Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of **Full Council** held on Wednesday 14th January 2026 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, W McNeill, S Slatter, S Walters, and J Webster.
In attendance: Vanessa Ricketts FSLCC (Clerk and RFO), Nicki France (Assistant Clerk) and seven members of the public.

276 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs S Skinner (personal matter) and P Hilliard (prior engagement). Cllr Ede had advised he would be attending from approximately 7pm. It was therefore:

RESOLVED: That the apologies for absence be accepted.

277 Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

278 Minutes of meeting of 12th November 2025

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

279 Chair remarks:

The Chair welcomed the Officers, Members and public to the meeting and advised that this was a large agenda which included approving the budget and setting the precept. He thanked the Clerk for the technical reports supporting the agenda items.

280 Public Representation

A young member of the public addressed the Council regarding the state of the paths and pavements in the parish, drawing attention to dangerous litter which could put pets and wildlife at risk. She stated that she had recently lost a pet, and it had been suspected that ingestion of poisonous debris may have been the cause. The Chair thanked the young person for attending the meeting and commended her on her bravery of addressing the Council on this concerning subject; he was saddened at the loss of her pet and agreed that it was worrying to hear of the litter issue. He stated that, whilst it was not within the direct powers of the Parish Council, in that refuse collection and street cleaning was the responsibility of BCP Council, he would work with Members to raise public awareness of the problem. Both BCP Ward Councillors spoke in empathy with the loss of a beloved pet, with Cllr A Martin stating that he would pass this concern to the Environmental Portfolio Holder and appropriate Director at BCP, and Cllr D Martin stating that, in his work with local

schools, he would be raising this with the intention of further educating school children on the hazards of debris and littering. A Member also recalled that HWPC had previously arranged local litter picks and Members agreed that this practice should be re-established.

281 BCP Councillors Reports

Cllr A Martin addressed the council, providing the latest information on the BCP budget deficit of £7m and the awaited decision from the Government on a bid for exceptional financial support and permission to increase the council tax to 7%. He further reported on the progress with the day centre and its possible use for special education needs. Finally Cllr Martin stated that he had been working on a application for BCP to become Town of Culture for 2028.

Cllr D Martin advised that he had recently had good engagement with the schools and parents regarding dangerous parking.

282 Resolutions report

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

Cllr Ede joined the meeting at this point.

283 Finance

a) Members noted the approved schedule of Accounts and the current bank balances for November and December.

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

b) Members noted the Bank reconciliations for November and December.

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

284 Fees and Charges 2026/2027

Members noted the previously set fees and charges which included costs for cricket at Wingfield.

RESOLVED that:

a) Cricket provision be removed from the list of fees and charges as the Council was unable to support the sport at Wingfield.
b) That allotment fees be considered at the Amenities Committee in March.
c) That the fees for Highcliffe Hawkes be frozen for 2025/26 and increase by 4.14%, in line with the increase to the BCP Service level Agreement for maintenance of Wingfield Sports Field for the 2026/2027 financial year.

285 Highcliffe Library – request for funding

The Clerk presented a report outlining the request from BCP Council for the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds towards replacement of deteriorating decking at Highcliffe Library**.** The Clerk stated HWPC can only allocate CIL funds towards a BCP-owned asset if it can be demonstrated that the expenditure mitigates development impact locally. However, as the decking replacement related to a health and safety and fire compliance issues in an existing building. It was not directly linked to growth or new development pressures.

The BCP Ward Member spoke in favour of the funding request stating that BCP Council did not have the budget for this maintenance. It was noted that the quotation for the works had been obtained in 2024. A Member asked if the funding could be allocated under Local Government Act S145 – provision of entertainments. The Clerk stated that at present the Grants Budget was overspent but this could be considered in the next financial year.

RESOLVED:

a) that the BCP Ward Cllr and Portfolio Holder for Culture, be tasked to ask BCP to restate the current cost the project and ascertain if match funding would be an option.
b) That the request be further consider in the new financial year once BCP's decision to a) was known.

286 VAT Registration

The Clerk presented a report on the complex subject of VAT registration in light of the Council's possible acquirement of the Old School and extensive building and renovation works required.

RESOLVED that the Clerk approach PSTAX for professional advice and report back to Council.

287 Shoreline Paths Project

The Clerk presented a paper outlining the progress to date of the project and request from BCP Council for funding from HWPC of £110,000 contribution towards the cost of the project. The Chairman and Cllr A Martin were thanked for bringing forward this project and for their contribution to the specification for additional safety measures.

RESOLVED that Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council:

1. Approves the allocation of £110,000 towards the Shoreline Paths Project as delivered by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, subject to completion and acceptance of both ramps as per specification;

2. Formally signs off the updated drawings submitted with the planning application.

3. Provides written confirmation that the funding contribution is made solely for the benefit of local residents and visitors, with no goods, services, or other consideration received in return. Wording to read: Subject: VAT Status Confirmation – Shoreline

Paths Project Funding - Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council confirms that its £110,000 contribution towards the Shoreline Paths Project is a non-contractual funding contribution made solely to support community infrastructure for the benefit of residents and visitors, and that no goods, services, or other taxable supply are provided to the Parish Council in return.

4. Requests that BCP continues to engage with the Parish Council on:
    - Potential future provision of a handrail to the East Ramp, subject to budget and permissions
    - Final signage locations and implementation

288 Ear Marked Reserves

The Clerk presented the current ear marked reserves. Members agreed to make several transfers within the reserve.

RESOLVED that the reserves as amended and appended to these minutes be approved.

289 Budget and precept 2026/2027

The Clerk presented a report on the budget as agreed at the meeting on 12th November 2025. The report further stated that the new cost for the BCP Council SLA for grounds maintenance had been received and had been increased by 4.14%. There was also a recommendation for a £500 Chairman's allowance in order to be able to purchase small gifts eg: 100th birthday flowers. It was noted that with these additional items the precept would amount to £231,735 – that being an increase of 2.75% on the previous year, or £0.90 increase on a Band D property.

A Member proposed an amendment to the budget, reducing the precept by £20,000 due to anticipated savings. The amendment was seconded.

A number of Members spoke against the amendment citing the number of projects and lack of funding availability from BCP Council and reduction in service. The amendment was put to the vote and failed. Members then voted on the substantive motion and a recorded vote was called for:

RESOLVED that:

a) The budget for 2026/2027 (as appended to these minutes) be approved.
b) The precept for 2026/2027 be set at £231,735, Band D equivalent of £33.76 (Tax base 6,865)

Voting for: Cllr A Sofianos, Cllr A Martin, Cllr D Martin, Cllr S Walters, Cllr T Butcher, Cllr W McNeill, Cllr J Webster.

Voting against: Cllr B Hutchings; Cllr R Ede, Cllr S Slatter.

290 Vexatious Complainants Policy

The Clerk presented a policy setting out how the Councill would determine when a complainant is unreasonably persistent or vexatious and setting out the actions that may be taken in these circumstances.

RESOLVED that the Vexatious Complainants policy be approved.

291 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 that the matter of graffiti be brought to the attention to the Safer Neighbourhoods Team – the Clerk advised that this has been done.

A Member advised that the old nursery site at Roeshot Hill had been sold to Sir George Meyrick and requested that the Council investigate if safeguards are in place for access to the allotments.

A Member requested that an update on the Cliffhanger Toilets be added to the next Council agenda.

A Member suggested that pavements along Lymington road be reduced in width to allow for more space for parked vehicles.

292 Date of the Next Meeting

Wednesday 11th March 2026 at 6.30pm

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 20:45.

Signed …….. Date……