

MINUTES OF NORTON SUB HAMDON PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 10th FEBRUARY 2025
AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, NORTON VILLAGE HALL

25/2164 PRESENT:

The meeting was chaired by Vice Chair - Cllr. B. Matraives (Acting Chair), Cllr. J Cole, Cllr. C Riley, Cllr. J Harris, Cllr. P Gartrell, Cllr R Reid and Mrs. L. Brooks (Clerk). There were 2 members of the public present.

25/2165 APOLOGIES:

Cllr. S More (Chairman)

Cllr. Oliver Patrick (Somerset Councillor) – ongoing apologies

Cllr. Mike Hewitson (Somerset Councillor) – no apologies received

25/2166 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Nothing to report

25/2167 PUBLIC TIME

25/2167/a Public Time

Nothing to report

25/2167/b P.C.S.O. Report:

Nothing to report

25/2167/c Somerset Councillor report:

A report had been received earlier that day which had been circulated to all Parish Councillors. Neither of the Somerset Councillors were present at the meeting.

25/2167/d CLT Update:

Cllr Harris gave an update on the shop and post office. She also reported that hopefully the property that was available at Minchington would soon be filled as a suitable candidate who fitted the criteria had shown interest.

25/2167/e HYG Report

Cllr Riley informed the PC of the next HYG meeting.

25/2167/f Allotments Report

Cllr Matraives updated the PC on the allotments.

25/2167/g Bus Service Report

Cllr Harris had nothing to report.

25/2168 MINUTES

The Minutes from the January meeting were circulated. They were approved and signed.

Proposed: Cllr. Harris

Seconded: Cllr. Reid

Agreed unanimously.

25/2169 MATTERS ARISING

25/2169/a Minchington rec – play area, grass maintenance for 2025, wall and devolution of asset updates

Play Equipment: The clerk had a meeting with Kenton Bourne at SC over the maintenance of the SC owned Minchington Rec play area. The clerk had asked for the boat and the matting to be cleaned. The boat had been cleaned. However, the clerk did not feel that the jetting of the matting was adequate. Kenton said they would get a team over to do a better job as soon as possible. The clerk also asked about any repair work that had been highlighted in the last annual report carried out by The Play Inspection Company. The clerk had received a copy of the report and a couple of things had been highlighted as amber (moderate risk), including the slide, which showed parts of the steel having corroded and the metal had perforated in places. He responded that SC had no money for maintenance of their play areas and in other areas where an issue had been highlighted, the item of play equipment had been completely removed and would not be replaced.

Grass Maintenance: The clerk reported that she had been in contact with Quenton Coleman at SC to ask for a schedule of their grass cutting for 2025-26. It is likely the grass cutting for Minchington will only be carried out once a month due to a reduced budget, which will not be enough to maintain the rec to a standard that is acceptable. If this is the case the Parish Council will have to consider stepping in and paying for a fortnightly cut either by SC or Somerset Landscapes, meaning the grass at Minchington would be cut fortnightly throughout the growing season. Quenton informed the clerk that SC are currently reviewing their schedules of grass cutting across the board so that they all align with each other, and he informed her that a decision should be agreed in the next few weeks. He also said that as soon as he knew, he would pass on the information to the PC. He also informed the clerk that

the plan is to start mowing at the beginning of March weather permitting, but he also said that if there was a dry spell in February, he would send a team out to cut Minchington rec.

Minchington Wall: The clerk reported that following an email from Cllr Hewitson confirming that Sally Stark (Head of Estates Operations at SC) had in principle given approval for a capped amount to be spent to repair the rest of the wall. Cllr Cole, Cllr Riley and herself had a meeting on 6th February with Peter Biggenden from SC. Hi-Line had now been in and cleared the area around the generator. This ground now required clearing as it was higher than the other parts of the rec due to the roots etc. and the stone mason would need this completed before he could repair the wall. New chain-link fencing would be erected around the generator after the wall repair had been completed. They looked at the other areas of the wall. The clerk would let the PC know as soon as she had any updates.

Action: Clerk

Devolution of Assets: The clerk had asked Cllr Hewitson for an update and asked the question where the PC stood if a S114 was declared on SC before the PCs application had been completed. Cllr Hewitson reported that currently the Devolution team had a long backlog in dealing with the transfer of assets to the larger City & Town Councils and that they would be working through the backlog of Expressions of Interest as quickly as possible, but this is likely to take some time.

In answer to the question - Would a S114 impact on this process? He responded that effectively all a S114 notice would do is require the Council to hold a meeting within 21 days. Were Commissioners to be appointed they would effectively force the sale of assets which mean that they *could* halt SC being able to devolve assets to parishes. He also stated that the reality of this is however low, and that the Council should get through 2025/6 one way or another, but it is 2026/7 that gives him more concern.

Action: Clerk

25/2169/b S137 grants (£1,000 total) – applications from: HYG, village newsletter and CLT shop

The PC discussed the three applications they had received for the annual S137 grant allocation.

The PC agreed unanimously to distribute the funds by allocating:

£500 to the CLT shop, £300 to HYG and £200 to the newsletter. The clerk will inform the relevant parties and arrange payment.

Action: Clerk

Proposed: Cllr. Cole

Seconded: Cllr Harris

Agreed unanimously

25/2169/c Recent Flooding

The PC discussed the recent flooding in the area. The Councillors felt that Norton had come through it well with no properties being flooded. Wessex Water had been in the area on three consecutive days to sort out equipment that was found not to be working. The attenuation pond had worked well in holding back water and had not burst. The clerk had asked Wessex Water for a report, but there would be a delay receiving anything due to Wessex Water being inundated with work due to other local areas not faring so well. The Clerk would forward the report as soon as she had received it.

Action: Clerk

25/2169/d Allotment footpath landslide – update following site meeting

The clerk reported on a recent site meeting with Daniel Gordon (SC RoW Officer) and Austin Harding (Footpaths liaison Officer for Norton) held on Friday 7th February. Firstly, Daniel confirmed to the clerk that he would be leaving his position as RoW Officer for the South Somerset Area as he would be moving to cover the Mendip Area. From April, we would have Eve Wynn, who the clerk had already had previous communication with when she was covering between RoW officers last year.

The site meeting took place at the footpath which runs between the allotments and Bagnell Farm Lane, which had recently suffered from a landslide, leaving the footpath suffering from subsidence and therefore unsafe. It had been subsequently closed by the RoW team at SC. The clerk reported that although the RoW officer had closed the footpath with a blockade and signs, it had twice been ripped down by walkers who were still using the path. The RoW officer informed her that the footpath had been formally closed and if anyone had an accident whilst using it SC would not be liable, and users were doing so at their own risk. The clerk and RoW officer discussed options for the path, with the clerk reiterating the importance of getting the path open again as quickly as possible. The RoW officer said that to reopen the path in the location it currently is, would require a lot of pinning the bank below and securing the area above to prevent further landslides. This sort of work would be very expensive, and SC did not have the funds to do this. We looked at other solutions, in particular looking at a way of diverting the path just before the affected area and creating some sleeper steps down off the bank into the lane, creating a new entrance/exit to the path at the Bagnell Farm entrance, and permanently closing off the old entrance/exit. Both Mr. Harding and the clerk thought this would be a good compromise that would get the path reopened faster. The RoW officer would go back and put it to his manager. He would also write to Bagnell Farm and check with the Land Registry to confirm ownership of land in the area.

The clerk also asked the RoW Officer for clarification on strimming of footpaths for 2025-26 and what the programme was looking like. He informed her that there would be a huge cut to the strimming budget for this year and they were currently trying to work out the best way to spend the reduced budget they had. The clerk discussed the matter further and suggested that the majority of parish councils had already budgeted for footpath maintenance, particularly the strimming of footpaths. She talked about the idea that if SC paid for the first cut and then the PC paid SC for the second cut, this would be a good compromise and still maintain the footpaths to a good standard. Currently Norton footpaths are cut twice a year, and the clerk stressed the importance that this was maintained for safety reasons. The RoW officer said he would go back and discuss this idea further with his manager. The clerk said she would write to his manager as well to confirm what was discussed. **Action: Clerk**

25/2169/e Allocated Footpath gates

The clerk confirmed that Norton had now received 7 complete aluminum kissing gate structures that Austin Harding had ordered. The clerk reported that a new kissing gate comprised of 3 separate structures – 2 curved sides plus a lockable gate (similar to the kissing gate in Broadmead Lane). Mr. Harding requested two more straight footpath gates from RoW Officer. Mr. Harding also asked if the SC could replace a couple of the gates that have already been reported as either broken or missing. RoW officer would ask the question but did not think that the SC RoW department had any money left in their budget to do this.

25/2170 PLANNING:

25/2170/a Matters For Report

Nothing to report

25/2170/b Decisions Notified:

Nothing to report

25/2170/c Applications for consideration

Application Number: 25/00197/HOU - 12 Barn Orchard New Road Norton Sub Hamdon

Proposal: Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of single storey rear extension. Proposed loft conversion

25/2171 FINANCE:

25/2171/a Matters for report:

Nothing to report.

25/2171/b Matters for resolution

Nothing to report.

25/2171/c Invoices Payable – all paid via the Unity Trust Bank

Louise Brooks	Democratic services – Jan 2025	£ 1,002.80
HMRC	Employee NI & PAYE & Employer NI to pay – Jan 2025	£ 285.75
Louise Brooks	Home Office Allowance – Jan 2025 – Government set	£ 26.00
Louise Brooks	January Parish Council Office supplies – Includes paper, ink and other office consumables, postage.	£ 44.00
Cumbria Clock Company Ltd	Annual church clock service	£ 234.00
SES (Yeovil) Ltd	CCTV annual service	£ 102.34
CPRE	Annual membership	£ 36.00
CLT – village shop	S137 grant – support for new counter	£ 500.00
Village Newsletter	S137 grant – support towards the running costs of the newsletter	£ 200.00
Hamdon Youth Group	S137 grant – support for HYG (gardening equipment)	£ 300.00

Proposed: Cllr. Reid

Seconded: Cllr. Gartrell

Agreed unanimously

25/2172 VILLAGE HALL:

Cllr Harris reported that the AGM was next week and all were welcome. She also reported that they currently had no wedding booked in for 2025 and obviously this is their main source of income. Cllr Cole asked if the PC would consider moving the side entrance to the rec. The entrance is currently positioned by the village hall and this area gets caked in mud which then gets dragged all over the verandah and subsequently into the hall. It was discussed that if the entrance were sealed up (by a gate or fence so it could be opened to allow disabled access for events) then a new entrance could be installed in the existing post and rail fence. Cllr Cole will discuss this further with the hall committee and will come back with an update to the March Parish Council meeting.

25/2173 RECREATION GROUND:

Nothing to report.

25/2174 CORRESPONDENCE:

All correspondence received has been circulated to all Parish Councillors.

25/2175 FOOTPATHS:

The clerk reported that the owner of the horses which are kept on the footpath at Broadmead Lane had been in contact with her and had promised to erect signs on both gates, including her contact details in case of an emergency.

25/2176 MEMBERS' REPORTS.

Cllr Matraes reported that the 30mph sign on Sandy Lane needed replacing, after it had been hit by the falling tree. Clerk to report. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Matraes also reported some fly tipping on Ham Hill. Clerk to report to the Rangers. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Matraes also reported his concerns over the safety of the remains of the tree that had been cleared by SC on Sandy Lane. There is still a huge amount on site which is leaning onto another tree. Clerk to report to the Rangers. **Action: Clerk**

There being no further business and the meeting closed at 8.50pm

The next monthly meeting will be held on MONDAY 10th MARCH 2025 at 7.30 pm in the village hall committee room.