



PARSON DROVE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parson Drove Parish Council Meeting held on
**Wednesday 8th April 2026 at Parson Drove Village Hall,
Main Road, Parson Drove**

Attended by Councillors: G Booth (Chairman), P Spriggs, Y Reader, P Williams & P Unwin

FDC Councillors: G Booth & D Cutler

Members of the Public: 0

Also Present: Sarah Bligh (Parish Clerk)

85/26. Election of Chairman

(a) For Council to elect a chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2025-2026.

Cllr Spriggs proposed Cllr Booth for Chairman, seconded by Cllr Unwin. With no further nominations Cllr Booth accepted the position and was duly elected Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2025-2026.

(b) To receive elected Chairman Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Booth read and signed the declaration of office for Chairman, Countersigned by the Proper Officer/Clerk.

86/26. To agree apologies for absence

Apologies of absence were received and accepted from Cllr Fowler.

87/26. To consider any requests by Councillors for dispensation – None Received

88/26. To receive Members Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Booth declared a personal interest in respect of agenda items 100/26(b)i. and 104/26 due to being a committee member of the Amenities 95 Management Committee
- Cllr Spriggs declared a pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 102/26(c) as the contractor quoting for works.

89/26. Open Forum – Public participation. Agenda item time limited to 15 minutes.

To allow up to 3 minutes for each member of the public who wishes to address the Council.

- Cllr Diane Cutler, acting as a delivery volunteer for the Parish Post magazine, requested that a 'help needed' poster be placed on the Parish Noticeboard. The purpose of this is to recruit a new volunteer specifically for Parson Drove, ensuring continued distribution within the community.
- In her capacity as Chairman of Murrow Street Pride, Cllr Diane Cutler informed the Council that the group has submitted an application for grant funding to support the Armed Forces Day village fete. An application has also been made to Wisbech St Mary Parish Council, recognising that Murrow village lies within both parishes and the event aims to benefit all local residents.
- As secretary for Amenities '95, Cllr Diane Cutler spoke in favour of the group's grant application. She clarified to the Council that, although the Halloween Party is an annual event, the grant should be considered for this year only, treating it as a one-off occasion.

90/26. To agree the minutes of the meeting dated 11th March 2026.

The Council resolved including any amendments to accept as a true record, the minutes of the meetings. These were duly signed by the Chairman.

91/26. Matters arising from previous minutes not covered on the agenda (for information only)

- The Clerk reported that she has been unable to meet any contractors on site to discuss the permissive walkway. This is due to her current heavy workload at the end of the financial year. She aims to resolve this matter during the following month.
- The Clerk also reported that she has obtained quotes for lifebuoys, which will be required for a further grant application to Wrydecroft for village enhancements. These quotes will be considered at the May meeting.
- Following her Health & Safety training, the Clerk has redesigned the Risk Assessment document. She hopes to meet with both Cllrs Booth and Unwin during the summer to review the new document and discuss any health & safety concerns.
- The Chairman reported that a by-election has not been called for the casual vacancy. The Council may now proceed to co-option. The Clerk has prepared a notice, which will be displayed on the parish noticeboard, the Council's website, and social media page, including a link to the 'Good Councillors Guide'.

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- The Chairman, in his capacity as Fenland District Council Councillor, has requested an update from planning enforcement regarding Seadyke Bank. To date, no response has been received.
- The Chairman reported that local government reorganisation has been published for Norfolk and Essex, which announced smaller unitary authorities than initially indicated by the government. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are not expected to be announced until July 2026.
- The Clerk reported concerns about the laptop's performance, noting that warning notifications for lack of storage are becoming problematic. She has been advised that suitable equipment for future business use would cost approximately £615. Cllr Reader recommended adding this item to the agenda for the next meeting, with the Clerk to research and obtain comparison quotes for consideration.

92/26. To receive the District Councillors Reports

Cllr Cutler reported her attendance at the Extraordinary General Meeting of FDC, where agreement was reached on the formal response to the LGR consultation. The council resolved to fully support option D, now designated as option 4, which advocates for the establishment of three unitary councils. Given that this proposal originated from FDC, their support was expected, and a government response is anticipated by July 2026. The next full council meeting of FDC is scheduled for 18th May 2026. Cllr Cutler also reported that Police community engagement events have been occurring monthly, with the next session in Parson Drove planned for 21st April 2026; May dates are currently being finalised.

93/26. To receive the County Councillor Report - No discussion took place under this item.

94/26. Highways Matters

- a) To report any new street lighting issues

The Clerk noted the receipt of electrical and structural certificates from FDC, although it appears these works were completed approximately one year ago, with certificates only now being forwarded. The Chairman inquired as to whether all streetlight replacements have been finalised. The Clerk will contact the assets team at FDC to seek clarification.

- b) To report any Highways Issues to be raised by Councillors

The Chairman expressed concern regarding the commencement date for repairs to Clough Bridge, noting that although repairs were initially scheduled for May, no further updates have been provided as this date approaches.

Cllr Spriggs voiced frustration about potholes on Long Drove, which have remained marked with yellow paint for over six weeks but have yet to be repaired. This delay resulted in damage to a tractor tyre, incurring a cost of £2,800.

95/26. Planning Applications – Decision Updates: Noted

(a)	F/YR26/0064/VOC	Variation of condition 07 (access), 08 (materials for day room), 10 (ecology) and 14 (list of approved plans) of planning permission F/YR22/0338/F (Change of use of land to a traveller's site involving the siting of 1 x mobile home and 1 x touring caravan, the erection of 1 x Day Room and the formation of an access) relating to design changes of the proposed day room at Land West Of Seadyke Caravan Park Seadyke Bank Murrow Cambridgeshire	GRANTED
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96/26. Planning Applications – For Comment:

(a)	F/YR26/0112/O	Erect up to 4 x dwellings involving the formation of an access (outline application with matters committed in respect of access) at Land To The East Of 114 Main Road Parson Drove Cambridgeshire The Parish Council raised no objection to the outline application subject to the condition of the 30mph speed limit section being in place before commencement of construction, and that this is not removed via a VOC at any time in the future. Also, due to concerns relating to drainage and flooding the drain that connects the development site to the edge of Silvers Lane to remain open and maintained regularly.	Applicant: Mrs P McCarter Agent: Swann Edwards Architecture Limited
(b)	F/YR26/0234/TRTPO	Works to 1 x Ash tree covered by TPO 03/2000 at Village Pond Main Road Parson Drove Cambridgeshire The Parish Council made no comment due to this being their own application.	Applicant: Mrs Sarah Bligh Agent: N/A

97/26. Finance Matters

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- (a) To receive the Finance & Budget Report for 2025/2026 to date.
The bank reconciliation of 28th February 2026 balanced at £86,570.24 which was between the Santander Current Account of £52,678.46, the Santander Savings Account of £15,305.46 and the Unity Trust Account of £24,221.85 with £10,635.53 of unrepresented payments and £5000.00 of unrepresented receipts. The Clerk drew attention to the income of £5000.00 which was for the replenishment of the Wrydecroft Small Grant fund for the new financial year. The report was agreed to and signed off by Cllr Pam Williams and unanimously agreed by Councillors.
- (b) To receive the year end Bank Reconciliation & Budget Report.
The bank reconciliation of 31st March 2026 balanced at £86,553.26 which was between the Santander Current Account of £52,624.58, the Santander Savings Account of £15,305.46 and the Unity Trust Account of £18,623.22 with no unrepresented payments or receipts. The report was agreed to and signed off by Cllr Pam Williams and unanimously agreed by Councillors.
- (c) Approval of the 2025/26 Accounts and AGAR as they stand prior to internal audit.
A copy of the Accounts and the completed AGAR for 2025/26 was presented by the Clerk to members for approval ahead of the internal audit. The AGAR figures for 2024/25 in boxes 6, 7, 8, and 9 were restated due to allotment income that had been adjusted during the previous year end bank reconciliation but was not actually received in the bank account over the following year. The Clerk recommended that the appropriate action is to write off this £55.12 discrepancy and restate the AGAR accordingly. In addition, the AGAR was corrected and restated for asset values because of a calculation error identified in the prior year. The Clerk confirmed that all required documentation had been submitted to the Internal Auditor for review. Following explanation of the accounts and discrepancy the 2025/26 Accounts and AGAR as they stand prior to audit were unanimously approved by Councillors.
- (d) Corporate Governance Questionnaire for certification by the Chairman.
The Clerk advised that the questionnaire had not yet been provided by the Internal Auditor.

98/26. **Finance Matters** - To agree the outstanding payments of the Council:

Item	Description	Total Amount	Power to Spend	
(a)	Clerks March Salary	£952.59	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(b)	Clerks March Expenses – includes Working from Home Allowance	£89.04	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(c)	HMRC Tax & NI for Month 1	£84.48	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(d)	NEST Pensions for Month 1 (D/D)	£62.12	LG Act 1972 S112	Agreed
(e)	Eon Next –Energy for the Cage (D/D)	£46.77	Parish Councils Act 1957 S3	Agreed
(f)	Tamar IT Ltd – Website Accessibility Work	£502.80	LG Act 1972 S142	Agreed
(g)	Reader Electrical – Cage Sockets	£58.22	LG Act 1972 S133	Agreed
(h)	DM Landscapes – Willows at the Pond	£3564.00	Public Health Act 1936 S260	Agreed
(i)	FDC – Business Rates 2026/27 – The Cage	£322.66	LG Act 1972 S133	Agreed
(j)	CAPALC – Affiliation Fee inc DPO Scheme	£571.98	LG Act 1972 S111	Agreed
(k)	SLCC – H&S/Risk Assessment Training	£207.90	LG Act 1972 S111	Agreed
(l)	Stephen Spriggs – Cage Redecoration	£845.00	LG Act 1972 S133	Agreed
(m)	Tamar IT Ltd – Domain Name & Hosting	£126.00	LG Act 1972 S142	Agreed

99/26. **Finance Matters** – To ratify payments made:

(a)	Tesco Mobile (Direct Debit)	£9.50	LG Act 1972 S111	Approved
(b)	Unity Bank Acc Fee (Standing Order) February	£7.00	LG Act 1972 S111	Approved
(c)	Santander Acc Fee (Standing Order) January	£4.99	LG Act 1972 S111	Approved
(d)	Santander Acc Fee (Standing Order) February	£4.99	LG Act 1972 S111	Approved

100/26. **Finance Matters – Grant Applications**

- (a) Section 137 Applications - **Nil**
- (b) Wrydecroft Small Grants Programme
- I. Amenities '95 – Sweets for Halloween Party £250.00
 - II. Murrow Street Pride – Armed Forces Day Village Fete £150.00
- Following discussion both grant applications were supported and the amount requested awarded.

101/26. **Correspondence**

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- (a) To receive an update from FDC regarding the clothing bank on the Village Green
- The Clerk informed members that, following discussions with both the conservation officer and refuse management, Fenland District Council (FDC) had offered to assist the parish council regarding the clothing bank situated on the Village Green. The council was advised that FDC would support the parish council by either relocating the bin to a different site or removing it entirely, depending on the council's preference. The Chairman raised the possibility of sourcing a bin in a different colour that would be more suitable for placement within a conservation area. Cllr Williams supported this approach. The Clerk agreed to pursue this enquiry further to determine whether such an option was available.
- Cllr Unwin suggested that the Amenities '95 committee should be consulted to see if the bin could be positioned at the front of the village hall. The Clerk had previously asked that this matter be referred to the committee but noted that the committee's next meeting was scheduled for 2nd May 2026. As a result, a decision could not be made ahead of the current meeting.
- Cllr Spriggs recommended implementing fenced screening to improve the visual appearance of the clothing bin. Cllr Unwin raised concerns regarding responsibility for the associated costs, and the Chairman suggested seeking funding from FDC if changing the bin's colour proves unfeasible.
- The Chairman recommended deferring a final decision on the clothing bank until responses were received regarding the availability of a different coloured bin and the input from the Amenities '95 committee. This was agreed by Council.

