

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Northleach with Eastington Town Council held in the Westwoods Centre on 11 February 2026, 7pm

Present: Cllrs Terry Morley-Blackwell (Chairman), Gina Blackwell, Valerie Glynn, Matt Jackson, Jules Russell, Michael Seath and Flam Wellman,

In Attendance: Pauline Rigby (Town Clerk), County Cllr Paul Hodgkinson, District Cllr Tony Dale and three members of the public

16. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Byron Hadley, Brian Hulcup, Laura Kirkby, and Caroline Saunders.

17. Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

There were no interests declared.

18. County and District Council reports

County Cllr Paul Hodgkinson reported that:

- Government consultation on Local Government Reorganisation is currently open and residents are encouraged to respond. All three options for Gloucestershire are being consulted upon, and the Government is expected to confirm its preferred option in early summer. Subject to the timetable proceeding as planned, all existing councils will be abolished in just over two years. Elections to the new unitary authority are anticipated in 2027. There will be no further district [or county] council elections, other than retaining councillors for the purposes of overseeing the transition and handover.
- Gloucestershire County Council will set its budget next Wednesday. The financial settlement from Government was £30 million less than expected, which will require reductions in planned expenditure. If the budget is approved, an additional £15 million will be allocated to highways, representing an increase of about 25%, together with further investment in reducing speed limits. The proposed 20mph zone in Northleach is funded through the Highways Local budget and is expected to be implemented in the autumn, with consultation likely to commence shortly. In response to questions, he added that the consultation process will involve preparation of formal designs, which the parish councils should have sight of before public advertisement. It was confirmed that the agreed start and end points of the 20mph zone will remain as previously determined in principle, with only minor alterations possible at this stage of the process.
- Concerns have been raised about the sheer number of potholes on local roads. It is particularly bad on the Old A40. Although the road has been inspected and some repairs undertaken, more substantial works are required. Following discussion with the Local Highways Manager, he understands that no further significant works can be undertaken within the current financial year, although this is nearing its end. He will be pushing for a more substantial repair to the worst section. Several people in the room suggested that a formal safety inspection was required.
- Regarding the S2 Bus between Oxford and Cheltenham, Pulham's have agreed the new timetable with Oxfordshire County Council and as soon as any further information is received then he will forward.

District Cllr Tony Dale reported that:

- Elections in May 2027 will be the final elections for the District Council and the first for the new Gloucestershire unitary councillors to the successor authority. The process of Local Government Reorganisation complex and demanding, involving the transformation of hundreds of millions of pounds of public services within a short timeframe. Whilst he remains sceptical, planning is underway to ensure that services are not disrupted. Cotswold District Council officers have been appointed to key roles in the transformation process on a part time basis. This places the Cotswolds in a strong position to help shape services within the future unitary authority.
- The aim is for the Strategic Local Plan for Cotswold District to be completed by the end of 2028, when it is anticipated that it will be submitted for examination.
- In terms of next year's budget, Cotswold District Council's settlement was better than anticipated. The senior leadership team had worked hard to balance the budget, particularly in light of changes to business rates.
- He has taken on a new Cabinet role with responsibility for Health, Leisure and the Visitor Economy.

19. Public Participation

A resident spoke in favour of reducing the speed limit on All Alone Lane, which is currently 60mph, to protect walkers and equestrian users.

A resident enquired whether there was any action the Town could take to highlight the poor condition of the Old A40. Can Highways be asked to put up some temporary signs?

20. Confirmation of Minutes

To confirm and sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting on 21 January 2026.

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of 21 January 2026 be confirmed for signing.

21. Planning: To consider council's response to planning applications, if any.

There were no planning applications in the parish open for public consultation.

22. Finance:

22.1 To receive the bank reconciliation to 31 January 2026.

Cllr Jackson confirmed that the bank reconciliation had been verified.

22.2 To receive the budget monitoring report for the year to date.

The report was received.

22.3 To authorise the payment of accounts as per the schedule.

It was RESOLVED that the payments schedule be approved.

[Note: an typing error of £10 in the invoice from McCracken & Sons was corrected].

23. Market Place Improvements: *Minute 10 of 10 September 2025 refers.*

To receive draft reports from transport planning consultants Rappor on parking reconfiguration of the Market Place and agree next steps.

