

MINUTES OF NORTON SUB HAMDON PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 8th SEPTEMBER 2025
AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, NORTON VILLAGE HALL

25/2242 PRESENT:

Cllr. S More (Chairman), Cllr. J Cole, Cllr. J Harris, Cllr. C Riley, Cllr R Reid, Cllr. Mike Hewitson (Somerset Councillor) and Mrs. L. Brooks (Clerk). There was one member of the public present.

25/2243 APOLOGIES:

Cllr. B. Matraves (Vice-Chair)

Cllr. P Gartrell

Cllr. Oliver Patrick (Somerset Councillor) – ongoing apologies

25/2244 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Nothing to report

25/2245 PUBLIC TIME

25/2245/a Public Time

Nothing to report

25/2245/b P.C.S.O. Report:

Nothing to report

25/2245/c Somerset Councillor report:

County Councillor Hewitson provided the Parish Council with the latest updates from Somerset Council, including the latest on The Octagon Theatre, Yeovil. The clerk updated Cllr Hewitson on outstanding issues including the allotment footpath, devolution of Minchington Rec and Barn Orchard Green.

The Chair reported that the Parish Council had received numerous complaints concerning what was perceived as a blatant waste of money by Somerset Council Highways on Sandy Lane in Little Norton and Ham Hill Road. Cllr More explained that a few months ago, SC Highways painted 40-mph roundels on these roads. The Chair had previously raised concerns with Cllr Hewitson, as a 40-mph limit on these narrow, twisty lanes was considered completely inappropriate.

Since then, SC Highways recently resurfaced both roads, covering the roundels. The Parish Council reiterated that they do not want the roundels replaced, but questioned why SC Highways had spent money unnecessarily, especially given the current financial pressures.

Cllr Hewitson said he would report these concerns back to Highways.

25/2245/d CLT Update:

Nothing to report

25/2245/e HYG Report

Cllr Riley provided an update on HYG. She reported on the upcoming AGM, scheduled for 23rd September, which she will attend on behalf of the Parish Council and will give a report at the October PC meeting. At the most recent committee meeting, HYG highlighted the need for additional volunteers, as the group now operates solely in Norton. Janet Goad delivered an excellent report on the summer events, and it was noted that HYG is now receiving support from the Youth Group in Martock.

25/2245/f Allotments Report

Nothing to report

25/2245/g Bus Service Report

Nothing to report

25/2246 MINUTES

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

Proposed: Cllr. Cole

Seconded: Cllr. Harris

Agreed unanimously.

25/2247 MATTERS ARISING

25/2247/a Update on devolution of assets – Minchington Rec & Barn Orchard Green – quotes for legal representation- resolution required

The Clerk provided an update on the devolution of assets. Somerset Council has now supplied the Heads of Terms, Land Registry documents, and associated papers relating to the proposed transfer of the Recreation Grounds at Minchington Close, the verge at Minchington Close, and Barn Orchard Green.

She reported that three quotes for legal representation had been obtained and gave an overview of each, including costs. One firm, Wellers (based in Leatherhead, Surrey), was recommended by SALC. The Clerk noted that she was particularly impressed with their initial advice, which identified a right of pre-emption clause within the Heads of Terms. This clause would require the Parish Council, should it wish to transfer the land in future, to first offer it back to Somerset Council for £1. Wellers advised that such

clauses are often challenged as unreasonable, as the Parish Council would be investing in the land and should not be compelled to dispose of it below market value.

The Clerk has asked Somerset Council to remove this clause and is awaiting a response from their legal team. She will share all correspondence with Cllr Hewitson, who offered to assist both in pressing for the clause's removal and in exploring possible funding towards legal costs. The Clerk recalled a Somerset Council meeting some years ago where a dedicated fund to support parish and town councils with legal fees for the devolution of assets scheme, was mentioned. However, she later heard that this fund had been used up by town councils, who were given priority in asset transfers. When the Clerk raised this again with the property manager, he claimed no such fund ever existed. Wellers, who have represented other Somerset councils in similar transfers, suggested pressing Somerset Council to contribute towards parish council legal fees as part of the process.

It was agreed that Wellers be instructed as the Parish Council's legal representatives, subject to confirmation that their fee includes support in removing the pre-emption clause. Once formally appointed and Somerset Council notified, the Land Manager will instruct Somerset Council's Legal Services to progress the transfer to completion.

Action: Clerk

25/2247/b Formation of a sub-committee for the devolution of assets

A sub-committee was formed to progress the transfer of assets from the SC to the Parish Council. The sub-committee would consist of: The Chair Cllr More, Cllr Reid, Cllr Riley and the clerk. The Clerk to circulate all Heads of Terms (HoTs) and Land Registry documentation to the Councillors for review.

Action: Clerk

25/2247/c Allotment footpath – update

The Clerk reported that she had received an update from the Rights of Way Officer and expressed her disappointment at the continued delays and further excuses regarding the reopening of the footpath. The Clerk requested that Cllr Hewitson intervene to help secure a successful resolution

25/2247/d Dog related complaints

The Clerk reported that, in recent months, she has received numerous complaints about dogs in the village. These issues have been concentrated in certain areas, particularly Little Street and Higher Street, and include dogs being left to bark for prolonged periods, as well as reports of two separate incidents where people were bitten and other cases of aggressive behaviour towards other dogs.

In relation to persistent barking, while there is no specific law preventing this, it can cause significant disturbance to other residents. The Parish Council therefore asked the Clerk to include a note in the newsletter, encouraging dog owners to be mindful of the impact such noise has on the community. With regard to dog bites, the Council stressed that this is unacceptable behaviour. However, responsibility for action lies with the individual affected, who must report the incident directly to the police. A reminder of this will also be included in the newsletter.

Action: Clerk

25/2247/e Grit Bins

After receiving an email from SC, the Clerk reported that it appeared grit bins would, after all, be refilled this autumn. This followed previous news from SC last Christmas that grit bin filling would no longer be a statutory service from 2025–26, and that parish councils would be required to provide their own. The Clerk requested a map from SC to ensure that all seven grit bins in the parish were listed. However, the map received only showed three grit bins for Norton. The Clerk contacted SC Highways to point out that the map was inaccurate and provided details of the location of all seven grit bins in the village, along with their current state of fullness.

The Highways Manager responded, explaining that the discrepancy was due to a lack of resources at SC, which had resulted in the information not being kept up to date.

25/2247/f Pre-planning for Budget for 2026-27

The clerk reported that she would soon be starting the preparation of the budget for 2026–27. She highlighted the items that need to be included: election costs, an introduction of an annual grant for the village hall, Minchington rec and verge – quotes for maintenance for 2026/27, Insurance for Minchington Rec, Barn Orchard Green – quotes for grass cutting for 2026/27, Barn Orchard Green insurance and future grit supply. The clerk also reported that the repayment of the Village Hall loan has now been completed. The Chair requested that if any Councillor thinks of any additional items to include in the budget, they should inform the clerk.

Action: Clerk

25/2247/g Village Hall Deeds

Cllr Cole reported that the file containing the Deeds to the village hall had now been located. A copy was given to the clerk to scan the document and send it to the Councillors.

Action: Clerk

25/2248 PLANNING:**25/2248/a Matters For Report**

Nothing to report

25/2248/b Decisions Notified:

Nothing to report

25/2248/c Applications for consideration

Nothing to report

25/2249 FINANCE:**25/2249/a Matters for report:**

Payments – HMRC and any council employee salary. Clerk to organise the payment of both salary and HMRC payment on the 1st of every month (or first working day). Clerk to speak to payroll.

Action: Clerk

25/2249/b Matters for resolution

Contribution towards new front double doors for village hall – S137. A resolution was made to make a donation towards the cost of the new village hall doors by using the S137 fund, to the value of £470.

Cllr Cole informed the council that the new doors had been ordered. Once they were installed the clerk would arrange the transfer of funds to the village hall.

Action: Clerk

25/2249/c Invoices Payable – all paid via the Unity Trust Bank**AUGUST = PAYMENTS MADE:**

Louise Brooks	Democratic services – JULY 2025	£ 1,170.55
HMRC	Employee NI & PAYE & Employer NI to pay – JULY 2025	£ 198.48
Louise Brooks	Home Office Allowance – JULY 2025 – Government set	£ 26.00
Louise Brooks	JULY Parish Council Office supplies – Includes paper, ink and other office consumables, postage.	£ 44.00
Town and Parish Council Websites	Extra to pay for annual hosting (now Gov.uk website). we've already paid £200 (original price was £200 new price is £330pa)) plus gov.uk domain name registration fees (£60), setting up all email accounts (£60), configuring the existing website to work with gov.uk domain (£60), domain name registration for old website name (£20) (safeguarding)	£ 330.00
Montague Countryside Services	Clear footpath Y20/34 Broadmead lane to Little Norton with overhanging branches (£50). Install new kissing gate (£175) plus VAT	£ 270.00

SEPTEMBER - PAYMENTS DUE:

