



Minutes of the Ansford Parish Council Meeting held in Caryford Hall, Maggs Lane, Ansford, BA7 7JJ on **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026** at 6:30pm

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

**In Attendance:** Mr Simon Pritchard: Responsible Finance Officer & Acting Proper Officer

**Members of the Public in Attendance: 3**

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

**Public Comments:**

There were no public comments.

**Reports from Somerset Council:**

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

Item no:	
1	<p><b><u>Election of Parish Council Chairperson for the Municipal Year 2026/27:</u></b>  <b>It was proposed by Councillor Henderson to elect Councillor Houlton as Chair for the Municipal Year 2026/2027, seconded by Cllr Parker. RESOLVED (7-0-0) (For-Abstain-Against).</b></p> <p>Cllr Houlton then expressed her thanks to the outgoing Chair for her handwork and efforts regarding: financial management, infrastructure and safety; governance and community relations.  She then outlined her priorities for the coming year with a focus on: continuity; ongoing and upcoming projects; relationships with neighboring councils; and public interaction.</p>
2	<p><b><u>To receive any apologies for absence:</u></b></p>

	Cllr Easeman attended the start of the meeting but gave her apologies for having to leave early (after agenda item 8)
3	<p><b><u>Declarations of interests:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cllr Parker declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 7</li> <li>○ Cllr Leary declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7</li> </ul>
4	<p><b><u>Adoption of previous council meeting minutes:</u></b></p> <p><b>a) Wednesday 8th April 2026:</b> The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026 had been circulated and were on the website. <b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson to adopt the minutes of Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026, seconded by Cllr Pinnions. RESOLVED (6-1-0) (For-Abstain-Against).</b></p> <p><b>b) Thursday 23rd April 2026:</b> The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026 had been circulated and were on the website. <b>It was proposed by Cllr Pinnions to adopt the minutes of Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026, seconded by Cllr Edwards. RESOLVED (6-1-0) (For-Abstain-Against).</b></p>
5	<p><b><u>Election of Vice-chair:</u></b> <b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to elect Cllr Henderson as Vice-chair for the Municipal Year 2026/2027, seconded by Cllr Parker. RESOLVED (7-0-0)</b></p>
6	<p><b><u>Appointment of Reps / Portfolios 2026/27:</u></b> Discussion was held about Cllrs' portfolios; it was agreed to keep the roles much the same.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Edwards: Footpaths, LCN, open spaces, and planning.</li> <li>• Cllr Henderson: Infrastructure, new estate, youth work, neighborhood plan lead.</li> <li>• Cllr Parker: Health and safety; wellbeing and health (including safeguarding).</li> <li>• Cllr Leary: Parish survey and possible parish clinic lead.</li> <li>• Cllr Pinnions: Church relations</li> <li>• Cllr Houlton: Highways</li> </ul>
7	<p>18:40 Cllrs Parker &amp; Leary left the room</p> <p><b><u>Planning &amp; development:</u></b> The development plans for 77 houses in the field behind Caryford Hall were discussed. Additional traffic at the junction of Maggs Lane and the A371 was identified as a major issue, with the installation of traffic lights seen as a potential solution. <b>It was proposed by Cllr Edwards to not raise any formal objection to this development and to work with Somerset Council to resolve traffic concerns, seconded by Cllr Pinnions. RESOLVED (5-0-0)</b></p>

8	<p>18:45 Cllrs Parker &amp; Leary returned the room</p> <p><b>Items for decision or requiring further action:</b></p>
	<p><b><u>8a Establishment of an HR committee</u></b>  A discussion on the need for and the composition of a HR committee took place. <b>It was agreed that an HR Committee is formed with a membership of three, councilors: Houlton, Henderson &amp; Parker.</b>  Terms of reference will be drafted for formal adoption at a future meeting.</p>
	<p><b><u>8b Neighbourhood Plan</u></b>  The council discussed plans to update the Neighbourhood Plan, the need to appoint a representative and some of the strategic considerations.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to appoint Cllr Henderson as the Neighbourhood Plan representative, seconded by Cllr Parker. RESOLVED (7-0-0)</b></p>
	<p><b><u>8c APC Website:</u></b>  The council agreed that commissioning a brand-new website at a cost of £3,000–£5,000 was too expensive. Instead, members favoured improving the existing Parish Online–hosted site, which is legally compliant but currently difficult to navigate and visually outdated. Examples from other parishes showed how a more modern, user-friendly design could look. It was agreed that a future meeting would discuss: costed options for improving the current site; a revised logo; and Cllrs views on what improvements needed to be made. Cllr Easeman will design a new logo.</p>
	<p><b><u>8d Martyn's Law</u></b>  The council discussed the forthcoming requirements of Martyn’s Law and confirmed that Caryford Hall’s (where the APC meetings take place) capacity, estimated at up to 360 people (combined halls), places it above the threshold that will trigger additional security planning. Although the legislation is not yet in force, members noted that guidance is emerging and preparation is expected. Alongside this, the council recognised the need for its own emergency plan to address potential violent incidents during meetings, prompted in part by a recent hostile poison pen letter (referred to police).  <b>It was agreed that Cllrs Henderson &amp; Houlton would draft a compliant plan for discussion at a future meeting.</b></p>
	<p><b><u>8e Resilience Plan</u></b>  The council reviewed the early draft of a resilience plan and agreed that a major power outage remains the primary risk for Ansford. Discussion focused on ensuring adequate community-hub capacity, the challenges residents would face during a multi-day outage, and the vulnerability of newer homes without alternative heating. Additional ideas such as generators and learning from other areas were noted for the future. Cllrs confirmed that</p>

	<p>the plan is proceeding in the right direction. It was noted that following enquiry to CCTC there is no plan in place for the Town.</p>
	<p><b><u>8f Parish Survey</u></b> The council discussed how best to distribute and refine the parish survey, agreeing it needs to gather more specific evidence on speeding. Ideas included an online version, promotion via the website and Facebook, and a targeted mail drop to residents of Churchfield Drive, where concerns are highest. Members suggested adding clearer questions about speeding and listing key roads to produce stronger, actionable data. There was broad support for a multi-pronged approach combining online engagement with targeted delivery.</p>
	<p><b><u>8g Parish Council Policies</u></b> The council agreed to readopt the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, noting only a minor typographical correction. <b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to readopt the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, seconded by Cllr Leary. RESOLVED (7-0-0).</b></p>
	<p><b><u>8h Fairfield Governance</u></b> The council discussed concerns about Fairfield’s governance, finances, and liability, agreeing they need full standalone accounts and proper consultation on decisions.</p> <p>The council confirmed it will support only minor BMX-track repairs (as noted by recent inspection report) and will pay its one-third share to remove the unused outdoor gym. Members further agreed to write formally to CCTC to oppose further spending on the gym and to challenge the procurement process that currently gives the contractor a non-competitive advantage.</p> <p>Finally, the council received a request for an extra £50 per cut for mowing around newly planted trees, as it had been agreed with CCTC prior that any additional direct and indirect costs were not the responsibility of APC. APC had not been able to give the go ahead for the tree planting within the timeframe because of concerns from local residents.</p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton that the council should write to CCTC saying that it does not support a full re-tarmacking of the BMX track, but would support patching and minor repairs as needed, seconded by Cllr Easeman. RESOLVED (7-0-0).</b></p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson to that the council write to CCTC saying that it will not support expenditure to repair the unused outdoor gym, but would contribute their share towards its removal, seconded by Cllr Houlton. RESOLVED (7-0-0).</b></p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to that the council should write to CCTC saying that it would not contribute to the cost of mowing around the additional trees in Fairfield, seconded by Cllr Henderson. RESOLVED (7-0-0) (For-Abstain-Against).</b></p>

	<p><b><u>8i Purchase of further Speed Indicator Devices</u></b>          The council reviewed options for purchasing additional Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs), noting that the newer models are more reliable, easier to deploy, and provide essential data for influencing highways decisions. Cllrs agreed that expanding the SID network would strengthen evidence gathering on speeding. A discounted two-unit offer was considered good value and would create a consistent set of three modern devices for use across existing and planned SID locations.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to that the council should purchase two new SID units from ElanCity at a cost of £4,499 plus delivery, plus VAT, with funding allocated from the Improving Ansford budget, seconded by Cllr Edwards. RESOLVED (7-0-0).</b></p>
	<p><b><u>8j Local Footpaths</u></b>          The council discussed a long-term project to improve local footpath signage and make walking routes more accessible by adding them to the parish website. Somerset Council might supply the small waymark discs, while installation of posts would need to be carried out by their Rights of Way team. For the website element, members agreed it would be simplest to link to existing Ordnance Survey mapping rather than create new maps.</p>
	<p><b><u>8k 2-day Sports Academy with Yeovil Town FC</u></b>          The council discussed support for a two-day multi-sports academy run by Yeovil Town Football Club, agreeing to subsidise hall hire and ensure children from families facing financial hardship can take part. To remain compliant with Section 137 rules, members decided the subsidy would be provided as a donation to the club, which would then allocate support to eligible children from Castle Cary and Ansford. The final budget was set at up to £900, covering £340 for hall hire and up to £560 in subsidy funding.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Eastman to that the council will host the 2-day Sports Academy with Yeovil Town FC and would allocate £900 to cover the costs, seconded by Cllr Leary. RESOLVED (7-0-0)</b></p>
	<p><b><u>8l Fairfield Legal Advice:</u></b>          The council agreed it must obtain legal advice on Fairfield to understand its liabilities and how to progress the matter, members confirmed that the Acting Proper Officer should handle engagement with the solicitor. The preferred solicitor is the Battens Solicitors lawyer already dealing with the Lovell’s Farm land transfer.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson that Mr Pritchard was delegated the authority to act as the council's representative in discussions with the solicitor, with a budget of up to £2,000 seconded by Cllr Houlton. RESOLVED (7-0-0)</b></p>

