Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of **Full Council** held on Wednesday 10th June 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, B Hutchings, W McNeill, S Skinner, S Slatter, S Walter.
In attendance: Vanessa Ricketts FSLCC (Clerk and RFO), Nicki France Assistant Clerk) and four members of the public.

Members noted that this meeting was being recorded for minute-taking purposes.

037 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received and noted from Cllr D Martin (work commitments)

RESOLVED: That the apologies for absence be accepted.

038 Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

039 Minutes of meeting 13th May 2026

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: The minutes were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

040 Chair remarks:

The Chair acknowledged that the Annual Council meeting and Annual Parish meeting had been lengthy and hoped for a shorter meeting. The Annual Parish Meeting held two weeks earlier was well attended, with around 60 people present, and received positive feedback; thanks was given to the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, and all who helped organise it. The unexpected cancellation of the Highcliffe Music Festival was acknowledged as disappointing, with recognition of its value to the community and the Parish Council's financial support in previous years.

It was clarified that concerns raised by residents and the Council related only to the proposed expansion, not the festival itself, and that no one had blocked the event. Although a two-day festival had been approved, no recent grant application was submitted despite an invitation. Looking ahead, the Highcliffe Food and Arts Festival on the 13th and 14th June 2026 was highlighted as a key upcoming event, with optimism for its success, and the Council continues to support future community events.

041 Public Representation: None

042 BCP Councillors Reports

The Chair welcomed Cllr L Deadman to the meeting, who addressed the council

BCP'S SEND reform plan is due by 19th June 2026 and is expected to improve outcomes for children by increasing local specialist provision. It was highlighted that

demand has grown significantly, with a 71% rise in children requiring SEND provision. Additionally, BCP now has over 600 children in care, which was described as concerning. Overall, it was acknowledged that BCP is actively addressing these challenges and that children's services are improving.

Cllr A Martin addressed the council

Progress was reported on the cliff paths project, with work now scheduled to begin in the week commencing 14th September 2026, it was noted that delays are due to the complexity and environmental designations of the site, and that this is a joint project with BCP. Ongoing concerns around parking and speeding near local schools were highlighted, and a request has been made for BCP to consider introducing 20mph zones in residential areas, subject to consultation. Issues with the overflow car park not being opened on a recent bank holiday were acknowledged, and arrangements are now in place to ensure the correct key is held locally so it can be opened when needed, within its 12-day annual limit.

An update was also given on school crossing patrols, with potential future replacement by automated crossings currently under consultation. The Council's bid for UK Town of Culture 2028 was noted, with a decision expected by the end of July. Finally, early steps are being taken to explore the possible acquisition of Jesmond Wood, including obtaining a market valuation and investigating funding and approval requirements, though discussions with the developer are still needed.

043 Resolutions Report

Members received and reviewed the Actions Against Resolutions report. It was noted that, under Minute 378, the Chair has written to Highcliffe Hawks regarding the Wingfield Pavilion lights, and an initial invoice covering 25% of May's electricity costs has been issued, with arrangements ongoing. Under Minute 382, BCP Council has been instructed to undertake the cricket pitch removal works, with completion expected in September 2026. Under Minute 020, the insurance reinstatement valuation survey has been carried out and the report is awaited. Under Minute 021, the Clerk has written to Sue Bessant at BCP to confirm that the Council no longer wishes to proceed with the transfer of the recreation ground.

044 Finance

Members considered Part A (schedule of accounts and current bank balance), Part B (bank reconciliations for the same period).

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

A Member queried the level of funds held in the Unity account, the Chair confirmed that these had been retained in anticipation of the cliff paths project proceeding before the summer; however, as the project has now been delayed, a decision is still to be made on whether to retain or transfer the funds. Concern was also raised regarding the current Treasury Management Policy, with it noted that earlier provisions on maximising returns on temporary balances no longer appear to be included. It was explained that the policy had been revised in 2025 following auditor advice and approved by Council, although it was agreed that it could be reviewed again to address any omissions while remaining compliant with guidance. It was confirmed that the policy would be reconsidered as part of the regular review cycle.

Members then agreed to accept the documents presented and authorised the Chair to sign them.

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

b) Members noted the bank reconciliations for May.

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

045 Old School Update

Members received a verbal update on the ongoing transfer of the Old School, noting that the project is now in its final stages with a target completion of September/October. Details have been received from HRA and are expected to be formally confirmed and exchanged following the next agenda item. It was reported that the building is being tidied, and an asset list is being compiled, which will be shared with the Council once available. A valuation report for stamp duty purposes has been received, valuing the building at £230,000, although the transfer itself will be at nil cost. BCP has been instructed to begin drafting the lease and covenants, noting some complexity due to the separation of the cottage from the main building.

The Clerk updated members on the tender period for building works has now closed, with bids received ranging from approximately £56,000 to £105,000; these will be evaluated and a full report brought to a future meeting. It was noted that current estimates are significantly lower than initially anticipated, improving overall deliverability.

Members also discussed the need to plan for the handover, including establishing a booking system and ensuring operational readiness by the proposed start date. The importance of developing a communications strategy and engaging with local groups, charities, and other organisations to maximise use of the facility and income generation was highlighted.

A member queried the accuracy of minute number 238 from a previous council meeting, regarding a full evaluation being done and a public consultation. The clerk confirmed that a public consultation would only be required should a public works loan be required to go ahead with the Old School. The clerk advised members further that a public consultation could be carried out, but members would have to state how that would need to be carried out and could potentially delay progress.

It was therefore proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to add in the wording to minute 238 ‘in the event of a public works loan is required’

046 Conveyancing Solicitor

Members received a report outlining quotations obtained from two specialist local authority solicitors for the conveyancing work, both in the region of £2,500. The firms considered were Wellers, who have previously provided advice to the Council, and Surrey Hills Solicitors, a specialist local government practice. The clerk recommended Surrey Hills, noting their experience, approachability, and confirmation that no stamp duty would be payable, which had not been confirmed by

the alternative firm. It was proposed that Surrey Hills be selected as the Council's preferred solicitor, with formal instruction to be issued following the next stage of approvals. It was therefore proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: The Clerk to appoint Surrey Hills Solicitors.

047 Nature Villages

Members noted the report which was written by Cllr A Martin and the recommendations of the report and it was therefore proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to note the recommendations of the report with a further update provided in Autum.

048 Seasonal response in readiness for the summer

Cllr A Martin noted that much of the item had already been covered under Agenda Item 6, but highlighted concerns regarding the limited presence of parking wardens during busy periods and confirmed that this has been raised with BCP for action.

049 Provision of Public Seating Policy

Members noted the Provision of Public Seating Policy. It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED that the policy be adopted, with paragraphs 9–16 removed and the financial amount amended from £250.00 to £500.00.

050 Officer/Member Protocol

Members noted the Officer/Member Protocol Policy. It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to adopt the policy.

051 Matters for consideration

The Clerk confirmed, as referenced under Agenda Item 8, that the Treasury Management Policy will be reviewed and brought back to Members for consideration.

052 Date of the next meeting

Wednesday 8th July 2026 at 6.30pm

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

Signed …….. Date ……