

## Drinkstone Parish Council

Clerk's report

**December 2025.**

### Finance

Current account	2,232.83
Savings account	22,132.13
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>24,364.96</u></b>
CIL monies	<u>3,734.04</u>
Free reserves	<u>20,630.92</u>

### Allotments

Current account	£975
Projected spend on gate	£75
<b>Balance</b>	<b>£900</b>

The allotment funds have fallen from previous years, largely brought about by exceptional costs in the current year.

### Non-recurring spend in 2025/6 has been:

New gate – supplied by Sapphire	250.00
Planning application costs	194.50
Sidegate at Gedding Road site	75.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£519.50</b>

In addition to non-recurring spend, the water bill for the current year is much higher than previous years.

2022-23 – dry summer	285
2023-24	248
2024-25	264
2025-26 – very dry summer	461

This shows a 75% increase in water costs, clearly brought about by the summer drought. With annual rent revenues of circa £280 it is evident that, if the drought

continues, rents may need to be reviewed in 2026/7. Consideration may need to be given as to what the level of reserves needs to be held in the Allotment bank accounts.

### **Repairs to the metal fence at Blacksmith Corner.**

I enquired of SALC as to whether maintenance of the fence was within the powers of the Drinkstone Parish Council.

Their response was:

“The parish council has the power to do these repairs under s.96(1) Highways Act 1980, **PROVIDING** it has consent of the highway authority as required in s.96(5) of that Act.

*s.96(1) reads - Subject to the provisions of this section, a highway authority may, in a highway maintainable at the public expense by them, plant trees and shrubs and lay out grass verges, and may erect and maintain guards or fences and otherwise do anything expedient for the maintenance or protection of trees, shrubs and grass verges planted or laid out, whether or not by them, in such a highway*

*s.96(5) reads - Subject to the restrictions for the time being imposed by any enactment on their expenditure, the council of a parish or community may, with the consent of the highway authority for a highway maintainable at the public expense in the parish or community, exercise with respect to that highway any of the powers conferred by subsections (1) and (2) above on the highway authority.*

Check the [Community Self-Help Scheme - Suffolk County Council](#) who may be able to offer some support with the repairs.”

Our insurers indicate:

I can confirm your Public Liability cover is in place to extend to this activity, providing the following:

- Full P.P.E is worn by those involved including high vis jackets where applicable
- Anyone under the age of 16 is accompanied by a parent/carer
- A full risk assessment is undertaken, including that of the road on which the metal railing is – how close to the road is the railing, is there risk of accidental damage to parked cars during the activity etc.
- A health & safety assessment is undertaken to ensure all who are involved in the activity are fit to do so

The SCC Help scheme does offer third party liability as long as their employees supervise road traffic management etc. This may be a better and less onerous route.

## Clerk salary

The national living wage will increase in April 2026 to £12.71 per hour.

The annual audit has raised the issue of whether the clerk's salary is above that level.

The proposed salary of £4,000 for 2026/7 equates to 6 hours per week which in line with current activity levels.

## CIL monies

Drinkstone PC retains £3,734 of funds, to be spent by 2029/30.

The slight increase from the previous meeting has been generated by the charging of footpath maintenance equipment to reserves rather than a use of CIL monies.

## Cash flow projections to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

	£
<b>Balance at 30th November 2025</b>	20,630.92
<b>Expenses:</b>	
Hall hire	60.00
Clerk	1,000.00
Tree surgeon	800.00
Contingency	500.00
	<b>(2,360.00)</b>
<b>Income</b>	
VAT rebate - estimate	3,000.00
<b>Projected balance 31st March 2026</b>	21,270.92
Draft Precept 2026/27	11,336.00
<b>Ratio precept/reserves</b>	<b>188%</b>

## **Planning consents**

The PC offered a “no comment” to the Kingfisher development project – this has now been withdrawn from the planning portal.

Michael Walton

1<sup>st</sup> December 2025