

Notice of meeting

15th January 2026

Councillors are summoned to a meeting of South Marston Parish Council on **Tuesday 20th January 2026 at 7:30pm** in the Village Hall. Members of the public are welcome to join the meeting.

Kevin Morgan, South Marston Parish Council

Agenda item	Supporting info	Start time
Open 10 minutes	None	7:30pm
1. Apologies	None	7:40pm
2. Declarations of interest Members are reminded that they should declare any interest they have in an agenda item at the start of the meeting or, if not previously foreseeable, during any discussion of the matter concerned.	None	7:40pm
3. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 16th December 2025	Website	7:40pm
4. To receive Ward Councillor Update		7:40pm
5. To review and update the Parish Council actions	Actions	7:55pm
6. To review and update the Parish Council calendar	Timeline	8:00pm
7. To review and discuss the Clerk's Report	Report	8:00pm
8. To review and comment on Planning & Highways matters: S/HOU/25/1619 Re: Erection of single storey side and rear extension. At: 5 The Orchard, South Marston Swindon SN3 4DD Deadline: 11 th January 2026 - Response submitted prior to meeting with no adverse comment. S/HOU/25/1645 Re: Erection of proposed 1st floor rear elevation. At: St Julians House, Thornhill Road South Marston Swindon SN3 4RY Deadline: 11 th January 2026 - Response submitted prior to meeting with no overall adverse comment but querying possibility of future letting. S/25/1680 Re: Change of use to vehicle pre-delivery inspection centre (Sui Generis), creation of additional car parking and demolition of 1 no. building. At: Unit 48-51, Thornhill Industrial Estate South Marston Swindon SN3 4TA Deadline: 3 rd February	SBC planning website	8:10pm

S/ADV/26/0010 Re: Installation of 2no. non illuminated building mounted logo signs. At: Unit 1, Panattoni Park Swindon SN3 4AL Deadline: 28th January S/25/1689 Re: Variation of Condition 4 of Planning application S/22/1813 relating to use of the garage for a rental space for one person to work (when the applicant is not working) in the salon, this will be within the approved hours of application S/22/1813. At: Bruce Manor, Highworth Road South Marston Swindon SN3 4SG Deadline: 2nd February Planning permissions S/25/1284 Permission granted for conversion to care home at Lancaster Place, main SM business park.		
9. Reports from Working Groups a) Communications b) Open Spaces c) Allotments d) Rights of Way	Reports	8:30pm
10. Reports relating to Expansion Strategic Planning Working Group	Report	8:40pm
11. Other reports a) SMRA & Play WG b) Parish/Borough Liaison	Reports	9:00pm
12. Finance - To review and approve finance statement and payments - To review and approve Q3 Financial Management report & FWG Meeting Minutes - To discuss and agree precept requirement for 2026-27	Finance Statement	9:20pm
13. Matters brought forward by or with the consent of the Chair	None	9:30pm

This meeting may be recorded by the Council or members of the press or public. Such recording should be in accordance with the Council's Recording Policy – this is available on the website and a copy will be made available at meetings.

Ward Councillor Update:

