



Minutes of the General Meeting of Spratton Parish Council

17th March 2026 at Spratton Village Hall, Spratton at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs: Marshall (Chair), McDonald-Walker, Gaywood, Matts, Young & Vellam.

CLERK: Alan Youel.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs: Ashton, & Beynon.

PUBLIC: 4 members of public in attendance.

270.25 Resolution to approve apologies for absence

On the proposition of Cllr Young, it was **RESOLVED:** to approve apologies for absence received from Cllrs Ashton & Beynon.

271.25 Members' declaration of interest in items on the agenda

To receive:

Pecuniary: Cllr Gaywood 288.25(a), (Landowner proposing scheme to WNC)

Nonpecuniary: Cllr Young 280.25, (Member of Village Hall Committee)
Cllr Matts 286.25(a), (Landowner)
Cllr Matts 281.25, (Landowner)
Cllr Matts 276.25
Cllr Matts 282.25, (Neighbouring landowner)
Cllr Matts 288.25(a), (Neighbouring landowner)

272.25 Public Forum

- A resident enquired regarding works at East View Cemetery. Cllr Young advised that, as resolved at the previous meeting, the Parish Council's contractor has been instructed to undertake grave levelling, seeding, and the filling of rabbit holes, in order to improve the overall standard and appearance of the cemetery.

- A resident expressed an interest in item 288.25(a) – Local Plan Consultation.

- A resident enquired regarding non agenda item relating to the fence/hedge along the bottom of the recreation ground. Cllr Gaywood advised that the Recreation Committee had reviewed the matter and, contrary to initial thoughts, considered the area to be satisfactory without hedge planting.

273.25 Report from Ward Councillor

- **Cllr Christine Ware – West Northamptonshire Council Update**

- Cllr Ware reported on a recent extraordinary meeting held by West Northamptonshire Council with a single agenda item concerning **devolution**, specifically whether WNC should register an Expression of Interest (EOI) in forming a **Foundation Strategic Authority**. This was described as an initial step towards a **Mayoral Strategic Authority**, and ultimately a fully **established Mayoral Authority**.
- Members were advised that current Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) have been formed through "**devolution by deal**", but this is expected to transition towards "**devolution by default**". A

Mayoral Strategic Authority would typically cover a population of approximately 1.5 million and provide greater access to government funding.

- It was noted that WNC had previously expressed interest in joining a **South Midlands Strategic Authority** alongside **Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes**; however, this proposal did not progress as Milton Keynes did not support WNC's inclusion.
- As a result, WNC is now considering alternative options, including progressing with a Foundation Strategic Authority as an interim step. It was noted that Foundation-level authorities receive significantly less funding compared to full Mayoral Strategic Authorities. Options under consideration include revisiting a South Midlands proposal or exploring opportunities further north.
- An Expression of Interest is being considered at Foundation level; however, it was noted that the long-term aim would be to achieve Strategic Authority status.
- Cllr Ware also advised that a West Northamptonshire Local Plan drop-in session is being held from 4:00pm to 7:00pm on Thursday 19 March at Brixworth Library, with the Brixworth Strategic Planning Group also in attendance.

274.25 Approval of Minutes

On the proposition of Cllr McDonald-Walker, seconded by Cllr Young, it was **RESOLVED**: to approve minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17th February 2026.

275.25 Resources

The Bank Balances, Bank Reconciliations, and Receipts and Payments report to 28 February 2026 were presented, along with confirmation of internal control checks. The finance checks had been completed by Cllr Matts. The bank statements and bank reconciliation were approved by Council and signed.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve all finance papers.

The RFO asked Members to note the following extraordinary payments:

- Bus subsidy to Brixworth Parish Council – £2,854.55
- External audit fees – £1,291.25 (including £976.25 for additional work relating to an audit challenge)
- Microsoft 365 – £84.99

On the proposition of Cllr Matts, seconded by the Chair, it was **RESOLVED**: to approve payments for March to April 2026.

On the proposition of the Chair, seconded by Cllr Young, it was **RESOLVED**: to note receipts for March to April 2026 - £655.

276.25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) – Section 3 2024/25

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED** that Council receives and notes the External Auditor's Report and approves the AGAR 2024/25 Section 3 External Auditor Report.

Cllr Young noted that there were no matters of concern or actions arising from the audit, including those relating to the audit challenge.

277.25 Planning

None.

278.25 Cemetery Condition and Upkeep

The contractor advised that memorial make-safe repairs are scheduled to take place towards the end of April. Warning signs will remain in situ until the works are completed.

279.25 St Andrew's Churchyard Wall – Condition & Proposed Works

Update

Cllr Beynon circulated an update prior to the meeting. Following the previous resolution, two additional local survey companies were contacted to obtain quotations for a monitoring survey:

- Topoland Surveys – no response received to date
- Aimcom Surveys – advised they do not undertake monitoring surveys but recommended contacting Global Surveys

A quotation has previously been received from Global Surveys for the installation of monitoring targets and baseline readings.

