

Minutes of Meeting on 29th January 2026
Elmstead Parish Council – New Community Centre Committee
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Mr R Fairweather, Cllr A Gladwin, Mrs J Grotier (Chairman), Cllr T Sanders, Mrs R Valentine and Cllr M Ward.

Also present: Mrs Baxter (Parish Clerk).

Not present: Cllr M Hare, Cllr L Richfield, Mrs D Stammers, Mrs J Triscott and Mr S Wright.

26/001 Chairman's welcome

Mrs Grotier welcomed everybody and thanked them for coming.

26/002 Apologies of Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr M Hare, Mrs Stammers, Mrs J Triscott and Mr S Wright.

26/003 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests

None.

26/004 Approval and signing of the minutes from the meeting of 20th November 2025

It was resolved to accept the minutes from the meeting of 20th November 2025 as true and accurate. Proposed: Cllr Gladwin, Seconded: Mr Sanders, all in favour.

Mr Fairweather asked about the minute regarding Latimer not having available funding to contribute to the new community centre because of the amount they are having to pay towards the link road. Are the government not paying for the link road? Cllr Gladwin attended the recent Garden Community Committee meeting and shared that they are currently waiting for the housing infrastructure fund from central government to give them another £61million. They will need at least another £21 million of which Latimer will fund £21 million but the costs have risen again and the government aren't providing any more funding.

26/005 Public Speaking

No public in attendance.

26/006 Work stage 4b (tender stage).

A general update on the tenders.

See item 26/008.

26/007 Exclusion of press and public for private and confidential matters under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2) as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

The above was resolved. Proposed: Cllr Gladwin, Seconded: Mrs Grotier, all in favour.

26/008 Tenders.

A more detailed update on the three tenders that scored highest in the tender process.

Cllr Gladwin updated that we scored the tenders which were all anonymous. DCB also had access to the anonymous tenders and excluded several that did not comply with the terms of the tender. Cllrs Gladwin and Sanders scored the remaining 13 and then combined their scores to give a score out of 100 using the scoring matrix agreed. There were three clear front runners with one score of 70.5 and two at 68.5. The 4th runner up was close but was the most expensive of the top 4.

At December's council meeting the council agreed to let the remaining 9 know that they had been unsuccessful. We didn't inform the 4th straight away in case any of the top 3 proved to be unviable once their identities were revealed and checks made. The QS looked into the finances and insurance. All of the top 3 were reputable companies so we let the 4th know at that stage. Our QS then reviewed the bill of quantities to see where there were any

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differences or issues and communicated with the companies to get all of the tenders onto a level footing. We then had 3 prices which were within £172k of each other. We then had meetings with the top 3, having the same conversation with the main focal point being value engineering (VE). We asked them for suggestions on bringing the price down. There are options to lower the price, potentially by 5-10%. The other question was to do with phasing the contract as we won't have all the funding available at the start. Phase 1 will be getting the building up. Phase 2 will probably be the car park and external works to be funded by the open spaces s106 money TDC is holding. Phase 3 will be the final outfit, including the kitchens, solar panels, EV and anything else that can wait until the end. We are looking at extra grants for those. The phases can be concurrent.

There was some interest in the current community centre. One offered a part exchange to reduce their price. One seemed accommodating on the financial side with our payments. They were all willing to be flexible.

Phase 1 will be 15-20 weeks, phase 2 will be similar.

It was asked if all the companies had experience building community centres. They do and two of them had handouts showing their relevant experience which were circulated. The QS has put together a list of all the VE suggestions and shared it with all of them to price equally. They should do this quickly.

Mr Fairweather is staggered at the prices, having spoken to a business who said they could do it for £1.5 million and who are building another community centre for £800k. However their tender was for £2.3 million.

We'll be discussing the way forward at the PC meeting next week. Ultimately it is likely to be the price that decides it.

We have an invitation to visit one of the businesses' current project of converting a church into a community centre.

There was a discussion on some of the VE options. For example not having the sliding wall between the 2 halls and having a wall with a door (would need to be acoustic doors), having a cheaper entrance barrier, not having skirting boards in the storerooms and changing the order of works so that it decreases the time on site.