102/26. Assets & Maintenance

- (a) To discuss restoration of the Information Board beside the Cage
- The Clerk informed the Council that, following advice from Paul Tibbs, she had purchased a sheet of polycarbonate suitable for the restoration of the information board located beside the Cage. She expressed her gratitude to Mr Reader, who had kindly measured the information board, ensuring the correct size of polycarbonate was obtained.
- Cllr Reader advised that, as part of the restoration, the existing plastic panel on the board would need to be removed and the sign thoroughly cleaned before the new polycarbonate panel could be installed.
- Cllr Spriggs generously offered to carry out the work required to clean the sign and fit the new plastic panel. The Clerk agreed to arrange delivery of the polycarbonate sheet to Cllr Spriggs in due course to facilitate the completion of the project.
- (b) To receive an update on Tree Works
- Cllr Spriggs reported that, during a conversation with the tree contractors while they were working on the village green trees, it was noted that the contractors were unable to carry out much work due to the presence of nesting rooks. The Clerk explained that the schedule of works set out the need to crown lift to 8 feet and to thin out the canopy by 30 percent and surmised that the contractors had likely ceased operations because of the nesting birds. The wood chippings generated from the works so far amounted to only three barrow loads, indicating that there is still a significant amount of work outstanding.
- The Clerk was instructed to request an update from DM Landscapes regarding the progress and next steps in the tree works programme.
- (c) To receive an update on the Permissive Walkway and consider quote received from Peter Spriggs for £2750 (No VAT)
- The Clerk explained that her heavy workload had prevented her from meeting contractors on site to discuss the remaining work needed to fully open the walkway to the public. She has identified three possible contractors but has not contacted them yet. Cllr Spriggs warned that his quote may not remain valid, as material costs are expected to rise sharply in May. He also noted that all quotes could increase if the work is delayed until June due to growth in the hedgerow and grass bank.
- The Chairman advised against proceeding with just one quote because this would breach financial regulations given the sum involved and recommended obtaining additional quotes for transparency. He mentioned applying for an extra grant from Wrydecroft for further works on the walkway, highlighting that the current funding round closes on 1st May 2026. However, the Clerk raised concerns about being unable to secure quotes before the application deadline. Cllr Reader agreed, suggesting that due to the Clerk's workload, and the associated wait for a funding decision, the work might not start until autumn.
- Nonetheless, the council could use unallocated cash reserves to fund the project instead of applying to Wrydecroft, which could speed up progress. The Clerk was instructed to continue seeking quotes, as these are required for both approaches.

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(d) To receive an update on the Community Orchard

The Chairman reported that an email has been received from the Chairman of Parson Drove Street Pride (PDSP), formally returning responsibility for the community orchard to the Parish Council due to insufficient volunteer support for ongoing management. The Chairman recommended that the area be assessed during the forthcoming land and asset inspection scheduled for the summer.

Cllr Spriggs noted that, during his recent repair work on the steps, he observed rabbits burrowing nearby, which has led to instability in the area. He expressed concern regarding the allocation of allotment rental income, suggesting it is not sufficiently reinvested into the site. Cllr Spriggs also requested that action be taken to control the rabbit population, as allotment tenants are reluctant to maintain their gardens, particularly as muntjac deer have also been causing additional issues.

The Chairman instructed the Clerk to contact the pest control company currently managing moles on the village green, to request a quotation for rabbit control at the Riverside Gardens Allotments. Cllr Reader proposed including the matter of rabbit control as an agenda item for discussion at the next meeting.

