

**Full Council Meeting**  
**Rendlesham Parish Council**

Minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2025 at 7.00pm, Room 16  
Rendlesham Community Centre Walnut Tree Avenue Rendlesham Suffolk  
IP12 2GG

<b>PRESENT</b>	
<b>CHAIRMAN</b>	
<b>COUNCILLORS</b>	Councillor Mrs N Delacamp; (Vice Chair) Councillor M Stevenson; Councillor R Routledge; Councillor E Points; Councillor C Ward-Wilkinson; Councillor Ms O Johnston; Councillor G Moir
<b>CLERK TO THE COUNCIL</b>	Mrs D Humphris
<b>ALSO PRESENT</b>	9 members of the public

<b><u>067/24</u></b>	<b><u>Appointment of Parish Council Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year to May 2025</u></b> Two nominations were received and voting took place. <b>RESOLVED:</b> to appoint the existing Vice Chair Councillor Mrs N Delacamp to the position of Chairman and to receive her acceptance of office form.
<b><u>068/24</u></b>	<b><u>Appointment of Parish Council Vice Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year to May 2025.</u></b> With the Vice Chairman now having been appointed Chairman it was <b>RESOLVED: (unanimously)</b> to appoint Councillor Ms O Johnston as Vice Chair.
<b><u>069/24</u></b>	<b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> <b>RESOLVED : (unanimously)</b> to accept apologies for absence from the Councillor Mrs J Weller and Councillor J Bird
<b><u>070/24</u></b>	<b><u>Public Forum</u></b> Questions were raised about the following items: 1) Skatepark project 2) Youth Club 3) Fireworks

	<p>4) Why don't the Council engage directly</p> <p>The Chairman advised that she could give no answers on these matters as final decisions have not yet been reached by the Council and more discussion would ensue under the Budget/Precept agenda item. The Chairman confirmed the fireworks had been paid for and were currently being kept in storage by the Fireworks company</p> <p>A question was raised inquiring about progress with a new newsletter and the Chairman advised this was being progressed and further details could be expected in February.</p>
<b><u>071/24</u></b>	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b> - Councillor Mrs Delacamp declared an interest in agenda item 8 Community Centre item relating to appointment of a paid position for the Facilities Manager position.
<b><u>072/24</u></b>	<b><u>Councillor Resignation</u></b> Members noted the resignation of David Waring as Councillor effective from 7 January 2025
<b><u>073/24</u></b>	<b><u>Co-option of new councillor</u></b> It was RESOLVED: (unanimously) to co-opt Martin Eley-Kemp to the Council:  He signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of the Clerk.  It was noted that a further vacancy would now be advertised for the recent Councillor resignation.
<b><u>074/24</u></b>	<b><u>Minutes of the last meeting</u></b> <b>RESOLVED: (unanimously)</b> to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record for signature by the Chairman as follows:  Minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2024
<b><u>075/24</u></b>	<b><u>Committee Meeting Minutes and updates.</u></b> The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Delacamp declared an interest and left the meeting.

	<p>a) It was noted that the minutes of the meetings held on 18th December 2024 and 13th January 2024 would be circulated as soon as they were completed.</p> <p>b) The Community Centre Chairman advised that it has been discovered that the Parish Council have not been paying rent for their office hire in the Community Centre for up to two years and have not been paying for room rental for their monthly council and committee meetings. She wished to make the Council aware that the Community Centre would be considering the issue of a backdated invoice to at least partly cover those costs and will be organising regular invoicing for current use. Councillors will need to note this when setting the budget/precept for 25/26.</p> <p>c) The Community Centre Committee Chairman advised that following recent advertisements for two paid positions to enable the Community Centre to remain open four applications had been received for the Caretaker/Handyman role and interviews would take place next week. No applications had been received for the Facilities Manager role and therefore the Community Centre committee had agreed unanimously to offer the position to Nickie Delacamp, with a starting date of 20th January 2025. Legal advice had been sought to confirm this was in order.</p>
<p><b><u>076/24</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Reports from County and District Councillors</u></b>  District Councillor Tim Wilson sent his apologies for absence.  County Councillor Nicoll gave a brief presentation on plans for Unitary Authorities which would affect Suffolk County Council and District Councils across Suffolk. May elections may be delayed because of this.</p>
<p><b><u>077/24</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Clerk's report</u></b>  The Clerk reported as follows:</p> <p><b><u>Data Breach</u></b>  During the course of examining documents for fulfilling FOI requests a Data Breach had been discovered involving the disclosure of personal details for numerous</p>

