Upwell Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Meeting of Upwell Parish Council, Monday 26th October 2026, 7pm

Committee Members: Cllr Aston, Cllr Gooch, Cllr A Harrison, Cllr Shorting, Cllr Pope, Cllr K Harrison, Cllr Robinson, Cllr Carr, Cllr Judd, Cllr Spikings, Cllr Fairbrother, Cllr Hartley, Cllr Rose.

Those Present: Cllr A Harrison, Cllr Aston, Cllr Gooch, Cllr Fairbrother, Cllr Shorting, Cllr Pope, Cllr K Harrison, Cllr Robinson, Cllr Carr, Cllr Spikings, Cllr Rose, M Hilton Clerk.

Public: none

Apologies: Cllr Judd

MINUTES

1. **Welcome and opening remarks:** The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **To consider and approve apologies for absence:** these were approved.

3. **Declarations of conflicts and pecuniary interests relating to items on this agenda:** Cllrs Spikings, K. Harrison declared interests in Norfolk Relief in Need Charity, and Cllrs Shorting and Robinson declared an interest in Upwell (Cambridge) Consolidated Charities.

4. **To discuss the budget for 2027-2028:** the draft budget started with a balance of £172.45 at year end. Each line of the budget was discussed in detail.

- Following discussion, it was agreed that the budget would not include a salary increase.
- It was agreed to obtain quotes for the War Memorial fencing and grass works and to apply for a CIL grant to fund the project.
- It was agreed to discuss the magazine printing costs further at the next full Council meeting.
- Cllr Pope asked about the Clerk's salary. The Clerk explained that the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services had agreed a retrospective 3.3% cost of living pay increase for the 2026/27 financial year. The increase applies automatically to clerks whose contracts link their pay to NJC terms, as hers does.
- Agricultural land rents and recent correspondence concerning Upwell Relief in Need will be considered at the next full Council meeting.
- Cllr Gooch raised specific concerns about the inadequacy of the proposed riverbank cutting. The Clerk explained that £800 had been allocated to the budget for four cuts per year, with one additional cut by the MLC. Cllr Gooch remained dissatisfied. All councillors approved the budget line except Cllr Gooch, who abstained.
- Cemetery tree-trimming costs could be reduced with assistance from councillors and/or Community Payback.
- It was agreed to retain £5,000 in reserves to replace ageing streetlights. The Council will consider each replacement individually when required.
- It was agreed to reduce the village hall refurbishment budget from £10,000 to £5,000. The Clerk advised that the flat roof currently has two leaks and, although the main floor was recently repaired, another soft spot has been identified.
- Highways estimated that a Wigwag sign outside the school would cost at least £4,000. The proposal was not approved.
- Cllr Pope asked why there is a reserves column in the budget. The Clerk explained a parish council budget includes a reserves column to show money set aside for future security and cash flow gaps.

It was noted that agricultural land rental income will decrease if the Charities land is returned.

5. **To agree the precept:** The draft budget initially proposed a 19% precept increase to achieve a balanced budget. Following discussion of the items above, this was reduced to 4%. The precept will be set at £52,500. Cllr Spikings proposed the motion, Cllr Aston seconded it, and all voted in favour except Cllr Pope, who abstained.

6. **Close:** the meeting closed at 20.26pm

Signed by the Chair …… Date ……