RUSPIDGE & SOUDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING held on Tuesday 13th October 2026.
(These minutes remain in draft form until approved at the next meeting of the Council)

Parish Councillors Present:
Cllrs. William Acland, Norman Snell, Denis Bagwell-Johnson, Robert Stubbs, Glenn Turner.

County Councillors Present:
Cllr. Beki Hoyland.

District Councillors Present:
None Present.

Parish Council Clerk – Roland Dowding.

Apologies:
Cllr's Tony Matthews, Paul Firth, Bernie O'Neill & Ray Donaghue, Richard Burton, Andy Moore.

Standing Declarations of Interest

a) Ruspidge Memorial Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Denis Bagwell-Johnston.
b) Soudley Village Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Rob Stubbs.

Public Present: None present.

10.1. **Apologies** received and recorded from absent members.

10.2. No declaration of prejudicial interest was declared by members present.

10.3. **Minutes** - The minutes of the council meeting held on the **8th of September, 2026** were **ACCEPTED** as a true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman, Cllr. William Acland.

10.4. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising from the minutes.

10.5. **District Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.

10.6. **County Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.

10.7. **Planning** – The completed schedule for **October** is attached as an Appendix to these Minutes. The Chairman duly signed the schedule for October.

10.8. Following a report by the Honorary Treasurer, Cllr. Norman Snell the council **APPROVED** the accounts presented for **October,** payment totalling **£9,388.28.** These figures are inclusive of confidential expenditure. A financial report is included for **October** in the appendix to these minutes.

Budget Transfers.

- From Contingency Budget **£1,000.00** to Play Area Budget. Member approval requested.
- From Contingency Budget **£ 10.00** to Office Budget. Member approval requested.
- From Contingency Budget **£ 1,000.00** to Defib Budget. Member approval requested.

The members present approved the listed budget transfers*.*

10.9. **AGAR Section 3 Certificate Received** – AGAR 2025/26 Completed. The members present acknowledge receipt of the section 3 certificate and noted the one advisory regarding a date being incorrect.

10.10. **Cullimore Bridge Safety Inspections** – Member's consider current safety arrangements for Cullimore bridge. A formalised, documented annual walk-over by a competent council representative is recommended. Cllr. Glenn Turner agreed to attend to the annual walk -over of Cullimore bridge. The Clerk will draft the appropriate documentation for this task.

10.11. **Liaison To St Whites School** - Members to appoint a Council liaison to St whites School. Cllr. Norman Snell put himself forward for this role. The members present approved unanimously.

10.12. **Soudley & Ruspidge Notice Board** – Council notices and Parish business are now posted via the Parish Council Website. Can the Soudley notice board be given to the Soudley Village hall Committee & the Ruspidge notice board shared with the Ruspidge Memorial Hall Committee along with the Ruspidge Welfare Trust. The Members present agreed this proposal.

10.13. **Lottery Grant Application for play equipment at Soudley** – The Parish Council are again eligible to apply for a grant application for play area equipment using the same service as 2024. The members agreed to this application in principle provided the Soudley Village Hall Committee agree and decide on a location at the Soudley recreational ground. Cllr. Stubbs will confirm with the Soudley Village Hall Committee.

10.14. **Soudley Request from Mr. Nick Ashfeild via Soudley Village Hall's Committee for improved directional signage to Soudley, Ruspidge & local venues.**

From Blackpool Bridge

- Soudley – 1 mile
- Ruspidge – 2.5 miles
- A brown tourist sign for Dean Heritage Centre

Junction outside the White Horse pub in Soudley.

- A directional sign pointing down the hill towards Soudley Village Hall

The members present agreed to this request in principle. GCC Cllr. Beki Hoyland will discuss the request with GCC Highways Officer Nathan Choat and inform R&SPC of any decisions agreed.

10.15. **Cllr. Robert Stubbs** - Six-Month Rule attendance request to members. The members present unanimously agreed this request.

10.16. **Cllr. Glenn Turner report to Council** - Regarding the recent Biosphere meeting held by FoDDC at St. Annals House.

- Chris McFarling & Alister Chapman were present representing FoDDC. Cllr's Matthews & Turner representing R&SPC. Two additional Cllr's present at the meeting.
- Biosphere application, if approved would have no statutory powers and could not override any rights or bylaws. Basically powerless.
- The Biosphere project will have no budget, and no jobs will be directly created by it.
- Two direct benefits of the project. One, the use of the Biosphere name as a marketing exercise and could have extensive use on signposts and literature and promotional usage.
- Two, the Biosphere is considered to be an 'Umbrella Consortium'. Biosphere status will be advantageous for grant applications, based on Biosphere implementation in other areas of the country such as Devon.
- Biosphere status can also influence tourism although, this is considered a subjective outcome.
- Governance proposal of a unique local partnership, being a Stewardship Assembly, a Biosphere Delivery Partnership and Custodians of Monitoring Power. Local partnerships being made up of The Commoners, Verderers, Free Miners, local Councils, local businesses and potentially other environmental organisations. The exact structure is yet to be defined.
- To note, Alister Chapman at the request of Cllr. Turner via email after the meeting stated the Stewardship Assembly could be made up of 40-60 people, possibly more. The Delivery Partnership, possibly 10-20 people. The Custodians & Monitoring Panel all key organisations.
- FoDDC were willing to amend the Biosphere application and had asked the Commoners for suggestions for the amendments.

Cllr. Glenn Turner made the following assertion, due to there being a small number of members making up the Verderers, Freeminers and the Commoners, it is posable there will be problems garnering attendance to the proposed Biosphere partnership meetings.
Cllr. Turner also raised a concern regarding the scope for 'governance creep' using the Commoners as an example. The Commoners elect a representative to attend Biosphere governance meetings, does this 'weaken' the Commoners voice over time? Cllr. Turnner also noted, the proposed Biosphere governance appears to be an additional layer of unnecessary bureaucracy that could be attended to by other departments.

10.17. **FoDDC Biosphere Proposals** - Member voting to be held. Opposed/Approving.
The following members Cllr. Acland, Turner, Snell, Stubbs & Cllr. Matthews voted opposed to FoDDC's biosphere proposal. Cllr. Bagwell-Johnson abstained. Note, Cllr's Stubb's and Matthews previously supplied email votes on this topic.
As a result of this vote Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council oppose FoDDC's Biosphere proposal.

10.18. **Confirmation of Remembrance Day 2026 arrangements -** Cllr's Stubbs & Bagwell-Johnson confirmed their availability for the 2026 Remembrance Day service.

10.19. **Liaison's Report for Soudley Village hall.**

- October Fest. Well attended.
- BBC Question time well attended and successful.
- Changing rooms building works are nearing completion.
- Solar Panel Project – potential converter change and larger batteries.

10.20. **Liaison's Report for Ruspidge Memorial Hall.**

- The main steps to the building have now been painted.
- A mobility aid ramp is to be installed before the end of October.
- Updated tech for the committee's internal online comms.
- Request for a porch over the lower hall door, approved in principle.

10.21. **Clerk's Report to Council.**

- Himalayan balsam Growing near Cullimore bridge, Invasive Alien Species Order 2019. Reported to all required authorities.
- SWARCO VAS Ruspidge Battery Failed Repairs Awaiting.
- Office P.A.T Testing attended to.
- Copland Maintenance. Advice received regarding the play areas.
- Liaising with STW regarding flooding and overflow of Brown water along Railway rd.
- Grass Cutting contract details supplied to GCC Highways.
- Enquiry regarding the fencing around Soudley Play area. SVHC would like it removed. If so, a replacement gate would no longer be required. Cllr. Stubbs confirmed this request. The members present agreed to the removal of the Soudley Play area fencing. Cllr. Stubbs agreed to SVHC taking responsibility for its removal and can sell off the fencing.
- Parish Emergency Planning Updated Requested By FoDDC. Currently working on for submission deadline.

