

LITTON CHENEY PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Litton Cheney Parish Council held on
7:30pm on Tuesday 14 January 2025
at Litton and Thorner's Community Hall

Present: Cllr Bill Orchard (Chair), Cllr Quentin Blacke, Cllr John Firrell, Cllr Andy King, Cllr Rob Matthews, Cllr Andrew Price, Debbie Hollings (Clerk).

Also in attendance: Dorset Councillor Sally Holland and 2 parishioners.

Apologies for absence: None received

Cllr Orchard expressed gratitude to former Clerk Lucy for her significant contributions during her tenure and warmly welcomed the new Clerk, Debbie Hollings.

Declarations of interest: None.

Democratic time: A parishioner enquired about unspent CIL funds from the past year and suggested duplicating the village map in other locations.

The issue of litter bins was raised and the need for more awareness of the country code and personal responsibility for rubbish disposal. The Chair explained that CIL funds have spending restrictions and must meet certain criteria. The Parish Council has plans for further CIL expenditure and funds in reserve, mainly due to a need to cover for reduced funding from Dorset Council. It was stressed it was not just down to the PC to come up with ideas for putting the CIL to good use. Local residents were actively encouraged to propose ways in which the money could be used.

The parishioner also asked about the plans for the next Christmas tree, suggesting a planted tree that could be sponsored by the local nursery who used to supply trees. There was a discussion on the sustainability of a potted versus a planted Christmas tree.

Afternote – Cllr Matthews, together with Elizabeth Kingston and Pete Dennis will meet as a group and put together ideas and proposals that can be considered at the Parish Assembly meeting in May.

Approval of Minutes of Parish Council meetings held on Tuesday 12 November 2024

One change to be noted for the previous minutes is that Cllr Andrew Price was in attendance. Proposed by Cllr Orchard, seconded by Cllr Firrell and all agreed unanimously to be a true record.

Matters arising from the minutes not part of this agenda: None.

Dorset Council overview: Ward Councillor for Chesil Bank: Cllr Sally Holland

Dorset Plan – was voted through at Full Council on 5 December.

Budget Plans – these are ongoing and there is no final budget to report on currently. The link below gives more details on the plans, which still have to go through the scrutiny process. The budget is £416 million an increase of £39 million from last year. The additional cost of service delivery next year is forecast to be £83.4 million. Council funding is set and limited by Government and this sum is not affordable. The council's budget proposals therefore also outline significant cost-saving measures. There is a proposed rise in council tax of just under 3% and increase in the precept for adult social care of 2%

[Dorset Council unveils bold £416 million budget for 2025/26 - Dorset Council](#)

20mph Applications – (Coast Road) – Abbotsbury is near submitting their application, with a high level of support from the residents. Portesham has applied for traffic surveys on the two roads required to complete application and will be carrying out a resident's survey. Burton Bradstock is awaiting survey results and have had a lot of support from the local community. Bus Service Improvement Plan – Dorset was awarded £3.8million from central government, this was considerably less than neighbouring councils so is disappointing with regard to increasing rural bus services. DC is keen to transform bus usage across the county, but this is subject to securing external funding.

Planning – with the large target for new homes set by the government, DC has opened a 'Call for Sites 2024' inviting landowners to submit land for consideration as part of the Local Plan. Should you know anyone, please make them aware of this invitation but Cllr Holland is aware the parish council has also been trying to secure land for a Community Land Trust.

Clerk's/RFO's Report:

Clerk now has access to Lloyds Business Banking and both accounts.

Clerk now familiar with the financial accounts for the council. Budget information and year to-date records have been created to help councillors with Precept decision making.

Clerk has met with previous post holder to confirm salary payment owed.

Setting up the parish council as a Business for HMRC records, as it is a registered Employer.

Creating an Employee Contract and confirming working arrangements, including any additional working from home allowance.

Sorting out paperwork from the previous post holder. Cllr Firrell confirmed space is available at LATCH for document storage if needed.

To note payment for signage approved at December 2024 meeting. Cllr Firrell confirmed that although no new signage has been completed as yet, the originals are being removed. The invoice and payment for the signs will most likely be approved at the March 2025 meeting.

Payment to the new Clerk for ten hours of extra handover time (£150.08) was proposed by Cllr Orchard, seconded by Cllr Price, and unanimously agreed.

Approval of invoices for payment and the Schedule of Regular Payments (as per Appendix a) was proposed by Cllr Firrell, seconded by Cllr Orchard, and unanimously agreed.

Budget and precept calculations for 2025/2026 were considered:

Cllr Orchard asked the Council to consider a 10% precept increase for 2025/26, raising it to £12,000. This would result in an annual bill of £58.84 for Council Tax Band D households and £83.00 for Band F properties. The increase is intended to help the council carry out works on behalf of the village, as Dorset Council cannot now always fulfil their obligations. The £12,000 precept would give the council an estimated income of £13,185 against an estimated expenditure of £13,800, resulting in a small loss of £600.15 to be covered by reserves. Cllr Orchard believes these charges offer good value for money for the village.

Cllr Firrell mentioned that costs for a new website and defibrillator listed in the budget might not be needed, potentially reducing the overspend. Cllr Orchard confirmed that CIL funds could be used as necessary throughout the year. Cllr Orchard proposed setting the 2024/2025 Precept Request at £12,000, which was seconded by Cllr Firrell and unanimously agreed. The Clerk will submit the request before the end of January 2025.

Cllr Matthews asked about the source of CIL funds. Cllr Orchard explained that developers contribute to the village through Section 106 or CIL funds for each development. Cllr Firrell confirmed recent contributions from developments at Charity Farm, Barges Close, and Garden Close. Without a neighbourhood plan, the parish council receives 15% of the funds, but with one, they would receive 25%.

Councillors' Portfolios:

Planning: Cllr Orchard:

Puncknowle and Swyre PC have completed a housing needs survey with a 56% response rate. A meeting to discuss further proposals will be held on 15th January 2025 at 7 pm in the Village Hall with the parish council and Jacqui Cuff.

Applications:

- Approval granted for the garage and store at Kowhai Cottage.
- Bride Place development nearing completion with external and internal works still pending. Sewerage connection, drainage, curbing, and footpaths are yet to be finished. Completion is expected in 2 to 3 months.
- Two new properties at the back of Barges Close are nearly complete, with mid-year completion anticipated. They will not be put up for sale until both are finished.
- The Garden Close application for Air source heating was withdrawn due to noise criteria issues. The applicant will now apply for solar panels. Dorset Council departments have conflicting requirements regarding Air source heating and noise compliance. A brief discussion followed on the benefits and noise issues of heat pumps.

Highways/Transport: Cllr Price:

- Three large trees on Whiteway have been marked for potential removal, likely requiring road closure, but no application has been received yet.

- No road closures are currently planned, though pre-works have been done at the bend past Four Meads, indicating possible resurfacing. The new access to Charity Farm is in use.
- Cllr Price has been advocating for nearly four years for a weight limit on articulated lorries on Whiteway, supported by the former MP and Head of Highways, Jack Wiltshire. The current main obstacle is the cost of £50,000 for signage and legal requirements, which Dorset Council cannot afford. National Highways suggests waiting for a wider safety study along the A35, but this delay is seen as unfair due to the dangers posed by heavy lorries on the narrow road. Parks Farm (Cheese Factory) is willing to contribute to the costs, and the parish is asked to consider if they can also contribute to help make the changes. Cllr Price emphasised the urgency due to ongoing damage and safety risks, noting the lack of advance warning signs and reliance on SATNAV guidance.
- There are serious safety concerns with lorries navigating Whiteway, especially during winter with wet, slippery roads. Issues include lorries getting stuck, driving on the wrong side of the road, and crossing the dual carriageway in fog. Cllr Price noted that National Highways are not making it easy to address these risks. It might be worth writing to the responsible minister or local MP. The previous MP was supportive, but progress stalled despite agreement on the solution.
- Cllr Price reported engagement with the Dorset road safety team on several issues, including damage to Beech House. Cllr Holland offered to put Cllr Price in touch with new MP, Edward Morello, in the hope that he could assist in bringing about a mutually acceptable solution to this long standing problem. This was gratefully accepted.

Afternote – contact with MP Edward Morello has been made.

Cllr Price suggested the council consider contributing funds to tip the balance but did not specify an amount. Discussions will continue.

- Cllr Blacke asked about “HGV Drivers ignore your SATNAV” signs. Cllr Price confirmed no objections to 7-ton HGV lorries, but 44-ton articulated lorries are problematic.
- Cllr Matthews questioned why restrictions cannot be applied to Cow Lane and Cox's Lane. The problem and solution are identified; the challenge is helping Dorset Council implement it, potentially through financial contributions.
- Cllr Price mentioned a legal agreement (Travel Plan) for routing Cheese Factory traffic via Long Bredy Hut, which took nearly 10 years to finalise. However, ongoing issues, such as damage to Beech House, have not been adequately addressed. The owner was asked to install CCTV at his own expense and notify the police, but without vehicle numbers, the police took no action.
- Other incidents include the CG Fry accident at the mill, where inappropriate bollards were installed and later removed after the chairman's intervention, and persistent flooding from drains at 2 Charity Cottage, which took excessive time to resolve.
- In Chalk Pit Lane, subsiding roads caused car scraping, but the issue was temporarily fixed without proper resolution. Cllr Price believes a road closure is needed for a proper repair.
- Other issues including access to Charity Farm have been ongoing. Bollards were introduced to prevent farm traffic from damaging the road, but this solution has not worked well. Elsewhere, signs put up by Parks Farm (Cheese Factory) to direct traffic were removed.
- More recently there had been a breakdown in relations with our nominated Community Highways Officer (CHO) culminating in an intervention from Interim Community Highways Manager Dawn Heath insisting business be conducted via the Dorset Council portal. There have been a number of email exchanges involving Cllr Price, Firrell and Orchard, previous Parish Clerk Lucy and Dawn Heath.

Afternote - A meeting has now been arranged in March between Cllr Firrell, Cllr Price, Dawn Heath and CHO Stuart Smith after which it is hoped normal relations can be resumed. Cllr Holland offered to assist if it would help.

Playground/ Playing Field/Allotments: Cllr King:

Allotments:

- There were two people on the waiting list for a plot, and 2 plots that became vacant have been allocated.
- Quotes for the grass cutting service, restarting in March 2025, have not yet been received. Cllr King will try to obtain three quotes quickly and suggested discussing and agreeing on the provider in a meeting if considered necessary. Dorset Council is expected to quote under £1000.
- The Clerk will check Financial Regulations regarding accepting quotes between meetings and financial limits.
- Cllr King requested Debbie to provide contact details for Derek Kent, who cuts grass in Shipton Gorge.

Playing field:

- Cllr King proposed to use social media to set up and lead a taskforce for small repairs to the playing field equipment.
- Moles: Cllr King has not made further progress on replacing the rubber mats in the playing field but will provide gathered information to all councillors within the next two weeks.

Countryside Matters/Footpaths/Rights of Way: Cllr Blacke

- Chilcombe Bridge: Cllr Blacke contacted Ranger Stuart Semple after New Year regarding Chilcombe Bridge damage. Stuart confirmed he could fund the project and offered £2,500 by the end of March. He has provided the bridge specification to Russell Randall. Cllr Blacke also secured a £500 contribution from Frederick Spicer of the Litton Trust and £100 from West Dorset Ramblers. Other groups may also pledge funds.
Stuart Semple, Senior Ranger from Dorset Council, emphasized that the invoice must be paid by the end of March 2025. The Clerk and Chairman will determine how to gather and pay the funds.