	<p>people to a source outside the Council. The Clerk has reported this to the ICO who have reviewed the evidence and provided an action plan which the Council will follow.</p> <p>A further minor breach involving 1 A4 document sent to 1 person with 1 unredacted name has also been reported to the ICO. ICO have confirmed the case is closed and responded as for breach detailed above.</p> <p><b><u>Events 2025 (Rendlesham Show)</u></b></p> <p>The Clerk is receiving enquiries and correspondence from vendors relating to the Rendlesham Show. The Council will be reviewing the position during the Budget/Precept discussions at this meeting but the Clerk emphasised that the Council must now make a firm decision on whether this event is to go ahead.</p> <p><b><u>SALC Meeting Advice and Workshop</u></b></p> <p>This Council is now in a critical position in terms of constitution, governance, finance, communications and HR and the Clerk and Councillor Mrs Delacamp then vice chair/now chair) met with the Suffolk Association of Local Councils to seek advice in dealing with the many obstacles and challenges facing the Council, which are preventing the Council from being able to move forwards.</p> <p>A workshop for the Council is being organised to assist with all matters and to assist in compiling a firm action plan to return the Council to a stable position following several unsettled years.</p> <p>Councillors must accept that this has to be their focus and there is no quick fix - the process is likely to take many months if not years</p>
<p><b><u>078/24</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Policy</u></b>  <b><u>RESOLVED: (unanimously)</u></b> to adopt the policy for Council use (details previously circulated).</p>

	The Clerk intends to add all approved council policies to the Council website over the next few weeks, for full transparency																
<b><u>079/24</u></b>	<p><b><u>Financial Reports.</u></b></p> <p>a)The RFO presented a report on the Council’s financial position as at 31 December 2024 follows:</p> <p>Bank reconciliation (APPENDIX1) shows bank balances at 31/12/24 as follows:</p> <p>Savings (Reserve) £145266.58 Current account £ 76701.36</p> <p>There are no outstanding unreconciled payments or receipts</p> <p>Savings account consists of ALL EARMARKED FUNDS as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="508 1081 1421 1480"> <tr> <td>CIL funds</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£89631.99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ESDC skatepark</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>return of funds to ESDC Jan 2025</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£50000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Skatepark event fundraising</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£ 2561.91</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Skatepark donations</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£ 584</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Elections earmark funds</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£ 2000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Balance return to c/a</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£ 488.65</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>TOTAL</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>£ 145266.58</b></td> </tr> </table> <p>As a result of releasing funds previously set aside for the skatepark project (£78,000) the council current account at 31/12 /24 has £76701.36 left to cover all payments to 31 March 2025 (end of financial year.) which will require close management to ensure the Council does not run out of money. It is clear that without those funds the Council would have already</p>	CIL funds	£89631.99	ESDC skatepark		return of funds to ESDC Jan 2025	£50000.00	Skatepark event fundraising	£ 2561.91	Skatepark donations	£ 584	Elections earmark funds	£ 2000	Balance return to c/a	£ 488.65	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 145266.58</b>
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been in a position where it could not meet its financial commitments for the remainder of the financial year. There is no general reserve (an audit requirement) and careful monitoring of expenditure will be needed to ensure the council can meet costs for salaries and regular contractual payments through to the end of the financial year. NO spending outside of this can be incurred and ALL payments MUST be considered and approved by the Full Council at monthly meetings. No payments are to be released from the bank account without having been reviewed and confirmed by the RFO and subsequently approved by Full Council at a legally constituted meeting, with those payments transparently recorded in the minutes.