Cllr Jackson introduced this item, reminding everyone that priorities had been agreed at the September meeting and feedback had been provided to Rappor. Most of the proposals submitted by the Council had been accommodated. These included provision for loading bays and additional parking. However, three matters could only be partially accepted:

- (a) **Additional disabled parking bay:** The Council had requested a third disabled bay, to be located near the pharmacy. Rappor had advised that, given the size and layout of the Market Place, two bays were considered sufficient.
- (b) **Loading bay at Black Cat Lane:** A loading bay at this location would not be practical, as it would require vehicles to reverse and raised safety concerns around access and egress.
- (c) **Bollards near the Post Office/Fruitcakes:** The Council had requested a bollard on the pavement near Fruitcakes to improve pedestrian safety when cars are parked. This was considered a minor point and did not require swept path analysis.

Cllr Jackson noted that the possibility of closing off the lane by the Black Cat Café to create a safer pedestrian route, although not included in the current plans, could be explored further with Highways. Similarly, the proposal for bollards near Fruitcakes could be discussed later.

A discussion took place about the potential for providing a disabled parking bay by the Pharmacy and whether to provide two or three standards-compliant disabled bays. Reasons for an additional disabled bay were that this had been agreed when the pavement was widened. However, disabled bays take up more space so would lead to an overall reduction in parking capacity. A show of hands indicated that the majority were in favour of retaining two bays. Following further discussion about the preferred location, it was agreed that the better position would be outside the Post Office as proposed in the report.

Members agreed that, overall, the revised scheme reflected the Council's priorities. The reports would form the basis of the Council's initial position in discussions with Highways, including the relining of the parking spaces in the Market Place, subject to available funding.

Questions were raised about whether a consultation exercise should be undertaken, given the potential impact of the proposed changes, although not legally required. Some councillors were of the view that this was unnecessary, as the existing road markings are worn and in need of renewal. However, Cllr Tony Dale suggested that, as a courtesy, the proposals should be delivered to residents and businesses on the Market Place, as they would be directly affected. He noted that this could help mitigate the risk of objections or legal challenge and encourage constructive engagement.

Cllr Seath noted that parking spaces are not enforceable unless supported by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which would require a formal public consultation. It was also suggested consulting the local Fire Brigade, as they had previously raised concerns about nose-in parking arrangements and emergency access.

It was agreed that the next step would be to arrange a meeting with Highways to seek clarification on the appropriate process and legal requirements.

It was RESOLVED that the Council engage with Highways to seek guidance on the next steps.

24. Charter Market

To hold preliminary discussions on whether to restart the Charter Market.

Cllr Morley-Blackwell enquired whether there was support for exploring this proposal.

It was RESOLVED that Council would like to explore bringing back the market.

It was agreed that Cllr Morley-Blackwell would arrange for leaflets to be printed and distributed at local markets to seek expressions of interest. A minimum of five stalls will be required for the market to operate safely.

25. Order of Business

It was RESOLVED to vary the order of business by taking agenda item 11 before item 10.

26. To consider whether to introduce community awards and how they could operate.

Cllr Kirkby had submitted a short outline of the proposed. It was noted that such awards could be beneficial, low cost and help foster community spirit. Concerns were raised about the additional workload involved and the potential for the process to become political. It was proposed that members of the community could be invited to form a judging panel.

It was RESOLVED that the Council would hold community awards, using judging panels drawn from the public and chaired by a councillor.

The scheme will operate for a trial period of one year, after which it will be reviewed.

27. To agree the format and arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting.

It was suggested that the meeting be moved to May to incorporate the Community Awards, allowing six weeks to invite nominations and expressions of interest for the judging panel. Cllr Russell was asked to lead on arrangements, with Cllr Glynn offering support, and to return next month with a detailed proposal.

Members discussed having a broad theme of town and community, including presentation of the 800 celebrations, the Charter Market, Council projects, and recognition of community volunteers, of whom there have been many over the past year including Pavilion painters, drain guardians and town wardens. The event could include a free drink and/or paid bar.

It was RESOLVED to move the Annual Town Meeting on Weds 6 May, 6pm.

[Post-meeting note: Date to be reviewed as the venue was not available.]

