

RUSPIDGE & SOUDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING held on Tuesday 13th January 2026.

Parish Councillors Present:

Cllrs. William Acland Chairman, Tony Matthews, Nicky Packer, Helen Medcraft, Norman Snell, Paul Firth, Denis Bagwell-Johnson.

County Councillors Present:

Ray Donaghue.

District Councillors Present:

Bernie O'Neill, Andy Moore, Richard Burton.

Parish Council Clerk – Roland Dowding.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Priya Shukla, Beki Hoyland.

Standing Declarations of Interest

- a) Ruspidge Memorial Hall – Insignificant interest by Cllr. Denis Bagwell-Johnston.
- b) St Whites School - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. William Acland.
- c) Soudley Village Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Norman Snell.

Public Present: Priya Shukla, Tony Smith.

R&SPC Public Participation: None.

- 1.1. **Apologies** received and recorded from absent members.
- 1.2. No declaration of prejudicial interest was declared by members present.
- 1.3. **Minutes** - The minutes of the council meeting held on the **11th of November 2025** were **ACCEPTED** as a true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman, Cllr. William Acland.
- 1.4. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- 1.5. **District Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.
- 1.6. **County Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.
- 1.7. **Planning** – The completed schedule for **December & January** are attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.

- 1.8. Following a report by the RFO Mr. Roland Dowding, representing the Honorary Treasurer, Cllr. Norman Snell the council **APPROVED** the accounts presented for **December & January**, payment for **December** totalling **£3,973.62**. Payment for **January** totalling **£19,901.18**. These figures are inclusive of confidential expenditure. A financial report is included in the appendix to these minutes.
- 1.9. **2026/27 Draft Budget** – The members present noted and unanimously approved the 2026/27 draft budget totalling **£ 74,119.00**. The Clerk is instructed to submit this demand to **FoDDC** ASAP.
- 1.10. **Parish October Play Area Operational Reports** – Members acknowledged receipt of said reports. The repair of the Soudley Play Area gate is to be made a priority, if a local contractor cannot attend to the repair in a timely manner, then **KOMPAN** will be instructed to attend to the repair.
- 1.11. **Proposal for grant funding application to GCC & match funding by R&SPC** – After debating the subject, the members present approved a grant application be made to GCC for £3,000.00 to be match funded by R&SPC for a toddler roundabout for Ruspidge Recreational Ground.
- 1.12. **R&SPC Internal Audit. April – December 2025** – The members present acknowledged individual receipt of the report and had no questions. The Clerk. Mr. R. Dowding was thanked for his work on this audit.
- 1.13. **Liaison's Report for Soudley Village Hall** – Deferred to February.
- 1.14. **Liaison's Report for Ruspidge Memorial Hall** – Cllr. Denis Bagwell – Johnston has been elected chairman to Ruspidge Memorial Hall. Events noted at the hall. Acapella musical performance in 21st of February. Them2 musical performance on the 20th of January.
- 1.15. **Correspondence** - The council **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the following correspondence: The Parish Councillors accepted all relevant correspondence has been forwarded via email to all members.
- 1.16. **Next Meeting** - the next meeting of the council will be held in the **Soudley Village Hall** at **7.00 p.m. Tuesday, 10th February 2026**. The agenda deadline is **Monday, 2nd of February 2026**.
- 1.17. **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 7:45 p.m.

Signed:.....Chairman. Dated:.....

APPENDIX

FINANCIAL REPORT for the meeting in: December 2025

1. Reconciliation of Account as at:	end November 2025			
Ledger	£	Bank	£	
Balance b/f	145,071.21	(Treasurers)	Lloyds Current A/c. 983.75	
Bank Interest	41.56	(Reserves)	Lloyds Inst. Access A/c. 92,563.65	
Lottery Grant	19,024.00		Unity Current A/c 906.00	
			Unity Inst Access A/c 63,805.44	
	Total	164,136.77	Total	158,258.84
Less Expenditure Nov		5,877.93		
Balance	158,258.84		Balance	158,258.84
2. Accounts for Payment	# = Paid in November but on December's ledger.			
Payee	No	Total £	VAT	
# EE Ltd	01. DD	16.07		
Module IT	02. DD	19.79	3.30	
Module IT	03. DD	92.80	15.47	
Konica/Minolta	4	94.32	15.72	
Konica/Minolta	5	32.00	5.33	
# PKF Little John	6	378.00	63.00	
# Amazon	7	10.67	1.78	
# PJR Electrical Ltd	8	258.33	43.06	
# Tesco	9	5.00		
Tim Harris	10	545.51		
Soudley Village Hall	11	24.00		
# Lloyds Bank	12. SC	4.25		
Busy Rascals	13	200.00		
Merlin Waste	14	288.00		

