

MINUTES OF THE OKEFORD FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE PAVILION, CASTLE LANE Tuesday 4th November 2025

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

APOLOGIES: Dorset Councillor S Murcer (SM) & PC Cllr S Corben (SC)

IN ATTENDANCE: Sam Smith (PC Clerk)

ALSO PRESENT: 11 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 7th October 2025 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Proposed: SW Seconded: FL

3. DORSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Cllr Murcer did not attend the meeting but sent a report as follows

Dorset Council Local Plan timetable - consultation 18th August to 13th October 2025 – extended to 31st October 2025. Draft Plan for further consultation August 2026. Submission for examination December 2026. Examination and adoption 2027. Local Plan meetings have been undertaken in Shillingstone, Okeford Fitzpaine, Lydlinch and Hazelbury Bryan and responses sent to Dorset Council, briefly:

Shillingstone - objected to sites LA/SHIL/3 a&b adjacent to the Trailway and supported LA/SHIL/3c South of Blandford Road. Challenged their T3 position in settlement hierarchy. **Okeford Fitzpaine** – did not support all their sites namely LA/OKEF/1, 2 & 7. Challenged their T3 position in the settlement hierarchy.

Hazelbury Bryan – objected to all the sites namely LA/Haze/3, 17,04,08 on the basis submitted but would support smaller developments within the flexible settlement policy on sites LA/HAZE/4&8. I have submitted my own responses to the Consultation in line with each of the PC's positions. **Our Future Council, MI Pack and 2026 Budget** - whilst the Council is still able to balance its budget with transfers from reserves its finances, like many LAs, remain very tight. OFC objective of delivering £18m annual savings by 2029.

Forecast savings in 2025 of £10m are currently behind plan at £5M because of delays in the redundancy programme. MI to July 2025 forecasts a full year deficit of £7.7m 1.8% overspend largely down to Children's Social care placements. The year end deficit will be corrected by transfer from reserves. The 2026 Budget process has started with a Cllr briefing this week specifically with a forward look from each of the directorates. It is too early to say what the Council Tax rise will be in the absence of the Government LA settlement which comes in December each year.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME: A resident asked who is responsible for the covered ditch along Lower Street that flows into the brook? The drainage/flow is blocked in places; can it cope with the projected water flow if the new houses at Pleydells are built? The ditch/drainage is owned by DC Highways. Would the ditch need to be re lined or rebuilt? Chris Norton suggested that a jet wash of the drains should be more than sufficient to clear the blockages. **PFUL/2025/05229 erection of 19 dwellings & amenity space with access from Lower Street. Pleydells Farm DT11 0RQ** – the meeting was attended by Mark Parsons (Parsons and Joyce Contractors) and Matt Holmes. The timescale given was - March 2026 to start construction of the 27 houses already given planning permission. The 27 houses would be built 1st and the 19 following on, with the road constructed 1st. The original/previous application for 19 extra houses was refused and subsequently went to an appeal; the appeal was upheld. The application has therefore been re submitted by the developer with amendments. The new application addresses the issues initially raised, mainly the mix and type of units to be built. This new application includes some bungalows and some smaller 2-bedroom properties. Residents in attendance highlighted possible highway issues – traffic entering the site & exiting onto Lower Street, roadside parking, pub traffic and the proximity on a bend. Residents are having trouble exiting their drives presently without the new houses. The new plans do show some space allocated on the development for visitor parking. The houses will include bird bricks & bat boxes etc. There will be an attenuation pond on the development as advised by Wessex Water, this collects water in high rain fall. PC Cllrs then discussed the application – the attenuation pond is now within the development boundary. It was agreed that the new houses would be an over development of the site without any proposed improvements to village infrastructure. The primary school is stated in the application as still open. The provision of bungalows is good.

Flood risk & surface water management issues have been raised and a report is in progress which the developers will be feedback to DC. All PC Cllrs felt that they were **unable to support** this application at present. Mainly for infrastructure, highway & flooding issues. The Clerk to draft a response and to circulate to all PC Cllrs for approval before submitting to DC Planning. Proposed: SW Seconded: FL

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. The overgrown brambles still need to be strimmed. A landing space for the Air Ambulance has been taken into consideration within the playground design, once the new equipment is installed the Ambulance Service can undertake a site visit if required.

Village waste bins: The Clerk was due to meet with Dorset Waste this week in the village; they cancelled at the last minute. The Clerk is waiting for the appointment to be rescheduled. The new waste bin might have to be re located (eg: on a wall) as Dorset Waste are unable to secure it into the pavement.

Drainage - Lower Street: Cllr SW gave a report on the possibility of installing a liner in the ditch at Bowey on top of the silt, eliminating the need to repair the clay liner. The first section to Chapel Cottage could be lined and then the following section piped and covered. This would cost approx. £3-5,000. The pipe would increase the ease of water flow and terminate into the pond area for the wildlife. In the meantime, we need a bit of rain so we can see if patching of the hole has helped. All PC Cllrs agreed to hold off on making any decision until we can test the flooding situation with some rainfall. To revisit in Spring 2026.

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. Cllr RR will go back to DC and ask them to fix/repair the footpath.

PC orchard: Re-laying of the hedge will start soon. Then the scrub clearance will take place. No trees will be touched, only the scrub.

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

5. OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

5.1 Children on bikes at night with no lights: There has been several reports from residents of children riding bikes in the dark with no lights & wearing dark clothes etc. There has been a number of near misses with cars. Each incident needs to be reported to the Police for the records. Dilys Gartside has contacted the Headmaster at Shillingstone School to see if they can help. The school can access bike safety sessions and funding. The village children have nowhere to go in the evenings and they are bored. A bike park or skate park has been suggested before. Volunteers need to come forward if this is something that the village would like to see. It is the teenagers that need something to do. Cllr SH will look into some options for village teenagers.

5.2 Fippenny News advertising charges: In January 2026 the advertising subs renew. The price of paper has doubled, and a small increase is needed to help cover the increased costs. 2022/23 was the last increase. All PC Cllrs agreed to a 10% increase in the advertising charges. The cost of producing the Fippenny News is heavily subsidised by the Parish Council. Do we need to physically distribute a hard copy to all houses? Maybe we could leave a supply in the church/pub/phonebox etc? A list of vulnerable people could be compiled who could still receive a delivered copy? Cllr RR will discuss with Derek Day (Editor) as an idea. We need to reduce costs, and we are struggling to find volunteers to deliver the magazine.

5.3 PC website/emails/internal auditor: Does the PC wish to use a paid, out of village, internal auditor going forward? from April 2026 onwards. Is George Weeks, by also maintaining the PC website, a conflict of interest? Cllr RR & the Clerk are looking into an alternative website/email service/provider. If there is a conflict, then that will no longer exist. All agreed to keep George as our internal auditor if he wishes to carry on. The Clerk will bring some website research & ideas to the next PC meeting in December.

5.4 Correspondence address for village Land Registry documents: Andrew Vickers has enquired about a Poor Lands Trust correspondence address for important documents. All the PCs Land Registry documents are registered under the Clerks home address currently. Installing a post box at the football pavilion was suggested to use as a correspondence address. This would be a locked post box in the wall. Cllr SF to take forward with Cllr SC. Cllr SF will contact the Post Office to check for the viability of the idea.

6. PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

P/FUL/2025/05229 erection of 19 dwellings & amenity space with access from Lower Street, Pleydells Farm DT11 0RQ **As in the public forum, All PCs object to the proposal.**

P/OUT/2025/06076 erection of up to 50 dwellings, including provision of public open space, drainage & ancillary works (outline application to determine access only) land off Manston Road, Sturminster Newton DT10 1AF **No comment as out of our parish area.**

P/VOC/2025/06312 demolition of existing barn & remnants of barn & erection of replacement 2 units of holiday accommodation (with variation of condition 2 of planning permission P/FUL/2022/04719 to amend approved plans) Mill Farm, Shillingstone Lane **No objection**

P/HOU/2025/05849 raise chimney stack and install new chimney pot. Church Walk Cottage, Belchalwell **No objection**

7. CLERKS FINANCIAL REPORT:**Payments to be authorised –**

£35.08	British Gas (pavilion)
£515.56	S Smith (Clerks wages October & expenses)
£4.25	Lloyds Bank (monthly bank charges)
£420.00	Churchyard grant/donation
£24.49	Poppy wreath
£285.00	Parish Mag Printers Fippenny News

The balances in the Lloyds Bank are - current account **£15,054.46** savings account **£60,000**

7.1 2026/27 budget/precept: The Clerk distributed a draft proposed budget/precept document. We need to submit our precept request by the end of January 2026. 2027 projects include – PC website, Castle Lane plot, school field, Bowey ditch & seeking paid planning advice. 1 years precept in reserve is ideal. The PC has excess funds currently which could fund a number of the 2026 projects. The Clerk will amend the document and bring it back to the December meeting for approval. Cllr RR attended a seminar recently with regards to devolution plans in Dorset, more expenses and responsibilities will be falling under the PCs umbrella in the future.

8. REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORTS:

Village Hall Management Committee: No meeting since the last PC meeting

Rights of Way liaison/Footpath Officer: Jeremy Gartside did not attend the meeting but sent a report in advance. All outstanding matters are being dealt with.

Tree Officer: Nothing to report.

Recreation ground/pavilion: Nothing to report.

Village Community Group (VCG): Nothing to report

PCC: The Remembrance Service starts at 10.45am on Sunday 9th November.

9. OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS OR THE CLERK: Age Friendly Dorset Council survey – The Clerk distributed to residents in attendance some hard copies for completion.

10. NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA: 2026/27 budget/precept, PC website/email, post box at Pavillion.

Okeford Fitzpaine Council resolved to note the date of the next meeting as **Tuesday 2nd December 2025 at 7.30pm to be held in The Pavilion, Castle Lane**

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 8.50pm.

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

Chairperson presiding..... Date: