Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of **Full Council** held on Wednesday 2nd September 2026 at 18.30 in The Old School, 254 Lymington Road, Highcliffe. BH23 5ET.

Present: A Martin (Chair), B Hutchings (Vice Chair), T Butcher, R Ede, , W McNeill, S Skinner, S Slatter, S Walter.
In attendance: Vanessa Ricketts FSLCC (Clerk and RFO), Nicki France (Assistant Clerk) and 22 members of the public.

132 Election of the Chair of Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council for the remainder of the 2026-2027 Municipal Year:

Resolved: Cllr Andy Martin was duly elected Chair of the Parish Council for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

Cllr Martin read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

133 Election of the Vice Chair of Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council for the remainder of the 2026-2027 Municipal Year:

Resolved: Cllr Bob Hutchings was duly elected Vice Chair of the Parish Council for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

Cllr Hutchings read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

134 Apologies for Absence:

There were no apologies for absence.

135 Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

136 Minutes of the previous meeting of Council

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Council meeting of 8th July 2026 and the Extraordinary Council meeting of 5th August 2026 be accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

137 Chair remarks:

The Chair stated that this was a very busy time for the parish council with lots of projects. and that the council is achieving a lot for the residents of Highcliffe and Walkford.

137 Public Representation:

A member of the public inquired regarding the work to the War Memorial. A Member advised that the Rotary Club would be completing the work before Remembrance and that it was due to start within the next two weeks

138 Casual Vacancy

The Clerk advised that BCP council had informed the council that no election had been called for the current vacancy for the Highcliffe West Ward.

RESOLVED - that the casual vacancy be filled by Co-option at the next meeting of council on the 14th October 2026.

Members then were advised that there had been four applications for the current vacancy on the parish council for the Highcliffe Ward following the resignation of Councillor John Webster. Each applicant was invited to address the council in turn and members asked questions of the applicants. In accordance with the council's policy, it was proposed and seconded that all applicants be put to the vote. Following the vote it was –

RESOLVED that Lesley Dedman be co-opted onto the council.

Councillor Lesley Dedman read and signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

139 BCP Councillors Reports

Cllr L Dedman addressed the council –

There have been issues with antisocial behaviour caused by youths in the area and this was being addressed. There were further concerns with people living in vans and the issue of van life would be addressed by the next Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting at BCP.

Cllr D Martin addressed the council:

The parking consultation had received over 100 responses and this was currently being collated. BCP members will have an input regarding Highciiffe and will be meeting with the traffic team. Cllr Martin advised that he had taken over from Nigel Brooks on the community speed watch, he further advised that volunteers were needed for this scheme. The playground repairs were still outstanding, and this was being chased. Cllr Martin also advised that he had attended the Action for Christchurch Harbour and Waterways event at the Regent Centre, which had been chaired by the Clerk in her capacity as BCP councillor. Finally he advised that he had been involved in the recruitment of the BCP Director of Children's Services.

Cllr A Martin addressed the council:

Martin advised that he had also attended the Regent Centre event with 500 people filling the venue to capacity and over 300 people outside unable to attend. Several positive actions has come out of the meeting including the promise of a harbour protection policy as well as BCP leading to pull together all the agencies in order for the harbour to be designated as bathing water. Councillor Martin advised that the paths project would be starting on 15th September, this is a £220,000 project with 50% being paid by BCP and 50% paid by the parish council.

A zebra crossing would be installed in Ringwood Rd, Walkford. The parish council currently has in its reserves £100,000 for a High Street improvement plan and BCP would be attending to draw up quotes for pavement repairs, new bollards, new planters, repainting existing bollards, etc. Councillor Martin advised that BCP finances has a $20 million deficit and the council was currently trying to find savings. Finally, Cllr Martin thanked Highcliffe Residents Association for setting up a

GoFundMe page to raise money to assist the parish council in placing a bid for Jesmond Wood.

140 Resolutions Report

Members received and reviewed the Actions Against Resolutions report.

141 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.

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

b) Members noted the bank reconciliations for June.

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

142 Quarter 1 Budget Report

Members received the Q1 budget report.

A Member was concerned that it appeared the allotment income was down on the previous year. The Clerk advised that she would bring a full report on this to the next Amenities committee. The Member was also concerned that the legacy payment for Bluebell playpark had not been received; the Clerk advised that she had chased this several times and would continue to do so.