The Clerk advised that the Council **must insist** on a monthly report detailing bank balances, earmarked funds and budget overspends so that they maintain a clear picture of the exact financial situation of the Council on an ongoing basis.

A mini audit has been undertaken by the RFO for the financial year commencing 1st April 2024 to assist councillors with difficult decisions to be made around the budget/precept. As detailed in that report, the planned budget is substantially overspent for this financial year.

The Council urgently needs to review all regular payments to understand where savings can be made or where costs/contracts can be cancelled.

### **b) Payments for January 2025**

Appendix 2 - List of payments

**RESOLVED: (unanimously)** to approve the payments and direct debits for January totalling £62716.87

	(includes £50k payment to ESDC for return of Skatepark CIL monies) plus transfers between reserve and current account totalling £ 50488.65 (as detailed on the payment sheet)
<b><u>080/24</u></b>	<p><b><u>Budget/Precept 2025/2026</u></b></p> <p>a)Councillors considered the mini audit report detailed below produced by the new RFO, reviewing banking and accounts information back to 1st April 2025 to assist them in understanding the Council’s current financial position and to make informed decisions around the precept for 2025/2026.</p> <p><b><u>Reserve balances and budgeting</u></b></p> <p>Earmark Reserve Balances recorded in the accounting records as at 1 April 2024 were shown as £246363.76.(Appendix 3)</p> <p>Actual bank balances at the same date 1/4//24 were £243575.48, so earmarks exceeded the balance in the bank (set aside more money than available) and there is no documented evidence of consideration given to maintaining a general reserve which should (at the very least) be between 6-12 months precept (at least £75k).</p> <p>The new RFO has now cancelled all earmark reserves as there is no funding (bank balance) to support them . Remaining earmarked funds are as follows:</p> <p>Elections account £2000  Scouts grant £5000 (paid 2024)  CIL funds £89k  ESDC skate park funds £50,000 - being returned to ESDC</p> <p>Budget expenditure for the full financial year 1st April 2024 - 31 March 2025 was £184141 and the precept</p>

was set at £156084 which was not enough to cover the Council budgeted expenditure with no reserves to call on (as detailed above) to fill the shortfall of £28057 between budgeted expenditure and the precept (which is the Council's only source of confirmed income) Added to this monthly expenditure has been on average £21000 per month (equivalent to £252000 annual spend) meaning the Council has spent in excess of its total annual budget of £184k by end of month 9 with total spend to date of £188391.19.

Payments made by the Council should be recorded in monthly minutes to comply with both internal audit requirements and for full transparency. As this has not happened the RFO will compile a list of all payments made by the Council month by month since 1st April 2024 and these will be posted on the website within the next few weeks.

Overspends include unbudgeted expenses:

SOS HR - Retained HR £750 per month  
 FOI and ongoing correspondence re cancelled fireworks event £3000 staff overtime  
 Insurance of Community Centre Building £1788  
 Legal costs £16691

(These unexpected costs highlight the importance of maintaining a General Reserve account for contingency purposes)

With no General Reserve fund and no close monitoring of spend against budget the resulting financial position has led to the Council's decision to cancel the skatepark project as there was no choice than to use those funds for revenue expenses/salaries etc. for the last 3 months of the year, as the Council had run out of money.



ESDC CIL monies of £50k held for the skatepark project will need to be returned to ESDC and National Lottery Grant Funding has been withdrawn as the project could not be completed without the parish council contribution.

RFO has advised that NO SPENDING can take place other than statutory payments such as salaries and/or existing contracts before APRIL 2025 and with a very limited general reserve through 25/26 spending must be strictly monitored month by month to ensure no overspends and that costs are cut wherever possible.

CIL funds of £89k can be used for capital spends but must not be touched for revenue costs. These funds have now been separated and earmarked into the savings account so that it is clear to the Council that the only funds they have available for any expenses are those balances held in the current account (See January financial report)

£9k has been committed to support the Community Centre at £3k per month for 1 year. (9k to come from this year's balances remainder to be built into precept for 2025/2026. This is conditional on regular financial reports from the Community Centre evidencing improving finances and sustainability for the Community Centre. No guarantees have been given for funding the Community Centre in future years.