A local stonemason, Tim Foster, has also been consulted. He advised that any repair works to the wall may require Faculty consent from the Diocese, in addition to any necessary Listed Building Consent.

Mr Foster contacted West Northamptonshire Council Conservation Officer, Rachel Booth, who advised that the installation of galvanised steel monitoring bolts would not require conservation consent.

Recommendation

It has been suggested that, subject to Church consent, the Council may wish to proceed with the installation of monitoring targets and undertake monitoring at six-month intervals. This would enable the Council to assess whether any movement is occurring, and if so, whether it is seasonal/weather-related or indicative of progressive structural movement toward the road.

Outcome

The item was carried forward pending receipt of additional quotations.

280.25 Youth Provision

The Council considered the continued provision of youth services delivered by CYPN, currently funded by the Parish Council.

Members considered:

- A draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) for continuation of the provision, including a proposed change of venue
- A grant application prepared by CYPN, noting that due to funding eligibility criteria, the application has been submitted in the name of the Parish Council

Information was received from CYPN in response to previous queries, including:

- Average attendance of approximately 9 per session, with 15 young people registered
- Attendance records are maintained for all sessions
- Approximately 10% of the village's 10–19 age group are currently engaged
- A proposal to relocate sessions to Spratton Community Club, which may increase attendance and reduce costs to the Council

Members discussed concerns regarding current attendance levels and the need to demonstrate increased engagement, particularly among young people resident in Spratton. It was suggested that clear targets and monitoring arrangements be established.

Resolved:

- That the Parish Council will enter into a one-year Service Level Agreement with CYPN
- That CYPN be requested to make every effort to increase attendance, including consideration of venue change and session timing
- That CYPN provide a breakdown of attendees, including how many are resident in Spratton
- That CYPN report attendance figures to the Council on a six-monthly basis
- That a target be set to increase participation to approximately 20% of the 10–19 age group within the village
- That the Parish Council will submit the grant application to support the provision

On the proposition of the Chair, the above was **RESOLVED**.

281.25 Smith Street – Pedestrian Access Gate

The Council considered the resident request for potential replacement of the Smith Street kissing gate at the pedestrian entrance to the East View Cemetery access road from Smith Street with a swing gate, in order to improve accessibility for users with pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility aids.

It was noted that this matter had previously been considered approximately five years ago, when the kissing gate was previously modified to a swing gate, but was subsequently reinstated by the adjoining landowner.

The Chair expressed a desire to improve accessibility to the cemetery, while acknowledging that there is an ongoing dispute regarding the ownership and control of the gate.

Members discussed the need to establish the legal ownership of the gate, including reviewing deeds, asset records, and any previous legal advice. The Clerk advised that the matter had been subject to legal consideration previously, with advice at that time indicating that the Parish Council had the authority to replace the gate; however, this had subsequently been challenged in practice.

Given the complexity and the need to review historical information, it was agreed that further investigation is required. The Clerk noted that compiling the full history would be a significant task.

Resolved:

- To investigate and clarify the ownership and legal position of the gate
- That the Clerk will, in due course, circulate relevant historical information to Members
- That the Clerk will write to the resident to advise that the matter is under review
- That the Clerk will write formally to the adjoining landowner to advise that the matter has been raised following a resident request

On the proposition of Cllr Young, seconded by the Chair, the above was **RESOLVED**: with the circulation of detailed historical information to be deferred until later in the financial year due to current workload priorities, including audit requirements.

282.25 Footpath – Brixworth Road

The Council considered a resident request for the Parish Council to submit or endorse a Minor Works application to West Northamptonshire Council Highways for the provision of a footpath along Brixworth Road linking to Brampton Valley Way.

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED**: to consider this matter in conjunction with the Local Plan.

283.25 Memorial Tree

The Council considered a request for memorial tree planting.

The Chair advised that the Recreation Committee had expressed willingness to accept memorial tree requests for planting at the top of the recreation field. Cllr Gaywood further advised that the Recreation Committee prefer such requests to be referred directly to them.

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED**: that memorial tree requests be delegated to the Recreation Committee for consideration.

284.25 Memorial Bench

The Council considered a request for a memorial bench at East View Cemetery.

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED**: to approve the request, subject to the requestor agreeing to the Council's specification and conditions.

Cllr Young will circulate details of the specification, including fixing and proposed location, to Members.

285.25 Community Speed Watch

Council considered a request from Creaton Parish Council to participate in a Community Speed Watch initiative.

The campaign offers the opportunity to purchase a speed detection device at a cost of £150. Participation would require a minimum of 10 volunteers.

Creaton Parish Council has suggested that neighbouring parishes, including Thornby Parish Council and Spratton Parish Council, work jointly to share both volunteers and the purchase cost of the device.

