

**MINUTES OF THE OKEFORD FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE PAVILION, CASTLE LANE
Tuesday 7th October 2025**

PRESENT: Cllrs R Rowe (RR Chair) Charley Read (CR Vice Chair) F Light (FL) S Corben (SC) S Wheeler (SW) S Finklaire (SF) & S Harvey (SH)

APOLOGIES: None

IN ATTENDANCE: Sam Smith (PC Clerk) Dorset Councillor S Murcer (SM)

ALSO PRESENT: 18 members of the public

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATION REQUESTS: None

2. MINUTES: Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council RESOLVED that the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 2nd September 2025 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Proposed: SW Seconded: CR

3. DORSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Cllr Murcer attended the meeting and gave a presentation as follows – **Dorset Council Local Plan** - the public consultation opened on the 18th of August 2025 and will run until the 13th of October 2025. The plan will detail how Dorset Council will be aiming to meet the Government's target for house building. The draft plan maps out the areas that have been offered up for development, or the areas Dorset Council thinks are suitable for house building over the next 17 years. All these sites are not set in stone but only a proposal. At present DC are averaging building 1,500 new homes per year, the Government target is 3,284 per year in Dorset. Is there the workforce to build them? demand and developer capacity will dictate what happens next. 3 sites have been earmarked for Okeford Fitzpaine, this totals 177 new houses. All residents can go online and view the plan and comment in the consultation process. There are more sites suggested in the plan than needed to meet the target, so 50% will naturally fall away. The amended plan will be published again & made public in August 2026, with the aim to have the plan agreed and in operation in 2027. Okeford Fitzpaine is graded as a larger 3 tier village. The qualifying criteria for this includes - population size, public transport, shops, employment, schools etc. Cllr Murcer has questioned this with DC, requesting that this grading is looked at again. The proposed 177 houses for the village would be at 3 sites – land west of Comerwicke (an application has already been submitted by the developer to DC, no final decision yet) The fields behind Rideouts & land at Playdells. Okeford Fitzpaine already has sites that have been given planning permission to go ahead – the land at Playdells & Wessex Park Homes, but no work has taken place, and houses are still unsold at Shillingston Fields. The PC will also submit a comment/view on the plan, see point 5.1

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME: The Rivan lobbying group attended the meeting and introduced themselves. They are opposing the plans to locally create an industrial chemical plant to produce methane gas to be fed back into the national gas grid. The land already hosts a solar farm, but this would be extended to power 25 units, each containing 2 x 40-foot containers. The proposed site is situated south of the Stour on farmland outside Sturminster Newton on Okeford Common. This site has been chosen due to the route of the gas main and the close proximity of a water supply. A planning application has not been submitted at present. There would be increased traffic through the village while this was being built, and the complete site would also be visible from the village. The group are seeking support from the PC and residents. They will keep us updated with developments.

A resident in attendance raised the issue of anti-social behaviour in village, the road safety mirrors have been vandalised.

4. UPDATES ON OPEN ITEMS:

Bowey Play Park: Cllr CR is moving forward with phase 2; we are waiting for confirmation of an installation date from the contractor.

Village waste bins: The Clerk has chased this matter again with Dorset Waste. Everything is in place for a waste bin to be installed by the phone box/shop. Dorset Waste hope to have the bin in place by the end of October 2025.

Horse warning signs: We are still chasing DC Highways for horse warning signs for the village.

Drainage - Lower Street: Cllr SF has obtained another quote should we need to go ahead and remove the silt. This has been quoted at **£5,327** for 4 days work. Cllr SW had suggested installing a liner instead, on top of the silt, therefore no need to repair the clay liner. Cllr SW will put together a proposal on how this option would work and the costs involved etc. In the meantime, we need a bit of rain so we can see if patching the hole has helped. The removed vegetation is slowly growing back. All PC Cllrs agreed to hold off on making any decision until we can test the flooding situation with some rainfall.

Transfer of school playing field to the PC: DC have submitted an application to the Secretary of State to transfer the land into PC ownership, but it must remain as a playing field for 10yrs. The transfer fee is £1 plus legal fees. Cllr RR has chased DC for an update; we are waiting for progress on this matter.

Nethermead footpath: It has been confirmed through Land Registry, DC & PC documents that the footpath behind Nethermead is Dorset Councils responsibility. The Clerk & Cllr RR are gathering information and documents regarding the land surrounding the path for our records.

PC orchard: Cllr SC has obtained a number of quotes to clear the land. No trees will be touched, only the scrub. The quotes range from **£3,850** to **£672**. The quotes include waste removal. It was agreed by all PC Cllrs to go ahead with the **£672** quote. Proposed: SC Seconded: SW Quotes have also been sought for hedge laying at the site. These have come back as **£500** to **£700**. This is to be completed before the scrub clearance. It was agreed to go ahead with the **£500** quote. Proposed: SC Seconded: SW

Metal slide at the rec: Cllr SC is still investigating repairs/alterations of the slide and will report back at next PC meeting.

5. OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

5.1 PC response to draft Dorset Local Plan: All Cllrs agreed that we no longer meet the criteria to be a 3-tier village as no suitable infrastructure is in place or proposed. Our village has minimal employment opportunities, public transport, school, shop, street lighting etc. It was agreed to raise this issue with DC Proposed: SC Seconded: SW. The 3 proposed development sites – we have already opposed the recent planning application for the land west of Commerwicke. All agreed to oppose all 3 sites until the tier 3 status is re assessed. Proposed: SW Seconded: SF. Cllr RR to circulate our draft response for Cllrs to comment on. Our response is to be submitted to DC before the consultation period ends.

6. PLANNING APPLICATIONS: P/FUL/2025/03574

P/FUL/2025/04100 Darknoll Farm DT11 0RP - Conversion of area of barn to create 4 self-catering holiday pods. **Approved** by Dorset Council planning.

7. CLERKS FINANCIAL REPORT:

Payments to be authorised –

£33.02	British Gas (pavilion)
£618.40	S Smith (Clerks wages September & expenses)
£33.80	HMRC PAYE
£4.25	Lloyds Bank (monthly bank charges)
£71.87	SSE pavilion electric
£504	BDO external audit fees

Received: Dorset Council precept 50% **£14,510**

£258 refund of defibrillator battery cost (defib was faulty not the battery)

£6 Farnfileds solicitor refund (orchard plot purchase transaction)

The Clerk has finally managed close the PC NatWest accounts. Both balances have been transferred into the PC Lloyds current account. The Clerk will set up a savings account so that we can gain some interest on our savings. The balance in the Lloyds Bank is **£76,979.48**

The Clerk circulated a copy to all PC Cllrs of the PCs financial transactions for the first 6 months of the year, attached was also a copy of the latest bank statement.

The PC external audit 2025 has been completed and signed off by BDO.

Annual churchyard maintenance donation **£420** agreed. Proposed: SC Seconded: SW. Clerk to action.

8. REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORTS:

Village Hall Management Committee: The Cherry and Lime tree are ready to be pruned. Cllr SC to instruct the contractor to start on the work.

Rights of Way liaison/Footpath Officer: Jeremy Gartside did not attend the meeting. Graham Stanley to visit Shillingston Fields to assess the footpath situation. Bowey footpath (rear section) decayed/rotten timber requiring repair or replacement. Darknoll Lane footpath bridge damaged steps leading onto the bridge, and the wooden handrail has rotted and fallen away – both reported to the DC Rangers for repair.

Tree Officer: Nothing to report.

Recreation ground/pavilion: Nothing to report.

Village Community Group (VCG): The group met last week, the bowls club has been given £2,800 for mats. £400 to the church for lighting & wreath workshop. Cllr SC to obtain a quote for an oven for the pavilion. The 11th of October marks 10 years of the Mud Pie Café. The faulty defibrillator has been replaced free of charge under its warranty.

PCC: The Church - nothing to report.

9. OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS OR THE CLERK: Request to plant a small tree at Nethermead on PC land **agreed** by all, Alan Frampton will plant. Remembrance Sunday wreath – Cllr RR to order, Cllr FL to lay at the memorial.

10. NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA: Playdells planning application, Fippenny News cost of advertising 2026

Okeford Fitzpaine Council resolved to note the date of the next meeting as **Tuesday 4th November 2025 at 7.30pm to be held in The Pavilion, Castle Lane**

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 8.55pm.

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record, and signed –

Chairperson presiding..... Date: