

**MINUTES OF THE OKEFORD FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE PAVILION, CASTLE LANE
Tuesday 7th April 2026**

PRESENT: Cllrs R Rowe (RR Chair) Charley Read (CR Vice Chair) S Corben (SC) T Hood (TH) S Wheeler (SW) S Harvey (SH) & George Norris (GN) part **APOLOGIES:** None. **IN ATTENDANCE:** Dorset Councillor S Murcer (SM) & Sam Smith (PC Clerk) **ALSO PRESENT:** 8 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 March 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.
Proposed SC Seconded SH

3. DORSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Cllr Murcer reported as follows – **Refusal of the planning application for 78 Houses in Okeford Fitzpaine** - This application was reconsidered by the DC Planning Committee on the 17th March 2026. The meeting was open to the public. Parish Council representatives, Cllr Murcer & members of the public attended. The conclusion of the meeting was - The site lies outside the settlement boundary for Okeford Fitzpaine and as such is located within the open countryside. The proposed development would not represent a type of development that would be appropriate in the countryside or otherwise have a demonstrable overriding need for a countryside location and would lack safe and convenient access to a sufficient range of services to meet the day-to-day needs of the occupiers of the dwellings. The development of the site would therefore represent an unsustainable form of development, contrary to the spatial strategy of the adopted development plan, specifically Policies 2, 6, and 20 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016), and the National Planning Policy Framework. The development would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area through the quantum of development proposed and its urbanising effect on this edge of settlement location. This would be contrary to Policies 4 and 24 of the adopted North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016), and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Dorset Council Ward Boundary Review - The review aims to make sure each ward councillor represents roughly the same number of electors, while keeping communities with shared interests together where possible. Following earlier work with the council, the Commission has decided Dorset Council should continue to have 82 councillors. The consultation runs until 1st June 2026.

Help with households with the cost of heating oil The Government has provided additional funding through the Crisis and Resilience Fund to support low-income households that rely on heating oil and are struggling with rising costs. If you are facing a heating oil crisis and cannot afford an urgent top-up, you may be eligible for support. For more information see the Dorset Council's home page on its website.

Dorset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy The strategy sets out a 10-year county-wide plan for making more space for nature and how councils, organisations, farmers, land managers, community groups, businesses and residents can work together to do this. Led by Dorset Council and supported by BCP Council and Natural England, the strategy was co-produced with farmers, landowners, community groups, conservation organisations and businesses through workshops, surveys, sharing practical knowledge and experience from communities. **Cllr Steve Murcer** cllrsteve.murcer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Item moved up the agenda - 5.1 PC Cllr vacancies: At the last PC meeting, it was agreed to co-opt George Norris on to the PC. George joined Cllrs at the front table. George signed the Declaration of Acceptance Office form and returned this to the Clerk. ROI requests have been emailed to Cllrs GN & TH. George Weeks has been asked to set up 2 new PC Cllr email addresses for GN & TH.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME: No items raised.

4. UPDATES ON OPEN ITEMS:

Bowey play park: The installation of phase 2 is now complete. The associated S106 monies have been received from DC into the PC bank account. The Clerk has paid the outstanding invoices received from the equipment installers. The overgrown brambles still need to be trimmed (inc fixing some fencing & some grass cutting) Cllr SC is struggling to find someone to complete the job. Cllr SH suggested a village volunteer afternoon could be arranged to complete the work. The trampoline has a few damage issues. Cllr RR to forward The Clerk a photo. The repairs needed might still be covered under a guarantee. The Clerk to investigate.

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, progress is slow but moving forward. The Clerk has completed all the early paperwork requests & will be attending a Teams meeting on the 13th April 2026 to discuss the new site further. The website 'contract agreement' was signed by the Clerk in the meeting. The Clerk will give an update & report back further at the next PC meeting in May.

Post box at sports pavilion: Cllr SC has ordered a locked post box. The Clerk to reimburse Cllr SC the cost.

Little Lane: A site meeting is needed with DC Highways. The Clerk has requested a site visit with Rolly Skeats at DC Highways but to date a reply has not been received. Clerk to forward to Cllr SM for action.

Electric supply at the bus stop/museum: The museum defibrillator has been moved to its new location, The Old School House. Cllr SC requested that the property owner is given a token amount for the electric used or a thank you gift. As the resident was in the audience, it was suggested to discuss this matter further out of the meeting. The Clerk has requested with SSE the termination of the bus stop electric. 25 days' notice has been given. The Clerk to chase to avoid us paying more charges than necessary.

PC orchard: The new path and fencing has been completed. There has been lots of positive comments from residents. Cllr RR to send a request to DC for the S106 monies to enable The Clerk to pay the contractor's invoice. Where to go from here? Do we continue the path, over the culvert to the recreation ground? New gates would be needed to stop children at park going on to the road. Water which accumulates during heavy rain needs to be looked at. Cllr SW suggested a site visit to discuss this issue further. S106 monies can be used again for the continuing works. It was suggested that the works should be moved on asap to avoid further prices rises. Cllr SC to get quotes. Proposed SC Seconded SW

Metal slide at the rec: Cllr SC has suggested some modifications. 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. We are awaiting a report from Cllr SC. The annual play park safety report is booked for May 2026.

5. OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

5.1 PC Cllr vacancies: See above

5.2 DAPTC membership 2026: The PC did not renew its annual DAPTC membership in 2025. It was thought at that time that the fee was too high, it had jumped significantly from the previous year. Should we re join in 2026? The fee would be **£515.98 - £594.09** depending on the number of parish electors. All PC Cllrs agreed to re joining for 2026 and then re assess for 2027. Clerk to organise and pay. Proposed RR Seconded SW

6. Planning applications received & updates: P/FUL/2026/00573 Proposal: change of use of land for the keeping and grazing of horses. Land east of Higher Street to Turnworth Village Road, Okeford Fitzpaine
No objections from PC Cllrs.

P/VOC/2025/07496 Proposal: demolition of existing barn & remnants of barn & erection of replacement 2no. units of holiday accommodation (with variation of Condition No. 2 of Planning Permission No. P/FUL/2022/04719 to amend the approved plans) Mill Farm, Shillingstone Lane. **No objections** from PC Cllrs. The Clerk will highlight to DC that we still require a Highways site meeting to discuss the condition of the Lane.

P/FUL/2025/03574 Land North of Castle Avenue, Okeford Fitzpaine, erect 78 No. dwellings, form vehicular and pedestrian access. **Refused** by Northern Planning Committee on 17th March 2026. It was thought that the developer will probably appeal the decision. The PC has held a debrief meeting. It was agreed to write to Simon Hoare MP. The purpose of the letter is to highlight general planning concerns within the village - lack of Infrastructure, over development, our 3-tier status etc, new appeal rules that come in from April 1st 2026 and the lack of response from DC on matters raised. Cllr SM suggested that Cllr RR attend Simon Hoare's next open surgery to deliver letter in person.

6.1 Approve expenditure for planning consultant advice: The PC has sought planning advice from Jo Witherden since the last PC meeting in March 2026, enabling us to prepare for the planning committee meeting on the 17th March. All PC Cllrs **agreed** retrospectively to the spend of **£495.00**. The Clerk will check the PC Financial Regulations for the emergency spend amount. These regulations might need updating and agreeing again at our AGM in May 2026.

7. CLERKS FINANCIAL REPORT:

Payments to be authorised –

£46.66	British Gas (pavilion)
£25.00	Water2Business
£618.40	S Smith (Clerks wages March & expenses)
£4.25	Lloyds Bank (monthly bank charges)
£285.00	Fippenny News
£83.64	SSE bus stop/museum electric
£177.49	SSE pavilion electric
£44.00	Amazon Clerks replacement printer
£99.00	Seiretto email/website storage
£495.00	Dorset Planning Consultant - Castle Lane
£336.00	JC Hardy defibrillator re location
£598.80	Aubergine new PC website set up
£3,943.20	Sutcliffe Play phase 1 balance
£33,676.80	Sutcliffe Play phase 2

Received: £7,739.43 VAT refund. S106 monies **£31,350** (play park ex VAT) Fippenny News advertising total **£396**. The balances in the Lloyds Bank are - current account **£7,986.41** savings account **£60,121.26**

7.1 2026 audit arrangements: Due to his other commitments, George Weeks is no longer completing our annual internal audit. The Clerk has found a replacement, at least for this year. Nicky Phillips is based in Motcombe and The Clerk has used her before for audits in other PCs. BDO LLP have emailed The Clerk to inform us that OFPC has been selected as part of the 5% selection to receive an intermediate audit. The Clerk to manage this.

8. REPRESENTATIVE’S REPORTS:

Village Hall Management Committee: The AGM to be held soon, there will be a vote for a new Chair.

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

Tree Officer: Nothing to report.

Drainage & infrastructure maintenance: Various defect reports have been submitted to DC Highways. An email has been received from DC in reply to concerns raised by the PC with regards to water surface issues & drainage at the Pleydells development. The water way is part owned by the PC, who is responsible the developer or Wessex Water? The issue of flooding on Shillingstone Lane was also raised.

Recreation ground/pavilion: The defibrillator at the pavilion is currently kept inside the building. We have a spare cabinet, so why not erect this on the outside of the building to house the defibrillator? Cllr SC has received a quote for this of **£252.00**, the box needs to be connected to the pavilion electrics. All PC Cllrs **agreed** to go ahead. The Clerk has received some emails pertaining to the recent fire alarm inspection. The Clerk to investigate further and discuss with Cllr SC if needed.

Village Community Group (VCG): The Repair Café is back on the 25th April. There will be a knife sharpener & key cutter in the car park.

PCC: Nothing to report

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

10. NEXT MEETING’S AGENDA: PC website/email. AGM & APM

Okeford Fitzpaine Council resolved to note the date of the next meeting as **Tuesday 5th May 2026 at 7pm to be held in The Pavilion, Castle Lane. AGM & APM**

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

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

Chairperson presiding..... Date:for

Following the meeting all Cllrs **agreed** to purchasing a £50 gift voucher for The Old School House re the defibrillator. The Clerk to organise.