

Compton Bishop Parish Council

COMPTON BISHOP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Open Annual General Meeting 19th May 2025

Present Councillors T Mason (Chair), C Settle, E Parker, D McCarthy, G Hancock, H Dean, D Ham, Parish Clerk A Mortimore, along with residents of the Parish.

To receive any apologies for non-attendance.

Somerset Councillor B Filmer, N & A Campbell and D & R Tyas.

The Chair's welcome to the public.

The Chair of Compton Bishop Parish Council (CBPC) Terry Mason welcomed members of the public to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

As Councillor Filmer was unable to attend he had sent a report regarding the current developments at Somerset Council. This included Boundary Changes with public consultation being involved, the financial situation and the need to sell £43M of assets to balance the books. The full transcript of the report can be found on the Parish website under the Parish Council meetings 14th May 2025.

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He then gave an overview of the type of work and projects being undertaken by CBPC: -

- 1) Councillor Mason mentioned that following all the changes to Somerset Council the main point of contact with the different departments were now online for both local councils and the general public which generally collaborate effectively.
- 2) The Parish Council would like to thank Mike Rolfe for organising the Village Maintenance Team along with all the volunteers who help maintain verges, hedges, the Planters and any other maintenance that is needed.
- 3) Defibrillators – the Parish Council maintain the 3 Defibrillators around the parish with the help of local volunteers making sure that they are all in working order with new batteries being replaced when necessary.
- 4) The Wessex Water Pumping Station in Cross was overwhelmed with the heavy rain that occurred early last year and this resulted in tankers being used to remove the excess water. Wessex had intended to implement a survey as to the cause of the overflow, but unfortunately, the dry spring weather this year has delayed matters.
- 5) Blocked Drains – Due to Gigaclear installing fibre optic cables they managed to break some drainpipes and this has caused water overflowing onto the road which is a hazard particularly in winter. Somerset Council (SC) has jet washed around 3 drains, but it is not yet clear if this has worked satisfactorily. SC will be taking this issue up with Gigaclear for recompense.
- 6) Webbington Hotel – Water flowing across the road from the hotel has become an issue, particularly in winter when it becomes icy. The parish council are in contact with the hotel to resolve this and it is the landowner's responsibility not to allow overflowing water onto a highway.
- 7) Broken wooden footbridge over the River Axe – Councillor Mason confirmed that a new bridge has been designed and has been out for tender but there is no timescale for when it will eventually be completed.
- 8) Overgrown vegetation in and along the riverbank which stopped the water flowing freely – It is the landowner's responsibility to ensure that any rivers or streams on their land do not get overgrown with vegetation and the parish council has been in touch with the two landowners concerned with one managing to clear all the overgrown vegetation so far. Still awaiting a response from the second landowner who is taking advice from The Environment Agency.

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The Chair then asked if any Village Groups would like to report on their activities.

Reports from Village Groups.

1) Cross Connections - Ruth Orriss

Ruth explained this is an informal group of people that started around 15 years ago to get things happening around the villages of the parish.

A variety of social events are organised, and anyone is very welcome to join the group if they so wish. There is contact by email as well as a Facebook page for Cross Connections for posting any relevant information around the parish.

2) Gardening Club – John Parfitt (Chair of the Club)

This is a group of around 30 members from around the surrounding area which meet once a month in the Memorial Hall to enhance gardening knowledge. All sorts of social events are organised using in the hall as well visits to other gardens (mostly be guided tours).

New members are most welcome at a very modest fee of £12 per annum.

3) Neighbourhood Watch – Eddie Farley

Eddie has been the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for many years with this being his last year. He has asked for anyone willing to take on the co-ordination role to contact him.

4) Axe Vale Climate Change Group – Rachel Merchant

There are many local events being organised by the group to encourage more awareness of environmental issues including an Eco- Festival at the Cider barn in Chapel Allerton.

There are talks on all aspects of green issues such as recycling and Solar Panels. Also, there is a “Tech Amnesty” group that take any type of mobile phone, laptop, computer etc. All information is wiped clean and then the device can be passed on to those unable to afford to buy such equipment and to the homeless if they can. If the device cannot be reused, then it is stripped of any precious materials and other parts that can be recycled. The Cider barn has agreed to be the collection point for this “Tech Amnesty” with collections to pick up any devices being once a month.

The group is also promoting getting people to leave part of their garden as “rewilding” to encourage all sort of plants and wildlife to flourish.

Other events are planned especially some family events in the summer holidays to encourage children to become more aware of the environment.

5) Springfield Wildlife Site – Sarah Ayling

Sarah kindly provided the Clerk with a full written transcript of her talk, which has Been included in these minutes: -

Springfield Wildlife Site is a small area of damp woodland with a pond and circular access path. The site entrance is between numbers 8 and 9 Springfield Close, in Cross. The site together with the adjoining Rhynes and ditches form the Cross Rhynes Local Wildlife Site.

Springfield Wildlife Site was established as a community wildlife site in 2002 when Springfield Close and Chardet Place were built. In 2023, ownership of the site passed from Sedgemoor District Council to the newly established Somerset Council.

Over the past year local volunteers have held regular work parties at the site, usually, every 4-6 weeks depending on time of year, weather, and what tasks need doing. The main regular task is keeping the access path and dipping

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platform cut, reducing vegetation either side of the path to 6-18 inches in height to allow easy access for people with pushchairs or prams or with mobility difficulties. It also creates a variety of different heights of vegetation that encourages a greater variety of plants and animals. Volunteers also ensure that the hedge either side of the entrance path does not obstruct the path. We are grateful to the owners of Number 8 and 9 Springfield Close for trimming to top of the hedge. Over the last two winters, following advice from Mr Grainger the District Ecologist we have been pulling up nettles in the central area and placing them on the woodpile to rot. This should help to remove some nitrogen rich material and favour growth of less vigorous species. In 2023, staff from Somerset Council cleared some sycamores from the area near the pond surrounding a mature multi-stemmed alder tree. This winter and spring volunteers continued work in the area removing seedlings and saplings of non-native species, such as sycamore, bay and pyrocanthus, as well as brambles.