Report details	
Report Date:	14/01/2026
Report written by:	Matt Vallender
Inclusion in PC meeting:	Jan 2026
Agenda item number:	4
Progress/activity update	
20mph zone	Update from Philip Martlew on the extension on both Thornhill Road and Highworth Road. Think that is common sense and glad to see. The TRO will have its formal public consultation before the election period begins at the end of March, and following the formal consultation stage, a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) must be "made" (legally sealed and brought into force) within a maximum of two years from the date it was first advertised. This means that on the current timetable, the 20mph zone will be in force by March 2028 at the latest.
Road Resurfacing	I have asked about an allocation in the LTP for South Marston roads. Maintenance budget is seeing significant increase so some may already be planned as part of that - PM is checking. As part of the works on the 20mph zone, some patching/resurfacing will be necessary for the installation of traffic calming measures. This may massively help with the road surfaces situation.
Box Junction Requests, Gablecross and Symmetry Park	These are going to need a proper technical assessment - probably through an external highways consultancy support. Being looked into and further updates to follow. There isn't much else that can be done with the traffic light sequencing to increase capacity without a complete junction redesign at Gablecross.
OVL Closures	From Monday 19th January. Pedestrian and Cycle Access to be maintained at all times. We will be keeping an eye on the mud situation etc. A lot of work has gone into mitigating as far as possible. I am writing this on 14 th January and not all details are finalised yet. Verbal update to follow in the meeting.
C6 Bus Diversion	An agreement has been reached between the developers, Swindon Buses, and 3 Church Farm Lane for the double decker to turn around there. This removes the need for taxis and alternative transport to get students to the Gablecross bus stop.
No 23 Diversion	Will be the same as the previous OVL closure, through the village to Supermarine, u-turn on the roundabout, and then back to Manor Park bus stop. The No.23 may potentially use the same turning point at Church Farm Lane to avoid the larger detour.
Panattoni/Flood risk	Meetings upcoming to discuss flood risk and culvert widths (etc). Date TBC but high on the list of priorities.
Rowborough Nightingale Edge CADC	Meetings with Vistry, Nightingale Farm, Sylvia, and myself to discuss concerns on 22nd Jan. Ed Snook has been invited, otherwise we will update him at our meeting on the 27th Jan.
December Coffee Morning	Quite a few development queries, including from the Morses Lane residents around their water pipe connection. Have raised with the developers and awaiting an update.
Request for Future Editions of Community News	Would be an article in all six editions be possible please? Particularly with the ward going down to 1 SBC cllr after May. I'm happy if the compromise is a shorter article in all 6 rather than 4 longer ones? Also is there a stance on candidates taking out (paid) adverts in the March edition for the elections?

Actions:

Group, AWG – Allotments Working Group, SPWG – Strategic Planning Working Group, FWG – Finance Working Group, NPC – Neighbourhood Planning Committee, SBC – Swindon Borough Council, NP – Neighbourhood Plan, SMRA – South Marston Recreation Association, NEV – New Eastern Villages, GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations

In Progress – started but no significant progress yet

Progressing – some notable progress has been achieved

Done - means that action is complete but there may be a need for a follow-up.*

Meeting & minute	Area	Action	Progress update	Owner	Review date
Oct 24 92/24-25	Clerk's Report	Wiltshire Prepared – clerk to meet with Highworth TC in new year.	Progressing	Clerk	Jan 26
Apr 25 185/24-25	Working Groups	Clerk and BT agreed compensating watering volunteers – Clerk to process	Done	Clerk/BT	Dec 25
Apr 25 185/24-25	Working Groups	Clerk to chase developers over RoW queries.	Progressing	Clerk/BT	
Jun 25 38/25-26	Working Groups	Commemorative requests – Clerk to draft policy	Pending	Clerk	Feb 26
Nov 25 95/25-26	Calendar	Alternate quotes for contractors for services to be sought.	Progressing	Clerk/BT	

Added in December 2025					
Dec 25 109/25-26	Council Calendar	Annual invoice to be issue to school for rec usage.	Progressing	Clerk	
Dec 25 110/25-26	Clerk Report	Response to street name request to be submitted. SBC Policy being challenged.	Progressing	SB	
Dec 25 111/25-26	Planning	S/25/1597 & 1598 – signage and facilities, Stirling Rd main industrial estate. To respond, no comment.	Done	Clerk	
Dec 25 112/25-26	Adoption of IT Policy	Clerk to upload policy to website.	Done	Clerk	
Dec 25 115/25-26	SMRA	To investigate legality of council involvement in financial/legal issues with potential sale of Village Hall.	Progressing	Clerk	

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Calendar:

DECEMBER 2025		
Responsibility:	Activity:	Progress
Communications Working Group	Produce January edition of Community News	Done
Council administration	Consider SMRA MOU and grant	January
Council administration	Clerk to circulate draft service contracts for approval	Jan/February
Council administration	Remind school licence fee due	Done
Finance Working Group	Meeting to review budget, precept requirement	Done
Agenda items:	- Agree SMRA MOU and grant - Review draft service contracts	
JANUARY 2026		
Responsibility:	Activity:	Progress
Allotment Working Group	Send New Year email/letter to tenants	
Council administration	Review and propose precept amount	
Council administration	Notify SBC of precept amount	
Council administration	Issue contracts to suppliers	Jan/February
Finance Working Group	Confirm appointment and date for internal auditor	Done
Council Administration	Produce 3rd quarter Financial Management report	Done
Finance Working Group	Meeting to review Financial Management Report and confirm precept recommendation	Done
Open Spaces/Footpaths	Review SBC maintenance	
Council Administration	Approve SMRA MoU and grant	
Agenda items:	- Review and approve precept amount and inform SBC - Review and approve 3rd quarter Financial Management Report - Present draft budget (February) - Review and sign new supplier contracts - Review SBC footpath maintenance - Approve SMRA funding	
FEBRUARY 2026		
Responsibility:	Activity:	Progress
Communications Working Group	Produce March edition of Community News	
Council administration	Confirm appointment of internal auditor	Done
Council administration	Verify road sweeping (15 th February)	
Council administration	Present and approve budget	
Agenda items:	- Approve appointment of internal auditor - Review and approve budget - Review staff remuneration	

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Clerk's Report:

Report details	
Report Date:	January 2026
Report written by:	Clerk
Inclusion in PC meeting: Agenda item number:	Jan 26 7
Overview	
Audit dates Clerk Forum Orchard Press CN Printing CN Advertising rates	
Item	Progress/activity update
Audit	We have booked the audit with Rosie Darkin-Miller as usual – for Thursday 28 th May.
Clerk forum	Latest meeting was held online on 12th January. Overall frustrating with lack of confirmation of road sweeping, weed control exercises for 26-27 as two examples. While recognising its statutory responsibilities, the borough seems reluctant to commit to anything because of ongoing restructure – officers were made aware that PCs are budgeting and forced to submit precept requirements in January, and so the lack of information is not acceptable. Some positive updates – fly tipping enforcement should now be more effective as there is a dedicated team for this. Also a proposal to reduce Parish council fees for Streetworks licenses (benches, signage etc) by 50% is being taken to council for approval, if approved will take effect from 1st April.
CN Printing	Quote from Orchard Press for 450 copies @ cost of £6,549 presented for approval. Details circulated to councillors for information.
CN Advertising Rates	Revised Community News advertising rates copied below for approval.
Old Post Office	As raised in December meeting, council to discuss whether to request further adjustment of fencing from the landowner.
Actions or queries for consideration by the Council at PC meeting	
Approve CN printing quote for 26-27. Approve revised advertising costs.	

Size of magazine: B5 portrait (halfway between A4 and A5).

Production schedule: Every 2 months, 6 editions per year.

Approximate size of adverts, including margins:

	Ad Size (mm)	One Year	One Edition Only
Full page - back page	176w x 250h	£365	£122
Full page - inside	176w x 250h	£243	£82
Half page	176w x 125h	£183	£61
Quarter page	88w x 125h	£122	£42
Eighth page	88w x 62.5h	£92	£31

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Communications Working Group report:

Verbal report to be given.

Open Spaces Working Group report:

