

MINUTES OF NORTON SUB HAMDON PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13th APRIL 2026
AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, NORTON VILLAGE HALL

26/2331 PRESENT:

Cllr. S More (Chairman), Cllr. B. Matraves (Vice-Chair), Cllr. J Harris, Cllr. C Riley, Cllr R Reid, Cllr. Mike Hewitson (Somerset Councillor) and Mrs. L. Brooks (Clerk). There were three members of the public present.

26/2332 APOLOGIES:

Cllr. J Cole

Cllr. P Gartrell

Cllr. Oliver Patrick (Somerset Councillor) – ongoing apologies

26/2333 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Nothing to report

26/2334 PUBLIC TIME

26/2334/a Public Time

A MOP thanked the Parish Council for the repairs that had been carried out to the handrail on the footpath in Little Street.

26/2334/b P.C.S.O. Report:

The Clerk reported that an update had been received from the PCSO regarding the dog attacks earlier in the year. The PCSO confirmed that the Police met with the owners in March. While specific details could not be disclosed due to data protection, further measures have been implemented to ensure the dogs are kept under control in line with legal requirements. The PCSO also requested that any further incidents or concerns involving the dogs be reported immediately.

26/2334/c Somerset Councillor report:

A report had been received prior to the meeting, and Cllr Hewitson was present to provide further information. The report outlined Somerset Council's focus on pothole repairs and its investment of up to £5 million over the next three years to improve the condition and appearance of roads, pavements, and cycleways across the county. The programme will include clearing gullies and drains, repairing and cleaning signs, refreshing road markings, and cutting back overgrown vegetation, particularly along walking and cycling routes. It aims to address long-standing maintenance issues not covered by routine safety works and to improve the ease with which residents can report problems. The Parish Council also discussed developments at Ham Hill and raised concerns regarding a reported alcohol license application, of which Cllr Hewitson was unaware.

26/2334/d CLT Update:

There were no matters to report. The Chair advised that she had spoken with the Chairman of the CLT regarding keeping the Parish Council informed of any developments or issues. She will follow up to confirm that this arrangement can be put in place.

Action: Chair Cllr. More

26/2334/e HYG Report

Cllr Riley reported that the HYG had a meeting later that week. She praised the enthusiasm of the members and the youth worker.

26/2334/f Allotment Report:

Cllr Matraves reported that one tenant was still yet to pay the 2026 fee; however, this matter is in hand and payment is expected during the week. He further reported that one full-size plot and one half-size plot are currently available. It was suggested that the availability and associated costs be advertised via the village WhatsApp group to increase awareness.

Action: Cllr Matraves

26/2334/g Bus Service Report

Nothing to report

26/2335 MINUTES

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

Proposed: Cllr. Riley

Seconded: Cllr. Reid

Agreed unanimously.

26/2336 MATTERS ARISING

26/2336/a Ham Hill – recent developments ref ham stone signs, damage and application for alcohol licence.

The Chair outlined concerns regarding developments that had arisen at Ham Hill over the past month, following the removal of all the traditional ham stone signs which had been toppled in preparation for replacement with new metal girder signage. The introduction of this new signage has been poorly received by residents of Norton and surrounding villages, with strong concern expressed that no public consultation had taken place.

The Clerk reported that she had written to Rachel Whaites at Somerset Council to convey the Parish Council's dismay at the removal of such an important element of Ham Hill's heritage. This concern was heightened given that the new visitor centre has benefited from National Lottery funding, which is intended to support projects that preserve and celebrate the UK's heritage, historic landscapes, and community identity. The removal of the traditional ham stone signs was considered to be fundamentally at odds with this purpose.

The Clerk further highlighted that SCs assertion that the proposed steel signage would be in keeping with the character of Ham Hill was strongly disputed. The introduction of industrial-style materials was viewed as entirely inappropriate within this historic and natural setting. She formally requested that the original stone signage be reinstated with immediate effect, emphasising that Ham Hill is a rustic country park with deep historical roots, not a modern attraction requiring such interventions. It was felt that the current approach risked undermining the character that makes the site so valued by the community.

It was noted that many residents had also submitted complaints. Following this, Somerset Council issued a revised response stating that it had always intended to reinstate the stone signage.

However, by this stage, when the stones were reinstalled near to where they had originally sat, there appeared to be significant damage caused to them.

At the April Parish Council meeting, the Chair raised further concerns regarding the safety of the proposed steel signage. It was noted that modern roadside signage is typically required to be collapsible, frangible, or "passively safe" in order to reduce the risk of serious injury or fatality in the event of a collision. Traditional rigid steel posts may present a hazard, and it was questioned whether the proposed design would meet current safety standards.

