

MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF MARTLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THE 15TH JULY 2026

Present: - Cllr C Geeson (Chair), Cllr L Burrows, Cllr S Daws, Cllr L Galbraith, Cllr I O'Brien Baker, Cllr R Staines, Cllr E Thompson

In attendance: - Mrs L Burgess (Clerk/RFO), District Cllr Mark Packard, 8 members of the public

The meeting opened at 7:30pm and the Chair welcomed Councillors and members of the public. The Chair proposed recording the meeting and asked Councillors whether they were happy for the meeting to be recorded.

Resolution EXO2026/7a to record the meeting for the purpose of accuracy of the minutes - **Agreed**

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr P Whitby, Cllr L Sheridan, County Cllr P Mulcahy

2. Filling the Parish Council Vacancies

The Chair asked whether there were any applications for Parish Council vacancies, the Clerk confirmed that she had received 1 application which will be circulated to Councillors. The Applicant will be invited to the Full Council meeting in September. There were no other applications received - **Noted**

3. Any declarations of disposable pecuniary or local non-pecuniary interests

There were none declared

4. Update on action taken so far

Updated provided by the Project & Planning Officer, which the Chair read out to the meeting, requesting contributions from Cllr Galbraith as she heads up the Portal Woods Working Group who continue support the Campaign.

Portal Woodlands – update

- The working group continues to raise awareness of the Council's bid to purchase Portal Woodlands, with valuable support from community volunteers who have assisted with leafleting and staffing information stalls at local events.
- Engagement with Woodbridge Town Council and Kesgrave Town Council is ongoing, and both councils remain supportive of the campaign.
- Drop boxes have been purchased for the loan application consultation so that residents who prefer not to use the electronic option can return paper copies. Arrangements for the public consultation are being finalised.
- Communications continue through the Council's regular channels, including mailing lists, social media and the website.
- Gorseland School has offered its support, and its pupils have played an important role in raising awareness of the value of woodland to the school community.
- The pledge agreement template has been finalised, and information on how residents can make a pledge has been issued to the public.
- Advice from Claire at Ashton's LLP has been circulated by email to the Full Council and submitted as a council paper.
- Landbridge has been appointed to carry out the Red Book Valuation report and is awaiting formal resolution by the Council before proceeding.
- A member of the public has very generously offered the Parish Council a short-term bridging loan to aid the purchase. Initial advice on this has been sought from Claire at Ashton's LLP.

Claire has advised:

Parish councils can legally borrow money from a parishioner or an individual but it is complicated since all forms of borrowing are regulated and takes time to organise.

To proceed, the council would need to strictly adhere to statutory approval and transparency requirements which in summary are.

1. Formal Sanction Required: Under the Local Government Act 2003, the council must obtain formal "Borrowing Approval" (also called loan sanction) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) before taking out any loan.
2. Capital Expenditure Only: The borrowed funds must be used for a specific capital expenditure (such as acquiring land, constructing a pavilion, or another significant asset). It cannot be used for day-to-day running costs or maintenance.
3. Full Council Vote: The decision to borrow must be debated and approved at a formal meeting of the Full Council
4. Public Consultation: The council must consult local residents on the project and the borrowing plans. They must provide evidence of public support, particularly if they plan to raise the council tax precept to pay the parishioner back.
5. No Mortgages: The council cannot offer any of its property or assets as collateral/security for the loan.
I am not aware of any exemptions for short term bridging loans and would have to research this point – I am mindful that our fees will end up being higher for out of scope work as well so while I could assist I do not think the council has sufficient time and the extra costs might not be worthwhile if its short term benefit only.

The Chair asked whether there were any comments or questions in respect of the update provided. Comments were made in respect of the complication of applying for a Public Works Loan, the process of accepting a bridging loan looks almost the same as application for a Public Works Loan. The Chair confirmed that this offer has come from a member of the community and whilst it is an extremely generous and kind offer our response of thanks needs to include detailing as to why we are unable to accept the offer - **Noted**

The question was raised about how far we had progressed the borrowing application. The Clerk confirmed that Resolution C2026/ECO6d Planning & Project Officer to draft explanatory wording and acquire a quotation from "leaflet frog" for 2500 copies (folded with explanatory note of the external side of the fold – Agreed (10.06.26) the Clerk advised this has been carried out to the point that the wording was drafted and presented to Council but she was unsure as to the position of the quotation. An action point was raised for the Planning & Project Officer to confirm the quotation - **Noted**

Following a request by a Councillor and agreement by the Public it was agreed for the meeting to go "in camera" to discuss transparency as to what point in the

process of a potential purchase of Portal Woodlands the Parish Council had reached
– **Agreed**

7.56pm the public were excluded and the meeting went “in camera”

The meeting was reopened to the public at 8.06pm

5. Public Forum

5.1 Reports from District Councillors in respect of Portal Woodlands

There were none

5.2 Reports from County Councillors in respect of Portal Woodlands

There were none

5.3 To allow members of the public to address business on the agenda

This was allowed within the meeting

5.4 Any Issues raised by the Public

Not at this time

The meeting reconvened with the public at 8:06 pm.

The Chair thanked the public for stepping out of the meeting

It was confirmed that an offer had been made to Grainger PLC that offer has been accepted that the Parish Council were working towards a successful exchange of contracts and completion. It was confirmed that we are working towards a tight deadline for exchange contracts in August.

The Chair advised that there was a lot of work to be carried out to work towards the exchange date and that we will now be looking at the next stages to confirm the steps that needed to be taken.

Queries with regards to the pledge agreement template were discussed, should an editable copy of the template be required this can be provided by the office and the bank account that was being used to accept the pledges made. It was confirmed that the bank account was an unused account of the Parish Council, that's sole use would be for the purpose of accepting pledges towards the potential purchase of Portal Woodlands.

6. Council Decision on Red Book valuation

Councillors discussed what action should be taken in respect of the Red Book Valuation, no agreement has been reached at previous meetings to proceed with the valuation.

Resolution EXO2026/7d to ratify the decision for the Red Book Valuation to be undertaken by Landbridge - Agreed

7. Discussion about next steps

Further discussions took place regarding the solicitors query about carrying out due diligence searches

Resolution EXO2026/7e Ashtons to proceed with the due diligence checks and searches in advance of the Parish Council receiving the Red Book Valuation – **Agreed**

Another resolution required following advice received from Ashton Legal, the Clerk was persistent that this resolution should be made for us to proceed without convening a further meeting:

Resolution EXO2026/7f the council resolves to acquire the land known as Portal Woodlands pursuant to Section 124 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the benefit, improvement and development of the parish and its inhabitants upon the terms set out in Appendix X with such minor variations to such terms as the Chair (after consultation with the Council's lawyers) may deem necessary to achieve the overall objectives. **Agreed**

Further discussions took place in respect of concerns being raised as to the position of the Parish Council should the Red Book Valuation come in lower than the offer made. It was discussed that due to the community interest and support in respect of the Parish Councils acquisition of Portal Woodlands we could quote that the offer was made "in the interest of the community and their needs". Evidence of best value, (best value is not necessarily the cheapest option.) - **Noted**

There was a question from the public with regards to the loan application and whether this could be made prior to the consultation taking place. It was explained that the Consultation for a potential increase of the precept to allow for borrowing had to take place for approval for borrowing to be confirmed before a loan application could be made – **Noted**

Authorised signatories

Reference was made to the Parish Council standing orders. Discussion took place in respect of legal document being signed and bank authorisations. It was discussed that work was being undertaken to get the signatories changed. There were concerns raised over holiday period and availability of signatories and Councillors - **Noted**

Resolution EXO2026/7g to act as soon as possible to pay purchase monies and fees (inclusive of auctioneer's fees, in respect of land known as Portal Woodlands as described within the agreed plan area of the land for sale) into Ashton Client Account ahead of exchange and completion, payment to be returned should exchange not take place – **Agreed**

Resolution EXO2026/7h for any two Councillors present at the meeting on the 15th July 2026, with the exception of Cllr Daws (who has been asked to be excluded) to be able to sign any legal documentation, in respect of the purchase of land known as Portal Woodlands, to include any transfer and overage documentation in respect of the purchase of Portal Woodlands. In the event of absence of the Clerk the Finance Officer can witness the signatures – **Agreed**

The Parish Council has no seal - **Noted**

Resolution EXO2026/7i to proceed with exchange of contracts following full due diligence being completed by Ashtons - **Agreed**

Public Liability Insurance

As per advice from Ashtons the Parish Council needs to ensure that their public liability insurance covers the Woodlands from the point of sale. The Clerk pointed out that we are liable from the point of exchange of contract.

Resolution EXO2026/7j to ensure that Portal Woodlands is covered by the Parish Council's Insurance and Public Liability from the point of exchange of contracts – **Agreed**

Discussions that took place in respect of the point raised by Ashtons in respect of the Byelaws in respect of land ownership. The Clerk confirmed that the resolution should be to investigate the byelaws. It was then discussed that we should investigate the byelaws in respect of all of Parish Council owned land.

Resolution EXO2026/7k to investigate the byelaws under Section 15 of the Open Spaces Act 1906 to regulate activities within the woodland, including the lighting of fires, camping, damage to trees and wildlife, unauthorised vehicles and other activities that may present risks to the public safety or the woodland environment for Portal Woodlands and all Council owned sites – **Agreed**

Any other business

Ashtons will need copies of certified minutes - **Noted**

There was a question raised about in the event of absence of the Clerk who can input payments to the system.

Resolution EXO2026/71 add the Finance Officer to the bank mandate allowing payments to be added to the bank in the absence of the Clerk – **Agreed**

Thanks were given to those attending the meeting.

The meeting was closed at 8:47pm

Chair, 2nd September 2026