

Durweston Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting hosted by: Durweston Parish Council Meeting followed by the regular Parish Council meeting on 19th May 2025 at Durweston Village Hall starting at 1900 hours. nt: Councillors: C Newton (Chair), E Corry, H Galpin, T Hewson, T Marks.

In Attendance: Dorset Councillor Sherry Jespersen, Mrs J O'Connell (Clerk), 0 members of the public.

Apologies for Absence: Cllr J Hosford, S Spiller.

Annual Parish Meeting: The following reports were submitted.

1. Parish Council – Chairs Report 2024-2025

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all those who generously give up their time in service of our very special village and for the good of all.

2024/2025 was a quieter year than the last couple of years, when we held Jubilee and Coronation Celebrations but continuing in a similar theme as previous years. In the last 12 months we have:

Main Road: Continued the campaign to reduce the speed limit of the main road to 30 mph, and to reduce the speed at the Enford Farm Bend. More signage has been put up and markings on the main road have been re-painted. My thanks to the Speed Watch team for their efforts. Also discussions are taking place with the Bridge and Structural team at Dorset Council regarding rebuilding and protecting our beloved bridge from future damage.

Playing Fields: Considerable time and effort is spent on maintaining and improving the playing field and play equipment. Special thanks once again to Sam James who renovated the roundabout and one of the benches. Sadly, following our Annual Inspection we had to take the bucket swing out of action due to rotten poles. We are looking to replacing it with a metal swing to lessen maintenance and avoid any damage due to strimming. In addition, the canopy of one of our majestic oaks was reduced by a third as sadly Oak Bracket Fungus is attacking its roots, the other oak was also slightly reduced in size and the Willow was pollarded.

Allotments: The lease was renewed, and I wish to thank Mark Taylor for overseeing this on behalf of the Parish Council. Many thanks also to the Allotment Committee for their help with this matter.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all of the Councillors for their dedication and service to our community, also immense thanks to Jan O'Connell (previously Fairman), our Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, for her expertise and hard work throughout the year. Lastly, I wish to express my thanks to our Dorset Councillor Sherry Jespersen for her support and expertise throughout the year.

2. St Nicholas Church.

Saint Nicholas Church is open every day and maintains two services per month, (1st and 3rd Sundays) with additional festival services, eg, Christmas and Easter. We have no vicar at the moment although the Diocese is looking to recruit a priest who will take charge of the newly formed Longbarrow Benefice: a six-parish benefice of which we are one. Services are mostly conducted by Dr Penny Wallis, a Licenced Lay Minister and Durweston resident. Durweston School has daily assemblies in church and the popular St Nicks café opens every Thursday morning. There have been some well attended concerts and soirees throughout

the year. Thanks to the generosity of individuals and the hard work of a small army of volunteers the church made a small trading surplus in 2024.

3. St Nicholas Café:

St Nicholas Café has been open now for more than three years and has become a valuable and significant part of our community. We started tentatively in the aftermath of COVID at a time when everyone had been suffering the aftereffects of isolation and the inability to meet and share.

We open every Thursday from 8.30 am until noon so children and their parents can have breakfast before school. The morning continues with our regular visitors and often those from further afield. We even have groups coming to café such as beaters, hedge layers, cyclists from time to time, teaching staff before they begin their school day, plus we offer takeaways for, eg. Farmers and local workers.

We have recently increased our prices for the first time in order to cover our costs, contribute to the cost of running the church and donate to charities quarterly. St Nicks Café has given Durweston a new lease of life when it was very much needed and has also been instrumental in keeping the church open for worship when it was struggling to achieve financial stability.

The atmosphere is always warm and friendly and for many, coming to café is the highlight of their week. Combining the enthusiasm of volunteers who share the running of the café, the excellent quality of our home-made organic food, and the fun we all have with our visitors and guests, St Nicks Café is a resounding success.

If you would like to join our fun and enthusiastic team, please get in touch with Cllr Christine Newton or Jules Hosford.

4. The Village Hall.

It has been another productive year for the Village Hall with lots of progress made around maintaining the hall to a suitable standard.

Two sources of repeated feedback have been resolved, heating and boiler have been overhauled and a long running issue with the dishwasher has been resolved without having to run to the cost of replacing either.

Occupancy over the last financial year is at 62.30% and a financial position better than last year in being £1,416.33 profit.

The regular activities continue to bring the village together in the Hall, in the form of weekly coffee mornings, monthly pub nights, and annual events such as Autumn Festival, over 60s Christmas dinner and solstice festivals.

The Committee continues to meet monthly and has grown with 3 new members over the past year. Special thanks to the new Treasurer, Secretary, old and new committee members, and our full-time employee for all the effort put in to keeping the hall functioning.

5. The Allotment Association:

The allotments in Durweston continue to be popular and well-tended by members of the Association who come from both the village and areas close by. Eight residents from the village have allotments and six from other villages or from Blandford.

