(c) Format – printed/digital

The Clerk again reiterated the issue of trying to get sufficient, interesting copy and to then get it to the printers and delivered by certain deadlines. It was note the printing costs were now over a £1,000.00 per edition and once printed it was getting increasingly harder to get volunteers to deliver it. The Clerk also reported that following the inclusion of a questionnaire in last December's gazette asking residents for their preference of a printed or digital gazette, only 8 responses were received out of the 2,000 plus copies delivered. Some of those said they

accepted cost may mean it becoming an online digital copy in the future. It was agreed that one more printed copy should be produced and delivered as usual to advise residents that it would be the last and in future it would be produced digitally, however some copies could be produced by the council for those that required them.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND to produce one more printed copy to be delivered and to include an item to advise residents this will be the last printed copy and in future it will be available on line but if a printed copy was required it could be collected from the parish office or posted.

97. **PARISH NOTICE BOARDS**

The Clerk reminded members that two of the parish notice boards were damaged beyond repair and not currently being used – these were located at the top of Bell Lane and near to Papas on the A20. The others located outside the parish office, the school, shops at Woodlands Parade and entrance of Bradbourne Lane were still being used but would require replacing at some point. The Clerk advised that to provide good quality noticeboards could cost several hundred pounds each. She also reported that following the inclusion of a questionnaire in last December's gazette asking residents for their preference of viewing council notices [on the noticeboards or online] again only 8 responses were received out of the 2,000 plus copies delivered. Therefore, it was acknowledged that there was not the demand for noticeboards as most could view items online now. It was acknowledged that some noticeboards should be retained as the council is required to display at least one agenda in a "conspicuous" place such as on a noticeboard or in window.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND to remove the damaged noticeboards at Bell Lane and Papas on A20 and not to replace at this time but to keep the remaining noticeboards.

98. **PARISH COUNCIL MINUTE BOOKS**

The Clerk advised that there were several years worth of parish council minutes that required binding or filing as the minutes had to be kept indefinitely. She advised the company previously used to bind the minutes was no longer in business. She had looked for another company but it would cost over £156 per book. She advised she had looked at an alternative option of purchasing good quality A4 binders that would be printed with gold lettering – she had various quotes for different qualities of folder ranging from £18 - £49.50 per binder.

RESOLVED to approve that the Clerk purchase suitable binders for future minute storage.

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and standing Orders 27 & 50 the Chairman to move that due to the confidential nature of the next item the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting.

99. **CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

The Chairman reported that this matter would be deferred to the Personnel Committee meeting that would follow.

100. **CLOSURE**

The meeting close at 8.24pm.