28. To discuss the meetings schedule for the year ahead.

It was proposed that:

- (a) Full Council meetings would move to the third week of the month.
- (b) Finance & General Purposes Committee would remain quarterly.
- (c) Property & Premises Management would continue to meet in alternate months.
- (d) Westwoods Committee would reduce from six meetings a year to four.
- (e) King George V Playing Field Trust meetings to be convened after Full Council as and when required.

It was RESOLVED that the meetings schedule be drawn up on this basis.

29. To receive minutes of the Westwoods Committee meeting on 9 February 2026.

The Westwoods Committee minutes, which had been published on the council website, were received.

30. To report back from the initial meeting of the 'Northleach 800' Working Group. (Developing plans to mark 800 years since granting of the Town's Charter in 1227.)

Councillor Morley-Blackwell introduced this item and reported that representatives from almost all local groups had attended the initial meeting. The purpose had been to workshop ideas for the 800th anniversary celebrations. Several proposals are being progressed, and it was agreed to meet again to review whether these have been developed or discounted.

Ideas discussed included the production of an "800" commemorative beer, and reusable pint mug featuring anniversary branding. The Church has expressed interest in "Beating the Bounds" following the historic boundary. The Town Trustees proposed a parade recognising notable historic figures. An aerial photograph forming the number 800 on the playing field was also suggested. The Historical Society had hosted a speaker who could be commissioned to write parish histories. Cllr Seath would make contact to explore this further.

It was noted that the Charter Fair Committee have been asked whether they intend to mark the occasion separately and have confirmed that they do not. Subject to permission, there is interest in holding a medieval feast at the Church in March, including period dress and a re-enactment of the signing of the Charter. The Historical Society will seek to locate the original Charter. It was suggested the Town Crier read the Charter on the anniversary of its signing.

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was Tuesday 12 May 2026.

It was RESOLVED that a Working Group be created to organise a medieval feast in church. Group members: Cllrs Blackwell, Morley-Blackwell, Glynn, Russell, and Wellman.

31. To receive item for future meetings

To be added: update on Annual Town Meeting (Cllr Russell); tourist levy (Cllr Glynn), Fortey Woods, Market Place toilets.

32. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 11 March 2026, 7pm in the Westwoods Centre

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:45 pm.

Signature of the Chairman on approval of the minutes: _____

Payment Schedule

| Date | Supplier | Service | Amount |
|--------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 08-Jan | Cotswold District Council * | Toilet block insurance recharge | £ 26.11 |
| 16-Jan | Everflow | Water charges | £ 15.86 |
| 19-Jan | Lloyds | Service charge | £ 4.25 |
| 19-Jan | Turtle Engineering | Defib battery | £ 360.00 |
| 20-Jan | Starboard Systems * | Scribe accounting software | £ 696.25 |
| 20-Jan | Tesco Stores | Catering supplies | £ 17.67 |
| 21-Jan | Zen Internet | Broadband and voice | £ 40.80 |
| 21-Jan | Lemonbooking * | Booking software | £ 188.00 |
| 22-Jan | BrightHR | HR support | £ 24.30 |
| 22-Jan | Everflow | Refund #1 | -£ 47.99 |
| 25-Jan | Staff costs | Payroll January | £ 3,814.00 |
| 26-Jan | Everflow | Refund #2 | -£ 15.86 |
| 27-Jan | Central Tree Services * | Churchyard laurel | £ 540.00 |
| 28-Jan | Rappor * | Transport planning | £ 2,284.00 |
| 29-Jan | WaterPlus * | Water charges | £ 22.51 |
| 31-Jan | McCracken & Son * | Grounds maintenance | £ 1,527.30 |
| 31-Jan | Grundon | Waste collection | £ 152.95 |
| 02-Feb | Smarty | Mobile phone | £ 6.00 |
| 02-Feb | EDF Energy | Westwoods electricity | £ 256.29 |
| 06-Feb | Powys County Council * | DBS checks | £ 73.00 |
| 08-Feb | Pinpoint Utilities * | Standpipe repair | £ 403.93 |
| 08-Jan | Cotswold District Council * | Toilet block insurance recharge | £ 26.11 |
| | TOTAL PAYMENTS | | £ 10,389.37 |

* Outstanding payments to be approved.