Report details	
Report Date:	13 th January 2026
Report written by:	Barry Thunder
Inclusion in PC meeting:	Jan 2026
Agenda item number:	9
Overview	
Lengthsman tasking Oxleaze Woods Village trees & orphan land	
Progress/activity update	
Lengthsman tasking	We will be relocating some small tools from the Green store to one of the secured wooden sheds at the Allotments to make more room for new tools for Justin. Eg, new mower, hedge cutter and possibly Wood Chipper. We will be testing safety rules and operation of the wood chipper in St Julians. When safe to do so, Justin will be cleaning road signage on village roads and notice holders. This will be a regular commitment at least once or twice per year.
Oxleaze Woods Work Day	The second volunteer day with the Bodleian and their contractor is planned for 22nd Jan with Justin, Chris Brooks & myself. We also need to replace the gate security padlock cut off by persons unknown!
Village garden	Some work required to reduce the height of bushes and some fence repairs remain outstanding. The cost for the fence repairs is pending the time to carry out a close review.
Village Trees/orphan land	A review of tree management on orphan land and a decision on use of Justin to carry out minor works remains outstanding.
Trees behind changing rooms	Note that several of these trees have been safely removed and two more to be removed when school children are absent. Thanks to Lionel for rounding up two village volunteers.
Community Payback update	We now have a new contact with the local branch named Justin (most confusing!). They plan to be working in St Julians on Friday 16th Jan.
Actions or queries for consideration by the Council at PC meeting	
Councillors are requested to note the above and discuss ideas re Orphan Land in the village, if time permits.	

Allotments Working Group report:

Report details	
Report Date:	13 th January 2026
Report written by:	Barry Thunder
Inclusion in PC meeting: Agenda item number:	Jan 2026 9
Overview	
Allotment availability Water leak in memorial garden Rental increase Noticeboard Repair S106 funds	
Item	Progress/activity update
Allotment plot updates	We have two vacant plots. Advertised in Comm News and advert to be placed on Facebook.
Water leak in memorial garden	Repair via Panattoni's contractor outstanding. Possibly awaiting spring conditions for repairs under the grassed area.
Allotment Noticeboard	This board was "gifted" to us by Stratton PC some years ago. The two wooden posts used to erect this have now rotted and require replacing. Volunteers on site will do this. We are looking into erecting an Allotment site notice board to advertise the site with some contact details on it and vacancy notices. It is hoped placing inside the site boundary will overcome any roadside planning requirements.
Review of Allotment rents for 2026/27	With no actual ideas of water costs as yet, we are holding back on advising tenants of rent increases for 26/27. Current thinking is around £5 pa to every plot, but we have not publicised this. Still pending to be reviewed during February.
Bellway s106 funds	Recent items purchased are to be tested on Friday 16th. Particularly the new petrol Wood Chipper and Hedge cutter with new battery packs. We still need to purchase a new mower for Justin to use in the allotments and other sites. All costs contained within the December approval for £1000.
Actions or queries for consideration by the Council at PC meeting	
Councillors, please note all the above.	

Rights of Way Working Party:

Veral report to be given.

Strategic Planning Working Group report:

Report details	
Report Date:	13.01.26
Report written by:	Colin McEwen, Sylvia Brown
Working Group meeting date:	
Inclusion in Parish Council meeting:	Jan 2026
Agenda item number:	10

Overview	
HHT 20mph Village Centre Old Vicarage Lane closure School expansion	
Item	Summary
HHT	Responses submitted on the 3 SM substations : SBC is requiring an acoustic check and picked up various of our concerns. However, Highways have not picked up on our objection to the use of Morse's Lane for construction vehicles for the western substation. We will be pursuing this separately. Street name options provided for the Vistry R6 site. Complaint put into SBC Gazetteers that under their new policy on road naming, the options are too restrictive, particularly in a major Swindon expansion area. Still battling the footpath layout to make it more relevant. Rowborough Reserved Matters applications now coming in. Major effort put in trying to ensure Nightingale Lane pedestrian/cycle accesses are created early in the buildout, particularly if Rowborough schoolchildren will be using SM school ahead of their own new school build. Adequacy of "tenure blind" factors with affordable housing being queried. Viability of surface water drainage scheme around and eastward of South Marston Brook is being queried by both us and the EA. The main problem is we rarely get to see the main surface water network all on one plan – it's bits and pieces shown in jigsaw fashion. In South Marston, December flood waters overtopped the flood storage lagoon opposite the Carpenter's Arms, but all water west of OVL was contained within the fields adjacent to the railway. Situation should work better still once downstream works are completed.