The proposal is to coordinate efforts particularly along the A5199, which has been identified as an area of concern in relation to speeding vehicles.

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED**: to support the initiative, including sharing costs and assisting with volunteer recruitment.

286.25 Churchyards, Cemeteries and Open Spaces – Mowing/Maintenance Issues (if any)

a) Village Handyman: Quote requested for Rabbit-Proof Fencing (East View Cemetery)

Despite several attempts, only two quotations were received for the installation of rabbit-proof fencing at East View Cemetery. Both quotations were based on the specification previously agreed by the Council, as recommended by Natural England.

- Quote 1: £6,117 (excl. VAT)

- Quote 2: £3,400

On the proposition of the Chair, seconded by Cllr Young, it was **RESOLVED:** to award the contract to Simon Barnett in the sum of £3,400.

The Clerk is to inform the relevant landowners.

b) Cemetery Issues

i. The surface of the path at East View Cemetery has deteriorated along the edges. Concern was raised that sweeping the path may remove loose material and result in depressions forming.

The Council noted the issue; no action is to be taken at this time.

ii. The Council considered a request for the replacement of a dead memorial tree at East View Cemetery. A suggested species of *Amelanchier* (serviceberry) was proposed, although the requester indicated flexibility. Members were reminded of Burial Ground Regulation 38.

On the proposition of Cllr Young, it was **RESOLVED:** to approve the request and to replace the tree at cost to the Parish Council.

287.25 Community Issues

- a) **Defibrillator Checks:** Completed as of 9 March 2026.
- b) **Highway Safety:** None.
- c) **Pocket Park – Upkeep Proposal**

The Council considered a proposal from Sharon Scanlan, supported by Jane and Adrian Baker, to undertake the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of the Pocket Park.

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED:** to approve the proposal. The Chair will liaise with Dave and Sharon and report back to Council. Risk assessment and insurance arrangements are to be considered.

The Council also considered an offer from Sharon Scanlan to refresh the metal railings on the wall of the Pocket Park.

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED:** to approve the works and to reimburse the cost of paint.

288.25 Consultations Requiring a Response:

- a) Carried forward from last meeting: **West Northamptonshire Local Plan**
To consider a response to the consultation on the fresh draft of the West Northamptonshire Local Plan, a key opportunity for Parish Councils to review and comment on proposals guiding future development. Consultation runs to **27 March 2026**.

WNC Local Plan Consultation

Cllr Young reminded Members that the West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Local Plan is the overarching planning policy document for the area and is not specific to Spratton.

The Chair shared personal views that some level of development within the village would be acceptable, noting that the Spratton Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) may require updating in due course. Concerns were raised regarding the proposed minimum allocation of 54 dwellings, particularly in relation to cumulative impacts when considered alongside development in surrounding villages. Members highlighted pressures on infrastructure, healthcare provision and local services, as well as the risk of coalescence between settlements and loss of village identity.

The Chair also expressed concern regarding the potential requirement to review the Neighbourhood Plan without associated financial support. While engagement with local landowners was viewed positively, it was noted that developers may seek to promote higher housing numbers to maximise returns. Clarification was sought on housing mix, including opportunities to widen choice and any applicable design requirements, with an emphasis on ensuring development delivers a positive outcome for the village. Concern was also raised that reductions in housing numbers elsewhere could increase pressure on Spratton.

Cllr Matts advised that the existing Neighbourhood Plan is comprehensive and could be used to guide development, including provision for affordable and starter homes. It was noted that such housing could support local needs, particularly for younger residents, and help sustain the primary school, which is currently experiencing lower pupil numbers. Cllr Matts expressed an open-minded approach to development, provided it aligns with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Members discussed that the proposed figure of 54 dwellings felt broadly appropriate, subject to appropriate controls and alignment with local needs. Key considerations included:

- Provision of affordable, starter and family homes
- Alignment with the Neighbourhood Plan
- Highways and transport infrastructure, including connectivity to primary service villages, bus services, and walking/cycling routes
- Protection of the green wedge and prevention of urban creep
- Maintaining the character of the village

Cllr Ware reminded Members that they are also able to submit individual responses to the consultation.

On the proposition of the Chair, it was **RESOLVED:** to submit a Parish Council response to the WNC Local Plan consultation reflecting the points raised. The Clerk is to prepare a draft response and circulate to the Chair for review prior to submission.

- b) Following the May 2025 elections, WNC have been reviewing the way the cost of elections is recharged to town and parish councils. WNC are aware the cost of elections is a concern for parishes and are consulting on 3 options which will run until **10 April 2026**. *No response.*

289.25 Date of next meeting

21st April 2026, Annual Parish Meeting

21st April 2026, Meeting of the Parish Council.

Meeting closed: 21:20

Signed:  21/04/2026