10.22. **Correspondence** - The council **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the following correspondence:

- **FoDDC. Cluster Groups Update. Parish and Town Council Cluster Meetings Schedule.**
- **AGAR Section 3. Notification.**
- Planning Application Consultation: P1361/25/FUL.

No concerns regarding receipt of emails by the members were recorded.

10.23. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the council will be held in the **Soudley Village Hall** at **7.00 p.m. Tuesday, 10th November 2026**. The agenda deadline for the full council meeting is **Monday, 2nd of November 2026**.

10.24. **Exclusion of the Press and the Public** - The council **RESOLVED** that for any remaining business of a confidential nature, the press and the public should be excluded from the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 10.xi (2020).

The meeting closed at 8:30 p.m.

Signed:……Chairman. Dated:……

APPENDIX

FINANCIAL REPORT for the meeting in: October 2026

1. Reconciliation of Account as at: end September 2026

Ledger		**£**			**Bank**			**£**
Balance b/f		121,013.26		*(Com Acc)*	Community A/c.			2,456.67
FoDDC Precept		37,059.50		*(Com Instant)*	Comm Inst. Access A/c.			83,342.41
Lloyds Interest		22.03			Unity Current A/c			906.00
Unity Bank Interest		318.50			Unity Inst Access A/c			65,119.98
	Total	158,413.29					**Total**	151,825.06
Less Expenditure Sept		6,588.23						
Balance		151,825.06			**Balance**			151,825.06

2. Accounts for Payment *# = Paid in September but on October's ledger.*

PKF Little John	1	504.00	84.00	AGAR Audit Fee.
PJR Electrical	2	400.31	66.72	Defib Electrical Prep Soudley
Complete Landscapes	3	360.00	60.00	Parish Grass Cutting
Cinderford Town Council	4	530.64	88.44	Office Rantal & Service Charge
Soudley Village Hall	5	25.00		Grass Cutting SVH Play Area
Soudley Village Hall	6	30.00		Hall Hire
Community Heartbeat Trust	7	984.00	164.00	Defib Cabinet Soudley
SVHC Grant	8	250.00		Drinking Water Grant
SVHC Grant	9	500.00		Asbestos Panels Survey Grant
Soudley Village Hall Youth Cl	10	300.00		SVH Youth Club Grant
Module IT	11.DD	19.79	3.30	VOIP
Module IT	12.DD	147.23	24.54	IT Support
Lloyds Bank	13.SC	4.25		Bank Service Charge
Sjs Book Keeping	14. SO	30.00	5.00	Pay Roll Accountancy
The Sign Shed	15	97.79	16.29	Sign Boards for Play Areas
Merlin Waste	16	300.00		Dog waste
Complete Landscapes	17	1,104.00	184.00	Complete Landscapes
EE Ltd	18. DD	17.83		Mobile Phone
Tim Harris	19	135.00		BRT Strim, Bells Place& Yew Tree Brake Grass Cuts.
Tim Harris	20	450.51		St Clean, Park & Defib Checks, Bridge Checks.
	TOTAL	5,286.04	545.57	

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

Planning Schedule October, 2026

Planning Reference Site Address & Detail	Parish Comment				
P1361/25/FUL 82 Ruspidge Road Ruspidge Cinderford Erection of a 3 bedroom chalet bungalow with associated landscaping, parking and works. Demolition of existing garage and outbuilding.	No Obj				

Decisions notified by the Planning Authority

Planning Reference Site Address & Detail	Parish Comment	District Decision	Date		
P0269/25/FUL Mar 2025. Prouts Cottage Road From Brains Green To Cyder Mill Cottage Bradley Hill Blakeney Gloucestershire GL15 4AW	No Obj	Consent	23rd September 2026		

Blakeney and Bream Division of Gloucestershire County Council Parishes Report October 2026

beki.hoyland@gloucestershire.gov.uk
07815660013

Transport and travel

Please continue to use and promote the use of **FixMyStreet** to report issues on the roads.

Public transport

£3 for a single journey on stagecoach busses. With fuel costs increasing it may be worth considering taking the bus. Below are links to help you find your timetable and route.

About 5 — FoDCAP to download the transport map of the Forest of Dean, including links to all the timetables.

traveline sw - welcome

County bus network maps | Gloucestershire County Council

How to book a journey | Gloucestershire County Council The Robin

Or you can consider walking or the train, here are links to help

Rights of way online map | Highways

The official source for trains in Great Britain | National Rail

Closed Roads

9th February - ongoing. Lydney to Whitecroft road is closed for structural maintenance. The no. 23 bus is rerouted as follows: Lydney, Bream, Whitecroft, Parkend, Sling. We have now officially been told that more of this road needs to be stabilised so will not be opening before next June.

- 21st September to 21st November Soudley bridge, closed for maintenance
- 13th to 23rd October Surface improvement work between A48 to Parkend and around Bream.
- 28th October Awre Road, (just past last house out of Blakeney) Severn Trent
- 6th November -11th November. Bream- Lydney Road bottom part of High street and Parawell Road for resurfacing.
- 24th November – 3rd December. Littledean Hill Road for resurfacing (along with several other roads around Cindreford)
- 30th November New Road, Parkend. BT open reach work.

County News

Applications open for grants supporting community projects across Gloucestershire

Community and voluntary organisations across Gloucestershire are being invited to apply for funding through Gloucestershire County Council's Thriving Communities Grant scheme. The scheme supports activities that help adults stay well, connected and independent, while reducing isolation and strengthening local communities. Applications are now open and close on 16 October.

For full eligibility criteria and details about how to apply, visit: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/thriving-communities-grants

Greener Gloucestershire Wondering whether a heat pump would work in a home like yours? Visit a Heat Pump is a free service from the charity Nesta that connects you with people near you who already have one. Hear what it's actually like to live with, see and hear the unit for yourself, and ask an owner anything.

Find one near you at visitaheatpump.com

Halloween Costume Swaps

Gloucestershire Libraries are running their annual Halloween Costume Swap again this autumn. It's an opportunity to donate any costumes you no longer need, swap them for something different, or simply pick up a new outfit to take home. All county libraries are now accepting costume donations until the end of October,

so it’s the perfect time to have a clear out and give someone else the chance to dress up this Halloween. Child and adult costumes are gratefully accepted, including accessories. If you’re on the hunt for something to wear this year, costumes rails will go up in libraries between 5 - 31 October, during library opening hours. All are welcome to take a costume home, even if you don’t have one to swap.

District Councillor Report – Richard Burton – October 2026

Update from CEOs meeting with MHCLG on 24 September 2026

On Thursday 24 September, Chief Executives from each of Gloucestershire’s councils met with officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It followed the Government’s announcement on Monday 7 September where it asked councils across the country to pause implementation of the local government reorganisation (LGR) decisions it made earlier this year.

This includes Gloucestershire, where work to create one single unitary authority is currently on hold. In Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk the decisions have been withdrawn.

The Chief Executives were grateful that four representatives from MHCLG came to the county in person for the face-to-face meeting, which was specifically to discuss the Gloucestershire area.

During the meeting, our Chief Executives sought clarification on how long the pause will

last, what will happen with elections, while also asking about funding.

They also restated Gloucestershire’s position and our ask on devolution.

MHCLG officials were unable to give too much clarification, but did confirm that during the week commencing 12 October, an update on the national LGR programme is expected to be announced in the House of Commons. It is hoped this update will provide more information about the scope and likely length of the review.

Council Chief Executives felt that the MHCLG representatives listened clearly to their outlining of the Gloucestershire position, and they have agreed to meet again in October following the announcement to the House of Commons.

More Forest of Dean schools invited to join award-winning Eco-Schools programme

Schools across the Forest of Dean are being invited to take part in the internationally recognised Eco-Schools programme for the 2026/27 academic year, with Forest of Dean District Council once again providing funding to encourage participation.

The council's support includes covering registration costs and providing an additional £100 per school to fund environmental projects and resources, helping more children learn about sustainability while taking practical action in their schools and communities.

Councillor Jackie Fraser, Cabinet Member for Environment at Forest of Dean District Council, said:

"We're really pleased to be supporting Eco-Schools again this year and helping more local schools get involved.

"It's been fantastic to see what schools across the Forest of Dean have achieved over the last 12 months. Whether it's creating spaces for wildlife, cutting down on waste, encouraging greener ways to travel or getting involved in their local communities, pupils have shown real enthusiasm for looking after the environment and making a positive difference.

The Eco-Schools programme is administered by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy and is the largest school environmental programme in the world, with millions of young people taking part globally each year.

Schools interested in taking part in the 2026/27 programme can contact Forest of Dean District Council at climate.action@fdean.gov.uk

Thermal Camera Loan Scheme Transfers to Forest Community Energy

Forest of Dean District Council's popular Thermal Camera Loan Scheme will now be operated by Forest Community Energy, enabling residents to continue benefiting from the free service and help improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

The Thermal Camera Loan Scheme was launched by the council in 2025 in partnership with the AURORA Project, Forest Community Energy, and South West Net Zero Hub.

Designed to help households reduce energy bills, improve home comfort, and cut carbon emissions, it enables homeowners to borrow thermal imaging cameras to identify areas where heat is escaping from their properties. The images help residents pinpoint opportunities for improvements such as insulation, draught-proofing, and more energy-efficient windows and doors.

Forest Community Energy will now manage the day-to-day operation of the scheme and provide advice on interpreting thermal images and planning future home energy improvements.

Residents can find out more or enquire about borrowing a camera by contacting thermalcamera@forestcommunityenergy.org.uk or visiting **Forest Community Energy**.

Residents invited to have their say on the future of recycling bring bank sites Residents are being invited to share their views on the future of recycling bring banks across the Forest of Dean.

Forest of Dean District Council has launched a six-week consultation on options for the future of the service, which provides recycling facilities for materials such as glass and cardboard at locations across the district. The review follows significant changes in how residents recycle.

Over recent years, the range of materials collected through the council's kerbside recycling service has increased, meaning many items that once needed to be taken to a bring bank can now be recycled from home.

No decisions have been made, and feedback from residents will help inform a future Cabinet decision.

Recycling bring banks are public recycling points for specific materials and are operated by Forest of Dean District Council. They are separate from Household Recycling Centres. This consultation does not include Oak Quarry Household Recycling Centre, which is operated by Gloucestershire County Council.

The council currently spends around £134,000 a year operating the bring bank service, equivalent to around £3.24 per household each year. The consultation seeks views on a range of options, from maintaining a reduced network of bring banks at key locations to removing council-operated bring banks altogether.

Under all options, residents would continue to be able to recycle glass bottles and jars, paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, food tins and drinks cans through the council's kerbside recycling service. Textiles are also collected from the kerbside, while small electrical items and household batteries can be recycled on refuse collection days. Household Recycling Centres would also remain available for larger quantities of recycling and materials that cannot be collected at the kerbside.

The council regularly deals with issues at bring bank sites, including overflowing cardboard banks, littering, fly-tipping and the misuse of facilities by businesses disposing of commercial waste. These issues often require additional maintenance and clear-up work, creating extra costs and affecting residents' experience when using the facilities.

Any savings generated through changes to the service could be used to support other council priorities and future improvements to recycling services.

The consultation runs until the 15 November 2026.

Residents can take part online at: https://fdean.gov.uk/recyclingbankconsultation