

**East Coker Parish Council Precept Minutes 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026 6.30 pm  
which was held at East Coker Pre School**

**Attending Councillors:** Cllr Cowen, Cllr Hodge, Cllr Costello, Cllr Mead, Cllr Walker, Cllr Hall, Cllr Sugg (7 pm), Cllr Wintersgill, Cllr Carter Uren, Cllr Haigh, Cllr Chauveau & Clerk

**26/01 Apologies for non-attendance:** None

**26/02 Cllrs declarations of interest** Cllr Sugg and Cllr Mead on item 26/12

**26/03 Review the 2026/27 budget.** Budget figures for 2026/2027 had been circulated to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. Cllr Hodge advised that the forecast for the current budget (2025/2026) was looking to be on track. She ran through the forecast for the 2026/2027 budget line by line. Clerk advised that the daily rate figure for jetting drains by the Ranger needed to be added, and it was decided that 5 days per year would be sufficient. It was also agreed that the budgets of the following line items would be increased: Printing, Pavilion Maintenance, and Website hosting and maintenance. Cllr Hodge advised that both the preschool and football club rent would be increased with CPI in April. Cllrs agreed that they were happy to accept the circulated budget with the above changes. The vote was included in agenda item **26/04**.

**26/04 Discuss, agree and approve the Precept for the financial year 2026/2027.** After much discussion, it was proposed that the precept needed to be raised by 7.5%. A number of factors were taken into account including the increase in inflation, the need to budget extra for the Keyford development as this has become active again, and the loss of income from Willows Childcare. This is a reduction from last year when it was raised by 10%. It means the increase in the East Coker Parish Council part of the Council Tax for a Class D property would be approximately £8.00 per year. **Proposed:** Cllr Costello **Seconded:** Cllr Walker **Vote:** 8 in favour with 2 abstentions **Action:** Clerk to submit request to Somerset Council.

**Monthly Parish Council Meeting Agenda –14<sup>th</sup> January 2026 7pm**

**7pm Cllr Sugg arrived.**

**26/05 To receive and approve the minutes for the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025 meeting.** The minutes were approved without amendment. **Proposed** Cllr Walker **Seconded:** Cllr Costello **Vote:** All in favour **Action:** Clerk to publish

**26/06 Public Question Time**

- a There were no members of the public present
- b There were no Unitary Cllrs present

**26/07 Chair's Report.** Chair thanked the Helyar Arms for allowing us to use their premises for our meetings over the past few months. Chair reported that the Bus Stop Book Exchange had been cleared of a lot of the books and hoped that we would soon get a volunteer to help with keeping it tidy. He asked Cllr Carter-Uren to make a poster to place there, asking for any volunteers.

**26/08 100 Club number draw** 1<sup>st</sup> = 1 2<sup>nd</sup> = 30 3<sup>rd</sup> = 29 **Action:** Clerk to publish and pay

**26/09 To discuss and make observations on SC Planning Applications**

a **15/01000/OUT Location:** Keyford. Cllr Walker thanked the Chair for completing our response to the new application. This was submitted to Somerset Council in Dec 2025. Cllr Cowen said he did not think that it was necessary to have an EGM at present (proposed at the December meeting) but we would review this after the Somerset Planning Committee meeting had been held. No date for this has been released yet but we believe it will be in the Spring. He said we will need legal advice once the S106 agreement had been drafted by Somerset Council. Cllr Sugg said we needed to be prepared for the huge changes which will affect the village when the development was started/completed.

**26/10 To consider recent planning applications** There were no planning applications from Somerset Council (South), received in the days after the agenda has been circulated

**26/11 December Planning Decisions 25/02645/LBC** Hollybank, Main Street Approved

Cllr Mead and Cllr Sugg stood down from the meeting for the next agenda item

**25/12 Memorial Request** for an additional inscription was received to remember the late Bob Mead. This was approved **Action:** Clerk to update Stone Mason

Cllr Mead and Cllr Sugg rejoined meeting

**26/13 Matters for discussion and resolution:**

- a. Road Gritting representative to be chosen. Cllr Walker kindly volunteered **Action:** Clerk to send information to him.

- b. LCN & Emergency representative to be chosen. Cllr Haigh kindly volunteered. **Action:** Clerk to send all relevant information to Cllr Haigh
- c. HR Committee. Additional members were requested. Cllr Chauveau and Cllr Wintersgill kindly volunteered
- d. Trailer which has been left outside Laburnum Cottage has been moved, so discussion was not required.
- e. Collapsed drain outside the school. Cllr Sugg said this needed to be escalated. She suggested that the Chair write to the surrounding properties and asked them to write letters to the PC but also send them to Unitary Cllrs and MP Mr Adam Dance. **Action:** Cllr Cowen to write to Highways and the owners of Devonshire Cottage, Old Forge, Coker Hall and School.