FINANCIAL REPORT for the meeting in: January 2026

1. Reconciliation of Account as at: end December 2025

Ledger	£	Bank	£
Balance b/f	158,258.84	(Treasurers) Lloyds Current A/c.	964.89
Lloyds Bank Interest	40.88	(Reserves) Lloyds Inst. Access A/c.	73,104.53
Unity Bank Interest	351.63	Unity Current A/c	906.00
		Unity Inst Access A/c	64,157.07
Total	158,651.35		
Less Expenditure Dec	19,518.86		
Balance	139,132.49	Balance	139,132.49
2. Accounts for Payment	# = Paid in December but on January's ledger.		
Payee	No	Total £	VAT
Module IT	01 (DD)	92.80	15.47
Module IT	02 (DD)	19.79	3.30
# EE Ltd	03 (DD)	16.07	
# Busy Rascals	4	500.00	
# KOMPAN	5	10,473.67	1,745.61
# KOMPAN	6	5,205.37	867.56
# GSC Official P&CCG	7	4.20	
# GSC Official P&CCG	8	14.00	
# Lloyds Bank	9 (SC)	4.25	
SJS Book Keeping & Account	10	225.00	37.50
Merlin Waste	11	360.00	
Cinderford Town Council	12	530.64	88.44
Tim Harris	13	450.51	
TOTAL		17,896.30	2,757.88

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

Planning Schedule December, 2025

Planning Reference Site Address & Detail	Parish Comment		
P1375/25/FUL Agricultural Building (Bradley Villa), Lower Soudley, Gloucestershire, GL14 2UD. Conversion of a rural building to a single self-build dwellinghouse, alterations to the access and associated works	No Objection		
P1424/25/FUL 55 Ruspidge Road, Ruspidge, Cinderford, Gloucestershire. Widening of existing dropped kerb entrance to allow improved access to driveway	No Objection		
DF10665 P1468/25/AG The Old Grange Sutton Road Littledean Prior notification for the erection of a steel portal frame machinery/equipment storage building	No Objection		
Decisions notified by the Planning Authority			
Planning Reference Site Address & Detail	Parish Comment	District Decision	Date
P1244/25/PJ14PA St Whites Primary School , Sneyd Wood Road, Cinderford, Gloucestershire. Prior notification for the Installation of roof mounted Solar PV at St White's Primary School	No Obj	Not Required	03/10/2025

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

Planning Schedule January, 2026

Planning Reference Site Address & Detail	Parish Comment
No Notification from FODDC for this month	
Decisions notified by the Planning Authority	
Planning Reference Site Address & Detail	Parish Comment
P1375/25/FUL Agricultural Building (Bradley Villa), Lower Soudley, Gloucestershire, GL14 2UD. Conversion of a rural building to a single self-build dwellinghouse, alterations to the access and associated works	No Objection
	Refused
	07/01/2026

District Councillor Report – Richard Burton – January 2026

Have your say: Council invites feedback on 2026/27 Budget plans

Residents, businesses, and organisations across the district are urged to give their thoughts on Forest of Dean District Council's spending plans, with a consultation for the budget for the next financial year beginning 19 December 2026 and running until **16 January 2026**.

Forest of Dean District Council provide everyday essential services such as waste collection, housing, parking and leisure, while Gloucestershire County Council provides services including road maintenance, schools and social care.

The District Council receives just over 9% of the overall council tax bill and that contribution helps to ensure that services provided by Forest of Dean District Council continue to be of the highest possible standard. Residents can see the exact breakdown on their council tax bill.

Alongside its core services, the Council is continuing progress with its ambitious regeneration projects. These include the transformation of Five Acres and the creation of a new enterprise education facility at Hartpury University and College. Along with work undertaken within communities across the Forest, these investments align with the Council's key priorities and are designed to boost opportunities for residents and further strengthen the local economy.

To view the Council's proposal for the 2026/27 budget, visit: <https://fdean.gov.uk/budget>

Planning approval secured for Five Acres 3G Pitch

Work continues behind the scenes at Five Acres, with planning approval now granted for the external facilities at the site, including the 3G pitch and associated lighting.

The forthcoming redevelopment of Five Acres will provide indoor amenities designed to support health, wellbeing, and community engagement. The designs include a soft play area, dedicated party rooms, power-assisted exercise facilities, group fitness studios, a fully equipped 53-station gym, and an on-site café. In addition, the upper floors of the former Speedwell Building will be transformed into modern office and community spaces, alongside a new outreach facility for Hartpury University's Aspiration Centre.

Externally, the plans feature the installation of a floodlit 3G pitch suitable for both rugby and football, complete with a designated spectator area. This element of the project was made possible through a successful funding application to the Football Association in January 2025.

Local Government Reorganisation

Nothing formal to report, but the council is corresponding with the Local Government Minister about the process, asking for clarification on matters like the funding and powers of Neighbourhood Partnerships and the democratic deficit. We've pointed out that the FoDDC is well run, financially stable and with good constituent feedback, and that change is unlikely to achieve the expected benefits, costs are likely to be higher than estimated, and will necessarily cause problems.

Gloucestershire County Parishes Report

December 2025

Contact me on

beki.hoyland@gloucestershire.gov.uk

07815660013

Roads

Please continue to use and promote the use of [FixMyStreet](https://www.fixmystreet.com) to report issues on the roads.

I am now chair of the Forest of Dean Road Safety Group which brings together highways, fire, police, councillors from parish, town, district and county, Forestry England and others as required. The aim of this meeting is to highlight areas in the whole district that need attention and work done to improve safety. If there is something you would like to add to this agenda do let me know.

Closed Roads

11th – 12th December Popes Hill, Ferns to junction with New Road

15th – 18th December. Dean Road for patching.

8th January - 2 February.

New Road, Blakeney through to Parkend including a small stretch of Pitching Green will be closed in stages for resurfacing.

Speech House Road will also be resurfaced during this time

County News

[Gloucestershire County Council signals support for single unitary proposal](#)

A vote taken at this month's Full Council meeting marked a major step towards the biggest change in local government for more than 50 years, as the County Council voted to support the single unitary option of LGR. This decision was [ratified at Cabinet](#). The other Gloucestershire Councils held similar votes, with a [joint submission sent to Government on November 28th](#).

[Liberal Democrats unveil council strategy at this month's council meeting](#)

Also at this month's Full Council meeting, the Liberal Democrats launched their council strategy for 2025–2029. The Green Group voted to support the strategy while promising to push for greater ambition on the environment and social justice.

Liberal Democrats reveal proposed county budget for 2026/27

Proposed multi-million-pound spending plans for 2026/27 have been released, ahead of a meeting of Cabinet in December. The Green Group are currently undertaking work on a series of amendments to the budget to ensure it meets green priorities.

County council set to back next phase of Mass Rapid Transit development and delivery

Gloucestershire County Council is set to approve the next stage of work to develop a business case and early delivery steps for a new Mass Rapid Transit system in Gloucestershire.

Call for carers to share their views - National Survey 2025

Gloucestershire County Council is inviting carers to take part in the 2025 national survey of adult carers in England. Surveys have now been sent out to a random sample of around 1,000 carers across Gloucestershire, giving them the opportunity to share their experiences and help shape future support.

Staff recognised for achievements at Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service awards evenings

Ceremonies to celebrate the achievements and long service of staff at Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) have been held at The Stonehouse Court Hotel.

New report highlights key risks to county from climate change

Gloucestershire County Council has been assessing the risk of climate change to the county, in partnership with Climate Leadership Gloucestershire.

Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund

The recently launched Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund scheme is continuing to seek applications from eligible groups. The scheme delivers funding to community initiatives seeking to make a positive impact on health and wellbeing, access to nature, digital inclusion, community cohesion, and reducing inequalities. Each Councillor is allocated £20,000 to support projects in their division.

More information about the new scheme is available on the dedicated [webpage](#). Guidance for how to apply is available [here](#).

GCC Meetings

Full Council

This month saw a historic meeting of the Full County Council as councillors voted on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation. [Members from the Green Group voiced their concerns that the reorganisation was undemocratic, threat to local representative democracy and created high costs for the Council before deciding which of the two options on the table – one or two unitary authorities – offered the least-worst option.](#)

Six members of the group voted for the one-unitary option. Three of the group abstained from the vote, saying neither of the options would benefit residents and that 'none of the above' should have been included as a third option.



CLLR CHLOE TURNER SPEAKING AT THE LGR DEBATE

In addition to the LGR debate, the Liberal Democrats presented their council strategy (see above) and three motions were debated. [The Green Groups motion to better incorporate the views and needs of young people in decision-making was passed with unanimous support.](#)

A Reform motion to “improve transparency, responsiveness, and equity in highways service” was passed following an amendment from the Liberal Democrats while a Green amendment to the [Conservative-proposed motion](#) on the reform of agricultural inheritance tax was referred to scrutiny. The amendment sought to protect genuine family farmers while ensuring wealthy landowners pay their fair share.



CLLR CRAIG HORROCKS SPEAKING FOR THE MOTION



CLLR GARY LUFF PRESENTING THE GREENS' AMENDMENT TO THE FARMING TAX MOTION

The full recording of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

Cabinet

This month's GCC meeting of the Cabinet ratified the decision of Full Council on LGR (see above). During the meeting, Cabinet also approved:

1. The Council Strategy
2. Continued funding of the development of a mass rapid transit business case for Gloucestershire.
3. To delegate authority to procure a Framework Agreement and call-off of contracts related to the provision of behaviour change interventions for perpetrators of domestic abuse, i.e. the service known as Positive Relationships Gloucestershire (PRG).
4. To procure a contract for the provision of public notices advertising services.
5. To delegate to authority to award contracts for the supply of Microsoft Surface laptops for GCC staff.

6. The adoption of the Gloucestershire County Council Planning Performance Agreements Charter
7. Continued participation in Adoption West (AW).
8. Extension to the term of the council's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)/SAP Implementation Programme.

A recording of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

Also help this month were meetings of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee; Adult, Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee, Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee, Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board, plus the Police and Crime Panel and Planning Committee.

Full recordings can be found [here](#).

Commented [NL1]: Add any relevant outcomes from your respective committees

Greener Gloucestershire News

Heat pump demonstrations

- A short talk explaining how heat pumps operate and their environmental benefits
- A live demonstration of a working heat pump
- Insights into installation, running costs, and maintenance
- Real-world examples of heat pump performance in UK homes
- A chance to ask questions and speak directly with our technical expert

Currently, Gloucester and Stroud locations are available to book and more will follow, all events will be listed [on Eventbrite](#)

Christmas wrapping with a twist

Before heading to the shops to buy more wrapping paper this year, why not think about trying something new for the sake of the environment (and your pocket).

Why? Remember... reduce, reuse and then recycle.

The most effective way to reduce emissions is to prevent waste and consume less. Less consumption leads to less waste and fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

[Try furoshiki wrapping this year](#), using material instead of wrapping paper! Head to charity shops and places where you can pick up second hand material, such as the [Gloucester Resource centre](#) to give these fabrics a second life 

Warm homes local grant

Fully-funded energy improvements for homes in Gloucestershire

What's on offer:

- Expert surveys, reports and recommendations for your home
- Fully-funded energy-saving upgrades
- Improvements such as insulation, heating, and renewables
- Support for you and your household at every step

To qualify you must:

- Live in Gloucestershire
- Own or privately rent a home with an EPC of D, E, F or G
- Have a total household income of less than £36,000 a year

[Find out more](#)

Cinderford & Ruspidge County Councillor Report January 2026

Cllr. Ray Donaghue.

Speedwatch – We have sessions booked this month and for February & March. Suggestions for locations are welcome. So are volunteers!

Town Centre Regeneration – In late December, we met with Ubico, CTC, FODDC, GCC for a “Cinderford Spring Clean” and I felt there was some willingness but felt that there could be much more enthusiasm and flexibility from some services to help support the goals of the town plan and the need to improve the centre’s appearance.

I have agreed a quote to jet wash the entire centre from the Councillor Highways budget – this includes the rest of the Triangle. It will be done by the same people who recently cleaned part the Triangle area.

Forest of Dean deprivation Cabinet Panel – I have been invited by Julian Tooke (Cabinet Member for Business, Economic Development, Infrastructure & Planning) to attend. Its purpose is “a Cabinet Panel to bring together key stakeholders for a constructive discussion on how we can improve areas such as Barriers to Housing and Living Environment consistently scoring the highest out of all the categories”. Any input will be welcome. This initiative is off the back of our meetings with Julian where amongst other things we discussed the town centre, potential BID and the blocks on redevelopment at Ensers and other sites in Cinderford.

There have been some initial applications for the new fund County Councillors we can access but I am still looking for more potential projects at this stage.

I met with the Deputy OPCC and on the back of that I have set up a monthly meeting with the Police to discuss issues in Cinderford & Ruspidge. The next meeting is on February 17th. Any issues you want to bring forth please let me know. We discussed the following – open Cannabis use – I have asked the police to do a “Stop & Search” campaign (hopefully for a few days this spring). I have also requested the numbers of “cannabis warnings” for the area the police have issued and other drug stats. We also discussed prostitution in the area and illegal parking. Amber is speaking to PC Wilce about crime figures/potential PSPO. This is quite an arduous process.

I am undertaking a scrutiny session of the substance misuse support offer (VIA) today at the ASC committee at GCC so will update at the town council meeting.