The allotments are managed by a small committee and there are few problems. However, one significant concern is the constant dog fouling on the site despite constant encouragement that

dog waste should be picked up by owners. To counteract this issue, we are randomly locking the gate to deter dog walkers using the path through the allotments and bring attention to the issue. The general site tasks (strimming, hedge cutting etc.) are carried out by the allotment holders themselves. Costs are covered by the allotment holders who pay an annual fee, and the accounts are well managed by the Secretary/ Treasurer. The accounts/ standing orders for the management of the allotments and general tasks are discussed, agreed at the Annual meeting of the holders in March each year and published to members.

In summary the allotments are popular, well managed and very productive and are a positive asset to the village.

6. Durweston Primary ASEC Report from Headteacher:

This year is my last as I am retiring at the end of the summer term after 19 years at the school, 9 of them as headteacher. I feel that I am leaving the school in a good place. In 2024, our KS2 SATs results were excellent, and it looks as if this year's could be even better. The school has a good reputation in the local area and numbers are rising for the first time for a long time, we had more applications than places for our Reception class next year: pre-school is full this term and we have 19 children booked in for September.

A new headteacher has been appointed: She is currently Deputy Head at Trinity CE Primary School in Verwood. Trinity is also a member of DSAT, and staff know Jenny as she is their English lead. I think that everyone is happy with the appointment. Jenny came to our May Day celebration and took time to chat with parents, which I know was much appreciated. I know that the Trust are keen for Jenny to keep the character of Durweston and especially to maintain our extensive extra curriculum offer. To this end, I have put together this document for her, detailing the opportunities we provide in addition to the National Curriculum.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/107KEbp3ABT0iVJJuvGcYgNAMQp9pdpceDgy3oR9XtyM/edit?usp=sharing>

Please make sure that you look at all of the tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet.

I am really proud of what we have achieved at Durweston but please make no mistake, this is very much a team effort! I have been blessed to work with some really amazing members of staff. Three of the teachers are Trust Lead Teachers and two of the others have been recognised for the outstanding work they do in their classrooms. The new pre-school lead has transformed our pre-school. The office staff provide the administrative backbone, and we all know that the most important member of staff is really the Premises Officer (aka cleaner). Thanks too, to my amazing team of governors who have tirelessly given their time to support the school. Further information on what we have been doing over the past year can be found in our newsletter. Finally please remember that you are all most welcome to visit the school, I am always pleased to show people around.

7. Speed Watch.

Durweston Community Speed Watch have managed 5-hour sessions over the last year. In those sessions we monitored 3,490 vehicles with 8 vehicles exceeding the speed limit, the fastest doing 76 mph in a 40 zone.

Working with Dorset CSW co-ordinators, we have managed to set up two additional CSW locations, one outside the old brewery on the A350 and the second in the 10 zone, on the junction of Church Road and Haycombe.

8. Dorset Councillor Sherry Jespersen Report.

The current government is making changes to planning regulations to further their intention to build more houses. Many of these changes are likely to make it even harder for local councils to control speculative development and government are also looking to strip away the powers of planning committees to make local decisions. The government's housing target for Dorset is 3,219 homes each year, more than double the previous target. So, the new Local Plan for Dorset will be critical. This plan sets out where the 3,219 homes should be located and what physical and social infrastructure will be needed alongside these new homes. But the local plan is not just about housing, it also sets out policies for employment and retail sites, reviving town centres, community facilities, conservation and environmental protection and building design and sustainability standards.

The final draft of the Dorset Local Plan will be published for consultation over the summer. It is really important that we all engage with the consultation. It will be our last chance to influence the plan before it goes to the Secretary of State for implementation in 2027. In the meantime, we continue with the current policies which we know from experience offer little protection from speculative development around our villages. I will continue to serve on the planning committee and do my best for North Dorset.

Dorset Council is reviewing Day Care Services and is proposing to close the Blandford Day Centre and the Trinity Centre in Shaftesbury which will leave residents of North Dorset underserved. These services are a lifeline for those who use them. A campaign led by local residents and supported by Local Councillors and Simon Hoare MP, is underway to persuade the administration at DC that these services must be kept open. A public consultation runs on this until 9th June so please make your views known.

On a more positive note, the new Vale Family Hub has opened in Sturminster. The hub offers support for families including health and midwifery, breakfast and homework clubs and help with problems such as housing and debt. It is a really welcoming space with a play area and a great café.

I am supporting a call to DC to increase support for Dorsets beleaguered businesses. While many of the levers to improve economic performance rest with national government there is more that the council can do to support businesses as they face unprecedented challenges. Conservative councillors have put forward a ten-point plan which will put economic recovery at the heart of the council's decision making and signal clear intent to support the moral as well as economic case for economic growth.