The Clerk reported that she had been informed earlier that day by another Clerk that the Visitor Centre was applying for an alcohol licence. She advised that she had spoken with the landlord of the Prince of Wales public house that morning, who subsequently raised the matter with Somerset Council. Somerset Council had responded to the landlord stating that alcohol would only be sold in the gift shop and served on-site at special events. The Parish Council expressed strong concern upon learning that an alcohol licence may now be sought for more general sales.

Members felt it was unrealistic to assume that alcohol purchased from the shop would not be consumed on-site, particularly given the provision of new outdoor seating. Concern was also raised that the removal of litter bins could result in an increase in discarded bottles and cans across the area.

In addition, the Parish Council expressed concern about the potential impact that the sale of alcohol could have on the Prince of Wales public house at Ham Hill, particularly at a time when many public houses are facing significant challenges.

The Clerk also reported concerns raised locally regarding an increase in dog fouling across the site since Somerset Council had begun promoting Ham Hill in a more commercial manner, with some residents feeling that the site had become less welcoming to local people.

Overall, members considered that these developments indicate a shift towards commercialisation, rather than preserving Ham Hill as an area of natural beauty and a traditional country park.

The Clerk was instructed to write a further email outlining these concerns.

Acton: Clerk

26/2336/b Minchington Rec

The clerk updated the PC on the latest developments at Minchington Rec.

- The Clerk will contact the tree surveyor regarding a tree that has been marked as diseased and identified for removal, following the Chair's observation that the tree is currently in flower.
- A resident has contacted the Clerk expressing appreciation for the works undertaken at Minchington Recreation Ground and has offered to fund the planting of additional cherry trees to replace gaps in the avenue where trees have been lost over recent years. Bridge – the rotted footbridge leading into the field in the corner of Minchington Rec has been reported and is on the website as issue no: Action is needed pretty quickly though as the bridge is rapidly deteriorating.
- Norton Community Matters has been in touch with the clerk and are keen to contribute towards some new replacement swings. The clerk has received one quote to date which she has passed onto the group and reported she had a meeting with them later in the week.
- The Clerk reported that the footbridge leading into the field in the corner of Minchington Recreation Ground has been identified as rotten and deteriorating. The issue has been reported and now appears on the Rights of Way website (issue no #85713). Urgent attention was noted as being required due to the condition of the bridge, which is deteriorating rapidly.
- The boules committee have been in touch and would like to repaint the boules bench. Th PC had no objection to this.

Acton: Clerk

26/2336/c Fencing at Main Rec

The Chairman reported that the fencing had been reviewed and the matter discussed in detail. The Council confirmed that it is satisfied that the recreation field fencing, as installed, is appropriate and in accordance with the original quotation, and agreed that no alterations are required.

The Chair also noted that the new fence at the property backing onto the village hall car park requires attention. The installation has generated a significant amount of spoil (excess soil, clay, and rocks excavated for post holes), and there was concern that this could cause issues during heavy periods of rain. Cllr Harris reported that the neighbouring resident is addressing the matter.

The Chair further reported that she had met with the Vice Chair of the Village Hall Committee prior to the meeting. During this discussion, it was raised that the new section of fencing adjacent to the hall is positioned approximately 1.2 metres from the building and is considered too close to allow full use of the kitchen fire escape in an emergency. The Chair noted that the existing path width is 1.2 metres. It was also noted that this is the first time a specific concern regarding the distance has been raised, as previous comments at the March meeting related to workmanship, height, and materials rather than positioning.

It was noted that the fence had been installed to follow the line of the existing path alongside the Hall and to align with the end of the existing veranda fencing, as agreed at the original site measurements stage. It was further noted that aligning it with the recreation field fencing would not have followed the path or veranda line and may have appeared incongruous.

It was unanimously agreed that, as the Village Hall Committee had funded the materials for their section of the fencing, any decisions relating to that portion of the post-and-rail fencing rest with them, provided that the recreation field fencing remains unchanged.

It was suggested that extending the existing metal railings around the veranda, in line with the path, may be more appropriate aesthetically. It was also noted that the Village Hall Committee may wish to consider using the Parish Council's annual £2,000 grant (to be paid into the Village Hall Committee account on 14th April) towards any further works.

26/2336/d SES quotes for new cameras

Following the recent service of the CCTV at the hall, it was highlighted that 3 new cameras were required. This was discussed in detail. It was agreed that as we had recently paid SES for the annual CCTV maintenance agreement (covering up to February 2027), it makes sense to proceed with the replacement of the three cameras that did not work.

The Chair reiterated the importance that the PC need to be confident that authorised individuals are able to access footage when needed. In the past, there have been some recurring issues.

As public funds are involved, we need to be sure this represents good value. The maintenance arrangements will be reviewed each year, and if problems continue, we may need to reconsider the situation.

