



Minutes of the Ansford Parish Council Meeting held in Caryford Hall, Maggs Lane, Ansford, BA7 7JJ on **Wednesday 8th April 2026** at 6:30pm

**Present:** Cllr. Debra Henderson (Chairperson)  
Cllr. Fiona Houlton (Vice-chair)  
Cllr. Chris Edwards  
Cllr. Ray Leary  
Cllr. Annette Parker  
Cllr. Di Pinnions

**In Attendance:** Mr Simon Pritchard: Responsible Finance Officer & Acting Proper Officer  
Mrs Deborah Duffy: Assistant Parish Clerk

**Members of the Public in Attendance:** Two

- o The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained to the public how the period of public comments worked.

**Public Comments:**

- o A resident raised concerns regarding the Ansford Somerset Councillors not being present at Ansford Parish Council meetings. It is a dereliction of their duty. Due to their absence, there are no reports from Somerset Council. A request was made to the Parish Council to encourage their presence. The question was also raised as to whether parishioners need to be made aware of the Somerset Councillors current ongoing absences, which suggests a lack of interest.

**Reports from Somerset Council:**

- o Somerset Councillors Henry Hobhouse & Kevin Messenger didn't attend the meeting, no written reports received.

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| Item no: |   |
| 1        | <b><u>To receive any apologies for absence:</u></b><br>Apologies received and accepted from Cllr. Summer Easeman. |
| 2        | <b><u>Declarations of interests:</u></b><br>None.   |

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| 3 | <p><b><u>Adoption of previous council meeting minutes:</u></b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026 had been circulated and were on the website.</p> <p><b>Noted: 2 corrections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The developer of Lovells Farm is Backhouse, not Redcliffe.</li> <li>• Grass cutter correct name is Audrey Wadman</li> </ul> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to adopt the minutes of Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026, seconded by Cllr Edwards. RESOLVED (5-1-0) (For-Abstain-Against).</b></p>   |
| 4 | <p><b><u>Planning &amp; development:</u></b></p> <p>The Chair updated the council that the architects for Wyke Farm are submitting plans for 77 houses in the field behind Caryford Hall.</p>  |
| 5 | <p><b>Items for decision or requiring further action:</b></p> <p><b><u>5.1 Lovells Farm Play Area Land Transfer.</u></b></p> <p>A discussion was held regarding the appointment of a solicitor for the Lovells Farm play area and land transfer from the developer (Backhouse) to the Parish Council. Multiple quotes had been sought, but only two firms had responded to offer a quote. One of these was a well-established larger firm with a solicitor working for them who has overseen very similar transfers at other councils.</p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr. Henderson that the Parish Council instruct Battens Solicitors, at an estimated cost of £2,400, seconded by Cllr. Houlton RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p><b><u>5.2 Parish Survey and Plan</u></b></p> <p>A draft of the parish survey exists with Cllr Easeman. The council discussed how to incentivise residents to complete it, with ideas including offering a sponsored prize or paying someone for door-to-door collection. The deadline is to have the survey ready for the Annual Parish Meeting in May. The survey consultation period will need to be extended through the summer, with a goal to have data collected by autumn 2026.</p> <p><b>Action: An email discussion to be continued.</b></p> <p><b><u>5.3 Parish Council Policies</u></b></p> <p>The council discussed the new draft Privacy Notice. It was noted that the current IT policy requires a clause to be added regarding the use of Plaud (AI note taker) and the fact that the recording is deleted as soon as the minutes have been drafted.</p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr. Parker to adopt the new Privacy Notice, seconded by Cllr. Houlton. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p><b><u>5.4 Fairfield Governance</u></b></p> <p>The council discussed its position as a joint owner of Fairfield with Castle Cary Town Council. Concerns were raised about the lack of consultation from Castle Cary Town</p> |

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|          | <p>Council; the fee structure for companies wanting to hire the land; the lack of any income having been received by the Parish Council; ambiguity regarding legal responsibilities; Safeguarding concerns and possible liability regarding Duty of Care.</p> <p>The RFO expressed concern that he didn't know what the Parish Council's legal obligation was, the play equipment inspection regime wasn't understood, there was no regular reporting to the Parish Council, how does the insurance work? – advise the Parish Council to take legal advice as to what the Parish Council's liabilities are and what paperwork and reporting must be being made by CCTC to APC. It is possible that much more information and paperwork than is currently being received needs to be checked and be on the Parish Council's file as well.</p> <p>It was also noted upon recent investigation that Shaftesbury Town Council charges £1000 per day for the use of its open space, it is understood that CCTC charge £450 per week, there has been no discussion regarding fees.</p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson that Cllr Parker and herself discuss further action required and seek legal advice, seconded by Cllr Leary. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p>  |
| <p>6</p> | <p><b><u>Items for report only:</u></b><br/>         NB: all the written reports are available for the Parish Council's website.</p> <p><b><u>7.1 Chair's report (Cllr Henderson):</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report noted, no questions.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>6.2. LCN (Cllr Edwards):</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council discussed a lack of information, and outstanding minutes from January 2026. It was noted that the next meeting will take place on 7th May to accommodate the Police and Crime Commissioner to attend. (PCC).</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b><br/> <b>Email questions for PCC ahead of the meeting. Questions to be sent to Cllr Edwards with copy to Parish Clerk and Cllrs Henderson and Houlton.</b></p> <p><b><u>6.3. Local Highways (Cllr Houlton):</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sinkhole works scheduled to start around April 20th.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b><br/> <b>Cllr. Houlton to follow up with Neil Gould ensuring the sinkhole works project is transferred to the correct department.</b></p> <p><b><u>6.4. Open Spaces and Footpaths (Cllr Edwards):</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken timber stiles will be replaced with galvanized kissing gates. The associated farmer is responsible for the removal of existing items and installation of replacements – Local Ramblers Association members are able to assist.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b><br/> <b>Cllr. Edwards to speak to the relevant farmer with the reminder to replace the stiles in the same location. Cllr. Henderson requested this to be recorded in writing.</b></p> |

#### **6.5. Fairfield Governance (Cllr Parker):**

- Report noted, no discussion

#### **6.6. Health and Safety (Cllr Parker):**

- A health and safety update including a planned DBS check for skateboard day organisers.
- An update to the defibrillator list to be added onto the parish council's website including blood kits.

#### **6.7. Maggs Lane (Cllr Henderson):**

- The parish council is exploring letting the Maggs Lane pitch from Somerset Council to gain control over maintenance and potentially add a running track and welfare facilities.
- The parish council discussed the terminology for the new facility, agreeing on "welfare facilities" to describe a building with changing rooms, a kitchenette, and a breakout area, for which Section 106 money is available.

#### **Action:**

- **Cllr Henderson to meet with landscapers and discuss potential improvements.**
- **All Councillors to research papers shared by Cllr. Leary for background understanding and consider any detail that can be sent ahead of attending a solution-based workshop.**

#### **6.8. Emergency Plan Progress (Mr Houlton)**

- Mr. Houlton presented an initial overview of the emerging emergency plan, which will focus on disruptive events like a large-scale electricity outage, the top-ranked risk. The plan is to be developed independently of other parishes to avoid delays.
- It was noted that Somerset Council runs a "Somerset Prepared" program, but the parish council feels it has not been effectively engaged.

#### **Actions:**

- **Mr Houlton to draft an emergency plan for a sustained electrical outage. The plan should include potential solutions, options, and associated costs for the council to review ASAP.**
- **Mr Houlton to research best practices from other parishes and organizations for emergency planning.**
- **Mr Houlton to liaise with Castle Cary TC regarding their emergency plan.**
- **Develop a strategy to present solutions to Somerset Council regarding places of safety.**

#### **6.9. Parishioner contact (Clerk and Cllrs):**

- A resident's issue with a pothole highlighted the need for a clear, interactive parish boundary map on the parish council's website.
- A query regarding the location of the Annual Meeting, from Brue Valley.

#### **Actions:**

- **Cllr. Edwards to upload a detailed interactive parish boundary map for the website.**

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cllr. Henderson to inform Brue Valley that due to venue size, the meeting will be for the parish only this year.</b></li> </ul> <p><b><u>6.10 Parish Clerk’s report:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No verbal updated noted.</li> </ul>   |
| 7 | <p><b><u>Parish Council Finance:</u></b></p> <p><b><u>7.1 To approve the payments list:</u></b><br/>         The list of payments made since the last meeting was received and reviewed.<br/> <b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to approve the list of payments, seconded by Cllr Edwards. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p><b><u>7.2 To note the end of the year financial reports and bank reconciliation:</u></b><br/>         The end of year finical reports were received, they show an underspend against budget of £7,855.14. They also show that the parish council achieved an extra £5,431.10 in unbudgeted income, much of this being grants obtained during the year.<br/>         The RFO reported that the parish council had managed to deliver on all its priorities this year but still come in under budget. This gives further justification to the Council Tax reduction of 5% for this new financial year.</p> <p><b><u>7.3 To Review the earmarked Funds</u></b><br/>         The RFO recommended that the General Reserve sit at £50,000, therefore £11,650 needed to be earmarked for a project or sink fund. To earmark £11650 for the Lovells Farm Play Area<br/> <b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson that £11,650 be earmarked for new play equipment in the new Lovells Farm Play Area, seconded by Cllr Pinnions RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b><br/>         Tenders for the Lovels Farm play area are expected on April 9th, 2026.</p> <p><b><u>7.4 To Approve the purchase of Plaud (AI note taker)</u></b><br/> <b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson that the Parish Council purchase a Plaud at a cost of up to £200, seconded by Cllr Houlton. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cllr. Henderson will distribute the tenders for the Lovells Farm play area to all councillors post 9.4.26</li> <li>○ Potentially may have to schedule an Extraordinary Meeting to vote on the play area tenders</li> </ul> |
| 8 | <p><b><u>Details of the Annual Parish Meeting:</u></b><br/>         A few details were covered.<br/>         The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026: 6:30pm to 8:30pm</p>  |

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| 9 | <p><b><u>Date of the next Meeting:</u></b><br/>It was agreed that the next meeting will be the Annual Council Meeting to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026</p>  |
| 9 | <p><b><u>Confidential Session:</u></b><br/>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton that as the next agenda item related to staffing matters, that the press and public be excluded from the meeting seconded by Cllr Parker. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</p> <p><b><u>Staffing Matter</u></b><br/>A confidential session was held regarding a staffing matter.</p> |

**End of Meeting at 8.00pm**

**Confidential Notes of the meeting:**

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**Agenda Item: 9  
Staffing matter**

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The RFO (and Acting Proper Officer) reported that it was time that the parish council engaged a substantive, permanent parish clerk. Legally, the role must be a permanent employee, not a self-employed contractor.

The workload is estimated at six hours per week, and the current locum clerk, Deborah Duffy, has expressed interest in the permanent role.

**Actions:**

- **The council agreed to move forward with the process of hiring a substantive, permanent parish clerk.**
- **It was agreed that a smaller group will meet to detail the clerk's job description and responsibilities before proceeding with the formal hiring process.**