

HECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Heckington Parish Council Finance Committee meeting held on Monday 21 July 2025 at 7.30pm in the Parish Council Chambers, St Andrews Street, Heckington

1. Chair's Welcome (FC/033)

The Chair, Councillor Tucker, hereafter referred to as the Chair, welcomed Councillors and one member of the public to the meeting. She delivered the usual health and safety announcements and asked those present to silence their mobile devices.

2. Public Forum (FC/034)

The member of the public expressed concern that the playing field in its entirety had not been 'aerated' in the Autumn of 2024 per the Fineturf agreement. The Clerk said that her understanding is that the contract covers the playing surfaces only which fits with the criteria set in the Section 106 agreement. Councillor Spencer confirmed that the S106 money is ring-fenced for this purpose.

The member of the public said he also had concerns about the area where the containers are located; the earth that was removed from this area was dumped on the top field. The border behind the playground, which was supposed to be for wildlife, has turned into a dumping ground for broken branches and nettles. He said that there is no thought to the playing field yet a fortune is being spent on the Pavilion building. The Clerk informed the member of the public that the Parish Council have been asked to leave the border undisturbed as it provides a habitat for wildlife.

The member of the public asked who authorised the location of the new all-weather cricket pitch as he has concerns that this is too close to the football pitch. The Chair confirmed that this was agreed between the football club and cricket club.

He expressed his concern about the movement of the storage containers.

The member of the public said as a dog walker, he is concerned about the number of people who have a total disregard for keeping their dogs on leads. Councillor Spencer informed the member of the public that new signage will be installed in the near future.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Fineturf.

3. Councillors present (FC/035)

Councillor Tucker, Chair
Councillor Davison
Councillor Garlick
Councillor Spencer
Councillor Wright

4. Apologies (FC/036)

None

5. To receive any reports of member's interest, pecuniary or otherwise in relation to the agenda and any dispensations in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 (FC/037)

None

6. Approval of Minutes (FC/038)

Councillor Wright proposed that the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on 16 June 2025 are approved as a true and accurate record of that meeting. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Davison and the motion was passed by resolution of the Committee. Councillor Spencer abstained from the vote as he was not present at that meeting.

7. Finance (FC/039)

a) Cemetery Budget

The Chair proposed that this agenda item a) is discussed ahead of item d) on the agenda.

b) MUGA

The Clerk informed the meeting that the proposal from Smiths Civil and Engineering are still pending. Members agreed to defer this item.

c) Handheld radios for the Clerk and Caretaker

Members agreed to defer this item to the Parish Council meeting on Monday 28 July 2025.

Cemetery Budget

The Chair stated that there is a proposal from the Cemetery Committee to absorb £30,000.00 from the sale of Star Fen to boost the budget for the current financial year. She reminded the meeting that £56,676.41 of money ring-fenced for the cemetery was used for the purchase of Star Fen.

The Chair said that further to a discussion with the RFO, she would like to hand over to the RFO for an update on the budget for 2025/26.

The presented the following figures to show with a view to demonstrating the impacts of the current budget on the rest of the financial year.

Expenditure as of 14 July 2025 (actual)	89,662.33
Budget for 2025/26	254,749.00
Difference between expenditure and budget	165,086.67
Current account as of 21 July 2025	7,533.78
Deposit account (including Star Fen monies)	122,358.20
Total available balance	129,891.98
Difference between available funds and budget	(35,194.69)
Precept (payment 2 of 2)	55,373.00
Estimated Year End Total	20,178.31

She warned that if the Parish Council continues to spend in line with the budget, it will leave the Parish Council at financial risk and she therefore suggested cuts across budget heads as follows:

Budget Head	Current	Proposed	Saving
Annual Subscription	3,700.00	2,500.00	1,200.00
Elections	8,000.00	7,000.00	1,000.00
SID	3,500.00	500.00	3,000.00
Office Equipment	750.00	0.00	750.00
Village Maintenance	5,000.00	3,500.00	1,500.00
Petrol	1,500.00	500.00	1,000.00
Miscellaneous	1,500.00	500.00	1,000.00
Section 137	10,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Events	5420.00	1,500.00	3,920.00
Pavilion	67,000.00	50,000.00	17,000.00

Playground	4,950.00	1,950.00	3,000.00
Chambers	14,870.00	7,870.00	7,000.00
Workshop	3,000.00	5,500.00	(2,500.00)
TOTALS	129,190.00	86,320.00	42,870.00

This provoked lengthy debate: Councillor Davison said that the cemetery needs more funding as it has been woefully neglected. He suggested that work at the Pavilion is deferred to 2026/27 as the Council has a statutory responsibility to the cemetery.

The Chair said that an additional £10,000 is required for the cemetery budget head, to build a Garden of Remembrance and she reminded members that sales for cremation plots had fallen through in recent weeks due to the state of the cemetery. She reminded members that after the precept, the second highest source of income comes from burials. The Chair said that a Garden of Remembrance will create additional cremation plots which will lead to additional income.

Councillor Spencer said that given the suggestion from the RFO that cuts are required, he would be reluctant to support the reallocation of £10,000.00 to the cemetery; he said there needs to be a review of the Parish Council's financial commitments. Councillor Davison agreed that the Parish Council needs to take a scalpel to the budget heads.

Councillor Wright enquired as to the purpose of the Garden of Remembrance. The Chair explained that it is with a view to creating a space for the interment of ashes. The Clerk gave an estimate of costings for the purchase of an Exclusive Right of Burial, interment fees and the erection of a memorial. The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council ask local businesses to sponsor the Garden of Remembrance. The Chair said that the Parish Council had neglected their statutory duty to the cemetery.