Village Fabric/ Maintenance/ DAPTC/BLAP/Administration and Probity: Cllr Firrell: Litter/Dog Poo Bins:

- Richard Cuzens has arranged with Dorset Council to purchase and install two bins in or near his field at the top of School Lane, which he will also service. LCPC will provide two additional bins. Currently, two bins are being refurbished by Russel Randall. Subject to DC approval, one will be placed at White Cross where the footpath starts to Puncknowle, with the second location yet to be decided.
Robin Barbour does not want a bin at or near Baglake Farm, preferring people to take their dog waste home.
The Parish Council seeks a convenient location for the second bin that is also accessible for Dorset Council to service. Potential locations include by the snicket bench or the entrance to the playing field, though Cllr John Firrell noted the latter is not accessible for DC servicing. Another suggested location is the triangle at Coombefield Farm on Chalk Pit Lane.
Discussed putting up Dog Notices to encourage people not to litter. Cllr Matthews still has the original ones provided by the Dog Warden. Proposals: Cllr Firrell proposed that a budget for putting up further signs be set at £200. Cllr Orchard seconded the proposal. All agreed.
- DAPTC Cllr Firrell advised that the virtual DAPTC Western Area meeting due to take place this week had been postponed.
- BLAP Cllr Firrell advised that the next meeting due to take place soon with both a varied agenda and several items of interest to the parish, one being devolution and where are we going to put the extra houses!

Telecommunications/IT: Cllr Matthews:

Openreach – Full fibre installation in the village is nearly complete, with only a small stretch in Chalk Pit Lane and Litton Hill remaining. While there are some logistical and finishing issues, almost everyone in the village should now be able to apply for full fibre.

Planning Matters: no further applications for discussion.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- Cllr Firrell noted that the parish council previously donated £4000 to the community hall for solar panels, which are now helping with energy costs. To fully complete the sustainability project, storage batteries are needed. Cllr Firrell is requesting the PC to set aside £3000 (not yet committed) for LATCH. The LATCH committee will review costs and present a full proposal to the council in March.
- Regarding the A35 signage contribution, it was discussed that the PC might consider agreeing in principle to make a contribution. The Clerk will confirm whether the PC can contribute to Highways authority signage.

Election of new Chairman: Cllr Orchard proposed stepping down as Chairman, as indicated at the last meeting. With Cllr Firrell's agreement, he proposed that Cllr Firrell take over as Chairman. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Matthews. Cllr Firrell confirmed he would deem it a considerable privilege to serve as Chairman, and the proposal was unanimously agreed.

Election of new Vice Chairman: Cllr Firrell proposed that Cllr Orchard be appointed Vice Chairman. Cllr Orchard expressed a willingness to take on the role of Vice Chairman. The parish council aims to plan for role succession. Cllr Orchard has served as Chairman since 2015, and both councillors have been on the council since 2008. They acknowledge the need for future leadership transitions, with Cllr Firrell humorously comparing his age to that of Joe Biden. Cllr Price seconded the proposal, and all agreed.

Date of next meeting: The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Tuesday 11 March 2025

Meeting closed: 21:21.

Debbie Hollings
Parish Clerk

Appendix a: Finance Report 6th January 2025

<u>Parish funds</u>	Total
Balance brought forward as at 1 April	£36,773.32
Income to date	£11,212.52
Expenditure to date	£13,966.21
Parish funds as at above date*	£34,019.63

Of which the following is held in reserves or CIL

Earmarked reserves	£13,750
CIL	£14,742
Playground (ringfenced)	£100
Community Bench Fund (ringfenced)	£677
Total reserves/CIL held	£29,269.00
Approved spend since last reported/meeting	
CIL: Signage £378+VAT	£453.60
PCC Donation	£550.00
	£1,003.60
Income since last reported/meeting	
Interest	£25.82
Interest	£21.93
	£47.75

Invoices/Payments for approval at time of publishing agenda	
Vision ICT Domain Hosting	£60.00
Clerks Handover Additional Hours x10	£150.08
Reimburse Cllr Firrell for village Christmas Tree	£49.96
Scheduled: Outgoing Clerk's wage	£422.24
Scheduled: Clerk's wage	£422.24
	£1,104.52