

Etton Parish Council

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Minutes of a meeting of Etton Parish Council held on **Wednesday 26th March 2026** starting 7.00pm at The Golden Pheasant, Main Road, Etton, Peterborough, PE6 9DA.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Fred Morton (Chair), Anne Curwen (Vice-Chair), Steve Watson and Martin Brook.

IN ATTENDANCE: Clerk Elinor Beesley.

PUBLIC FORUM: Nine members of the public (all residents) were present in relation to item 26.31.1 regarding the potential installation of a village flagpole.

The Chair asked the clerk to outline the consultation results and summarise the information provided to the Council. Following the Clerk's submission, a resident queried the difference between the consultation result of twenty-eight valid responses (thirty-four responses in total) in favour of a village flagpole and the forty-five signatures of support that they had collected independently prior to the consultation. The Clerk and Members suggested that this difference may be due to some of the independently collected signatures having been obtained from individuals who were not residents of the Parish (as canvassing had taken place whilst individuals were walking through the village, rather than at residences), or that some residents may not have responded to the formal consultation or may have changed their view.

The Clerk was asked to clarify the reasons for the invalidation of seven responses. The Clerk explained that two responses were from individuals living outside of the Parish, two responses were incomplete (no surnames) and the individuals could not be verified as residents, two were duplicate submissions, with names replaced and the same signature on both forms, and one response was received via email without a completed form. In addition, one form included one name and one signature and requested to be counted as two responses; this was accepted as one response and not considered an invalid response.

The Clerk explained that, although invalid responses were excluded from the official consultation result, a breakdown of all responses had been provided to Council and detailed in the earlier Clerk's summary. All comments received had been anonymised and provided to Council.

The Council was asked how individuals living outside of the Parish had been able to respond the consultation. It was explained that individuals from two residences with longstanding involvement in the Parish had been invited to respond.

A resident expressed the view that an independent body should be invited to oversee the council decision-making process, stating that they did not believe that the Council had acted appropriately. The resident indicated that it was their intention to make a complaint to the Monitoring Officer.

A resident asked one of the residents who was in support of a village flagpole what their reasons of support are and the resident explained that they had expressed their reasons at previous meetings.

A resident asked whether the same level of scrutiny had been applied to comments in support of the proposal as of those not in support. The Clerk confirmed that all comments were to be given equal consideration and explained that individual comments would not be published due to GDPR. However, a summary of the themes could be provided, noting that themes may have been raised once or multiple times.

Themes in support of installation included: alignment with neighbouring villages that already have a flagpole, a way to show community pride and heritage, useful for celebrating national, local and community events and occasions, its use could reflect the diversity and different cultures, patriotic purposes and that it would be a positive addition to the village and community. Comments were received in support, but on the

condition that a flagpole would not be used for political purposes and that there were clear rules for flying of acceptable flags.

Themes expressed by those not in support included concerns about politicisation and that the flying of certain flags would be divisive, have negative links or be misinterpreted, concerns about who would decide which flags are flown and when, and ongoing costs and maintenance, comments that a flagpole is unnecessary for a small village that has not had one previously, that a flagpole is not needed for community spirit and concerns about continued division in the community and lack of long term funding.

A resident asked what the next step would be and the Chair explained that the consultation and information obtained would be discussed and deliberated, and the Council would decide whether to proceed, not proceed or defer the item.

26.26 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** None.

26.27 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**, held on Wednesday 25th February 2026: It was **resolved** to approve the minutes as a true record, and they were signed by the Chair.

26.28 **COUNCILLOR VACANCIES:** One application had been received which members considered. It was **resolved** to co-opt Joanne Watson as a member of Etton Parish Council. Mrs Watson signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting at this point as Cllr Watson.

26.29 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** No declarations of interest and no written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests were received.

26.30 **GOVERNANCE:**

30.1 *To note purchases made under delegated powers:* None.

30.2 It was **resolved** to adopt or re-adopt:

- a) Freedom of information Policy
- b) Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice
- c) Data Breach Policy
- d) Information Technology Policy
- e) Reserves Policy
- f) Complaints Policy

26.31 **VILLAGE AMENITIES AND MAINTENANCE:**

31.1 Members considered the results of the residents' consultation regarding the potential installation of a flagpole on the Village Green, together with all relevant information including feasibility, planning, and financial considerations.

It was agreed that the Council had spent a significant amount of time and effort collating the necessary information to ensure that the proposal could be considered thoroughly and fairly.

