



WEST MEON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk's Report for December 2025

General Update:

HR

Payroll: **Staffing budget (Clerk hours):** C.B. Reid have provided an illustrated costing (circulated) for budgeting purposes, based on increasing the Clerk's hours to 15 hours per week (either through overtime or contractual increase) and increasing the employer pension contribution from the minimum to the standard rate. Based on £15.48 per hour, 15 hours per week, plus a £40 per month WFH allowance, the indicative annual figures are: gross salary £12,466.91; employer pension (5% on qualifying earnings) £294.75; and employer NI £1,072.64 (using the secondary threshold of £417 per month at 15%).

Finance:

- **Payments / late invoices:** An invoice was received after publication of the agenda from M Edwards **for** 2025 grounds maintenance at the Recreation Ground: **£3,460.54 (ex VAT) / £4,152.65 (inc VAT)**. I have asked M Edwards if he is happy to continue maintaining the grounds and awaiting a reply.
- **Member expenses:** An expenses claim has been received from Cllr Fowler for the purchase of the Christmas tree lights and has been included in this month's scheduled payments.
- **Bank balances (as of 31 December 2025):**
 - Current account: **£11,634.39**
 - Deposit account: **£102,629.71**
- **Deposit account interest:** **£507.89** received for the period.
- **Transfers:** **£10,000.00** transferred from the deposit account to the current account to cover forthcoming payments.
- **Draft Budget:** see issue 39.
- **Peppercorn Rent:** see item 41.
- **Q3 Budget Position:** see item 40.
- **Overtime:** 10 hours worked for the research and preparation of the HALC Legal Services document. For consideration by council at the meeting.

Correspondence

- **Hampshire Constabulary:** Police Constable Ellie Harty has taken over as the neighbourhood officer from PC Jack Marriner.
- **MP Danny Chambers:** An email has been received regarding comments from Cllr Pett on the effectiveness of the A272 average speed camera schemes and the pilot scheme relating to noise reduction cameras. This has been circulated as part of the agenda pack for consideration at the January meeting.

- **Winter X Running Team:** Notification received of a planned race on 28 December; this was shared on the West Meon Facebook page for awareness.
- **Councillor vacancy:** An email has been received from a prospective resident councillor expressing interest in the current councillor vacancy; I have responded with the relevant information.
- **Winchester City Council – Play Area Inspections (March 2026):** An email has been received confirming the 2026 play inspections are due in **March 2026**, with details of additional services available (circulated). Given the age of the equipment at Meonwara and the small playground, I recommend that the Council requests an additional life expectancy assessment alongside the standard inspection. This will provide evidence to support forward planning and the setting of appropriate reserves for future replacement.

Community

- **Trees down (highways reports):** Two separate incidents of fallen trees obstructing the highway have been reported to Hampshire Highways: one on Station Road, and a second near the entrance to Old Winchester Hill car park.
- **Christmas Trees:** the six trees were removed from the High Street (4th January).
- **Woodlands Entrance Signs:** see issue 22.
- **Playground:** site visit by Infinity Playgrounds, see issue 37.

Legal

- **HALC LEGAL SERVICES:** research is complete and report has been compiled (circulated), issue 29.

Please see below table of areas worked on this month relating to specific project items.

Bernice Gibson-Ost
Clerk – West Meon Parish Council

Ref	Area	Task / Topic	RAG Status Green 0-3 months Amber 3-6 Red + 6 months	Progress Status	Updates / Action Needed	Meeting Agenda
11	Community	Thermal Imaging Camera: loan	Green	In Progress	Contacted Oswlebury. Available to collect.	
12	Village Maintenance	Tree On The Cross: Survey and options appraisal	Amber	In Progress	<p>Dec 25: decision for January meeting, to proceed with submitting a Planning Application for the Holm Oak Tree.</p> <p>16/11/25. Invoice sent from S Arboriculture for inspection report and recommendations - already circulated. For them to submit the planning application is £105 + VAT.</p> <p>17/10/25: Technical report received from Sapling Arboriculture, for consideration at next meeting. Invoice for work carried out for the assessment received, for next months payment.</p> <p>3/10/25: Met with Sapling Arboriculture with Cllr Main. The tree was inspected and while healthy, the initial views are that the tree had outgrown its location. This is causing structural damage to the flint wall. Reducing the height will not change this. A full report will be provided, to be considered by WMPC.</p> <p>July: Meeting scheduled for 9th September, Sapling Arboriculture (Tree Inspector Specialist) to review the tree/root system and damage to the wall at The Cross.</p> <p>June: Enquiry sent to 3 tree surgeons. Two quotes received and submitted. TPO in place – options limited.</p>	Jan
14	Legal	Land Registry: application Status	Red	In Progress	<p>22/10/25: email sent to Bramsdon & Child: Application had stalled pending solicitor action. This has been confirmed as resolved by Bramsdon & Child. Email sent requesting Land Registry reference, confirmation all information is now submitted, and an updated completion timescale. Awaiting response.</p> <p>3/10/25: Bramsdon & Child confirmed that Land Registry do have the application. Land Registry advised Bramsdon & Child (by letter) to say it could not be expedited through the portal. Bramsdon & Child advise they have not seen the letter. Furthermore Bramsdon & Child claim they have expedited this over the phone (27th August 2025)</p> <p>27/08/25: Email sent asking for a progress update, reference to the Title Deeds on Land Registry and access to original deeds.</p> <p>19/8/25: Bramsdon & Child have confirmed they have located the original</p>	

					deeds in their South Sea office. 5/8/25: email sent to all members of Bramsdon & Childs, escalated due to lack of response. 28/7/25: Email sent as no response since previous call. Have asked for the issue to be escalated. June 25: Chaser email sent as application status unclear, so issue remains unresolved (Bramsdon & Childs Solicitors). No response as 5/07/25.	
16	Governance	Trust: Recreation Ground: 301982: Charity Annual Returns outstanding since 2020/2021 Financial Year	Amber	In Progress	<p>Nov 25: Email sent to two of the trustees to formalise their wish to resign as trustees. One response received and one outstanding. Details of the charity, including information about the trustee requirements circulated to council members. Postponed to next meeting due to budget review this month.</p> <p>20/10/25: Annual Return: I have submitted the annual return for the past 6 years. Income and expenditure reported, based on financial information contained within the Minutes of Meetings from April 2020 - March 2025.</p> <p>Trustees' removal of existing and appointing new trustees still to be resolved.</p> <p>6/10/25: I've received a response back from the Charity Commission, which I need to review as it came in today.</p> <p>22/08/25: Trustees have confirmed no financial transactions, they have also requested to step down, and governing documents are not currently available online. Clerk has contacted the Charity Commission for guidance (annual returns and new trustees) and will update once next steps are confirmed.</p> <p>18/08/25: Compliance risk with Charity Commission, clarification sought from trustees.</p> <p>4/8/25: Met with MacEdwards, who authorised the administration of the charity over to the Clerk. Five to six years' worth of annual returns need to be completed, from previous council. Charity Commission advised that the recreation ground should remain a charity. Clerk to access portal and process Annual Returns.</p> <p>June 25: Charity Commission contacted 25th June, to request how to go about changing the current trustee, where there are no access rights to use the charity portal (online access).</p>	

17	Working Groups	Flood Action: Weir, Culverts, Drains, Bridges - Reporting Issues	Red	In Progress	<p>Dec 25: Cllr N Bolton emailed to say that he is discussing with Cllr Pett ownership of the weir. Although no funding is available, confirmation for actual ownership for future needs is still being sought.</p> <p>Nov: District Cllrs have confirmed: EA representative P Taylor has previously stated that the Weir is the asset of the EA. However, the EA have limited funding, and this is being taken up with serious flooding issues. 17/10/25: Entry 1 – Funding position</p> <p>Three independent contractors provided cost estimates ranging from £24,000–£90,000 for repairs. Current position: Following legal advice, the Parish Council does not have the statutory power to fund or undertake these works under Section 137 or other powers. Email sent to the Environment agent requesting, Confirmation of ownership/responsibility for the weir;</p> <p>A possible site visit/assessment; Advice on repair options, indicative costs, and Information on any EA or partnership funding opportunities (including future capital or community schemes). Await clarification of ownership and responsibility before exploring external funding routes.</p> <p>18/09/25: ENQ2025/24645: Response received from EA, this has been circulated to R.Gedye/H.Davies, for review and consideration before responding back. This relates to the summary of the 5 key issues (published online) specifically the culverts and increased flood risk.</p> <p>18/8/25: HH advise that maintenance of Culverts is the responsibility of EA. Details of the issues have been passed onto EA for response.</p> <p>23/7/25: HH have checked the highway culvert underneath Lynch Lane, assessed as clear and flowing. Enquiry closed.</p> <p>27/6/25: EA response: to remove blockages at low-priority weir; no repair funding available. Other pinch points are landowner or Highways responsibility. Any works in this area would need to seek permits from EA.</p> <p>June 25: Email sent to Hampshire Highways (ref 7177260) and the Environment Agency regarding ongoing concerns raised because of the Hydrox report and input by the Flood Risk Group. Response received from EA and circulated.</p> <p>Awaiting response from Hampshire Highways. Email sent 20/6/25</p>	Oct
18	Legal/Property	Legal Advice: Sports Club & Village Hall	Green	In Progress	<p>17/10: Confirmation received back from HALC legal advisors that copies of the original documents are sufficient.</p> <p>1/10/25: Cllr Davies and I visited Hampshire Archives: 4 hours spent looking though historic records, to feedback at meeting. Further 2 hours searching information on the clerks' emails/files (historic). Records include: Abtract of Title, Conveyance 1986, Deed of Release 1986, Lease 1978 (Recreation Ground), Redemption Notice 1956, WMVH Conveyance 2017, WMVH</p>	Jan

					Conveyance Document 1952, Deed of Release (Tennis Courts), Charity Commission (Recreation Ground) 1932. Noted that Hampshire Archives have no minutes between 1990 and current date. 26/08/25: Meeting held between Clerk, Cllr Silk and Senior Legal Advisors, specialising in Charity and Parish Council land. Following meeting the next steps summarised and to be considered/agreed in September Council meeting. 11/8/25: request has been forwarded to HALC's legal advisors due to specialist nature. 6/8/25: request submitted to HALC asking for advice. Uncertainty around legal ownership of land occupied by the Village Hall. Delay is preventing VH from progressing to a CIO status. Legal advice requested." July 25: email sent to HALC requesting free one hour call to discuss leases and Village Hall proposed ICO status.	
22	Projects	Woodlands Entry Signs: Confirmation of location	Red	In Progress	Dec 25: a third location for the Woodlands sign has been submitted to the Clerk of Bramdean. This was checked during the Xmas break, and the site looks acceptable, with sufficient space and no obstructions. My only concern is that the location is some distance inside the Bramdean boundary, https://w3w.co/turkey.passively.crystals but will wait to hear back from Bramdean Parish Council, their views. Nov 25: Two of the three signs have been installed. Third location lies within Bramdean boundary. Have tried calling the clerk and left message but no response. Budget preparation has prevented me from pursuing further but will be picked up in the following month. A third site location has been provided but needs to be checked for suitability. 21/10/25: Attended a site visit with the Chair to review the two locations. Both are suitable. A third site has been located (SU64227). I have contacted the Clerk at Bramdean as this is 50 metres within their parish border. 1/10/25: Invoice received from JK Engineering for the sum of £1000.00 for downpayment towards build and installation. Payment approved in September meeting. Payment will be included in October payments. 26/08/25: three entrance signs have been prepared. JK Engineering to send invoice as partial payment. 25/7/25: End of consultation period. No objections to the two proposed locations. JK Engineering has been authorised to proceed with making the entrance signs. Third location to be agreed resolving. July 25: Chasing HH for update. Correspondence received from two residents of Woodlands requesting installation of the 3rd entrance sign. Advised this is on hold as further investigation of location necessary. June 25: Emailed HH, no response. May 25: I have been pursuing the necessary approval for site locations from HCC and Woodlands Community before placing the order with JK Engineering.	

23	Projects	Woodlands Fingerpost Signs	Red	In Progress	<p>22/08/25: HH confirmed they are still waiting for a date from contractor who has been assigned the work.</p> <p>18/08/25: Update requested from Hampshire Highways</p> <p>June 25: Awaiting update from the contractor about timescales. Delayed due to the restructure at HCC. HCC Traffic Dept. will be in touch when more information is available (last response 6th June).</p>	
26	Working Groups	Car Park: Resurfacing and Space Optimisation - 3 quotes	Red	In Progress	<p>Nov 25: proposal for works to the car park have been submitted by the Car Park Working Group and circulated for discussed in December meeting.</p> <p>22.08/25: I have sought quotes for resurfacing the car park and received one quotation with a price to do the initial survey at £6941.00 ex VAT). However, it at this stage may be more appropriate to obtain estimates so that the Council has an indication of likely costs before considering whether to proceed further. Two estimates have been received for discussion in September meeting.</p> <p>28/7/25: initial enquiry sent out to Nidagraveluk.co.uk, info@slatterestatesurfaces.com, info@randcgroundworks.com and Ed Bagshaw Ltd.</p>	
27	Finance	Quote/Tender process: public spaces	Green	In Progress	<p>Dec 25: Draft specification for ground maintenance has been prepared and circulated, for consideration and feedback my council members.</p> <p>27/10/25: meeting to be held with Chair Sports Pavillion to review next year's schedule.</p> <p>11/8/25: Work confirmed by Hillier Garden Services and Mac Edwards. Worksheet sent to Biodiversity Working Group for input into any additional requirements. I also received an email from Chair Sports, who would like to review the document before it is approved.</p> <p>29/7/25: contacted Mac & Will to clarify scope of rec ground maintenance of public places.</p>	Jan
28	HR Development	Training Request	Green	In Progress	<p>July: request received from Cllr Burke to attend the following NALC training courses: The Art of Communication: Navigating Tough Decisions on 26 November, Mastering Asset Management on 28 January, and Future Leaders on 25 February. The budget for training allocated to Councillors has been spent. Council to decide if this can come out of General Reserves.</p>	

29	Legal/Property	Leases and Land Ownership	Red	In Progress	<p>DEC 25: Discovery piece is now complete and the document and supporting evidence prepared for HALC Legal Services. The document has been circulated for consideration at the next meeting.</p> <p>Sep 25: see issue 18 update.</p> <p>22/08/25: meeting held with legal advisors. Discovery piece is required to collate all the historical documents relating to the land and buildings. Summary document has been provided and will be circulated.</p> <p>11/8/25: request has been forwarded to HALC's legal advisors due to specialist nature: reference 3146 - response time 5 days from reviewing the request. Advice sought on whether WMPC should engage a solicitor, appropriate and legally sound way to regularise the land ownership and trust arrangements, lease requirements between WMPC and the Village Hall charity, how to protect the councils' interest if land is transferred, suggested next steps to clarify responsibilities for both parties.</p> <p>6/8/25: request submitted to HALC asking for advice. Uncertainty around legal ownership of land occupied by the Village Hall. Delay is preventing VH from progressing to a CIO status. Legal advice requested.</p>	Jan
32	Public Rights of Way	Missing Signpost	Green	In Progress	<p>18/08/25: Fingerpost sign reported missing from Drs Lane, location 242/1/1. Reported to Hampshire Country Council reference number 250850735HCC Rights of Way: a job has been issued to Countryside Access Ranger Team - advised this make take some time before it is completed.</p>	
33	Projects	Neighbourhood Plan	Green	In Progress	<p>28/10/25: Initial discussions held with neighbouring clerks; seeking advice from HALC (Steve Tilbury) for an independent view on developing a neighbourhood plan, including any funding options and if they recommend professional services in the area. I've been advised by the neighbouring clerk that funding has been withdrawn but will follow-up when discussing with HALC.</p> <p>17/10/25: SDNP have emailed confirming the process to register an application, involving mapping of the area. I have also contacted two companies to provide estimates for professional services to give an idea of costs and time and effort that will be required. Two companies contacted are Adams Henry in Winchester and Southern Planning Practices in Twyford.</p> <p>18/08/25: email circulated with proposed date for strategy meeting (29th, 30th September 1st and 2nd October).</p>	

36	Planning	Planning Application	Green	In Progress	Nov 25: the planning application is still awaiting review. They have a significant backlog and no timescales are available as to when it will be seen. 22/10/25: progress update requested from Winchester Council on Planning Application SDNP/24/03257/FUL. There has been no response so I have also asked Cllr Wallace if he can assist, as I note he was involved previously.	
37	Open Spaces	Play Equipment	Green	In Progress	Dec 25: contacted VitaPlay, Infinity Playgrounds. I met with Infinity Playgrounds before Christmas, they have reviewed all sites and are preparing a quote to address the issues highlighted in the Playground Inspection Report, that require specialist work carried out.	
38	Finance	Precept	Green	In Progress	Dec 25: Based on the Electoral Register information from Winchester Council the recommendation is that the Parish Council do not increase the precept value per taxpayer this year. In 2025-26 the tax base was 404.80 and in 2026-27 this has increased to 418.08. Based on the increase this provides a precept value of £41,828.00. Decision for January meeting.	Jan
39	Finance	Budget	Green	In Progress	<p>The 26/27 draft budget has been prepared and reviewed by a member of SLCC and an experienced Clerk of many parish councils, and recommendations proposed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Water Meadows: Provision removed at this stage as the scope, costs and timescales are not yet defined; any future request can be considered via the Council's grant process once further detail is available. 2. Neighbourhood Plan: Provision reduced by £5,000. 3. Traffic Calming: Provision reduced by £5,000, leaving sufficient funding for three SAM speed signs. 4. These amendments reduced the level of earmarked reserves proposed, which would otherwise have resulted in an increase in the precept. 5. Increase in clerks' salary and pension following the council meeting in December (for illustration). <p>The remaining general reserve position is stronger and provides improved resilience for unforeseen events and emerging priorities, broadly in line with external audit guidance (e.g. maintaining an appropriate level of reserves/cashflow contingency).</p>	Jan

40	Finance	Q3 Position	Green	In Progress	To note the Q3 financial position as of the 31st of December. The 2025/26 precept has been received in full (£40,503). Bank interest is ahead of budget year-to-date, due to transferring funds into the deposit account to gain higher interest (£1,528.31 against a £750 budget), and VAT reclaimed to date is £4,518 (with further VAT reclaim expected subject to eligible spend). Expenditure is generally within budget overall, with notable planned project spend including Play Equipment Replacement (£10,000) to build a future replacement Capital Reserves fund. Grants & Donations (£4,200). Key variances include Member Training, which was higher than budget (£848 against £400) due to in-house training earlier in the year, and Flood Defence expenditure to date of £6,980.63 against a proposed budget of £26,000.	Jan
41	Finance	Peppercorn Rent	Green	In Progress	Dec25: The Chairman of the Village Hall and Rifle Club have both been sent an agreement document to cover unrecovered Peppercorn rents for the last five years at £1 per year (back dated), and future years to be collected on the 1st of April. This issue was logged by the internal auditor as it needs addressing. Rifle Club are raising this with their committee, and the village hall are raising this with their lawyers, to get advice on potential impact - if any.	