	L&G's agent contacted about access through hedge at Thornhill junction onto the Keypoint bridleway. Meeting arranged with Planning Officer. Early Feb. meeting with developers planned.
20 MPH	Street lighting will need to be installed as part of the TW parcel following the reopening of OVL before implementation.
Village Centre	The Designers have suggested moving the hall itself to a more central position – still on the boundary between the Bell Gdns field and the existing Rec, but with the car park between it and Magdalene Close. The Steering Group has made refinements to the building layout to maximise flexibility. A plan with these changes was circulated to the wider "33" group of residents and was generally favourably received. It is now back with the designers for further tweaks, mainly relating to the footpath layout. We have given input to the heating engineers. Public consultation event planned for 18th Feb.
OVL closure	Old Vicarage Lane due to close for 21 weeks from 19th Jan. Developers providing gravel path alongside closed section. Arkells say that they are in negotiation with the Developers.
School	The smaller football pitch area is being preserved free of footpaths. SBC say that the school build project is ready to go out to tender this year (!)
Local Plan Review	SMPC is in direct contact with the Forward Planning Team ahead of production of draft Local Plan for the next 15 years. Key issues are ensuring continuance of anti-coalescence zones to the east of South Marston, and ensuring our current Neighbourhood Plan policies, that have proved so valuable in the design of the expanded South Marston, are reflected in the new Local Plan policies.
PC Actions/Recommendations	
Note the Report	

SMRA report:

Report details	
Report Date:	14/01/2026
Report written by:	Sylvia Brown
Working Group meeting date:	13/01/2026
Inclusion in Parish Council meeting:	January 26
Agenda item number:	11
Rec Maintenance Changing Room Issues	
Rec maintenance	Drain down procedures in the changing rooms/toilets were put in hand ahead of the recent cold weather, so no problems with burst pipes. 2027 Allbuild contract has been signed to maintain the grass by mowing and strimming, plus line marking on request. SMRA discussed how best to tackle the safety surface damage by grass cracking/shrinkage, particularly under the Motoric Track slide. We are keen to invest in renovation that will last beyond one year's use, as this is our best used equipment. Quotes per metre being obtained for the highest quality safety surfacing from a number of suppliers to estimate the likely cost and consider what areas would benefit from it. Roundabout repair still outstanding and minor remedial tasks being done in line with the low risk items identified by Sovereign Play inspection. Item of gym equipment that has a seized bearing is being looked at.
Football Hire	We felt it necessary to warn all football teams of the impending construction work on the adult pitch that could affect matches towards the end of the football season. One of our 3 football teams has now taken the decision to move elsewhere, so income may be less than anticipated. No further trouble with unacceptable behaviour in the changing rooms but daily visual checks still being made
Storage facilities on rec	SMRA has been clearing the garage and container to rationalise storage for those items we need to keep, in anticipation of changing expectations over the next few years. The current storage will probably be in use even after the new Hall is available, so it is in everyone's interest to maintain in good condition in the medium term.
Financial agreement with SMPC	As outlined in the December report, SMRA now asks for formal approval by the Parish Council of an increase of 5% in the overall maintenance grant for the Recreation Ground. No increase is requested in the grant towards the upkeep of the Village Hall. Early explorations of the future for the current Village Hall are underway. Renovation work is being kept to a minimum consistent with keeping the Hall operational for two or more years.

	Since our last report, it has become evident that the main front door will not survive and does need replacing. The door hardware is often failing and there is no likelihood of replacing locks/hinges into decaying wood. The size means this is a custom build rather than off the shelf and options are being looked at. SMRA would like to approach the Parish Council for help, if needed, to fund replacement of the main door to ensure the Hall can remain in use up to the time at which the new Hall is available.
PC Recommendations/Actions • Request formal approval of a 5% increase in the Rec maintenance payment from £7,749 to £8,137 and no increase to the support grant to the Village Hall, staying at £5,395 for 2026/27 • Note that a request may come forward from SMRA to fund a replacement main door via the SMPC 'Facilities' Fund, which was created for exactly this kind of circumstance.	

Parish/Borough Liaison report:

The current formula of meetings is accepted by both the Forum and Borough senior figures as unsatisfactory - this is to be raised at the Shared Leadership Forum planned for this Monday 19th.

The Partnership Protocol has been nominally adopted, but not at senior level and so it is hard to see it making a difference.

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Finance

January 2026

Account balances:

Account	Balance date	Balance
Unity Trust	31/12/2025	£42,432.18
Nationwide	01/01/2026	£88,654.79
Hinckley & Rugby BS	14/01/2026	£61,574.60
	TOTAL:	£192,661.57

Payments

Payment method	SMPC ref	Payee	Reason	Dept	VAT	Total
BACS 17/12/2025 (paid in Dec)	0137	HAGS Ltd	Play equip spares	SMRA	£48.55	£291.31
BACS Paid 22/12/2025	0138	Staff	Salaries	Admin, comms	£0.00	£2,208.63
DD 31/12/2025	0139	HMRC	Month 9	Admin	£0.00	£587.75
BACS 21/01/2026	0140	Mandy Larcombe	Bookkeeping	Admin	£0.00	£135.00
BACS 21/01/2026	0141	Allbuild	Pitch marking	SMRA	£24.00	£144.00
BACS 21/01/2026	0142	Allbuild	Waste collection	Open Spaces	£29.63	£177.79
BACS 21/01/2026	0143	Allbuild	Various jobs	Open Spaces	£76.20	£457.20
DD 16/01/2026	0144	Lloyds Bank	Various	Various	£23.69	£91.09
BACS 21/01/2026	0145	J Wright	Lengthsman hours	Open Spaces, allotments	£0.00	£77.00
DD 29/12/2025	0146	Scottish Widows	KM Pension Dec	Admin	£0.00	£305.44
BACS 21/01/2026	0147	B Thunder	Expenses	Various	£154.44	£961.91
				TOTALS:	£356.51	£5,437.12

Credit Card summary form

Month: January 2026

Cardholder: Kevin Morgan

Payee	Reason	Dept	Code	Net	VAT	Total	Receipt attached
Vonage	Phone Line	2	7080	£13.33	£2.67	£16.00	Y
Lloyds Bank	Monthly fee	2	7605	£3.00	£0.00	£3.00	Y
TOTALS:			TOTALS	£16.33	£2.67	£19.00	

Cardholder: Barry Thunder



Payee	Reason	Dept	Code	Net	VAT	Total	Receipt attached
Lloyds Bank	Monthly fee	2	7605	£3.00	£0.00	£3.00	Y
Amazon	Circular saw	12	7517	£63.49	£12.70	£76.19	Y
Amazon	Storage case	12	7517	£41.58	£8.32	£49.90	Y
Amazon	Refund for nail gun	12	Allot			-£57.00	Y
TOTALS:			TOTALS	£170.13	£21.02	£72.09	