Neighbourhood Watch Scheme – next meeting February – slow start at the moment but I will pick up more as the months go on.

I have been meeting with the Cinderford High St Action Group and trying to lobby for a change in the bumps by the hospital. The works is at stage 3 of being signed off and I am trying to get this reconsidered.

Parking have been continuing night visits in the town centre but need pictures – please send into me.

Other constituent work includes highways and planning. I am meeting with Carol Marsh to work with her on her petition for a crossing in Steam Mills that can be presented at GCC.

Other work I have been doing at a GCC level is:

I have been doing training for my Highways Shadow Cabinet role – I am spending the day at with Warwickshire Highways this month. I am also hoping to the same in Derbyshire in the spring.

I met with deputy OPCC Commissioner this month. I have been added on to the Community Drugs Partnership. I can’t attend the first meeting in February as it lands on full council so will attend the meeting in June.

We met with some local Farmers who have been protesting recently (this included Conservative Councillors) and I have included some of the report put together at the end of this report. Their stories were very compelling.

There focus at GCC level has been on the proposed budget. I attended the budget scrutiny session on the 7th of Jan, The settlement from the government was £10 million less than expected than the forecast so budget is still not settled. I am trying to find out what this means for Cinderford Fire Station and other settlements.

Next Steps & Key Dates:

- Cabinet Decision: 28 January 2026
- Full Council Approval: 18 February 2026
- Implementation: 1 April 2026

Inheritance tax: a policy that punishes responsibility

The government claims it has listened by raising the inheritance tax threshold on farms from £1 million to £2.5 million. This is being presented as a solution, but the farmers stated it is not and does not go far enough.

Many working farms remain exposed, and even those that narrowly fall below the threshold are affected. The policy actively discourages growth, investment, modernisation, and diversification. Any improvement risks pushing a family business into an inheritance tax liability. That is not reform; it is deterrence.

This was not a genuine U-turn, only a partial retreat under pressure. The core policy remains intact, and trust between farmers and government has been seriously damaged. Once land, buildings, machinery, livestock, and equipment are properly accounted for, £2.5 million is not a large farm. It is a modest one.

Investment stalled, rural economies weakened

The uncertainty created by this policy has brought investment to a standstill. Farmers are delaying or cancelling essential machinery purchases, which can easily cost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The consequences reach far beyond the farm gate. Suppliers are offering zero-interest deals simply to generate business, while others are laying off staff as orders disappear. This is how rural economies are quietly hollowed out: not by climate or market forces, but by avoidable political decisions.

The human cost cannot be ignored

Farmers spoke candidly about exhaustion, anxiety, and sleepless nights. Many are mentally drained, not because they fear hard work or risk, but because they cannot plan under constant policy uncertainty.

They do not want to protest. They do not want sympathy. They want stability, fairness, and the ability to get on with feeding the country. That should not be an unreasonable demand.

A damaging narrative about farming

There is growing concern about how farming is being portrayed, particularly to children. Some schools now discourage meat consumption and present livestock farming, and methane in particular, as environmentally harmful. Cow methane has clear positives when viewed properly. It comes from a natural, short carbon cycle, not fossil carbon, and it eventually breaks down. Cattle grazing supports permanent pasture, which locks carbon into soils, improves soil health, boosts biodiversity, and reduces

flood risk. Cows also convert grass from land unsuitable for crops into nutritious food, strengthening food security and sustaining rural communities.

Farmers explained what policy-makers appear not to grasp: livestock farming is central to soil health and biodiversity. Animals produce dung; dung beetles return nutrients to the soil; crops grow; wildlife thrives. This cycle has sustained the countryside for generations. Removing livestock does not protect the environment; it degrades it.

Food security and standards at risk

Inheritance tax remains the central problem. Farm value is tied up in productive assets, not disposable wealth. Necessary investment can push a farm over the threshold, creating paralysis.

One dairy farmer described how seven full milk tankers' worth of milk are now being sent to slurry each week because it is no longer economical to sell. That is food being wasted, not through inefficiency, but through policy failure.



Farmers also raised serious concerns about welfare and standards. British farmers operate to some of the highest welfare standards in the world, yet the UK imports food produced under conditions that would be illegal here. This undermines domestic producers and risks public confidence in food safety.

What farmers are asking for

Despite strong public support, many farmers feel government would rather deflect blame than fix the problem. No other sector is penalised for investing, improving, and planning for succession.

Farmers are not asking for special treatment. They are asking to be treated fairly. They want to farm, to invest responsibly, to plan for the future, and to pass on viable businesses to the next generation.