26/2336/e Arborist

The Clerk apologised and explained that, due to personal circumstances and a period of compassionate leave since the March meeting, the tender had not yet been sent to the arborists. However, she confirmed that this would be done immediately.

The Clerk also reiterated that the Parish Council cannot lawfully use an untrained individual to remove or conduct work on a large tree in a public space. The Council has a strict legal duty to ensure that any such work is undertaken by a competent, appropriately trained, and fully insured arboriculturist (tree surgeon), particularly given the public nature of the site.

This responsibility arises under the Council's duty of care, including the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 and 1984, and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The Clerk further noted the importance of ensuring competence and training to minimise public risk and highlighted that failure to comply with these obligations could result in negligence and potential legal consequences.

26/2336/f Future food van visits to school car park

The Clerk reported that she has been in contact with a fish and chip van, a Greek food van, and an Italian food van, all of whom have expressed an interest in attending Norton on a Monday evening once a month on a rotational basis.

The proposed arrangement is to commence with the fish and chip van in the first month, followed by the Greek food van the following month, then the fish and chip van again, and subsequently the Italian food van, with the intention of continuing a rotating schedule of different food vendors in future months.

The Clerk confirmed that discussions are ongoing, and it is hoped that the initiative will commence on the first Monday in May.

Action: Clerk

26/2337 PLANNING:**26/2337/a Matters For Report**

Nothing to report

26/2337/b Decisions Notified:

Nothing to report

26/2337/c Applications for consideration

Nothing to report

26/2338 FINANCE:**26/2338/a Matters for report:**

End of final quarter 2025–26 / End of financial year 2025–26 to commence: The Clerk distributed hard copies of the receipts and payments for the year to all Parish Councillors present and talked through the figures.

The Clerk reported that she had a meeting scheduled with the internal auditor later in the week to go through the end of year paperwork.

26/2338/b Matters for resolution

Nothing to report

26/2338/c Invoices Payable – all paid via the Unity Trust Bank

Louise Brooks	Democratic services – March 2026	£ 1,198.10
HMRC	Employee NI & PAYE & Employer NI to pay March	£ 216.23
Louise Brooks	Home Office Allowance – March 2026 – Government set	£ 26.00
Louise Brooks	March Parish Council Office supplies – Includes paper, ink and other office consumables, postage.	£ 44.00
Down2Earth SW Ltd	General village maintenance Jan-March 26 inc play area, culvert & boundary stones	£ 345.00
PATA	Payroll & pension management Jan-March 26	£ 51.30
Somerset Landscapes Ltd	Main Rec Jan-March	£ 310.73
Somerset Landscapes Ltd	Minchington Rec March x 3 cuts (verge 1 x cut) inv no: SLL36685	£ 654.62
Somerset Landscapes Ltd	Barn Orchard March 2 x cuts inv no: SLL36684	£ 70.80
Zurich Insurance	Annual Insurance Policy	TBA
HYG	Annual Grant 2026-27	£ 2,657.60
Norton Village Hall	Annual Grant 2026-27	£ 2,000.00
Norton Newsletter	Annual Grant 2026-27	£ 60.00

Proposed: Cllr.Reid

Seconded: Cllr.Riley

Agreed unanimously

26/2339 VILLAGE HALL:

Nothing to report

26/2340 RECREATION GROUND:

Nothing to report

26/2341 CORRESPONDENCE:

All correspondence received has been circulated to all Parish Councillors.

26/2342 FOOTPATHS:

The Chair raised concern regarding a hole that has appeared on the footpath running from Broadmead Lane to Little Norton. The Parish Council expressed a preference not to formally report the issue at this stage, due to concerns that Somerset Council may close the footpath as a result.

The Clerk agreed to ask Cllr Cole whether he is able to fill the hole with hardcore. If this is not possible, the Clerk will contact Down2Earth to undertake the necessary.

Action: Clerk

26/2343 MEMBERS' REPORTS.

Cllr Matravers reported that a number of residents appear to be misusing the village dog waste bins by disposing of domestic animal waste (including dog, rabbit, and hamster waste) in carrier bags. As a result, the bins are becoming full, leaving insufficient space for dog walkers to dispose of waste during walks. This has led to some bags being left on the ground beside the bins.

The Parish Council noted that the dog waste bins, which are funded by the Council and regularly emptied, are intended solely for use by people whilst walking in the village. The current misuse is reducing their availability for this purpose.

The Parish Council asked the Clerk to include a note in the next newsletter requesting that residents refrain from using the dog bins for household pet waste, which can instead be disposed of in domestic black bins for collection.

Action: Clerk

The meeting closed at 8.36 pm

The next monthly meeting will be held on MONDAY 11th MAY 2026 at 7.30 pm in the village hall committee room.

THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE MONTHLY MEETING ON THE MONDAY 11TH MAY AT 7.10 PM