**8m Fairfield Delegated Authority**

It was proposed by Cllr Houlton that Mr Pritchard be award delegated authority to negotiate with the Town Clerk of CCTC, a sustainable long-term arrangement for the management of Fairfield. seconded by Cllr Henderson. RESOLVED (7-0-0)

Cllr Eastman left the meeting

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**Written & verbal reports (items for report only):**

NB: all the written reports are available for the Parish Council's website. Some key points are repeated here

**9a Chair's report (Cllr Henderson)**

**9b LCN – Somerset Council report (Cllr Edwards).**

The recent LCN meeting highlighted a perceived lack of substance. Although the Highways group was seen as a positive component.

**9c Local Highways (Cllr Houlton)**

The council reviewed recent speed-watch results confirming a serious speeding problem on Churchill Drive, a route expected to carry additional school traffic once the Persimmon development is occupied. Members agreed that Somerset Council should be asked for suitable traffic-calming options, with ideas such as SID posts and chicanes mentioned, and noted that a portion of the development's S106 funding should be used to address local safety needs.

**9d Open Spaces & Footpaths (Cllr Edwards)**

The council noted that a farmer had improperly fenced off a public footpath near the A371, the farmer is required to reinstall the gate in the correct location, and the council will need to monitor the work to ensure proper access is restored. Somerset's Rights of Way team has arranged for new kissing gates to be delivered. Members also discussed the urgent need to secure a new contractor for footpath cutting after the previous provider became unavailable, while clarifying which areas are informally maintained by a local volunteer to avoid duplicating costs. Several contacts will be approached for quotes, and checks will be made to confirm who is maintaining the station path this year.

**9e Fairfield Governance (Cllr Parker).**

No progress had been made and despite having promised sending APC the Terms of Reference at the meeting with Sarah Dyke MP, CCTC have not done so.

**9f Health and Safety (Cllr Parker)**

A resident's request for the council to support the closure of the stroke unit was discussed, but it was agreed this was not an appropriate matter for a parish council to become involved in.

**9g Maggs Lane (Cllr Henderson)**

The council discussed ongoing difficulties identifying who at Somerset Council is responsible for the day-to-day management of Maggs Lane playing field, which is delaying progress on subletting the site. Their usual contact is currently away, and the

	<p>legal team—while keen for the sublet to proceed—cannot advise who oversees operations such as grass cutting, hedge maintenance, or bookings. Members noted that Somerset Council’s internal structure appears confused, and the situation is worsened by the continued boycott of the parish council by the two unitary councillors, who would normally help navigate these issues. Recent hedge and grass cutting shows activity on site, but responsibility remains unclear, the parish council will continue investigating.</p> <p><b><u>9h Emergency Plan Progress (Mr Houlton)</u></b> Discussed in agenda item 8e</p> <p><b><u>9i Parishioner contact verbal report (Clerk and Cllrs)</u></b> The council considered a request for a letter of support for Caryford Hall’s grant application for solar panels and battery storage, intended to improve the hall’s resilience. Members noted some confusion over why this option was not raised in earlier years, despite previous discussion with trustees, but agreed the project itself was worthwhile and time-sensitive. <b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson to send a letter of support for Caryford Hall’s grant application for solar panels and battery storage, seconded by Cllr Houlton. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p>A resident raised concerns about crime levels, but the council noted that policing strategy is set by the police and not something they can influence. They also highlighted that the area has a low crime rate, meaning even a single incident can appear as a large percentage increase.</p> <p>The council noted that a resident had raised concerns traffic on Station Road once the sinkhole works are completed. Possible measures were discussed to help address safety and speeding: installing a zebra crossing and ensuring hedges are cut back more effectively to improve visibility.</p> <p><b><u>9j Parish Clerk’s verbal report:</u></b></p> <p><b>Lovells Farm play area land transfer and new play equipment</b> It was briefed that progress on the Lovell’s Farm play area has stalled because the land transfer from the developer has not yet been completed, preventing release of the S106 funds needed for new equipment. APC is now dealing directly with the developer and expects movement now. Although the project will miss the summer deadline, members noted that an autumn installation may offer practical benefits. Additional delays have arisen because previous tender documents provided to Somerset Council have not been passed to the S106 team.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p><b><u>Parish Council Finance:</u></b></p> <p><b><u>10a To receive the payments made list</u></b> The payments made list was received and approved. Numbers 1 to 25; total £6,893.13</p>

	<p><b><u>10b To approve the payments requested list</u></b>  The payments to make list was received. Two grounds-maintenance invoices for Fairfield were questioned because they lacked sufficient detail on the invoices as to what was being charged for.  Members were concerned they might be charged for work outside their responsibility and agreed that invoices must specify exactly what is included. The council also noted past issues with invoices and heard that contractors had been unfairly complaining about non-payment. This included an employee of CCTC who spoke in a café and was overheard by a parishioner who informed APC.  The council will continue seeking clearer financial reporting to avoid repeat problems.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton to approved payments for the newsletter, annual play inspection, and annual SALC membership. The two Fairfield grounds maintenance invoices will not be paid until itemised detail is provided, seconded by Cllr Parker RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p><b><u>10c To note the financial reports and bank reconciliation.</u></b>  Received and noted.</p>
11	<p><b><u>Parish Council Assets Register 2026/27:</u></b>  The asset register had been circulated ahead of the meeting.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson to adopt the Assets Register, seconded by Cllr Houlton RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p>The council discussed repairs to the vandalised bus shelter, noting that vandalism usually drops in summer and that claiming on insurance may not be worthwhile. Members debated whether to order replacement glass early to avoid delays later in the year, noting that delivery previously took around a month. It was agreed that a company would need to provide a price, but the final decision was deferred to the next meeting. The choice between glass and perspex was also discussed.</p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson for Cllr Edwards to obtain quotes for the repair, seconded by Cllr Houlton. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p>
12	<p><b><u>Parish Council Risk Assessment 2026/27:</u></b>  <b>Cllr Houlton proposed the adoption of the updated risk assessment, seconded Cllr Leary RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p>
13	<p><b><u>Parish Council Insurance Renewal 2026/27:</u></b>  The council reviewed the insurance renewal, clarified the valuation of its assets, and confirmed that the quoted figure represented the combined replacement value. They also revisited last year’s additions to the policy—covering Fairfield, the play equipment and the skate park—and discussed whether the skate park is still explicitly insured, given its higher-risk nature and the potential for increased premiums. It was agreed that confirmation from the insurer is needed.</p> <p><b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton that the Parish Council approve the renewal of the annual insurance policy, seconded by Cllr Pinnions. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p>

<p>14</p>	<p><b><u>END OF 2025/26 YEAR AUDIT</u></b></p> <p><b><u>14a Internal Audit Report 2025/26</u></b>          The council reviewed two improvement points from the internal audit: the need to register with the ICO and the lack of a formally adopted financial risk assessment.</p> <p>It was confirmed that ICO registration has now been completed; the issue with the risk assessment stemmed from a procedural lapse last year when an updated risk assessment was circulated but never formally adopted, however a basic risk assessment was adopted on 7th May 2025, so it wasn't the case that no risk assessment had been adopted. As the council adopted the new risk assessment earlier in the meeting, this audit point is now resolved.</p> <p>The council discussed ongoing website management problems, including the disappearance of the Accessibility Statement and accidental deletions caused by too many people having editing access. It was agreed that this posed a risk to required public records and that access needed to be tightened to only Officer access only now that staffing issues have stabilised.</p> <p><b><u>14b Annual Governance Statement 2025/26:</u></b>          The council agreed that two assertions on the Annual Governance Statement must be marked "No" to accurately reflect the internal audit findings. One related to the previous year's risk assessment not being formally adopted, and the other relating shortcomings in IT and data management, including the delayed ICO registration.</p> <p><b><u>14c Accounting Statement 2025/26</u></b>          The Accounting Statement was received and approved without concerns, with confidence expressed in the current financial reporting.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Henderson that the Parish Council approve the accounting statement seconded by Cllr Parker. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p> <p><b><u>14d Confirmation of Public Rights Dates</u></b>          The council confirmed the official period during which the public may inspect the financial records, noting that although financial information is already published online, this formal window provides the statutory right for detailed examination.  <b>It was proposed by Cllr Houlton that the period for the exercise of public rights to inspect the accounts will run from 3 June 2026 to 4 July 2026, seconded by Cllr Parker. RESOLVED (6-0-0)</b></p>
<p>15</p>	<p><b><u>Date of the next Meeting:</u></b>  <b>It was agreed that the next parish council meeting will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026</b></p>

16	<b><u>Confidential Session:</u></b> 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).
17	<b><u>Staffing matter:</u></b> It was proposed by Cllr Houlton that the RFO be paid a £6 per week Working From Home Allowance, seconded by Cllr Henderson RESOLVED (6-0-0).

End of Meeting at 8.53pm