

MINUTES OF THE OKEFORD FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE PAVILION, CASTLE LANE Tuesday 3rd March 2026

PRESENT: Cllrs R Rowe (RR Chair) Charley Read (CR Vice Chair) S Corben (SC) S Wheeler (SW) & S Harvey (SH) **APOLOGIES:** None **IN ATTENDANCE:** Dorset Councillor S Murcer (SM) & Sam Smith (PC Clerk) **ALSO PRESENT:** 9 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 the 3rd February 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.
Proposed SC Seconded CR

3. DORSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Cllr Murcer reported as follows – 2026 council tax bills will soon arrive at households; there will be a rise on the 2025 charge by 4.99%. Dorset Councils budget has risen by £37million to a total of £489million for 2026. Included in the budget is just £50million for highways inc pothole repairs. This year £5million has been allocated to a newly formed drain and gullies team. All potholes and road issues need to be reported via the DC website, this is the quickest way to see any action, but there is a back log due to the recent weather conditions. A consultation is currently open with regards to the proposed closure of 4 Dorset Fire Brigade stations at Maiden Newton, Cranborne, Hamworthy & Charmouth. Details can be found at www.dwfire.org.uk/proposed-station-closures. Cllr SM is chasing up a requested meeting between the PC and DC planning. Cllr RR raised the issue of a severe lack of communication between DC officers and the PC, particularly the answering of emails that the PC has sent. Cllr RR will email Catherine Howe DC Chief Executive with a complaint.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME: The wildflower group requested to move the excessive snowdrops from the old orchard and re plant in the grass verges. Cllr SC suggested that the bulbs in the route of the new path could be moved first. Sandy to meet Cllr SC tomorrow at the Orchard to discuss.

4. UPDATES ON OPEN ITEMS:

Bowey play park: The installation of phase 2 is now complete. The safety fencing will be removed on the 16th of March. Some of the new surface & matting needs further attention, this will be dealt with on the 16th. Payment for the project will come from S106 monies. The overgrown brambles still need to be strimmed, Cllr SC has obtained a quote (inc fixing some fencing & some grass cutting) Cllr SC to get another quote as it was thought that this was excessive.

Village waste bins: No progress. Cllr SM offered to chase this up as it was thought that Dorset Waste are procrastinating over supplying the bin.

A new PC website & email: The Clerk is liaising with the new website company and hopefully will be able to report back with some progress at the April PC meeting. Progress is slow as some PCs have a greater immediate need than us as they do not currently have a .gov email address. This a legal requirement from April 2026. We already have a .gov domain so our new website is not so urgent.

Post box at sports pavilion: Royal Mail has now issued the pavilion with a post code. Some sort of secure mailbox needs to be sited on the site. Cllr SC to organise a locked post box.

Little Lane: A site meeting is needed with DC Highways, a more appropriate time for this would be after the flood emergency is over and DC Highways have the time free to visit. The Clerk has requested a site visit with Rolly Skeats at DC Highways but to date a reply has not been received.

Electric supply at the bus stop/museum: The cost to the PC to maintain the electric supply is becoming too expensive. SSE have no interest in supplying a mainly standing charge only service. We are now out of contract and on an extremely high rate. The Old School House has offered their outside wall to site the defibrillator, and the new supply will run off the garage. The PC will need to pay to upgrade the wiring etc. Cllr SC has obtained a quote of **£336** for the work. The Clerk will ask SSE to terminate the current electric supply. The museum information board needs to be updated. Andrew Vickers to get a quote for a new one.

PC orchard: Cllr SC has obtained another quote for the footpath work & fencing; this confirms that we have the best price. S106 monies will be used to pay for the path. Work will commence soon.

Metal slide at the rec: Cllr SC has suggested some modifications. New bolts are needed and the existing metal steps covered in a non-slip surface. Cllr SC is waiting for some quotes for the works & will report back with further information at the April PC meeting. The swing has a hole in the soil underneath & the surface needs fixing/repairing. All repairs need to be authorised & agreed with ROSPA and the PC insurance in advance to ensure that any modifications comply with current safety requirements.

5. OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

5.1 PC Cllr vacancies: We currently have 2 PC Cllrs vacancies due to the recent resignations of Sue Finklaire & Fred Light. Since the last PC meeting, 3 applicants have applied to join the PC as Cllrs. Two of these attended the meeting, the third was working away at the time. The 2 applicants who attended the meeting gave a brief introduction to themselves. After a vote, it was agreed to welcome Toby Hood & George Norris on to the PC. The third unsuccessful applicant will be informed when another vacancy arises on the PC, with a view that they could be co-opted at that point. Toby signed the Declaration of Acceptance Office form and returned this to the Clerk.

5.2 Flooding/ditches/drains: An acknowledgement and gratitude to Roy Parsons and Bryan Evans, two volunteers who have come forward to spearhead our drain and maintenance programme for the village. Okeford Fitzpaine is not an area prone to flooding. No properties are in danger of flooding and never have been. Okeford is and remains a VERY low risk area (as per GOV.UK website) and all reports will only concern the ongoing issues that we have from blocked drains, blocked drainage ditches, and lack of maintenance on watercourses. All future reports will reflect this fact. We would like the District Council/Highways and us to work in harmony to provide the most effective communication and to understand the pathway from the initial reporting of an issue, through to the sending out working parties. Proposals: Roy and Bryan to be officially recognised as our Drainage and Infrastructure Representatives. They will report to the PC on issues as they arise and also be jointly raising awareness of the ongoing maintenance around the village That the Parish Council adopt our representatives maintenance recommendations, working alongside DCC/Highways in order that any excess rain water and run off (of which there has been huge levels this winter) are managed in the most efficient way. Proposed SW Seconded SC

6. Planning applications received & updates: P/LBC/2026/00908 proposal: removal of late 19th early 20th century ground floor suspended timber floor, spanning dining room, bathroom and entrance, and reinstatement of a solid floor with insulated limecrete slab and limestone flooring. Location: May Cottage, Fiddleford Village Track, Fiddleford - **no objections** from all PC Cllrs.

P/LBC/2026/01078 proposal: raise height of chimney. Location: Castle Cottage, Castle Lane, DT11 0RL **No objections** from all PC Cllrs

P/FUL/2025/03574 Location: Land North of Castle Avenue, Okeford Fitzpaine

Description: Erect 78 No. dwellings, form vehicular and pedestrian access, landscaping, open space, and drainage attenuation. This application will be considered by Planning Committee on **10am 17th March 2026**. The meeting will be held at: **Stour Hall - The Exchange, Old Market Hill, Sturminster Newton, DT10 1FH** Open for the public to attend & also streamed online audio only.

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

£122.79	British Gas (pavilion)
£25.00	Water2Business
£515.36	S Smith (Clerks wages February & expenses)
£23.80	HMRC Clerks PAYE
£4.25	Lloyds Bank (monthly bank charges)
£285.00	Fippenny News
324.00	Total Energy (Pavilion boiler & water heater service)
£155.64	Fireline (pavilion fire alarm service)
£92.61	SSE bus stop/museum electric
£330.00	Spiteri & Sons (tree work at the Village Hall)
£59.99	Microsoft 365 (Clerks laptop)
£162.00	Seiretto (website hosting 1 year)

Received: **£50.00** for 62 Greenhayes car parking permit, paid until February 2030.

The balances in the Lloyds Bank are - current account **£8,934.22** savings account **£60,098.21**.

8. REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORTS:

Village Hall Management Committee: The tree pruning has been completed at the village hall.

Rights of Way liaison/Footpath Officer: Jermery Gartside did not attend the meeting.

Tree Officer: Nothing to report.

Recreation ground/pavilion: There has been reports of human faeces & toilet paper found in the sports field car park. The main gate will be locked for a period of time to see if the issue resolves itself.

Village Community Group (VCG): Cllrs SC thanked the group for funding the new oven at the pavilion.

PCC: The roof is leaking in the tower.

9. OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS OR THE CLERK: None

10. NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA: PC website/email.

Okeford Fitzpaine Council resolved to note the date of the next meeting as **Tuesday 7th April 2026 at 7.30pm to be held in The Pavilion, Castle Lane.**

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 8.45pm.

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

Chairperson presiding..... Date: