Sutton Parish Council

Draft minutes of the ordinary meeting

Tuesday 17 November 2026 at 7.00 pm
St Michael & All Angels' Church, Nene Way, Sutton

Present: Cllrs Peter Lee (Chair), Mick Grange, Antony Eager, Michael Caskey and Martin Parker.
In attendance: Tony Henthorn, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.
Also present: Cllr Gavin Elsey and one visitor

26/062 Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

26/063 Declarations of interest and dispensations

No declarations of interest or requests for dispensation were made.

26/064 Approval of minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 3 November 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26/065 Actions arising and Clerk's update

The Clerk reported that Unity Trust Bank was now the Council's principal operating account. The second precept instalment had been paid into HSBC because the payment destination had not been changed. The latest available HSBC statement, dated 28 September 2026, showed £5,000.

The Chair had written to HSBC requesting mandate changes. Access remained unresolved following the death of the former Clerk. Members were asked to consider the account's future; no new decision to retain or close it was made at this meeting.

The Clerk reported progress in organising approximately 1,600 inherited electronic records into a searchable repository. Work continued to locate historical financial evidence, reconcile inconsistencies, and support continuity of administration.

26/066 Playground and recreation field safety

The Council received the annual inspection report and the Chair's schedule of recommended actions. The rotten junior goalpost and crossbar had been removed. The Chair reported that the remaining goal appeared sound on his check; the future of both timber goals would require further consideration.

The Chair identified the gazebo trip hazard, deteriorating vehicle access gate, rabbit holes and uneven ground, worn ground beneath equipment, missing bolt cover, damaged paintwork and weed growth as matters for attention. Replacement of the vehicle gate would be considered in the budget; no replacement purchase was authorised. The pedestrian gate was reported to be a City Council responsibility.

RESOLVED: To approve £47.68 for replacement buffers for the double cross-country skier. Proposed by Cllr Caskey; seconded by Cllr Eager.

RESOLVED: To authorise expenditure of up to £30 on matching touch-up paint. Surface preparation and painting were envisaged for the spring. Proposed by Cllr Eager; seconded by Cllr Caskey.

26/067 Financial position and 2026/27 forecast

Accounts and reconciliation. The Clerk presented the circulated receipts, payments and reconciliation evidence, including Unity statements and the latest available HSBC statement. RESOLVED: To approve the accounts and bank reconciliations as presented. Proposed by Cllr Lee; seconded by Cllr Grange.

A payment of £290 from the South Allotment tenant was reported as transferred. Receipt and allocation would be checked against the bank records.

Banking arrangements. Cllr Eager queried access to Unity statements and account information. Members discussed using the account menu beyond the payment-authorisation link.

Half-year review and forecast. The Chair reported that the annual church charge for community use was expected to be £1,000, normally invoiced in January. The charge could increase; potential roof-alarm expenditure was still being investigated, and no figure was available. The separate Town Lands trust had no budgetary relationship with the Parish Council.

Funds and grants. Members stressed that the cash balance included restricted or earmarked funds and was not wholly available for general expenditure. An earlier balance of approximately £15,000 was said to include close to £12,000 of ring-fenced funds; these were historical figures requiring reconciliation.

Cllr Grange identified the historical schedule "**Grants Number Six**", reported as updated to August, and undertook to supply it and the earlier financial statement to the Clerk. Reported figures included £4,807 remaining from an £8,600 nature-plan grant, £105 remaining from the gazebo grant and a £46 overspend against the Neighbourhood Plan grant. A possible duplication between biodiversity and planting grant headings required investigation. These amounts were reported for checking and were not adopted as verified current balances. A remaining tools-grant balance of approximately £1,000 was also reported, subject to reconciliation.

No new grant application was reported as submitted. Potential grant opportunities would continue to be monitored.

26/068 Proposed 2027/28 budget and precept

Members considered the draft financial papers and the need to set the precept before the City Council's submission deadline, which was expected to precede the next ordinary meeting. The precise deadline remained to be confirmed.

Discussion covered inflation, the cost of replacing the recreation-field gate, possible changes to grass-cutting costs, the church charge and uncertain additional costs, Clerk costs, and the distinction between free and restricted funds. Concern was expressed that a 5% increase might not cover the Council's cost pressures.

RESOLVED: To increase the 2027/28 precept by 5% over the current year. Proposed by Cllr Caskey; seconded by Cllr Parker. The motion was declared agreed.

The detailed budget remained unfinished and was not adopted. The Clerk would revise income, expenditure and reserve assumptions, obtain missing evidence and return the completed proposals to members. An extraordinary meeting would be convened if needed to finalise matters before the submission deadline. No separate approval of the draft training, website or other service proposals was recorded.

26/069 Allotments grazing land and boundary matters

Members reported annual grazing rents of £390 for the South Allotment and £540 for the North Allotment, payable in advance, with arrangements intended to provide two-year continuity subject to review. The South Allotment's part-year charge and payments received required reconciliation with the signed agreement and bank evidence. Members requested that future payments be directed to Unity.

Smaller allotment and garden rents, including two £15 rents and the position of land proposed for sale, were discussed. Cllr Grange would send the Clerk written corrections and tenancy/payment information, including clarification of the £330 garden-rent entry and another land-rent figure in the draft papers.

Alternative water provision for the North Allotment remained under investigation, including bowser costs and a possible supply/reimbursement arrangement with a nearby resident.

The Chair reported that Hegarty's had advised that the Plot 11A contract wording had progressed towards agreement. He had requested the final wording for review before signature. Completion and receipt of net proceeds were expected within the current financial year, but the amount after legal fees remained uncertain.

Members recalled the intended allocation of eventual land-sale proceeds between an allotment reserve and a reserve for replacing the Reading Room.

26/070 Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair confirmed that the Council's further Local Plan representations had been submitted on 12 November 2026. He would circulate copies to Gavin Elsey. There was no substantive Neighbourhood Plan update.

26/071 Planning follow-up from 3 November

The Chair confirmed that the Council's objection to cemetery application 26/002965/FUL had been submitted on 4 November 2026 and circulated.

No decisions were reported on replacement dwelling application 26/002989/FUL at 5 Manor Road or tree notification 26/003019/CTR, originally notified as 10 Manor Road. The correction to 8 Manor Road recorded on 3 November remains relevant. Members continued to experience intermittent access to documents on the planning portal.

26/072 Other planning applications and decisions

The Council discussed conservation-area tree notification **26/003189/CTR**, The Grange, 15 Nene Way: pollarding three crack willows along the riverside because of failed limbs and excessive lean towards the river. The consultation had been received that day.

Members had been unable to view the accompanying plan reliably. An initial suggestion to submit no comments was followed by a request for further information about the trees and the works.

Nene Way access and mapping. Members raised concern that the City Council's Hawkeye mapping described the route towards the river as maintenance access. They recalled historic City Council correspondence recognising its public-highway status, with maintenance for pedestrian access, and requested that the historical position be preserved in the record.

The Chair would draft wording for review with members and pass the agreed text and mapping information to the Clerk for correspondence with the City Council seeking clarification and correction. The

Council's discussion did not determine ownership or make a new legal finding about the route. No final response to the tree application was agreed.

26/073 Recreation field habitat and village assets

A fallen tree in the recreation-ground woodland would have its branches cleared, with the trunk retained on the ground as habitat. The Chair would arrange a suitable time with a member to undertake the work.

RESOLVED: To commission Rebecca Peace to survey the recreation-ground trees in December for £250, including a written report. Access to all parts of the site would be subject to conditions on the ground. Proposed by Cllr Grange; seconded by Cllr Lee.

Grass cutting. The Chair reported dissatisfaction with Nurture's service and its move from charges per cut to annual charges spread over 12 months. His records indicated seven cuts during the season rather than the ten allowed for in the current arrangement. On his calculation, payments made broadly covered the cuts delivered.

RESOLVED: The Chair would write to Nurture setting out the Council's calculation and seeking agreement on the outstanding billing position.

RESOLVED: Seek quotations from three grass-cutting contractors, with particular attention to the specification, number of cuts, payment arrangements, and treatment of cuts not required or delivered. Proposed by Cllr Lee; seconded by Cllr Caskey.

Proposed children's play facilities. Cllr Parker reported 23 household questionnaire returns: 16 in favour, six against and one undecided, representing an estimated 45% household response. No view was attributed to households that had not responded.

Concerns included the number of children, alternative spending priorities, visitors from outside the village, tranquillity and nature, use of green space, appearance and maintenance costs. These points would inform further work.

Cllr Parker and the Chair would develop a more specific equipment and location proposal, obtain three quotations and investigate external funding, including the reported March deadline for the Mick George Community Fund. Four or five items remained under consideration. The intention was to seek most funding externally, with any Sutton 49s contribution limited and subject to further consideration.

The report was received for information. A costed proposal would return to the January meeting. No approval in principle, grant application commitment, purchase or installation authority was given.

26/074 Correspondence and community activities

Cllr Caskey proposed bringing a draft community preparedness protocol to the next meeting, with possible arrangements for identifying vulnerable residents and volunteers willing to help. Members supported further consideration and sharing relevant examples from other councils.

The Clerk would include the draft in the next meeting pack and prepare a Village Tribune article on preparedness.

26/075 Public participation

The visitor was invited to raise questions and had none. Members discussed bringing matters forward for a future published agenda. No further decision was made under this item.

26/076 Next scheduled meeting

The next ordinary meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 19 January 2027 at 7.00 pm at St Michael & All Angels' Church, Nene Way, Sutton. Any necessary additional budget/precept meeting would be separately convened.

Meeting closed: 8.23 pm

Signed by the Chair: _____ Date: _____