

ST PAUL MALMESBURY WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on 22nd April 2026 at 18:30 in Crudwell Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Budgen (Chair), Hatherell (Vice Chair), Briggs, Clogg, Ingham, Jones, Maslin, Merriman, Sorby, Stephens and Smith (WC)

In Attendance: One member of the public

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose was to allow the Council to report on the work it has undertaken on behalf of parishioners over the past council year, May 2025 to April 2026.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Newman and Panting.

3. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 23rd April 2025 were adopted and signed as a true record.

4. CORSTON LOCAL NATURE RESERVE UPDATE BY ANN SKINNER, MANAGER OF THE VOLUNTEER GROUP

The Chairman welcomed Ann Skinner, who has been a cornerstone of the LNR for many years. Ann detailed her qualifications and experience; she has been a senior conservation advisor to the Environment Agency for over 25 years. A PowerPoint presentation was shown and Ann gave further details of the history of the site and its value to people and wildlife. It is managed by the local community, with volunteers who meet 4-5 times and give 40-50 hours over the course of the year. The parish council helps to fund the purchase of machinery and necessary repairs.

5. WILTSHIRE UPDATE BY COUNCILLOR MARTIN SMITH, WILTSHIRE COUNCILLOR FOR THE SHERSTON DIVISION

Planning:

Cllr Smith gave a WC Local Plan update. It is likely the current draft Plan will be formally withdrawn; the council will then have 30 months to produce another. This means the county is open to speculative development and communities will have to do a housing needs assessment.

Highways:

The country has had dreadful weather for roads and 6000+ potholes have been repaired since the start of the year. The WC highways budget has risen from just under £22 million in 2021-22, to £38 million this year and £40+ million next year.

Speeding:

Cllr Smith gave details of new policies to reduce the speed from 30 to 20 mph for communities, unless there are significant issues. The process would be cheaper and quicker, but communities would need to contribute towards the cost of signage.

WC Budget:

Wiltshire Council has approved its budget for 2026/27. The approved £567 budget includes a net £40m increase in spending on council services compared with 2025/26. The largest areas of council spend in 2026/27 will be adult services: £224m; families and children: £79m; waste services and environment: £62m; highways and transport: £44m; and education and skills: £41m.

Lime Down:

There were 75 speakers at the Inspectors Inquiry and only two spoke in favour. There was a good turnout. The report and recommendation will go to the Secretary of State in six months' time.

Sherston GP Surgery:

There is confirmation of funding for the project, as the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Integrated Care Board has allocated up to £88,000 per year for the development of a new surgery. It will still be a 2-3 year project with planning and procurement issues, although Cllr Smith is fairly confident they have a plan with a clear line of sight.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2025-26

General

The council elections in May resulted in all those wishing to stand being re-elected. The council was pleased to welcome three new volunteers onto the council to fill the vacant seats - Margo Panting, John Newman and Sara Sorby.

Despite the continuing economic pressures facing residents in the parish the council has regrettably had to raise its local tax demand for 2025/26 by 9%; this only equates to a £1.33 increase in a Band D property. The reason for this is largely due to the escalating cost of servicing the five waste bins installed at locations approved by the council. A decade or so ago Wiltshire Council placed the onus on local councils to purchase and service new waste bins. At present WC has committed to servicing the existing 'legacy' bins. In short the service cost for this activity now accounts for 25% of the council's budget.

The council has undertaken a review of all policies and procedures and introduced revised versions where appropriate.

Planning

The following are the most noteworthy points of interest during the period

- A total of 30 planning applications were received and discussed at council and comments submitted to Wiltshire Council (WC).
- Large scale speculative residential planning applications on sites within the town boundary continue to be submitted. The effect of these applications receiving consent will have a deleterious impact upon residents in the parish because of the additional pressure it will have on medical, educational and other services.
- Small scale speculative planning applications for residential development are still being received for sites that the council considers are inappropriate.
- A planning application from Island Green Power (IGP), a company registered in Bermuda, for a massive solar farm development that will directly affect the towns and villages of Alderton, Corston, Foxley, Grittleton, Hullavington, Malmesbury, Rodbourne, Sherston, Whitley and Norton has been received. The council along with other local councils whose residents are affected by this unacceptably large solar development are engaging with the process to ensure their objections are heard and addressed.

Highways

The council continues to be an enthusiastic member of the Local Highway & Footpath Improvement Group (LHFIG). Other notable highway issues progressed during the year were

- A seventh Speed Indicator Device (SID) has been installed and is operational along the C67 to the east of Milbourne.
- The no waiting restrictions at the far end of Sir Bernard Lovell Road have been installed and appear to be keeping the road clear of parked cars.

Projects

The following is a list of the council's current planned projects

- The council has joined with Malmesbury Town Council, the Malmesbury League of Friends, the River Valleys Trust, and other organisations in the town to purchase two fields from Foxley Road down to Daniel's Well to ensure that they remain in the control of the town and can be developed for the enjoyment of the wider community.

- The council is in the final stages of signing an agreement to transfer ownership of the Chippenham Road and Rodbourne Road playing fields, and the small portion of redundant land behind 22 Rodbourne Road to the council. It is hoped to restore this redundant land to an area that can be used by local residents for allotments.
- The council working with Wiltshire Highways has made significant progress in clearing the footpath from Corston to Burton Hill to allow a safe route for residents to walk between the two locations.
- Minor improvements undertaken by the council this year include bulb planting in Corston and at the Common/Foxley Road junction. An additional bench at the Cowbridge estate. Pond maintenance, tree work and machinery repairs at Corston Local Nature Reserve. Funding towards Malmesbury-in-Bloom, The Signpost and an Emergency Response Vehicle.

Finance

The council has

- successfully prepared and passed the External Audits of its accounts and processes for 2024, with only a minor observation.
- No Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions were received in this financial year, however over £8,000 of the council's accumulated CIL funds were spent on some of the projects mentioned above.

Playgrounds

- Both the Chippenham Road and Rodbourne Road playing fields have undergone a monthly internal inspection with no safety issues reported. Both facilities passed their annual RoSPA inspections with only minor observations reported.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Cllr Budgen expressed alarm regarding the policy to reduce speed limits from 30 to 20 mph and queried whether there would be an assessment as to whether it was necessary and who would enforce it. Cllr Smith responded that the police monitor speeds and that there were lots of communities in the county crying out for speed reduction. The policy requires communities to want and to request this, it is not a blanket enforcement. In Wales the evidence is overwhelming; over a year the fatality rate went down to 26% and it has carried on at this lower level.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is Wednesday 28th April 2027.

The meeting closed at 18:59

..... Chair

..... Date