Oving Parish Council

Minutes of the Oving Parish Council Meeting held on 15 January 2026 at Jubilee Hall, Oving commencing at 6.45 pm

Present Cllr D Marston (Chair) Cllr A Smith, Cllr M Liddell

In attendance Tracy Predeth – Locum Clerk
1 member of public

1. To receive apologies for absence and to consider reasons for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Matcham.

Members discussed the continued absence of the Chair, Cllr Stoner and the difficulty in making contact. The Council noted the need to confirm the date of his last attendance in order to determine the position regarding the six-month rule for councillor attendance.

Resolved: That the apology for absence from Cllr Matcham be accepted.

Action: Clerk to review previous minutes to confirm the last attendance dates of absent members

2. To receive declarations of interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for items on this agenda

No declarations of interest were made.

3. To consider any requests for dispensations

No requests for dispensations were received.

4. Public participation session

County Cllr Simon Oakley addressed the Council and provided an update regarding the current financial position of West Sussex County Council and wider local government matters.

The update included reference to pressures on council reserves, funding challenges in education and social care services, waste management costs, and uncertainty regarding the future structure of local government and potential election arrangements.

Members also raised questions regarding coastal clearance responsibilities and the role of different authorities.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Oakley for the update.

5. To receive and approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 November 2025

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025 were considered.

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 November 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record.

6. Financial matters

a) To consider and approve the schedule of payments and receipts as at 9 January 2026

The Council considered the schedule of payments and receipts as at 9 January 2026.

Members were advised that the financial records were currently being reorganised into a clearer format to improve transparency and ease of review. Particular discussion took place regarding school bus concession payments which had required clarification.

Resolved: That the schedule of payments and receipts as at 9 January 2026 be approved.

b) To note the current financial position of the Council

Members noted the Council's financial position.

The balances were reported as approximately:

Community Account: **£122,593.31** (less payments approved at the meeting)
Business Premium Account: **£160,007.47**

Members also discussed developer contribution funding which must be used within a specified timeframe and noted that projects may need to be identified before October 2026 to avoid the possibility of funds being reclaimed.

Action: Clerk to confirm timescales and permitted uses of developer contribution funding and bring forward possible project proposals.

7. To consider and resolve to appoint a bookkeeper, and to approve the associated contractual arrangements

The Council considered the appointment of a bookkeeper to support the Council's financial administration.

Members noted that appointing a bookkeeper would provide continuity and improve financial resilience during the current transitional period. The Council also considered the introduction of Scribe accounting software, designed specifically for parish councils.

Resolved:

1. To appoint a bookkeeper for 3 hours a week, subject to the Clerk finalising suitable contractual arrangements.
2. To approve the introduction of Scribe accounting software.

Action: Clerk to finalise contractual arrangements and implement Scribe.

8. To consider and resolve for migration to a .gov.uk domain and .gov.uk email provision

The Council considered the migration to a .gov.uk domain and email system, in line with current sector guidance and best practice.

Members noted that this would improve professionalism, clarity and compliance and ensure the Council's communications clearly identified it as a public authority.

Members discussed domain naming options and agreed that the domain should clearly identify Oving Parish Council and West Sussex.

Resolved: That the Council proceed with migration to a .gov.uk domain and email provision, subject to the preferred domain name being available.

Action: Clerk to progress the migration and confirm available domain options.

9. To consider and resolve to approve the draft budget for the 2026/27 financial year

Members reviewed the draft 2026/27 budget in detail and considered each budget heading.

The Council discussed staffing costs, recruitment of a qualified Clerk, pension provision, bookkeeping support, software costs, training, insurance, grants, maintenance budgets, hall support and future project requirements.

Members agreed several adjustments to the draft figures during the discussion.

Resolved: That the amended budget for the **2026/27 financial year** be approved.

Action: Clerk to update and retain the final approved budget.

10. To consider and resolve to set the precept demand for the 2026/27 financial year

Following approval of the budget, members considered the level of precept required for the forthcoming financial year.

Members noted that the proposed precept represented an increase of approximately 2.5% compared with the previous year and agreed that this increase was justified in light of inflationary pressures, staffing provision and governance improvements.

Resolved: That the precept demand for **2026/27 be set at £91,555**.

Action: Clerk to submit the approved precept request to the billing authority.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting date will be confirmed following consultation with councillors regarding availability.

Meeting closed: 8.49 pm

_____
Chairman

Date: _____