



Wivenhoe Town Council

MINUTES of the Full Town Council meeting held in the Council Chamber on Monday 16 March 2026 at 7.00pm **Draft**

Present: Cllr Guy (Chair), Cllr Hailes-Morley, Cllr Burke, Cllr Evans, Cllr Aldis, Cllr Andrew, Cllr Widgey, Cllr Boughton, Cllr Luxford-Vaughan, Cllr Garland, Peter Kay (Public Transport Representative, Emma Buckley (RFO) and 2 members of the public.

Public Questions: Philip George read the following statement:

Chair and Councillors,

Thank you for allowing me time to speak this evening.

May I begin by congratulating Councillor Garland on his success in last week's election? I have known him for many years and know him to be fair-minded, hardworking and completely committed to the wellbeing of Wivenhoe and its residents. The town is very fortunate to have him and I wish him the very best in the weeks and months ahead.

As some of you will know, I am a member of the Save Old King George Oak Tree Group. I am not its leader, as some have accused me of being in the past. The group does not have a formal leader and the campaign is an organic and informal entity of like-minded individuals; it has no constitution or code of participation. Many people in Wivenhoe care deeply about the issue of the tree, whether their concern is the wellbeing of residents affected by property movement, the safety of residents and visitors to the area, or the future of the trees themselves. All of those concerns are legitimate and deserve to be treated seriously.

As you will know, the High Court has now granted permission for the Judicial Review to proceed. That means the court considers the legal issues surrounding the original decision to fell the trees to be properly arguable and appropriate for determination by the court. We are surprised that the Council did not see fit to respond properly to our initial application, and we are also surprised that such an important and controversial issue does not appear on the agenda for tonight's meeting, either under Part A or Part B, given that the period for the Council to file its evidence is running. We trust that the Council is treating the issue with the importance it undoubtedly warrants.

Because the judicial process is now underway, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the legal arguments or evidence that will be considered by the court. The purpose of the Judicial Review is precisely to ensure that decisions of this nature are examined carefully and transparently within the proper legal framework.

What I can say is that the campaign group's aim has always been to ensure that decisions about these trees are taken on the basis of full evidence and proper process. We recognise the responsibilities the council carries in relation to public safety, and we support the use of independent expertise to assess the condition of the trees and any potential risks.

At the same time, many residents value these trees as an important part of Wivenhoe's environment and heritage. It is understandable that people want reassurance that any irreversible decisions are taken carefully and with the benefit of the best available information.

Now that the matter is before the court, we hope that the legal process will help bring clarity for everyone involved — including the residents whose homes have been affected.

In the meantime, we would encourage continued dialogue, careful consideration of expert advice, and a shared commitment to ensuring that the outcome is both lawful and responsible.

Cllr Guy thanked Philip George and advised him that he would update after consultation with TC as due to the insurance claim, we are limited on what we can answer in public meetings.

Philip George left the meeting at 19:05

PART A

FC/03.26/01 Apologies for absence: Cllrs Harmon, Cory and Kelly. Their apologies were accepted.

FC/03.26/02 Declarations of interest: None.

Cllr Burke made the following statement to the Council:

I find it difficult being around this table with and to work with Cllr Garland. The tree protestors, of which Cllr Garland is a representative of the group, are in a legal dispute with Wivenhoe Town Council, which Mr George has just said.

He has also made formal complaints about this Council, its officers and individual councillors to the Monitoring Officer. In addition, he has shared negative comments about the council on social media.

I find it hard to believe his reasons for wanting to be a councillor may be somewhat disingenuous.

I hope that Cllr Garland will respect and honor the responsibilities he's taken on as a councillor and act accordingly for the benefit of all Wivenhoe residents and not the few.

Cllr Garland responded that it was not a formed group and he was drawn into the group as the first person to read the reports. He has now completely withdrawn from the groups and Whatsapp messages. He confirmed that he had made two complaints but not about the officers.

FC/03.26/03 Minutes of the previous meetings:

The minutes of the full town council meeting held on 16 February 2026 were proposed by Cllr Widgery, seconded by Cllr Boughton and approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

Cllr Andrew arrived.

FC/03.26/04 Reports from Members of County and City Councillors & Public Transport Representative:

- a) No report received for ECC from Cllr Cory.
- b) The councillors considered a previously circulated report from Cllr Luxford-Vaughan which is attached as **Appendix A**.

Cllr Luxford-Vaughan reported that she had attended training on S106 and will circulate details to the council.

Concerns were raised about costal, environment issues and the highways agency, Cllr Luxford-Vaughan will be attending a meeting about some of these issues and will forward on any further details. It is expected that devolution will change this further in the future.

- c) Peter Kay had not provided a report.

FC/03.26/05 Committees:

- a. Planning: Cllr Burke reported that she will be attending a meeting with Cllr Luxford-Vaughan on 7th April about the Elmstead Road application, which is concerning and not compliant with the WNP.

- b. Finance & Personnel: Cllr Guy reported that at the previous meeting various policies have been reviewed, approved and published on the website. The internal controls have been reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee. It was recommended by Cllr Guy to approve the internal controls policy for 2026/27, this was seconded by Cllr Hailes-Morley with all in favour. Carried.

A replacement minibus has been reserved and will be collected in April. A minibus review is required for usage and charges; this will be discussed by the working group.

- c. Environment: Cllr Evans reported that the meeting with Tarmac was positive and they are on top of pollution issues in the river. It will be a 20-year project and they are happy to work with Cllr Evans. Cllr Evans will be meeting with Taylor Wimpey and the Biodiversity Working Group. He will report back.
- d. Estates: Cllr Evans had no update from the last Estates meeting. Cllr Burke reported that the council had received a letter from DEFRA relating to a tree management plan that is now required. A quote had been received for the plan, and it confirmed that Wivenhoe has 507 trees (with trunks over 40cm diameter) over 12 sites, this has identified some trees that require immediate attention. Estates to review the quote, alongside the Finance committee and report back, but this is an urgent requirement for the council. It was discussed that WTC needs to do everything it can to ensure compliance. It was also discussed that the TC had reported the oak tree damage to the forestry commission and any update will be provided when received.

FC/03.26/06 RFO Report:

- a. RFO Report: The councillors considered a previously circulated report which is attached as **Appendix B**.
- b. Approve list of payments previously circulated: The councillors considered the previously circulated list of payments which is attached as **Appendix C**. The list was proposed for payment by Cllr Guy. This was seconded by Cllr Evans, with all in favour. Carried.
- c. Approve the Bank Reconciliation: The councillors considered the previously circulated Bank Reconciliation which is attached as **Appendix D**. It was proposed for approval by Cllr Guy. This was seconded by Cllr Evans, with all in favour. Carried.
- d. The Budget: Considered.

FC/03.26/07 Working Groups:

- a) Wiv Works: Cllr Guy reported that Cllr Harmon is looking at volunteers for the weekend High Street clean. Funding is still being sort for the Wivworks project.
- b) Community Hub: Cllr Guy reported that a meeting will be held soon and it would be an idea to hold an event in the area or a consultation with the town to discuss the project and the residents' needs.
- c) Devolution: No update.
- d) Health & Wellbeing: Cllr Hailes-Morley reported that the International Women's Day lunch on 9 March with a guest speaker was a success with very positive feedback from all who attended. The next event is Men's Health Day on 28 April, with all welcome to attend.
- e) Community Engagement: Cllr Guy reported that the newsletter is ready to be delivered and will be published on the website next week.

- f) Car Parks: The Gazette had published an article stating charges will start in April, the council has not yet received notification from NEPP and are unsure where this has come from. Before any charges can be initiated there is a legal process of notification and signs need to be ordered and installed.
- g) Sporting Trust: Cllr Guy was unable to attend the meeting which clashed with FTC. There is a new Chair for the Trust, Cllr Guy to make contact and hope for better relationships with the council going forward.
- h) Wivenhoe Community Charity: Cllr Hailes-Morley reported that she is working on the website which should be going live soon. The charity has given a £200 grant to the Helping Hands Group.
- i) Events: Cllr Guy reported that the group are arranging a Picnic on the Park and an Annual Town meeting on 9 May. He will be contacting a potential guest speaker and there will be a BBQ and brass band on the field.
- j) Local Plan: No Further Update. Cllr Luxford-Vaughan noted that the CCC Local Plan meeting was tonight and Cllrs Cory and Kelly were in attendance. Cllr Luxford-Vaughan will send a summary to TC.
- k) Mayoral Activities: Cllr Guy reported that the international Women's Day lunch was a great event and feedback was inspiring to all. He will be attending an event at St Mary's Church and was approached about approval for a plaque in Brook Street to celebrate a local artists' 100th birthday.

FC/03.26/08 Town Clerk's Report: The Town Clerk's report was noted.

FC/03.26/09 Date and time of the next meeting: It was agreed that the next meeting will be held on Monday 20 April 2026 at 7pm.

FC/03.26/10 Exclusion of press and public: In accordance with Paragraph 1 (2) of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Council is invited to consider if the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item(s) owing to the confidential nature of the business. Cllr Guy proposed moving the meeting to Part B, this was seconded by Cllr Widgery, with all in agreement.

Part A of the meeting closed at 20:07

PART B

FC/03.26/11 Proposal by Cllr Guy: 'That on the recommendation of the Mede Way Working Group a contractor is instructed for the redevelopment of the Mede Way playpark following the tender process'.

- Debate on the tender process and contractors.

FC/03.26/12 Update on the legal advice on the Fisherman's Store and proposal by Cllr Burke on the next steps based on the advice.

- Discussions on the advice and next steps.

The Town Clerk holds a note of this part of the meeting.

Part B of the meeting closed at 20:35

Appendix A

CLlr Luxford-Vaughan Report March 2026

I have inputted into various consultations including the new NPPF. proposals to promote adoption of housing estate infrastructure options on areas that could be included in our relevant Spatial Development Strategy.

Streamlining Statutory Consultations

Consultation on Changes to various permitted development rights for EV charging

Local Plan (Regulation 18) Draft Plan responses are being analysed by officers

Approx. 3000 representations

Approx. 1170 respondents

Extensive work has been done on submissions to the Norwich to Tilbury NSIP hearing which is ongoing.

Enforcement-225 live complaints are currently being investigated.

Government have confirmed a further 65million extension to the HIF grant for the link road - certain people tried to take personal credit for securing this but it was a joint effort of officers Cllrs, Clarion and 3 MP's.

I tried to persuade the members of the joint committee not to sign a revised MoU with Latimer which gives them way too much ground. Unfortunately, officers pushed it through regardless. A meeting has been promised to look at revising the structure of decision making.

I signed yet another support letter to government for the increase in Clacton trains.

I chased what is happening with the Elmstead Road application. Will update at the meeting.

Organised 106 training for all CCC Cllrs.

I attended a meeting to discuss specific 106 agreement and how this would feed into the viability for the local plan and therefore what needs to happen before the reg 19 consultation to make this work sound.

I attended Essex coastal forum meeting and heard how funding is allocated for coastal defence and restoration work.

Sustainable Transport - a selection of ongoing projects include;

Bus promotion – proposing campaign to understand what stops residents from using buses with campaign to help address these issues. This could also include P&R promotion.

Wivenhoe Trail – Working with Sustrans and ECC to consider funding to refurbish route which may be possible with licence agreements for all the parcels of land in place. Sustrans working on new agreement with farmer.

Secure bike park – Portal Precinct – Purchase underway and expected completion end soon.

Bikewise campaign. ‘Love Your Bike’ metal signs to attach to end of run of Sheffield racks with bike locking advice and link to secure bike park, installed.

Shared Mobility and Mobility Hubs working with Planning colleagues in preparing a paper giving advice on shared mobility provision, and to be adopted as SPD. I have asked for a fuller briefing on this as the draft local plan allocates one of these for Wivenhoe at an eye-watering cost, but it is unclear what it is intended to be.

Appendix B

RFO Finance Report Update for March 2026

The work van has been sold, and the funds have been received for £1,823.09.

The floor cleaner that was purchased for the WLH broke for the second time, so a refund has been arranged, and a different brand will be purchased. The different model will be an extra £330.

b) Payments – That the circulated schedule of payments be approved.

Receipts – To approve the receipts reports for Cashbook one –

01/02 – 28/02/2026	£50,883.98
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c) Bank Reconciliations –

31/12/2025	Confirmed Bank Balances	£579,818
31/01/2026	Confirmed bank Balances	£528,064
28/02/2026	Confirmed bank Balances	£512,635

d) Budgetary Control Reports at 28.02.2026

The budget report is up to 28.02.2026

Total budget income is £616,362 - (Actual income is £638,612 less £22,250 to EMR)

Total budget expenditure is £496,824 - (Actual expenditure £534,182 less £37,358 from EMR)

The planned income budget was £574,609, to date we have received £638,612. This is mainly due to:

£1,000 – additional bank interest received, £1,000 extra rental income, £37,000 grants and donations received.

The planned expenditure budget was £553,889; to date we have spent £496,824 from the budget and

£37,358 from reserves.

Payroll and administration are paired on the budget. Currently administration expenditure is overspent, but this is balanced by a predicted underspend on payroll for the year. This overspent is due to increased expenditure for professional and legal fees and the Worknest contract.

Community Expenses are currently underspent, this is mainly due to underspends on website expenditure, community funds and the council newsletter.

Civic Expenses are overspent, this is due to elections and hospitality expenses.

Minibus budget is overspent, this is due to lower donations received, due to the ongoing mechanical issues.

The minibus working group has been discussing the minibus replacement.

WLH income is £4,000 higher than budgeted.

Cemetery income is expected to be £500 lower than the original budget.

Mede Way play area donation for £20,000 has been received and moved to reserves.

Appendix C – See attached

Appendix D – See attached

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