Members noted that sixty-three responses to the consultation had been received, representing 60.5% of electors. Members considered the breakdown of responses provided by the Clerk, together with the comments both in support of and not in support of the installation of a flagpole. *(Clerk note: a summary of the consultation results, information and advice provided to Council is published with the minutes.)*

Members noted that of the valid consultation responses 50% of respondents were in favour of a village flagpole and 50% were not in favour. It was agreed that, even if the invalid responses were included, no clear mandate was demonstrated. Members concluded that the neutral result, together with the strength of comments submitted both in support and not in support of the proposal, indicated that the proposal is divisive within the community.

Members considered the financial implications and noted that £1050.00 had been informally pledged towards the cost of purchase, installation, and maintenance of a flagpole. However, it was

agreed that for reasons of financial risk management and responsible governance, it would be necessary to secure funding through the precept for ongoing maintenance and repair, which would be required to be appropriately earmarked for the purpose. Members noted that the informal pledges are unsecured and could be dependent on future Council decisions such as choice of contractor and a Council flag policy. It was noted that the Section 137 Local Government Act power to spend is capped at £11.60 per elector for 2026/27 (current total being £1,206.40) which may be an obstacle in the event that all pledges were withdrawn.

It was noted that 51% of respondents supported the flying of the Union Jack, 33% supported the Cross of St George, and 25% supported the flying of the Cambridgeshire County flag. A total of ten respondents (18%) were in support of 'other' flags being flown with all but two suggestions being made only once and two suggested twice. The Council noted its statutory duty of neutrality and the Council's responsibility to adopt a flag policy that reflects this. Members agreed that a flag policy may not align with the views of those in support of a flagpole and that there is a risk of further division within the community and the potential for pledged contributions to be withdrawn.

It was further noted that any fees associated with planning and Commons Consent applications, together with additional administration time, would need to be met from current Council funds and/or through an increase in the 2027/28 precept. Members noted that 33% of consultation respondents supported partial or full funding through the precept, which represents approximately 20% of electors.

Members discussed the requirement for Commons Consent and planning permission, and expressed concerns that one or both applications may not be successful due to the Village Green's location within a conservation area and therefore the requirement to evidence that a flagpole would preserve or enhance the area, and the high likelihood of numerous objections to any application(s).

Lastly, members discussed the restrictions on the potential location of a flagpole, due to the presence of trees and utilities. It was agreed that the only identified potential location lacked prominence. It was also noted that the location was sited close to the boundary of the curtilage of a listed building which could further hamper Commons Consent and planning permission.

Members considered all relevant information and, in the public interest, it was **resolved** that the Council would not proceed with the proposal to install a village flagpole.

Members acknowledged that this decision would be disappointing to some residents and recognised the time, effort, and commitment shown by those who had asked the Council to consider the proposal.

26.32 FINANCE:

- 32.1 It was **resolved** to approve receipts and payments according to the attached schedule.
- 32.2 It was **resolved** to approve Financial Reports for one month to 28th February 2026.
- 32.3 Members agreed the terms for payment from residents for the Mini First Course event and it was **resolved** to accept payments via bank transfer only and that no refunds would be given unless the provider cancelled the event and provided refunds. It was either the date of of Tuesdays 28th April or Tuesday 5th May 2026 would be suitable subject to attendees and the provider's availability.
- 32.4 Members noted that the underspend of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fund for Nature Grant may be required to be returned, and it was **resolved** to approve the return in the sum of up to £230.51, should it be requested. **ACTION – Clerk** to follow to ask if funds could be spent on summer planting.
- 32.5 It was **resolved** to approve the fee for the Internal Audit 2025/26 in the sum of £65.00.
- 32.6 It was **resolved** to approve reimbursement to Cllr Watson for payment to Graytones Printers for printing of the Flagpole Consultation in the sum of £22.80 incl. VAT.

26.33 **NEXT MEETING:** Members confirmed the date of the next Council meeting as Wednesday 22nd April

2026.

There being no further business the Meeting closed at 8.12pm.

Approved as a true record of the Meeting: Chair, 22nd April 2026

Abbreviations used in these Minutes: None.

Schedule of Receipts and Payments (26.32.1)

Items marked * were paid prior to the meeting as a statutory obligation or under delegated powers, with the relevant Minute shown against the item. No VAT is charged on receipts. Any VAT included in payments is reclaimed annually at year end. Where no VAT is indicated, it was not charged by the supplier.

Receipts:

- a) TSB: Interest (10th January 2026), £3.95

Payments:

- b) Staff Salary: Basic (February 2026), £100.00 (standing order)*
- c) Staff Salary: Adjustment (February 2026), £82.46
- d) HMRC: PAYE (February 2026), £41.80
- e) Cloud Next: Domain renewal, £60.00 incl. VAT
- f) S Watson: Reimbursement (topsoil and cable ties), £33.04 incl. VAT (Minute 25.33.3)*
- g) Milton (Peterborough) Estates Limited: Christmas Tree 2025 (23rd March 2026), £132.00 incl. VAT