In the late winter staff from Somerset Council Open Spaces Team cut the vegetation on the bank between the pond and 7 and 8 Springfield Close. This area is quite steep, and the work is too heavy to be carried out easily using hand tools.

For several years water has been escaping from the pond around the side of, not over, the weir and one of the boards has been missing from the weir. This spring Mr Rolfe and I had a meeting with Mr Dunn from Somerset Council. He has notified the Open Spaces Team of the problem. We suggested that as a temporary measure, to prevent further erosion of the bank, the volunteer group could pug the break in the bank with sandbags. Mr Dunn was agreeable to this provided the repair did not need consent from the Inland drainage board. Unfortunately, IDB said that the site owner needed to apply (and pay) for consent. I have passed this information to Mr Dunn and am waiting to hear what will happen.

Volunteers have continued to monitor the plants and animals at the site and in July last year found a lesser stagbettle, in addition to the insects and molluscs reported at the last parish meeting. Unfortunately, Richard Parker has not been able to continue regular butterfly observations and we thank him for the work he did on this. If anyone would like to monitor butterflies at the wildlife site it is not very onerous and can be done when it suits you. This spring we have started making observations of birds, and on 27 April within about half an hour 19 different species were heard. I am always happy to receive and records of sightings from the wildlife site and can add them to the site species lists.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has helped at the site over the last year, and thank staff from Open Spaces Team who have continued to support us despite cuts in staffing and lack of funds.

6) Highways, Footpaths and Speedwatch - Councillor Delia McCarthy

Councillor McCarthy gave the following report:-

New replacement 30mph and 40mph signage on Webbington Road, near Church Lane and Newtown. There was no cost to the parish council for these signs.

A38 footpath from Cross along with Weare – overgrown hedges etc is hindering walkers and cyclists which need to be cut back.

Pedestrian safety- The reduction of speed limit on the Webbington Road from national speed limit to 40 mph has seen an increase of runners & parents with young children on their bikes

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Update on the installation of the Speed Indicator Device (SID) which has been approved by Somerset Highways and the proposed fitting and management procedures, an update on the fixing of the three poles to hold the SID, without the installation of the poles in the specific places as agreed with Highways, the device cannot be put into action. Aileen Fletcher Highways Engineer advised that the new contractors they use are working through the backlog from last year and any safety work takes priority. Therefore, we will have to wait our turn. Aileen assured us that we are at top of the backlog. The faint Road markings on our roads were reported to SC highways last year, this job is also waiting for contractors to complete.

Update on the proposals to upgrade the A38 particularly the Axbridge/Cross Junction. An update had been received from "Transport Schemes" at Somerset Council "At the moment, we do not have a schedule of works available as we are not yet at that stage of the project. However, I wanted to assure you that we are actively coordinating with North Somerset Council as we prepare for the Full Business Case submission. If the funding is approved by central government, construction is likely to be in 2026 and 2027.

We are considering the option of hosting drop-in sessions to provide more updates once we have further information, and these might even be joint sessions with North Somerset Council. This way, we can ensure that everyone is well-informed and can engage directly with the updates.

We have received a significant number of comments through the online engagement platform. We are in the process of analysing these comments, focusing on the common themes and issues that have been raised.

In terms of prioritising schemes, it is premature to make any statements without having an updated construction costs and understanding the impact of inflation on the overall programme".

We will try to keep you updated as we progress and have more concrete information to share.

Community Speedwatch

Mike Peel CSW Coordinator sends apologies

The parish CSW is still operational. If anyone has some time to spare can contact Mike Peel. Other parish councils have said that installing a SID has proved positive with regards to reducing speed of vehicles.

Safe Footpath previously Coffin Lane

At the last meeting it was suggested that we should make a final effort to progress the path and if no progress was made, we should wind up the campaign. This would likely be pursuing a meeting with Tessa Munt with other representatives from Axbridge Town Council and CBPC to see if this leads to anything.

Tess Gill tendered her resignation as chair of the group as other commitments have made it impossible for her to continue in this role.

It was suggested that outstanding actions could be pursued either individually, through Compton Bishop Parish Council, or Axevale Climate Action.

Another suggestion was that Compton Bishop Parish Council could convene a public meeting to review the work of the campaign group and consult those attending on their views as to how to progress the campaign.

This could be part of the process moving the campaign to the next phase.

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7) Local Farming – Richard Brinson

Richard explained that his family had been farming in the area for generations and now covered around 1500 acres in around the area. Roughly they have between 1000 and 2000 sheep with 100/200 head of cattle. They also have a small fencing business which was started by his father. As residents, the family are happy to assist the community in any way they can.

8) Cross Memorial Hall – Lester Parry

As chair of the Hall Committee, Lester thanked the Cleaners, caretakers and the members of the Hall Committee for all their work in maintaining the facility as it can be very time consuming.

LED lighting has recently been installed and a damp problem resolved. Planned projects for the future includes replacing the side entrance path to make it easier to vacate the hall should it be necessary and put some sort of film up to the windows to provide an element of privacy for both the hall users and the residents in the property behind the hall.

At present booking are relatively low and the committee are actively trying to get more use out of the facility, although it is financially viable at present.

At the end of the presentations a questions and answer session commenced followed by refreshments.

Alan Mortimore
Clerk to Compton Bishop Parish Council.

Terry Mason
Chair of Compton Bishop Parish Council