### **Bank reconciliations**

Bank reconciliations have been undertaken regularly but there appears to have been no investigation of outstanding payment items dating back to the summer of 2023.

The Council must ensure that unreconciled payments are properly reviewed and investigated on a regular basis.

The current RFO has investigated and reversed these from the accounts to remove all outstanding items.

### **Credit card accounts**

These have not been entered correctly in accounts. Total monthly balances have been placed to a suspense account (rather than placed to correct cost codes) and with direct debit payments to settle monthly credit card accounts coming from the current account, this has inflated the total expenditure figure for the council by around £6k. There is limited supporting invoices/paperwork for credit card expenditure and work is currently being undertaken to retrieve this information to enable the accounts entries to be corrected.

Due to the need to maintain close control on all expenditure the RFO is attempting to close both credit card accounts before year end 31/3/25. Any further spend on these cards is forbidden.

### **VAT**

VAT has not been reclaimed since the financial year ended 31/3/23.

RFO will investigate outstanding payments due and claim these. It is recommended that these should be reclaimed monthly particularly whilst the Council is in a poor financial position.

### **ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) Councillors must have sight of bank reconciliation and bank statement on a monthly basis along with details of unreconciled items (or ideally a nominated councillor who is not a bank signatory)
- 2) Monthly budget monitoring to be reported to the Council by RFO without fail and brief details recorded in the minutes.
- 3) No new spend/projects to be approved without due review of budgets/funds held.
- 4) VAT to be reclaimed monthly
- 5) Credit card accounts to be closed.
- 6) ALL payments must be approved by the Council and RFO BEFORE payment is made
- 7) Review of all existing contracts to understand what we are paying and why with a view to cutting as many costs as possible during 2025.
- 8) Council must plan to build a general reserve of a minimum of £75k

b) Draft Budget/Precept

Councillors then reviewed the line by line draft budget considered at the December meeting where discussions had led to consideration of a 98% increase in the Precept taking the full precept from £159k for 2024/2025 to £289k for 2025/2026.

Councillors considered where initial cutbacks can be made to reduce this, and after some discussion it was **RESOLVED:** to approve the operating costs budget of £168420. (This shows an instant decrease on 24/25 budgets of £185941 and is lower than 23/24 costs of £176625 evidencing the Council's commitment to reducing costs, with expected further cuts to be made during 25/26.) It was further **RESOLVED:** to increase the precept by £35k to support the Community Centre and a further £20k to enable a start towards building an

	<p>acceptable general reserve account It was noted that without funding the Community Centre would need to close. It was agreed that costs need to be critically reviewed and cut wherever possible and that any savings be placed to the General Reserve.</p> <p>The percentage increase calculations discussed at the meeting were calculated incorrectly.</p> <p>The result is a precept requirement of £ 221620 cost to a Band D Taxpayer for the parish element of council tax is £ 221.10 per annum an increase of 38% on 24/25 payments of £163.36 per annum</p> <p>Full details of budget and precept calculations can be found in Appendix 4.</p> <p><b><u>c) Clear communication of decisions</u></b>  RESOLVED (unanimously) to approve Gareth Moir to liaise with RFO to produce a transparent explanation of the reasons for the increased Precept for members of the public</p>
<b><u>081/24</u></b>	<p><b><u>Events 2025</u></b>  It was <b><u>RESOLVED (unanimously)</u></b> to consider this agenda item in private session due to the potential for sensitive information being disclosed.</p>
<b><u>082/24</u></b>	<p><b><u>Exclusion of the Public and Press</u></b>  <b><u>RESOLVED: (unanimously)</u></b> that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press shall be excluded due to the confidential nature of the items to be discussed as follows:</p>
<b><u>083/24</u></b>	<p><b><u>Events 2025</u></b>  a)Members considered the ongoing provision of events during 2025 and considered the following factors:  Costs</p>

	<p>Available council resource for 2025 Training Potential cost of buying in professional support such as security, health and safety The need to focus on returning the Council to a fully functioning council in terms of all areas including constitution, governance, finance and personnel.</p> <p>After much discussion it was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> there would be no council run events during 2025 but that this would not affect existing staffing structures as it would be a chance for the Council to research, train and reflect on Council oversight and management of events moving forwards, with a full review of the position late 2025 for possibilities of reviving events in 2026.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> to instruct the Chairman to liaise with Fully Fused fireworks to see if there is any potential for our purchased fireworks to be stored for use in 2026.</p> <p><u>b) Official Statement about events decision</u></p> <p><b>RESOLVED: (unanimously)</b> to appoint Councillor Eley-Kemp to prepare a suitable official statement for approval before release.</p> <p>This matter and the decision can be made available in the Full Council minutes.</p>
<b><u>084/24</u></b>	<p><b><u>FOI requests and correspondence</u></b></p> <p>a) There is an outstanding FOI request which will be looked at by a new working party to be appointed as the Council needs to relieve the pressure of ongoing correspondence and FOI requests and internal reviews from its staff. Clerk to forward all details to the working party.</p> <p>b) Councillors reviewed persistent correspondence from one member of the public on the same matter relating to information about the qualifications of the anonymous Health and Safety professional who provided guidance</p>

	<p>to the Council regarding the cancelled fireworks event. The adverse impact on staff resources and council costs was noted. It was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> to instruct the Clerk to confirm that the Council has no information on this matter. Further to this a copy of our persistent and vexatious complaints policy should be sent with that response .</p> <p>c) Staff are struggling with the workload being imposed on them by continued correspondence, FOI requests, requests for FOI reviews and correspondence. Staff are clearly feeling exhausted and emotional about matters and feel that there is a lack of understanding by the general public that as employees they can only act on the instructions of the Council so it was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> to appoint a working party to deal with ongoing correspondence relating to the cancelled fireworks event and/or any correspondence on any matter from any of the group of people pursuing this. This working party will also deal with any requested internal reviews of FOI requests already dealt with and will deal with all new FOI requests on any matter. It was accepted that councillors can not act alone or be delegated responsibility to respond on behalf of the Council so responses prepared by the working party will still need to be forwarded to the Proper Officer to be delivered. The Clerk will send all such correspondence received as detailed above directly to the working party to deal with and will respond with the draft responses prepared by the Working Party.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> that the working party will consist of Councillor Points, Councillor Eley-Kemp and Councillor Johnston</p> <p>This item discussed in the confidential session does not need to remain confidential.</p>
<b>085/24</b>	<p><b><u>Ongoing HR Matters</u></b></p> <p><u>Consideration of updates and legal advice</u></p> <p>Confidential Minutes (Appendix 5)</p>
<b>086/24</b>	<p><b><u>SOS HR</u></b></p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> that the Council</p>

	<p>needed to consider cutbacks and so the required 12 weeks notice would be given to end this contract, saving the Council around £8,000 per annum.</p>
<b>087/24</b>	<p><b><u>Staff matters - Working Party</u></b>  It was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> to appoint a working party to deal with ongoing issues. The Clerk is to forward all correspondence received directly to the working party.</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> that the working party would consist of The Chairman Councillor Delacamp, Councillor Points and Councillor Eley-Kemp.</p>
<b>088/24</b>	<p><b><u>Clerk and RFO position</u></b></p> <p><b><u>a)Clerk’s resignation</u></b>  The Clerk confirmed her reasons for leaving after such a short time in post and the Council confirmed understanding and acceptance of the Clerk’s resignation. Final date of work to be confirmed once outstanding TOIL/holiday owed is calculated.</p> <p>b) It was <b>RESOLVED (unanimously)</b> to appoint a working party to deal with recruitment of a new Clerk/RFO as follows: Chairman Councillor Delacamp Councillor Moir and Councillor Points. It was further agreed that the advert should make it clear that the Council would consider a split of the single Clerk/RFO role creating 2 part time jobs for the right applicants.</p> <p>There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9pm.</p>
	<p>Signed: Councillor Mrs N Delacamp</p> <p>Chairman</p> <p>Date: 24 January 2025</p>