

**Minutes of a meeting of Ashdon Parish Council, held on
Monday 16 March 2026, 7.30pm at Ashdon Village Hall.**

Present: Cllrs: Gray, Horrigan, Lewis, Moran & Pardue.
In the Chair: Cllr Horrigan.
Clerk: Angela Balcombe.
Also present: 7 members of the public.

26/32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Cllr Goodwin.

26/33. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

The minutes of 16 February 2026 were approved as a correct record of events.
Proposed: Cllr Lewis. Seconded: Cllr Pardue. All agreed

26/34. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

To receive any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests or Non-Registerable Interests relating to items on the agenda.

Please note: all Councillors are Sole Trustees of the Village Hall.

Cllr Moran is a District Councillor for Uttlesford District Council (UDC).

Cllr Gray declared a personal interest in item 26/42 as she is a friend of the contractors submitting quotes.

Cllr Lewis declared an interest in item 26/40, Application No: UTT/26/0366/CLP as he receives work from the applicant.

Cllr Moran explained that there is going to be a change to the membership of planning committee at UDC, therefore he is unable to comment on applications at Parish level until membership is confirmed.

26/35. MATTERS ARISING.

A brief update on any actions from the previous meeting.

(For information only, Councillors are reminded that no decisions can be made under this agenda item; Longfield Parish Council v Wright (1918) 88 LJ Ch 119).

- County Court Claim – the Parish Councils defence response has been submitted. Due to the case being time sensitive, the Council was advised by our insurance company and their legal team to submit the response as soon as possible. There are no new issues in the response, it being based on the response to the previous letter received from the claimant's solicitor.
- Community Speed Watch – we now have eleven volunteers, enough to register for the training.
- Speed Indicator Device – has been tested and is working ok, Mr Horrigan was thanked for sorting this out. The device to be put up on Sunday 22 March at 3pm.
- Traffic Data – data from four areas received and circulated. The Safer Speeds Strategy to be circulated; Councillors (speed representatives) to look at it and report back to the Council.

- Telephone Box - the kiosk has been added to the repainting list, it will be painted March-October 2026, no fixed date can be given for when it will take place.
- Garden Waste – the additional location was very well received.

26/36. COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS.

Essex County Council. Apologies were received from Cllr Foley.

Uttlesford District Council. Cllr Moran had spoken to the Lead Officer at UDC regarding missed bin collections. The Local Plan will be voted through at the next full Council Meeting.

26/37. ALLOTMENTS.

Cllr Lewis gave a brief report of the recent meeting he attended. There are currently two vacant plots. To be advertised on the Ashdon Facebook page.

26/37. PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised.

26/38. CASUAL VACANCY.

No election has been called for so the Parish Council must co-opt to fill the vacancy as soon as is practicable. A poster advertising the vacancy to be displayed, the deadline for applications is 13 April 2026.

26/39. FINANCE.

Payments made:

103122 £824.23 Ashdon Village Hall (Hall Hire £32.00, VAT reclaim £792.23)

103123 £564.76 A Balcombe (Salary/PAYE/Expenses)

103125 £1,740.00 Uttlesford District Council (Garden Waste Service)

103126 £3,070.63 Worknest Ltd. (Year 3 inc. Insurance/Admin Fee)

103127 £129.00 RCCE (Dual Membership)

103128 £32.00 Grasshopper Lawncare (War Memorial)

D/D £78.47 Npower Business Solutions (Streetlighting)

Cllr Pardue questioned the service the Council has received from Worknest and mentioned that Financial Regulations state value for money must be shown. It was explained that three quotes were obtained and that the Council voted unanimously for Worknest. A legally binding contract is held with a breakout clause after three years.

26/40. PLANNING.

Cllr Moran left the meeting for both planning applications.

Application No: UTT/26/0366/CLP. Single storey side extension.

Location: Fairview, Church Hill, Ashdon CB10 2HF.

After some discussion it was agreed to **object** to this application, a vote was taken with two in favour and one against.

Cllr Lewis left the meeting for this planning application.

Application No: UTT/26/0493/FUL. Erection of new agriculturally tied self-build dwelling at Sandons Farm, associated 2-bay cartshed, new driveway and vehicular access from existing private driveway to Sandons Farm.

Location: Land at Sandons Farm, Kates Lane, Ashdon.

It was agreed that this was a good application, however, it was beyond the expertise of the Parish Council. The Council to ask UDC to consider any flood risk and proof of sustainability.

Cllrs Moran and Lewis returned to the meeting.

26/41. RESPONSE TO PKF LITTLEJOHN (EXTERNAL AUDITOR).

To agree a response to two objections (Objection 8a and Objection 9) that have been accepted for further consideration by the External Auditor (circulated). With 10 pages of objections 38 attachments, and 28 emails to go through, the audit fee for 2024/25 is likely to be similar to that of 2023/24: over £5k.

The response was agreed with no amendments.

Proposed: Cllr Pardue. Seconded: Cllr Moran. Unanimously agreed.

26/42. GRASS/HEDGE CUTTING CONTRACT.

To agree a contractor for grass/hedge cutting for 2026 – 2029. It was agreed to accept the quote from M D Landscapes.

Proposed: Cllr Pardue. Seconded: Cllr Moran. Unanimously agreed.

Cllr Gray took no part in the discussion or voting process.

26/43. REVIEW OF CEMETERY FORMS & FEES.

To review the Cemetery forms and fees for 2026/27. It was unanimously agreed to adopt the revised forms. It was also agreed to raise the Cemetery fees by 4%.

Proposed: Cllr Moran. Seconded: Cllr Pardue. Unanimously agreed.

Thanks were noted to Christine Curzon for all her help with the Cemetery work.

26/44. TO ADOPT AN IT POLICY.

Parish councils must now have an IT Policy which explains how clerks and councillors should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software. This relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment. **Agreed to adopt the IT Policy.**

Emails – best practice for Councillors to use a separate address for Parish Council related business. Councillors are reminded that if they are using a personal email account for council business, this is still subject to data protection laws and FOI and subject access requests.

26/45. FIXED ASSET REGISTER.

The Fixed Asset Register for the year-ending 31 March 2026 was reviewed. The Speed Indicator Device and Bleed Kit have been added to the Register. Some of the comments need updating.

26/46. ANNUAL RISK ASSESSMENT/INSURANCE REVIEW.

The updated Risk Assessment was reviewed and accepted. Insurance cover was also reviewed, the Council has the necessary legal cover and adequate asset insurance.

26/47. CORRESPONDENCE TO NOTE.

Ashdon Primary School – copy of correspondence sent to Highways regarding the fading road markings outside the school.

Residents email – re litter at play area near the school. The bin needs replacing, it is the Parish Councils responsibility to empty play area bins. Cllr Moran will notify Councillors if his is away so that someone else can empty the bins.

EALC – resignation of Chief Executive Officer.

Playsafety Ltd – a RoSPA safety inspection will be carried out for the three play areas in May.

Trim Trail – due to lack of interest the event has been cancelled.

26/48. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA.

- To change the start time of meetings to 7pm, agreed that the change of time could start in May.
- Litter Bin Review.
- Future of Trim Trail.

26/49. MEETING DATES 2026.

Meetings are held on the third Monday of the month (except August).

20 April, 18 May, 15 June, 20 July, 21 September, 19 October, 16 November, 17 December (*please note the earlier date for the December meeting*).

Close of meeting 21:02

Signed (Chairman):

Date: