Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of **Full Council** held on Wednesday 12th November 2025 at 18.30 in The Old School, 254 Lymington Road, Highcliffe. BH23 5ET.

Present: Cllrs A Sofianos (Chair), A Martin (Vice Chair), T Butcher, R Ede, D Martin, B Hutchings, S Slatter, S Skinner, S Walters, and J Webster.
In attendance: Vanessa Ricketts FSLCC (Clerk and RFO), Nicki France (Assistant Clerk) and eleven members of the public.

221 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs W McNeill (private engagement) and P Hilliard (prior engagement). It was therefore:

RESOLVED: That the apologies for absence be accepted.

222 Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

223 Minutes of meeting of 8th October 2025

Cllr Ede advised that he had sent an email to tender his apologies for the previous meeting but unfortunately, due an issue with his account, this had not been received by the Office.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be accepted as a true record and signed by the chair.

224 Chair remarks:

The Chair welcomed the Officers, Members and public to the meeting and advised that this was a large agenda and that the Council was making continued progress on its governance and statutory requirements.

225 Public Representation

A member of the public addressed the Council regarding a previous planning application, granted in August 2025, in Hinton Wood Avenue, which had caused him concern over a third party boundary with Wingfield Sports Field. He asked the procedure for consideration of planning applications, which the Clerk outlined. He then stated that he did not think the current boundary between the third party property and the field was accurate. The Chair advised that he had inspected the field and considered that any difference was *de minimis* and the Council would not spend officer time and tax payers' money pursuing the matter.

226 BCP Councillors Reports

Cllr A Martin addressed the council, providing updates on Cliff Ramps, the latest BCP budget deficit of £6m and the ongoing Library Strategy. He further advised that he had made a formal complaint regarding the waste service and missed bins.

Cllr D Martin advised that the by-pass roadworks had continued through the nights as promised and that they were on track to be completed on time. He further advised that he would be revisiting the local schools to talk about graffiti and parking.

227 Resolutions report

Members received and reviewed the actions against resolutions report presented by the Clerk..

228 Finance

a) Members noted the approved schedule of Accounts and the current bank balance.

RESOLVED that the schedule of account and bank balance be approved and signed by the Chair.

b) Members noted the Bank reconciliation.

RESOLVED that the Bank Reconciliation be approved and signed by the Chair.

229 Internal Audit Interim Report

Members received Council's Interim Internal Audit Report and noted the issue which had been highlighted. They were advised by the Clerk that the following agendas items would address all issues and complete the action plan.

RESOLVED that:

a) The Council's Interim Internal Audit Report be noted.
b) That the improvements and action plan be carried out in the following agenda items.
c) That the Council appoint Mulberry as the Internal Auditor for 2026-2027.

230 Financial Regulations

The Clerk presented the revised Financial Regulations in accordance with the Internal Auditors recommendations for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the Financial Regulations be approved.

231 Investment Policy

The Clerk presented the revised Investment Policy in accordance with the Internal Auditors recommendations for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the Investment Policy be approved.

232 Transparency Code

The Clerk advised that the Transparency Code on the Council's website was incorrect and presented the correct version for Members' approval.

RESOLVED that the Local Government Transparency Code be approved.

233 Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference

The Clerk presented the Committee Terms of Reference which had been recommended by the Council's standing committees together with a revised Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED that the Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference for Amenities Committee, Planning Committee and Staffing Committee be approved.

234 GDPR policy review

The Clerk presented a fully compliant policy for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the GDPR policy be approved.

235 FOI policy review

The Clerk presented a fully compliant policy for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the Freedom of Information policy be approved.

236 Assertion 10 Compliance

The Clerk presented a report to note that the Council now was in full compliance with Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance and Accounting Review as required for external audit..

237 Highcliffe Music Festival – Stir Events

As requested by the Council, Stir Events had supplied a report on the event and the final accounts showing a surplus of £2407.13. Stir events had requested that, rather than return the surplus to the Council as per the signed agreement for the grant, that the monies be retained for the following year's event. Member considered this request and after debate it was:

RESOLVED that Stir Events be requested to return the surplus of £2407.13 in line with the signed agreement.

238 The Old School – next steps

Members received a report from the Clerk setting out time frames and actions for the Council to be able to progress with taking over the Old School from Highcliffe Residents Association. She further advised that she had met with a surveyor who would be submitting a quotation to draw up a schedule of works, but that he considered it would cost in the region of £100,000 - £120,000 to renovate the building and deal with the issues found within the surveys. The Clerk further clarified that due to the Council not having the General Power of Competence, the Council would not be able to take over the tenanted cottage at this time.

A Member suggested investigating if the building could be delisted.

Members debated the report and issues highlighted and conceded that, if the Council did not take on the building, it would be returned to BCP Council and most likely mothballed and Highcliffe would lose its valuable Community Centre. It was therefore:

RESOLVED that:

a) the transfer of the Community Centre (excluding the cottage) in principle, effective from 1 April 2026 be approved, subject to completion of due diligence, full financial evaluation, and public consultation.
b) The Clerk be authorised to:
    - Obtain quotations and professional reports needed to confirm the cost and scope of works;
    - Undertake financial planning and begin preparation of the Public Works Loan documentation;
    - Seek advice from DAPTC on procedural and legal sequencing;
    - Report back to Council in March 2026 with full findings for a final decision on whether to proceed.

239 Draft Budget 2026-27

The Clerk presented the draft budget, which had been prepared following a Budget Workshop, for Members consideration. Cllr Hutchings had prior to the meeting advised Members of an amendment, but decided to withdraw the amendment at this time.

RESOLVED that the draft budget be accepted as a basis for setting the precept in January.

240 Matters for consideration

The Chair advised that this was an opportunity for Members to raise items for report, information or for the agenda at the next meeting.

A Member requested a report on Highcliffe Recreation Ground – the Clerk advised that she was awaiting information requested from BCP Council.

A Member wished for an item on what the Council could do for children and younger people.

241 Exclusion of the Press and Public:

Resolved that the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the following business. (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) 1960, s1 (2)).

242 Assistant Clerk – changes to job description:

Members were advised that, as previously agreed, the Assistant Clerk was acting as line manager for the Amenities Officer and agreed this, together with a recent qualification achieved, should be reflected in the Assistant Clerk's remuneration.

Recommended to Council that the Assistant Clerk's salary be set as recommended by Staffing Committee.

243 Clerk and RFO – probationary period:

Members were advised that the Clerk had been with the Council for over 3 months and, that being the probationary period, a review had been carried out by Staffing Committee.

Resolved that the Clerk and RFO had successfully passed probation and that her permanent appointment be confirmed as recommended by Staffing Committee.

244 Date of the Next Meeting

Wednesday 14th January 2026 at 6.30pm

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 20:16.

Signed …….. Date……