26/009 Funding update

Any updates on funding.

We attended a meeting at TDC in December with Cllr Scott, Cllr Wiggins, Mr Guiver and Mr Pateman-Gee. They told us we don't need to start a new deed of variation (DOV) for the Lanswood contribution, we can re-open the old case with a variation on the wording. However Lanswood has asked them to re-open the case and the planner has told them they need to submit a new application so we have had to chase Mr Patemen-Gee to confirm to planning it wasn't necessary. TDC's solicitor is saying it could cost up to £1,500 for her time to work on the DOV. This will need to be approved at the next PC meeting. The DOV will add the wording "car park" to what the s106 funds can be spent on.

The QS has provided us with an estimated car park cost of about £370k, which could then be funded by the Lanswood s106. The full amount of that s106 is £480k.

The timing will be down to how long TDC takes to process the DOV but they have been very prompt so far.

Mr Fairweather was speaking to a contractor about what we're doing with the external grounds. He recommended that we don't have asphalt because we can't clean it easily. Block paving might be better. We can ask our contractor what that would do to our price.

One EV suggestion was that they do the under layers of the car park first and then use it as a compound. They don't then have to redo the entire car park after.

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The agreement to use a separate s106 pot towards the changing rooms is just waiting for sign off from the head of finance at TDC. They said that we would have to invoice TDC for the near £200k and they would transfer it to us.

We also spoke at the meeting about the biodiversity net gain (BNG). We were told that because the build is under 1,000m² it's classed as minor works. This removes some of the monitoring obligations. We were referred back to the BNG refusal document. We were advised to change the ratio of trees, hedgerow and grassland so that we don't have so many trees which changes the need to monitor.

We need an ecologist to complete the BNG submission. DCB are trying to find us someone. Our previous ecologist is not contactable. The clerk will send the previous ecologist details to Cllr Sanders and the refusal details.

It was asked if we can get the trees and hedges free from the Woodland Trust. We're not sure because the sizes aren't the same as the sizes on the current landscaping plan. The trees are 270 – 350cm, so we'd need to change the landscaping plan.

It's a pre commencement condition so we can't start building until it's approved.

The lottery application has been submitted. We requested £493k but explained that we are going through a VE exercise so we expect the figures to be reduced. It will take at most 3 months to see if we get through to the 2nd stage. If we aren't successful we'll see if we can apply again. We'll also ask the waste companies for a grant for the solar panels and/or EV. If we get the £493k and achieve £50k of VE then we should meet the cost. Realistically we want a contingency of 5-10%. This doesn't factor in the value of the current community centre.

Mr Fairweather has a hirer who is interested in buying the community centre. Market Field School are interested. If we get outline planning permission on the site it will be a higher value but we need to check the costs to achieve that.

What is the likelihood of getting a variation of use on the site? It's an important location in the village. A doctor's surgery was suggested but the last time we approached the NHS with a free building they weren't interested.

We're hoping that we will get all the VE pricing for the PC meeting next week and we should be able to choose a favoured contractor based upon price.

We're aiming for an easter start.

It was asked how much has been spent so far. It's £82,500.

One of the VE options was to replace the air source heat pumps with an air to air alternative which would have cooling capability too. We wouldn't have underfloor heating with that option, which would be more responsive.

We will sit down with the favoured contractor and Brontide to go through the heating and other M&E options.

Global warming was raised and the future need for air conditioning.

It was asked what the position is with the patio. This could be phase 3 or done after the building is signed off. We can do this under permitted development. Open spaces s106 could be used for it.

Another EV suggestion is getting rid of the excavated soil onto the field. This would be 1,300m³.

We could see if they can install land drains whilst they are on site because there is a lot of water laying on it. They could then put the soil over it to level it out. We could also put it around the edge and plant on top.

26/010 Any other updates

None.

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26/011 Matters raised for the next agenda or for information only
None.

26/012 Date of next committee meeting
TBA.

The meeting closed at 8.42pm.

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