Q3 Financial Management Report 2025-26

	Department	Balance at 1.4.2025	Income to date		Expenditure to date		Balances at 31.12.25	note:
			Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual		
2	ADMINISTRATION	11,376	37,060	38,574	30,432	29,094	20,856	
3	COMMUNICATION	3,659	11,201	10,305	11,575	12,333	1,631	
5	COMMUNITY ENGT	2,454	1,000	1,924	847	772	3,606	1
6	ALLOTMENTS	411	1,426	2,309	1,584	1,715	1,005	
7	OPEN SPACES	4,258	12,500	12,500	18,983	15,661	1,097	2
	TOTAL General Reserves	22,158	63,187	65,612	63,421	59,575	28,195	
9	PROJECT/RESERVE FUNDS							
	Election fund	1,980			0		1,980	
	IT fund	787			0		787	
	Allotment deposits	950	0	50	0		1,000	
	Trees For Climate Change	9,216	0	18,204	0	3,792	23,628	3
	Oxleaze Community Forest	6,781	0	0	0	0	6,781	
	Tree Maintenance	5,000			0	1,550	3,450	4
	Property contingency	5,000			0		5,000	
	Facilities Reserve	5,000			0		5,000	
	TOTAL projects/reserves	34,714	0	18,254	0	5,342	47,626	
10	PHASING fund	42,824			1,481	1,481	41,343	
11	SMRA Reserve	6,310	13,144	13,144	13,144	12,577	6,877	
12	BELLWAY S106 FUNDS						0	
	Bellway S106 Allotment	11,684			0	5,006	6,678	5
	Bellway S106 Community Facilities	59,533	0	0	0	0	59,533	
	CIL Funds	7,696	0	3,342	0	6,019	5,019	6
	Bellway S106 Sports & Play	2,415			0	758	1,657	
	Total Bellway S106	81,328	0	3,342	0	11,783	72,887	
	Overall Totals	187,334	76,331	100,352	78,046	90,758	196,928	

1	Difference in income mainly due to donation of £790 from F +E Trust for defibrillator maintenance - paid from admin, credited to comm engagment
2	Open spaces - expenditure lower than expected, some waste cleared under allotment s106, some tasks done by lengthsman including weed spraying. Less lengthsman costs than budgeted but expected to increase now fully available.
3	TfCC - includes watering during extended dry spells, costs of bowser hire and compensation to volunteers.
4	Tree Maint - expenditure is cost of tree survey and rec oak tree works
5	S106 allotments costs are mainly equipping tool store and refurbishing plots
6	CIL income received for Old Post Office, expenditure for rec maintenance as agreed by council.

Report prepared by K Morgan, Clerk & RFO

Finance Working Group Minutes 14.1.2026

Q3 Financial Management Report

Report was reviewed. No major concerns were noted but a few points were made:

- Open Spaces department may need a small injection of funds before the year end to maintain a positive balance.
- The Tree reserve funds have been partially drawn down during the year and this and other reserves may need adjustment at year end to retain resilience.

Otherwise the position remains healthy and on or near budget.

Open Spaces Budget for 2026-27

An adjustment to the budgeted costs for open spaces can be made with the lengthsman taking on some tasks as well as different contract for cutting a small area of grass. Will save an estimated £1800 per year.

Precept for 2026-27

Discussion took place on the precept requirement considering increases up to 10%, while acknowledging that any figure discussed would result in running a deficit budget.

Summary of precept options v anticipated deficit					
2025-6 Band D eq	Precept information			Extra p.a. for Band	Anticipated Deficit
	% Rise	Income	per bd D		
459	0.0	76,945	167.71	£0.00	£12,764
	3.5	79,638	173.58	£5.87	£10,071
	6.0	81,562	177.77	£10.06	£8,147
	7.5	82,716	180.29	£12.58	£6,993
	10.0	84,640	184.48	£16.77	£5,069

Following discussion, it was agreed that a precept increase of 6% to £ 81,562 would be recommended to council. On current estimates, this would result in a planned deficit in the budget for 2026-27 of just over £8,000.

The parish council element of the council tax for the average Band D household would rise by £10.06 to £177.77 for 2026-27.

While it was acknowledged that the tax base will increase considerably in coming years due to development, currently there remains uncertainty as to timing of that. Considerable expenses are anticipated from now on in securing best value from the construction of the new Hall and a smooth transition to taking ownership of it. There is also a continued unreliability of SBC meeting its maintenance duties which may require the PC to intervene to carry out certain tasks such as weed killing.

Future Long term Finance projection

A draft paper concerning the future growth of the tax base was discussed – this included early projections of tax base and precept growth as well as additional costs such as the new Village Hall.

While the uncertainty over development timescales remain, this kind of analysis will be vital to helping us manage our precept and management responsibilities appropriately during and after the housing expansion. The analysis is the base data for the Parish Council's financial management, and will need regular revision as timescales change; it will therefore not be circulated beyond FWG members.