

# Cotton End Parish Council

**DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Cotton End Parish Council held on Thursday, 14 May 2026, immediately following the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting, the latter commenced at 7.00pm, in the Village Hall Social Club**

**Present:** Councillors A Merel (Chairman), G Bangher (part-time), A Murray, A Simpson (part-time) and K Watts, and Mr T Middleton (representing Borough Cllr Coombs, who had sent his apologies, as had Borough Cllr Gallagher).

Also Present : V W Hislop (Clerk).

**26/055 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Merel was nominated by Cllr Watts, seconded by Cllr Bangher, and - there being no other nominations - duly elected as Chairman for the ensuing year.

**26/056 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE**

- i. Apologies were received from Cllrs Seymour and Stimson.
- ii. Both members' reasons for absence were approved.

**26/057 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Stimson was nominated by Cllr Watts, seconded by Cllr Murray, and - there being no other nominations - duly elected as Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

**26/058 APPOINTMENT TO THE FOLLOWING**

- i. Village Hall Management Committee - Cllr Merel to continue.
- ii. Cardington, Cople and Eastcotts Charity - the Clerk to continue.

**26/059 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**26/060 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2026 were confirmed as a true and accurate record, and signed by the Chairman.

**26/061 PUBLIC SESSION**

None present.

**26/062 UNITARY AUTHORITY REPORT**

A report from Cllr Gallagher had been distributed previously and is at Annex A. Mr Middleton highlighted some points from Cllr Coombs' report, which, once received, will be annexed as Annex B.

**26/063 PLANNING**

- i. New applications: None.
- ii. Applications decided by Bedford Borough Council: None.

26/064

**FINANCE AND RELATED MATTERS:**

- i. To receive the bank reconciliation: it was agreed to **receive** the report. Cash at the bank was £39,490.73
- ii. To approve the accounts to be settled: the following were **agreed**:  
Bob Barber (notice board) - £50  
Clerk's net May salary - £432.77  
Clerk's expenses (Toolstation Ltd - padlock) - £34.69  
Reynolds Landscaping Services Limited - Inv SI 1974 - £168  
Reynolds Landscaping Services Limited - Inv SI 2002 - £336
- iii. The Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 was **agreed**, and signed by the Chairman and Clerk. The Clerk cautioned members that a qualified audit opinion would be likely, given failures in the publication on the website for FY 2024/5 of required information.
- iv. The Accounting Statements 2025/26 were **agreed**, and signed by the Chairman, having been signed previously by the Responsible Financial Officer (as mandated).

26/065

**TO REVIEW AND AGREE:**

- i. The Asset Register.
- ii. The Risk Assessment.
- iii. The Code of Conduct.
- iv. The Standing Orders.
- v. The Financial Regulations.

The Clerk stated that, other than current dates, the only changes to the above were the addition of the new, donated bench and Christmas decorations to the Asset Register, and an annotation that the disused bus shelter is awaiting demolition. Cllr Murray stated that one of the existing benches was of composite material rather than wooden, and it was **agreed** that the Clerk should clarify from a survey undertaken previously. **Action: the Clerk.** Subject to the foregoing, all the above were **agreed** en bloc.

26/066

**CRIME STATISTICS AND SPEED CAMERA DATA**

To note crime and speed camera (if any) data released since the last meeting (distributed previously) - the two recorded offences in the former were discussed briefly and the report **noted**.

26/067

**REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS, AND PLAYING FIELD AND VILLAGE HALL MATTERS**

- i. To note any update on the installation of a donated new bench - the Clerk reported that a contractor is due to undertake the installation work shortly, and that the overall costs of both the purchase and installation would be likely to be contained within the original donation sum of £2,000.

26/068

**HIGHWAYS RELATED MATTERS**

- i. To receive any update/progress on the road safety issues reported to Bedford Borough Council Highways - Cllr Merel had again met with Mr Simons "on site" on 13 May, when school-related parking at the Bell, in Wood Lane and in Hermitage Gardens had been witnessed.

Repositioning of the flashing sign was discussed, as well as the possible installation of traffic calming signage. Related to the above, it was **agreed** to purchase a speed sign from Pandora Technologies Limited at a cost of £2,250 plus VAT, and for the Clerk to determine if power is available or alternatively purchase a solar kit. **Action: the Clerk.**

**26/069           CORRESPONDENCE**

An email had been received from a resident offering to buy some playground exercise equipment. This was welcomed and supported, and Cllr Merel would undertake some consultation via the newsletter. **Action: Cllr Merel.**

**26/070           CHANGES TO THE VILLAGE BUS SERVICES**

Cllr Murray reported that the 9A, B and D routes were effectively being halved from the end of May. It was **agreed** to ask Cllr Coombs, via these minutes, to ascertain the extent of subsidies being funded by Bedford Borough Council and, if that were not forthcoming, submit a Freedom of Information request. The Clerk was asked to make representations to Stagecoach and Cllr Merel to Richard Fuller MP. **Action: the Clerk and Cllr Merel.**

**26/071           ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Cllr Stimson's email of 14 April was referred to and would form the definitive list of actions for the forthcoming Village Tidy Week, which Cllr Merel would coordinate. **Action: Cllr Merel.**

The meeting concluded at 8.18pm.

Signed by the Chairman..... 11 June 2026