143 Investment Policy

Members were advised that an investment policy have been adopted by the council in November 2025, however, a new investment strategy had been submitted by Councillor Hutchings for council's consideration.

RESOLVED - That the investment strategy be approved.

144 Bank Mandate

The Clerk advised that, following the resignation of Councillor Sofianos, it was necessary to update the bank mandate.

RESOLVED that Cllr Hutchings be added to the Council's bank mandates..

145 Health and Safety Report

The Clerk presented the health and safety report prepared by Worknest. Members noted the actions within the report and agreed that the Clerk be given delegated responsibility to ensure that all actions were taken and expenditure approved.

RESOLVED - That the clerk be delegated to carry out all health and safety actions noted in the report.

146 Safeguarding Policy

Members noted that an action within the health and safety report was to implement a safeguarding policy. The Clerk presented a policy for consideration

RESOLVED that the policy be adopted.

147 Nea Meadows Licensing

Members were advised that several properties that back onto Nea Meadows were granted licences by the council for access.

RESOLVED – that the licenses be renewed.

148 Nature Village

The Chair outlined the purpose of the report, which had been prepared in conjunction with the Clerk. Council noted the progress made since its decision in June 2026, agreeing to support the Nature Village designation in principle. The proposed Nature village festival was outlined, and it was proposed, seconded and –

RESOLVED that: -

1. Council formally supports the designation of Highcliffe and Walkford as a Nature Village.

2. That it be noted that a detailed Nature Village strategy had yet to be presented and that a draft strategy be brought to the October 2026 meeting of Full Council.

3. A Nature Village Working Group be established, reporting to Council, with the membership being Cllrs Skinner, Hutchings, Butcher and A Martin.

4. That the presentation on the proposed Festival of Nature be noted and Members be invited to submit comments and suggestions for consideration in the development of a final proposal for the October 2026 meeting.

5. The festival date be agreed, in principle, as the last week in May 2027

5. That the financial implications be noted and that consideration of any additional Nature Village budget be deferred until a strategy and costed programme of activities are brought before Council.

6. That no final decision on the engagement of an external event coordinator be made until the final proposals are brought before Full Council in October.

7. That the Nature Village Working Group report regularly to Full Council on progress and bring forward recommendations for consideration and decision as appropriate.

149 Grant Applications

Members were advised that three Section 137 grant applications had been received. Numbers considered each grant application in turn, and it was proposed, seconded and –

RESOLVED that –

1. Life Education Wessex be granted £870
2. Highcliffe Horticultural Society be granted £750 and be invited to join the Nature Village project.
3. Highcliffe Library be granted £7500

150 Matters for consideration

A Member raised concerns about Beacon Drive open space. Members were advised that this belongs to BCP council and that the environment department was extremely stretched due to financial restrictions and that many areas within BCP were only receiving one or two cuts a year.

A Member requested an update on the Christmas lights. The Clerk advised that she had asked BCP council for approval for a new light installation on the Milestone Roundabout, but this had been refused, similarly additional lights on the lamp posts down the High Street had also been refused. However the PAT testing of the council's existing lights had taken place.

151 Delegated Decisions

The Clerk reported that it had been necessary to carry out work under delegated powers due to health and safety concerns. This had included the removal of two trees at Lakewood open space, neither of which were subject to a TPO, at a cost of £550. £215 had been spent removing a dangerous stairway at Nea Meadows. £185.53 had been spent to purchase a lifebuoy and £48 on warning signs for the lake at Nea Meadows. It had been necessary to carry out major bridge repairs due to rotten timber supports at Nea Meadows at a cost of £3082, and finally it had been necessary to repair the small bridge by the bowls club at a cost of £1700.

152 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)).

153 Jesmond Wood

Members were advised that Jesmond Wood was being put up for auction by the owner, with a guide price of £500k-£700k, and the deadline for submitting bids was the 14th of October 2026. Members considered the reserves currently held by the parish council and the likelihood of extra monies being made available through BCP council and the GoFundMe campaign.

RESOLVED that, it be delegated to the Clerk, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair, that a bid be made, subject to confirmation of BCP’s contribution, of the sum agreed, or higher provided other sources are confirmed.

154 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of Council would take place on **Wednesday 14th October 2026 at 6.30pm**

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 20:46.