Louise Brooks	Democratic services – AUGUST 2025 (plus National Gov pay rise – backdated to April 2025)	£ 1,309.29
HMRC	Employee NI & PAYE & Employer NI to pay –AUGUST 2025 + NI PAYE for backpay	£ 286.41
Louise Brooks	Home Office Allowance – AUGUST 2025 – Government set	£ 26.00
Louise Brooks	AUGUST Parish Council Office supplies – Includes paper, ink and other office consumables, postage.	£ 44.00
Play Inspections Ltd	Outdoor Annual inspection – Main Rec	£ 114.00
Somerset Council	Weekly Emptying of dog and litter bins owned by parish council (5 bins x £6.50 plus VAT per bin per week) for the period of Apr-Jun 2025 – 1 st quarter of 25-26 financial year inv no 32003354	£ 514.80
Louise Brooks	New padlock for recreation field gate – purchased through Locks Direct	£ 64.22

Proposed: Cllr. More

Seconded: Cllr. Reid

Agreed unanimously

25/2250 VILLAGE HALL:

Nothing to report

25/2251 RECREATION GROUND:**25/2251/a New padlock required**

The clerk reported that a new lock is required for the gates at the recreation ground. The new lock will be the same type as the existing combination lock. The clerk was authorised to proceed with the order. Cost: £53.52 plus VAT (£64.22 total)

Payment will be reimbursed to the clerk once the purchase has been made.

Proposed: Cllr. Harris

Seconded: Cllr. Reid

Agreed unanimously

Action: Clerk

25/2251/b new email address added to signage

The clerk reported that the email address on both recreation signs needed updating due to the change to gov.uk email addresses. A quote had been obtained for two waterproof stickers to cover the original email, at a cost of £60 per sign. The Parish Council agreed to proceed, and a resolution was passed authorizing the clerk to place the order.

Proposed: Cllr. More

Seconded: Cllr. Harris

Agreed unanimously

Cllr. Cole asked for an update on the issue of gate security at the recreation field during the recent Songs of Praise event, following concerns raised by a member of the public regarding security at the site.

Cllr. Riley confirmed that during the Flower Show Day, the gate had been manned throughout. The Chair raised the question of whether a written agreement should be put in place for all future events when access to the gate key is requested. The Clerk explained that, for most events, the key is not released, and the gate remains locked. On this occasion, however, the PCC requested access. The Clerk had sent an email outlining the condition that the gate must be manned at all times due to recent traveller activity in the area. The PCC representative confirmed acceptance of this condition in writing. Despite this, the gate was left unmanned and wide open during the Songs of Praise performance. The Chair expressed disappointment that the agreed terms had not been adhered to, noting the associated risks to security and insurance. The Clerk was instructed to write formally to the PCC member involved. The Chair confirmed that the matter had now been addressed and considered closed but stressed that in future the gate key would not be released under similar circumstances unless the agreed conditions were fully met.

Cllr. Riley expressed concern that the PCC may not wish to hold the event again, as they were offended by the letter sent. The Chair responded that this was their choice but emphasized that the overriding issue was failure to comply with the agreed conditions.

The Chair also suggested that had assistance been requested, the Parish Council could have helped to man the gate, and simply closing the gate during the performance would have prevented the problem. The Clerk highlighted that removal of travellers can cost parish councils several thousands of pounds and that leaving the gate open would invalidate insurance coverage if travellers had entered the site. It was agreed that the Clerk would obtain quotations for replacement gates, post-and-rail fencing, and the installation of bollards at the entrance. The Chair also proposed obtaining quotes for bollards or large pieces of ham stone along the open side of Minchington Recreation Ground to enhance security once the asset transfer is completed. Cllr. Cole agreed to measure the number of bollards required, inform the Clerk, and liaise with the local quarry regarding stone prices.

Action: Clerk/ Cllr Cole

Cllr Riley reported that a number of properties backing onto the recreation field appeared to have created rear pedestrian entrances, giving them direct access to the field. She asked whether this was permitted. Cllr Harris confirmed that it was not allowed. The Chair stated that she would walk the area to review the situation.

Action: Chair Cllr More

The Clerk reported that she had received reports of golf being played at the main recreation area. The Chair asked for a piece to be included in the newsletter article reminding everyone that golf is not permitted in this area due to safety concerns, as it is a public space. This rule is clearly stated on the signage already in place.

Action: Clerk

25/2252 CORRESPONDENCE:

All correspondence received has been circulated to all Parish Councillors.

25/2253 FOOTPATHS:

Cllr Reid reported that the footpath fingerpost at Broadmead Lane had again been disfigured by graffiti. The Clerk was asked to speak with a Member of the Public (MOP) and also contact Down to Earth to explore whether the post could be cleaned or painted to cover the damage.

Action: Clerk

25/2254 MEMBERS' REPORTS.

Nothing to report

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

The next monthly meeting will be held on MONDAY 13th OCTOBER 2025 at 7.30 pm in the village hall committee room.