I have been working with the Police and Crime Commissioner for over 2 years to improve the data used by the police and council to assess road safety. So often I request road safety measures on local roads only to be rejected on the grounds that there is no evidence to support my case. Residents tell me about near misses, collisions and damage to property but until now neither DC nor the police have kept records of non-injury collisions. I am pleased that we can now report damage only, non-injury incidents and near misses online to DC. This data will help me make your case for road improvements.

DC maintains 2,400 miles of roads, fills 20,000 potholes a year and cuts hundreds of miles of verges, so it stands to reason that work to maintain our roads must be prioritised. Our Community Highway Officer inspects roads for urgent work, but not all faults will get picked up. Residents all have a part to play in reporting issues as soon as they arise – the sooner and the more often a fault is reported the sooner it will be fixed. It is very easy to report issues on the DC website.

DC was awarded £3.3m in government funding for improvements to bus services but chose to allocate almost all of this to towns in the south of the county. Poor public transport is a persistent concern for rural residents, impacting the local economy, reducing choice for work or study and increasing isolation. I have raised this issue with the Portfolio Holder at DC and I will continue to press to ensure rural Dorset gets a fair share of investment to meet crucial transport needs.

Thank you to all our Parish Councils for all of their hard work on behalf of their communities and thank you to residents for their engagement. I am your representative to DC and am always here to help, so please get in touch on: cllrsherry.jespersen@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

There followed the regular meeting of Durweston Parish Council.

1. Election of the Chair & Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Newton was unanimously re-elected as Chair and signed the Acceptance of Office.

2. Election of the Vice Chair and Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Hewson was unanimously re-elected as Vice chair and signed the Acceptance of Office.

3. Appointment of Officers and Representatives:

- a. Rights of Way Officer/Footpaths: Cllr Jules Hosford
- b. North Dorset Area Committee DAPTC Representative: Cllr Harold Galpin.
- c. Highways Officer: Cllr Trevor Marks.
- d. Durweston Village Hall Management Committee Representative: Cllr Harold Galpin.
- e. Play Park working group representative: Cllr Christine Newton (Chair).
- f. Community Speed Watch.

4. Democratic Period. No members of the public present.

5. Declarations of Interest> None received.

6. Approval of Minutes: The April meeting minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

7. Matters Arising:

-There have been several bonfires in the village during the daytime hours, the Parish Council request that villagers are considerate of their neighbours when having a bonfire.

-**Highways update:** There is a drain gully in Rapson Lane where the water is not flowing into the drain, the Chair to send photographs to the Clerk so that she may report to DC.

-Thank you to the Durweston school children who have carried out a litter pick today around the village.

Verges and Footpaths – the Chair met with Dorset Council Ranger Graham Stanley regarding the cutting of the verges – Currently our verges are cut by Wessex Ground Services, however DC Rangers are keen to take this on for the following year. They now have equipment which removes the arisings, thus encouraging the growth of wildflowers. DC would cut the verges twice per year, should the PC wish to have further cuts they will need to find a contractor who can do this and take away the cuttings.

Cllr Marks to ask a contractor he knows whether this is something that they would be able to do and will report back at the next meeting.

-The hedge along Solmers Lane needs to be cut back, Clerk to contact Savills to request that this is done.

-The DC Ranger will clear the footpath at the back of the allotments.

The stile at the bottom of the playing field is broken, Dc Rangers will install a Kissing Gate at this point, at the cost of £500.00, this covers the cost of the gate, Dc will cover the cost of the installation. Chair to send contact details of the landowner to the Clerk, to seek their approval. DPC approved the payment of £500.00.

-Play Park update.

The Chair had met with Sovereign Play regarding the repair or replacement of the bucket swing. Sovereign confirmed that the warranty was no longer valid. The quote for the repair came to: £2,190.00, to include the removal of the old swing and fencing the repair would come to £2,633.00. To purchase a new wooden bucket swing including the installation and surfacing would come to £5,100.00, DPC decided that this was too much for one piece of equipment and wanted to replace the wooden swing with a metal swing which would require less maintenance and would last longer.

Cllr Hewson had acquired a quote from a company called Morti, for a metal replacement swing, the quote was for £3,000.00, as second quote was being obtained from Wicksteed. The quotes to be looked at, at the June PC meeting.

-Village Hall – Cllr Galpin to approach the Village Hall Committee to request that the PC can put a noticeboard on the outer wall at the VH.

8. Finances.

- a. The following payments were approved for payment:

-Clerks salary (at agreed rate), Clerks PAYE/ Village Hall Hire £16.00/ DAPTC Subscription £197.00 /Clear Insurance £6

9. Planning: No planning applications

To confirm the date of the next meeting: 16th June 2025.

The next Parish Council Meeting is to be held on Monday 16th June, 7pm in the Village Hall. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed _____ Dated _____