(e) To receive an update on the MVAS purchase

The Clerk reported that she had independently contacted Elan City for a quotation for two solar-powered MVAS SID units, as the combined quote awaited from the Sutton St Edmund clerk had not yet been received. Elan City was the sole provider offering a discount for multiple unit purchases, which increased the likelihood of achieving better value through a joint initiative. The quoted price for two units was £4,678.97 (Exc VAT). The Chairman suggested procuring three units since the available grant funding amounted to £6,000. The Clerk requested financial authorisation to proceed with acquiring three units, contingent upon securing a discount for the third device and ensuring that the parish council's additional contribution would not exceed £1,000. This approach was approved by Council. FDC Cllr Diane Cutler, acting as Community Speedwatch Coordinator, agreed to oversee the MVAS units once installed, noting that the solar-powered devices should require minimal maintenance. Additionally, it was agreed to forward this information to the Wisbech St Mary parish clerk to assist their ongoing discussions.

(f) To discuss and consider replacement of broken wooden post on the Village Green

Cllr Spriggs recommended deferring this discussion until the asset inspection is undertaken in July, as there may be more posts in need of replacement. This approach was agreed by Councillors.

103/26. The Cage Maintenance

(a) To receive an update regarding broken electrical sockets

Cllr Reader informed the meeting that, following an inspection by a qualified electrician, it was determined that the electrical sockets within the Cage had suffered overload, resulting in damage that rendered them irreparable. Consequently, the sockets have been replaced and are now functioning correctly.

(b) To receive an update regarding internal redecoration

Cllr Spriggs reported that the internal redecoration of the Cage has been completed. During this process, damp patches were observed above the doors and extending onto the ceiling. It was suggested that these could be attributed to a gap between the plasterboard ceiling and the exterior wall which in his opinion was possibly caused by subsidence. These areas have been treated for damp, filled, and repainted. Furthermore, a builder (RJ Vasey) was approached to address a gap between the wall and the parapet, which was sufficiently large enough to allow water seepage. A verbal quotation of £325 was received to remove the existing mortar and seal the lead to the brickwork, thereby bonding them together.

Cllr Spriggs advised caution regarding wooden beams in the roof, some of which have deteriorated significantly. Considering this, Cllr Unwin stressed the importance of commissioning a structural engineer to urgently assess the safety and integrity of the building. The Chairman subsequently recommended that any further works be deferred until a structural engineer has conducted a thorough investigation of the roof's structure.

Cllr Reader reported that the Friends of the Cage group have provided the Parish Council with a cheque for £300.00, reimbursing the cost incurred for replacing the broken electrical sockets and contributing towards the redecoration.

During the redecoration, Cllr Spriggs removed the infrared heater as recommended by the fire risk assessment. He also questioned the necessity of retaining the oil-filled radiator, noting its ineffectiveness due to slow heating. It was agreed to remove this heater as well.

104/26. To receive the Amenities 95 Management Committee Report

The Chairman informed the Council that the next meeting is scheduled for May. In the interim, he provided an update on recent activities, highlighting the success of an Easter event held at St John Church. This event was a joint

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endeavour between members of the Friends of St John’s Church and Amenities ’95. It attracted over 100 visitors, with the Easter Bunny making a special appearance, contributing to the festive atmosphere and enjoyment of attendees.

Cllr Spriggs shared that feedback received regarding the Easter event was overwhelmingly positive. As a result of its success, plans are now in place to organise a summer event following the same collaborative approach between the two groups.

Additionally, the Chairman reported that repairs to the damaged roadway at the village hall have now been completed, ensuring improved access and safety for users of the facility.

105/26. To collate agenda items for the next meeting

The Chairman scheduled the Parish Assembly before the May Annual Parish Council Meeting, both starting at 7pm.

106/26. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 13th May 2026 7:00pm Parson Drove Village Hall, Main Road, Parson Drove

The meeting was closed at 9:00pm