

Parish Clerk & RFO Report July 2026

CWPC Meeting 2nd June 2026

Minute #3111(vii)/2627 S137 Grant Request from Primary School PTA

The original funding donor has since confirmed their original intention to fund the school trips and so the PTA is no longer asking the Parish Council to consider their grant application.

Finance

Overall Costing for the Bus Stop Island Resurfacing

Bus Stop Island Resurfacing Project:		
Cost		5,043.00
SCC Grant	500.00	
SCC Cllr Grant	2,500.00	
Bus Stop Island Reserve	<u>1,275.00</u>	
	-4,275.00	5,043.00
Shortfall (overall cost to CWPC)	-768.00	

There is an agenda item (July meeting) to transfer £768.00 from a reserve account (CIL Reserve or General Reserve) to the 2026/27 budget heading 'bus stop island resurfacing' project, to balance the books.

The **total cost** of the bus stop island project **£27,568**.

The **total of grant funding** received for the bus stop island project **£26,800**.

The total cost to CWPC (shortfall) £768.00.

Other Matters

- 1) Babergh DC, Public Realm team issued an email on 3rd June 2026 advising of an upcoming change to their administration fee applied to their annual play inspection booking service. The block-booking rate offered by the Play Inspection Company continues to offer a significant discount compared to individual annual inspection rates and there is no notice, at this time, of this fee increasing (£59.57+VAT). However, Babergh DC considers their previous add-on fee of 10% per inspection no longer reflects their time to manage the co-ordination process. To cover the costs, the administration fee will be applied as a flat rate of £25 per inspection.

Present cost to CWPC (net of VAT)

3 play areas @ £59.57 (charge by The Play Inspection Company) + 10% per play area (BDC admin add-on) = £196.58

1 play area total cost £65.53

New Costs reflecting BDC Increase (net of VAT)

3 play areas @ £59.57 (charge by The Play Inspection Company) + £25 per play area (new BDC admin add-on) = £253.71

1 play area total cost £84.57

Increase rate of BDC charges £5.96 to £25.00 is 319.46%

I believe the new cost will still offer best value for money and will be cheaper than alternatives on offer BUT 319.46% increase!!!!

Suggestion for BDC – start invoicing for the works sooner than as is currently the practice. The play inspections were undertaken 16th February 2026; as of 11th June 2026, we still haven't received an invoice. No other provider or business will offer 4-months credit terms, and it's surprising that BDC can afford to do so.

- 2) The Parish Council's grant application, submitted to The Belstead Ganzoni Charitable Settlement, for the Mill Lane Play Area has been successful. A grant of £3k has been gratefully received by the Parish Council and a note of thanks has been forwarded to the Settlement c/o Birketts.
- 3) The allotment rents for 2026 have now been received in full; a total of £1,212.00.
There are currently a number of vacant plots –
 - 1 no. ¼ plot
 - 2 no. ⅓ plots
 - 2 no. ½ plots
 - 1 no. full plot
- 4) I have resigned from my position as Parish Clerk & RFO to Burstall Parish Council; I'll remain in post until their September meeting, 9th September 2026.

5) **Bus Stop Island Flagpole**

12th June 2026

The Parish Council received the following communication from SCC Highways –

"We've been made aware that a statutory Give Way sign was removed from the above location and replaced with a flagpole in the public highway footway, without permission from Suffolk County Council.

The flagpole can remain if it's properly licensed and deemed safely in place. The form to apply for that permission is attached. We will need confirmation of the following:

- *The contractors responsible for removal of the Give Way sign, and the flagpole's installation*
- *Proof of their NRSWA Street Works qualifications to have worked in the highway, with minimum public liability insurance coverage of £5m*
- *The manufacturing specifications of the pole and how it's been installed (i.e. weight, height, material, density, depth below ground, methods of fixture).*

For the time being the flagpole has been installed illegally, and liability for any claim arising from damage or injury found attributable to its presence will rest with the installer.

The Give Way sign will need to be replaced by NRSWA qualified contractors to SCC specifications; details for that will follow."

To which I replied -

"Thank you for your email. Please accept my apologies for missing your call the other day.

Regarding the flagpole, please accept our apologies for the oversight in not seeking a Street Licence beforehand; we weren't aware that one was required for this installation. Attached, please find the completed application form, the site photograph, and the technical data sheet for your review.

To address your specific queries:

- *Contractor Details: The works were carried out by Renovation Builders Ltd of Copdock, who also completed the recent bus shelter project. As you were involved in that project, these details should already be on your file.*
- *Technical Specification: Please refer to the attached data sheet for full details.*
- *Give Way Sign: We have recovered the sign, and it is ready for reinstatement. However, please note that the original pole was rotten and so was removed to make way for the flagpole. As the Give-Way sign had been facing the hedge and appeared to be redundant to the safety of the junction, we assumed it was no longer in use.*

Please let us know if you require any further information to process the licence."

Does anyone know /heard of how SCC knew that the sign had been removed?

6) **Church Lane, Speeding Traffic**

17th June 2026

I received a call from a resident of Church Lane (A12 side) who has expressed grave concerns about traffic speeding along the Lane; once vehicles are out of the Quiet Lane designated stretch, drivers are speeding to unacceptable speeds. Additionally, the verges are being damaged as drivers try to avoid potholes.

I advised that all of these issues are not within the Parish Council's realm and after a long discussion and explaining the difficulties CWPC faces when dealing with SCC Highways, she was quite sympathetic.

I've given the parishioner contact details of how to submit reports on the SCC Reporting Tool, suggesting that if there are numerous potholes, then each one needs to be reported individually; the contact details for Chris Hudson, as her County Cllr as well as the new SCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways; the contact details for the new leader of SCC, Cllr Mark Hadwen and with regards to the speeding, the contact details for Kate Jarrett, the Community Police Officer.

I've asked that if she'd like to keep us updated with any responses she may get, we'd be very interested to receive them.

7) **Babergh DC** has been notified about the removal of 4 no. waste bins, 2 no. of which have been replaced with dual waste bins.

8) **PKF Littlejohn – external audit**

The 2025/26 AGAR includes a new Assertion - *"We have put in place proper arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review"*.

Assertion 10 - Digital and data compliance (Assertion 10 added to clarify data compliance, previously covered under Assertion 3) **Note: Assertion 10 will not appear on the AGAR until 2025-26**

To warrant a positive response to this assertion, the authority needs to have taken the following actions:

- 1.47 Email management - Every authority must have a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain, for example clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk or clerk@abcparishcouncil.org.uk rather than abcparishclerk@gmail.com or abcparishclerk@outlook.com for example.
- 1.48 All smaller authorities (excluding parish meetings) must meet legal requirements for all existing websites regardless of what domain is being used.
- 1.49 All websites must meet the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 AA](#) and the [Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) \(No. 2\) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#) (where applicable).

PKF have said that they will be raising an 'except for' matter (qualification) on the AGAR Form 3, subject to sign off by an engagement lead:

- *Information has come to our attention highlighting the fact that the smaller authority does not have a generic email address hosted on an authority owned domain.*

I have argued that *"Copdock and Washbrook Parish Council continue to assert a positive response to Assertion 10. The email account and domain are both owned, operated and controlled by the Parish Council only; it is not a village/community domain; we have complete control of it."*

But they are now saying that *"as per the practitioner's guide paragraph attached in the earlier email the email account of a parish council should include the reference to a 'parish council' or 'pc', in this instance 'clerk@copdockandwashbrook.org' does not include parish council or pc."*

I have raised this with SALC as the training session I attended focussed on the parish council owning the domain and not the inclusion of the reference to 'parish council' or 'pc'. The SALC response has been *"with regards to email management, both the Practitioner's Guide and the slides from the webinar Aubergine ran earlier in the year, stipulate that councils need to have an email account hosted on an authority owned domain such as .gov.uk or.org, in the format clerk@abcparishcouncil.gov.uk".*

My response to SALC – *"I do feel that the focus has been on the generic email account and hosting on an authority owned domain, ie not @gmail.com or @outlook.com. Copdock and Washbrook can give a positive assertion to this as the domain is owned, operated and controlled by the Parish Council only. I don't recall, and have checked my notes, that any mention was made to the fact that the email address MUST include the work 'parish council' or 'pc'."*

PKF Littlejohn have concluded that “After seeking further clarification, we will not be raising the ‘except for’ matter regarding the email address.

However, it is recommended that the smaller authority make the necessary changes as per the email correspondence.”

I should therefore like to suggest that the parish council email address be changed to clerk@copdockandwashbrook-pc.gov.uk and to ask Suffolk.cloud, now Pear Space, to arrange and manage this new email address for us.

9) **Parish Cllr Register of Interests**

An important legislative change affecting councillors' Register of Interests came in to effect from 29 June 2026.

Under Section 65 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 and Section 32A of the Localism Act 2011, councillors will no longer be legally required to display their usual residential address (home address) on the publicly accessible Register of Interests.

This change is intended to provide councillors with greater control over the publication of their personal information while maintaining transparency regarding other relevant interests.

What does this mean for councillors?

Councillors now have the following options:

Option 1 – Continue displaying their home address

If a councillor is content for their home address to remain visible on the publicly accessible Register of Interests, no action is required. They will be deemed to have requested that their home address continues to be displayed.

Option 2 – Home address already withheld as a sensitive interest

Where a councillor's home address has previously been withheld because it was agreed with the Monitoring Officer that it constituted a sensitive interest, no further action is required. The address will continue to be withheld from public view.

Option 3 – Remove their home address from the public register

Councillors who wish to remove their home address from the publicly accessible Register of Interests must update their Register of Interests on or after 29 June 2026.

When completing the relevant section relating to land and property interests (DPI 5), councillors should remove their home address and replace it with the statement:

"Home address is withheld under Section 32A of the Localism Act 2011."

Important Exception

This change applies only to a councillor's usual residential address.

Any other land or property interests within the council area must still be declared and remain publicly available. This includes, for example:

- Investment properties
- Buy-to-let properties
- Vacant land or buildings
- Any other property in which the councillor or their spouse/partner has a beneficial interest

These interests must continue to be recorded under DPI 5 and cannot be withheld from the public register.

I have checked each cllr's ROI on the BDC website; should Cllrs Downey and Moon wish to update their ROI's to remove their addresses please let me know. All other cllrs have declared 'property within the parish'.

10) **Redwood Bank**

The interest rate on the 35-Day Notice Account (Issue 15) - Annual Interest – will be changing from 3.80% to 3.65% with effect from 17 August 2026.

Sue Frankis, Clerk to the Parish of Copdock & Washbrook