

**THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF**  
**TARRANT GUNVILLE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2026**

**Present:** Councillors Charlie Regnart (Chair), Jim Shephard, Jim Farquharson, Heather Sandison, Shirley Bragg, Nigel Marsh

**Apologies for absence:** Councillor Paul Wentworth

**In attendance:** Councillor Sherry Jespersen – Dorset Council, Tony Langdown – Rights of Way, Dermot Cusack – Flood Warden, John Holloway – Parish Clerk

**Members of the public:** 5 members of the public present.

**26/23. Welcome and opening remarks**

The meeting commenced at 19:00, the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**26/24. To agree the minutes of the quarterly meeting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

The minutes were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**26/25. Matters arising from these minutes**

**Speed Surveys**

The Highways Authority has recently carried out two traffic speed surveys in connection with the 20mph application. The final cost for these is £594 due immediately. The results of the surveys available, they will be forwarded to parish councillors and published on the parish council website.

**26/26. Proposed road closures.**

**For the benefit of the members of the public present, it was agreed to discuss this item early in the meeting.**

The Chair gave an outline on the proposed road closures due between October 12<sup>th</sup> and December 18<sup>th</sup> 2026, initially on the road leading from the Forge Cottage junction up past the church and latterly on the Valley Road itself extending from the Forge Cottage junction as far as the gate to Eastbury House.

The major concern was over the inordinate amount of time proposed to complete the works; incredulity was expressed by many with experience of these types of groundworks including Pearse Lally the Stubhampton Estate Manager who had proposed many alternative solutions to an intransigent Scottish and Southern Electricity (SSE) Networks and Cllr Farquharson.

Cllr Jespersen explained the complicated process of contracting on the road surface.

The following major concerns were raised:

1. Length of proposed works and resultant complete closures – 4 weeks for road past the church and 6 weeks for the Valley Road itself

2. Time of year – despite assurances from some it was agreed that if the water table rose during this period the community could be faced with road closures due to the works and from flooding with a potential to be cut off.

The risks because of the closures are significant and relate to emergency service response times. Despite assurances from the contractor and Dorset Council that emergency services are consulted the fact remains that transfer times to definitive treatment in hospitals for specific medical emergencies particularly of a cardiac nature would be increased and could cause potential harm and poor outcome.

Apart from the potential risk to residents, a real risk was deemed to exist regarding the viability of Home Farm's ability to remain trading during these works and in the future and the potential loss of a community asset. There would also be major cost implications for other businesses in the Upper Tarrant Valley.

Various alternate methodologies for expedition of the works / reduce the requirement for total closure were proposed namely:

1. Rather than excavate the trench in phases it was suggested to complete the trench in two continuous workstreams: one from the paddock just above the church entrance to the Forge Cottage junction and two from the junction to the Eastbury House entrance.
2. Despite protestations from Contractors / SSE at the meeting yesterday it was still deemed possible that the road could remain open outside of working hours if the trench was lateralised to the side of the road nearest to the telephone cable.
3. Again, despite denials that it was feasible during the contractor meeting with Cllrs Regnart, Jespersen and the Parish Clerk yesterday it was suggested that road plates should be used to open the road when works were not in progress i.e. in the evening / night and at weekends.
4. An alternative time of year was suggested - longer daylight hours and less risk of flooding.
5. Extended working days / weekend working did not have seem to have been considered by the contractors and SSE.

It must be noted that the Stubhampton Estate Manager had pursued all options to reduce the inconvenience caused by road closures even proposing an alternative contractor with roadway experience and traffic signals to allow the road to remain open. This had been blocked by SSE.

Valid concerns were also raised about Dorset Council Officers "automatic" approval of these works without prior consultation with local stakeholders and the Parish Council.

A kind offer was made to potentially take the cable through a resident's land, whilst this was extremely kind and pragmatic and of potential benefit to all; risks were discussed concerning potential issues during a future sale of the property and this was therefore discounted.

Proposals going forward:

1. An extra-ordinary meeting of the parish council would be convened during August in the daytime as opposed to the evening as it was pointed out the contractor unlike Dorset Council officers had no duty to the community and did not have to attend outside working hours. This would be to discuss these serious concerns and opposition to these works in the current form propose alternate options. To be effective this meeting would need a robust turnout from most of the local community despite potential concerns over timings.