**26/14 Correspondence received from Somerset Council.** None

**26/15 Discuss Parishioner Correspondence.** None

**26/16 Clerks Report**

- a. Clerk advised that webmaster would be sending information out to Cllrs re the new .gov.uk email addresses. She said for those Cllrs who already used their eastcoker.com address that the migration of emails would take place from 16<sup>th</sup> January. For all other Cllr's they would receive details of their new email addresses and password. Clerk advised that if they had any problems with them that they should contact the webmaster and he would help. She said that the use of the new email addresses was of the utmost importance for any PC business and needed to be implemented by all Cllrs before the next PC meeting.
- b. Clerk had received a complaint about a bench which had been placed in the cemetery and that it was said to be unsafe and possibly interfering with the location of future graves. She also confirmed that no permission had been sought for this. She had spoken to a family member and they requested retrospective permission for it to remain. It was felt by Cllrs that this would set a precedent for others, and Cllrs agreed that as it was unsafe it should be removed and returned to family. **Proposed:** Cllr Mead **Seconded:** Cllr Walker **Vote:** 10 in favour 1 abstention **Action:** Clerk to contact family to advise of outcome and to offer the use of the Ranger if this would help with the removal of the bench.
- c. Clerk advised that the pre-school had advised that the cladding at the back of the building was very worn and rotting, however was not letting any damp in. Clerk said that she had asked a contractor to look at a possible repair but they advised it would need to be replaced and this would cost a lot. Cllr Mead said this job could wait for a year or two as funds were not currently available.

**26/17 Working group updates**

- a. The Pavilion Modernisation.

Cllr Costello said the build was still behind schedule and we probably would not get the keys now until April.

He proposed that a solar battery was purchased at a cost of £7,240 + Vat. It would be sighted in a steel cage (the cost of which £400) behind the pavilion. It was agreed that, as solar panels are installed on the new building, it would make sense to be able to store and use the energy produced. We did have monies available from fundraising and it was agreed that we should go ahead and invest in a battery. **Proposed:** Cllr Costello **Seconded:** Cllr Mead **Vote:** All agreed **Action:** Cllr Costello to instruct contractors.

Cllr Costello asked if the PC wanted to install an alarm system but did not have costs. Cllr's felt that this could be problematic as who would be the key holder and cost may be high? Cllr's suggested that the wiring is put in, so in future if we want to install a system we could. **Action:** Cllr Costello to get quotes for a full alarm system and for just installing the wiring needed for a future alarm system.

Cllr Costello asked what path finish is wanted outside the front of the building. There was an option for resin (which is maintenance free) and the fee for this was included in the build price, so Cllr agreed this would be the best option.

Cllr Costello will submit an amendment to the planning application for the clock tower to Somerset Council at a cost of £298.

He advised that the hall lights in the hall area of the pavilion are going to be strip lights but has asked to have sight of them prior to installation to make sure they are in keeping.

He reported that the front elevation has been built differently to that in the plans, but has met with Hardwills and they have assured him that this will be corrected before the keys are handed over.

Cllr Costello advised that he had been recommended that system-fed showers are installed, rather than electric showers, as these cut off after a certain amount of time and this would mean that no shower will

be left running. Not much information about possible pros and cons is known at present, so Cllr Costello will investigate further and report back to the Pavilion Modernisation Working group.

d. Fund Raising & Nativity wash up

**Nativity:** Cllr Sugg thanked Penmill Scaffolding for installation of the stage for the production. She advised that she had spoken to them and they have said if they are able, they would happily help with future events. Cllr Hall said that early planning for the next nativity was key and asked for it to be included on the February agenda. Cllr Sugg said that she would investigate getting a choir booked once this year's date had been set.

**100 Club:** Cllr Cowen said that when fundraising for the new pavilion had finished, he suggested the 100 club could be wound up. However, Cllrs said that it should be continued for the time being.

e. Parish Communication

Cllr Chauveau said she thought that in future printing any signs, tickets or flyers should be outsourced to a professional printer to ensure quality. She also advised that it would be worth obtaining quotes for providing website services to check we are happy with the current arrangement. Although most Cllrs had noticed a huge improvement in the website in terms of presentation, ease of navigation and increased (and up to date) information one Cllr felt there was more that could be done like having live video broadcast of council meetings. It was felt that it was neither desirable or affordable at present. It was agreed that Cllr Carter Uren would request information for the East Coker Society newsletter from people at least a week before publication cut-off dates and send it to Cllr Wintersgill to proof read and amend if needed. Cllr Wintersgill would then return it to her for forwarding to the newsletter editor.

**26/18 Finance**

Monthly items of expenditure and those paid under delegated powers were approved. **Proposed:** Cllr Hall **Seconded:** Cllr Walker **Vote:** All agreed **Action:** Clerk to pay invoices

**26/19 To discuss and identify Highways Issues**

Road surface on Halves Lane and Mill Close. The Highway Dept has been informed.

A37 There is a drain blockage after Keyford and Red House roundabout on the sharp corner. Clerk to email UC Hewitson.

**26/20 To discuss and identify items for the Village Ranger.** Clerk advised a gate post on the footpath which runs down from Waterfalls is missing. Cllr Wintersgill reported a style at the end of narrow part of Moor Lane is broken. Cllr Sugg will instruct the Ranger. Cllr Sugg advised that the light and pole had been stolen from 'Rock and Roll' layby and rubbish had been dumped at the top of Dunnocks Lane. 2 new solar sensor lights will be purchased and installed.

**26/21 Agenda items for the next meeting** which will be on the 11th February 2026 at East Coker Pre School. Nativity Dates, Tellis Cross Play area.

Meeting ended at 20.50