Councillor Davison said the cuts are going to be a hard sell, given the sale of Star Fen.

The Clerk reminded members that the £56k in reserves for the purchase of future cemetery land was used to purchase Star Fen, but the ripple effect of that purchase went above and beyond the purchase price. She explained that after the works in the Autumn, it should be clear what capacity remains in the cemetery for future burials given that there is now no money in reserves for the purchase of new cemetery land.

The Chair said that she feels angry that she is having to justify the need for an additional £10k for the cemetery budget given the level of expenditure to date under certain budget heads.

Councillor Davison said that spending on the Pavilion should now be essential only. The Clerk said that she is in the process of getting quotes for the work that the Pavilion Committee said they would like to prioritise in the current financial year. Councillor Davison suggested that the list is revisited and revised. The Clerk in her capacity as RFO suggested that this response was a knee-jerk reaction; spending does not need to be halted but budget heads need to be reduced. Councillor Davison said he is focussed on the Pavilion as that is the area where there can be the biggest savings.

The Clerk asked the Committee with a view to making recommendations to the Parish Council to consider allocating the VAT refund from Quarter 1 at just of £7k to the cemetery budget head. Councillor Davison proposed this recommendation, it was seconded by Councillor Wright and the motion was passed by resolution of the Committee.

- d) A review of reserves following the sale of Star Fen.
Members agreed that this had been address in c) above.

- e) Monthly Finance Checks
The Clerk asked two Councillors to verify the bank reconciliation, bank statements, invoices, payment slips and cashbook for July 2025.

f) Members noted the quotes as they have been received for the insurance renewal on 3 August 2025.

- Hiscox (current provider) £6,468.02
- Ansvar Insurance £4,373.12
- Zurich £3,862.78
- Clear Council's Direct (quote pending)

Action: Councillor Davison agreed to review the renewals to ensure the policies are like for like.

8. Chambers (FC/040)

a) Fire Risk Assessment action plan and further requirements for compliance

- i) Councillor Garlick proposed the purchase of signage from Arion at £124.80. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Wright and the motion was passed by resolution of the Committee.
- ii) Councillor Garlick proposed the purchase of site plans at £300.00. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Wright and the motion was passed by resolution of the Committee.

b) Legionella Risk Assessment

Members agreed to defer this item to the Parish Council meeting on Monday 28 July 2025.

c) Chambers Accessibility

The Clerk explained that there is a pot of money for development of the library hub of £11,884.28. See email from Rachel Hoyles, Business Support Assistance for LCC dated 23 June 2025. This could be used to fund the Walk and Talk survey by one of AccessAble's NRAC Accessibility Consultants in relation to a review of accessibility. The Chair proposed expenditure of £700 for the Walk and Talk survey. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Spencer and the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Committee.

d) Review of the Parish Council Chambers

Councillors Wright said that the two most significant findings are the brickwork and the roof; there are lifted, broken and misaligned slates. The crumbling brickwork has been poorly repaired with cement rather than lime mortar. Councillor Garlick recalled repairs being made to the brickwork. There are also issues with the ramp, the sliding door to the meeting room, damp in the outside toilet, the flush and water heater in the accessible toilet and the door to the spare toilet catches on the floor.

Action: Clerk to check when work was last carried out on the roof to check for extended warranty. Clerk to investigate when the brickwork was repaired. Clerk to appoint building contractors to review the faults and the Caretaker will be appointed to make general repairs.

e) Weekly and monthly routine testing

The Clerk informed the meeting that the six monthly LOLER for the lift was carried out in June, the service is scheduled for August. The Cleaner is due to start on 22 July 2025. The Clerk said that the window cleaner is only doing two of three faces to the building. All other inspections including fire alarm, emergency lighting and first aid kits are being routinely carried out.

9. Date and time of the next meeting (FC/041)

Monday 15 September 2025 at 7.30pm

10. Questions from the public (FC/042)

The member asked whether there was a tenancy agreement in place. He stated that he was surprised to see that the Parish Councillors hadn't got the necessary paperwork for the meeting.

The Chair proposed that the meeting is moved into closed session in accordance with the Public Bodies Act 1960. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Spencer and the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Committee.

11. Closed Session (FC/043)

a) Pavilion tenancy agreement

A quote of £1,500.00 has been received from Weller's Solicitors to provide a tenancy agreement. Riky Patel from Chattertons would like to meet with representatives further to the decision not to proceed with Chattertons. Members discussed the reasons for the lack of progress and dissatisfaction with the tenancy agreement provided by Chattertons. The Chair emphasised the importance of fast-tracking the tenancy agreement.

Councillor Spencer proposed that the Clerk is tasked to gain an understanding of what type of contract Weller's are going to provide; bespoke or template based. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Garlick and the motion was passed unanimously by resolution of the Council.

Action: Clerk to speak to Jade Warr at Weller's. Clerk to meet with Riky Patel from Chattertons.

b) Future financial management at the Pavilion

The agreement between the Parish Council and previous tenants was discussed.

The peppercorn rent and mowing was discussed along with building maintenance.

The current relationship between the Parish Council and the sport's teams was discussed.

Councillors Davison, Wright and Tucker have not yet had the opportunity to meet to explore future financial models for the Pavilion.

There were no resolutions.

The Chair closed the meeting at 21.08pm.