2. A complaint would be raised with the Head of Highways at Dorset Council over the flawed approval process and non-existent communication with the local community prior to approval of the works.
3. Representatives of SSE at the meeting need to be senior and not just the contracts manager, indeed it was deemed that from previous experience by Cllr Jespersen that customer engagement managers have more flexibility to push for change than contract engineers.
4. In addition to the planned meeting a separate email complaints approach to SSE would be undertaken by the Chair on behalf of the Parish Council and residents.

## **26/27. Reports from appointed representatives and committees**

### **Rights of Way**

A request had been made to remove the overgrowth on the footpath by Chettle Longbarrow by topping – it was reported that this had already been completed by the landowner Councillor Farquharson who was thanked by the council.

### **Neighbourhood Watch and Speedwatch**

The neighbourhood watch co-ordinator (Jan Robinson) had recently circulated an email regarding the risks of identity theft.

Cllr Regnart (as Speedwatch co-ordinator) reported that no Speedwatch sessions had taken place recently but there would be one imminently probably in the middle of the day as opposed to the usual morning sessions.

### **Flood Warden**

There was nothing to report at present.

### **Village Hall Committee**

A verbal report by the Chair from Cllr Wentworth stated that the heat pumps had been upgraded to allow a cooling function. Defibrillators – the council acknowledged the excellent work undertaken by the late Dr Geoff Percival. The documentation thereof had been sent to Paul Wentworth in the interim pending responsibility being taken over by persons yet to be recruited / decided.

## **26/28. Planning matters**

P/CLE/2026/04064 Proposal: Certificate of Lawfulness to continue using the property as a C3 dwellinghouse without the agricultural occupancy restriction. Planning permission has been granted by reference numbers 431769/M and 0/A431295/M - Develop land by erection of agricultural dwelling and garage.

It was noted by the Chair that planning permission had been approved and in any case the development was allowed under permitted development rules. No concerns were raised.

Cllr Jespersen (Dorset Council) spoke to the meeting on the forthcoming changes to local planning laws and procedures. There are two facets:

1. A change to the timing of the "Local Plan".
2. Changes to the role of the local planning committee.

Cllr Jespersen is planning to hold a workshop / session on these matters either on 5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> September 2026 at a village hall (yet to be arranged / decided).

#### **26/29. Village Maintenance**

Cllr Farquharson will arrange for the pond opposite Park Cottage to be cleared of the debris which washed down during the winter flooding. He had heard from the environment agency that.....

Clearance of the Tarrant Water Course by Hardy corner was discussed, and Pearse Lally the Estate Manager from Stubhampton Estate has kindly offered to arrange clearance and removal of the flood debris at no cost to the Parish Council and therefore the community. He was thanked for this offer by all present. Cllr Farquharson had also offered to facilitate removal of the debris. The Chair stated that further work downstream of this point would not be necessary this year. The works would occur in due course.

No news as yet on the concrete from the roadway support in the Tarrant river bed downstream of the Orchard Chase bridge that has been reported to Dorset Council previously.

#### **26/30. Squires Playing Field**

A walnut tree which was planted as memorial to Bernard Sheridan was removed due to imminent danger of falling. It will be replaced in due course. The family will be notified by Cllr Bragg in due course.

#### **26/31. Correspondence received**

Cllr Regnart reported no correspondence received.

#### **26/32. Any other business**

The Parish Council precept was discussed considering reduction in Parish Council reserves to circa £500 as a result of increasing expenditure which is virtually exclusively now insurance costs of the village hall and playing field. It was decided to try and amalgamate the village hall and playing field trustees so that one overall insurance policy could cover both. This would hopefully have the effect of reducing insurance costs. This amalgamation would be on the proviso that individual trustee's workload does not increase to cover both facilities by using separate sub committees.

Any potential rise in the precept would be discussed at the next quarterly meeting in November 2026.

Coronation Pathways – Cllr Bragg reported that she had received the offer of a bench from Natural England. This would be installed at the entrance to Green Drove on the Skylark Loop.

A representative from the Yorkshire Vet would be invited to come and break a bottle of champagne over the bench once installed.

#### **26/33. Items from the public**

Nothing received prior to the meeting however an information gathering discussion took place between a member of the public and the Rights of Way officer over the status of the two DMMOs (Definitive Map Modification Orders) for rights of way outstanding for some time. In essence one was due to be considering within a two-year time frame and the other had as yet no completion date.

#### **26/34. Date and time of next meeting**

Extraordinary meeting to be convened during August at a time and date to be arranged to discuss road closures.

Next quarterly meeting on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 7pm in the Village Hall.

**The meeting closed at 20:30**