

Draft Minutes of Winterborne St Martin Parish Council

Monday 12 January 2026

Martinstown Village Hall

Present: Cllrs, Nuttall (Chair), Hutchings, Marsh, Eversden, Fitzgerald, Hosford, Walker, Pemberton
40 Members of the public present.

1. Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Marsh declared an interest in the planning application item.

Cllr Fitzgerald declared an interest in the Cricket Club item.

2. Wessex Water Presentation

The Chair welcomed the Wessex Water team and noted high public concern around the recent deployment of pumps, temporary river discharge, and persistent sewer flooding.
He requested respectful behaviour but acknowledged the “high passions” in the village.

2.1 Wessex Water’s Opening Summary

- Martinstown lies at the bottom of a chalk valley, meaning groundwater rises seasonally and can reach near-surface levels.
- When this occurs, the sewer system (being below-ground) becomes “part of the aquifer”, filling with groundwater.
- The system then becomes overwhelmed, not by household sewage, but by infiltration water entering through both public and private sewers.
- Temporary pumping (OMAP) is implemented to prevent:
 - Internal property flooding
 - Toilets backing up
 - Manhole flooding
- CCTV surveys are undertaken annually, but these can only occur during a narrow dry/wet transition window.
- Older clay systems (1970s) were not designed to withstand high external groundwater pressure.
- Even well-laid sections can be vulnerable under such conditions.
- Private lateral drains, often historic or uninspected for decades, contribute to infiltration.

2.2 Public Questions & Concerns

Public concern was **substantial**, with several long exchanges including.

Historic Sewer Construction Issues

Multiple residents recalled or reported:

- The 1970s installation by Whitehorse was allegedly rushed, poorly supervised and never pressure tested.
- Workers reportedly received bonuses that incentivised speed rather than quality.
- Claims were made that “no seals were installed on the joints”, explaining today’s infiltration.

Wessex Water Response:

- They acknowledged older systems often lack modern sealing standards.

- However, they have not yet found evidence of universal seal failure in Martinstown, despite known infiltration points.

Tankers Not Used This Year

A resident noted that in previous years tankers operated “24 hours a day”, whereas none were seen this year.

Wessex Water Response:

- Tankers were trialled early in December but could not keep up.
- By the time the tanker returned for a second cycle, the sewer had already refilled.
- Tankering is noisy, disruptive, and has no lasting effect.
- Pumping removes water continuously, which is why it was authorised.

Environmental Impact & Visible Sewage

Residents challenged the statement that discharge is “99% groundwater”:

- Reports were made of sediment, visible solids, and cloudy water in the Winterborne.

Wessex Water Response:

- The suction hose draws from the upper layer of the chamber where solids are minimal.
- A fine 5mm screen is fitted to catch debris.
- Independent contractors (OHES) sample the discharge daily; results so far show no difference between upstream and downstream.

Residents countered:

- Even dilute sewage is unacceptable.
- The Winterborne feeds ultimately toward Poole Harbour, an internationally protected site.

Repeated Overflows & Lack of Long-Term Progress

Residents expressed frustration:

- Similar assurances were made “five years ago”.
- Promised solutions from previous meetings had not materialised.
- Large pumps had previously “burst collars” on ageing pipes.
- Manholes have been seen “bubbling like fountains” during heavy groundwater surges.

Wessex Water:

- They emphasised that progress *has* been made (sealing, inspections, diversion, removal of private land drains) but acknowledged it has not yet resolved the problem.
- They stated the nature-based wetland solution is the most viable long-term plan approved by Defra.

Capacity of Dorchester Sewage System

A resident who farms land downstream of Dorchester Sewage Works described:

- Rivers and ditches blocked with silt “as black as the pictures on the wall”.
- Flooding of farmland preventing crop harvesting.
- Long-term build-up that coincided with discharges from Dorchester.

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- Dorchester's sewer system is over capacity.
- Martinstown continues to suffer because the downstream system cannot cope.

Wessex Water Response:

- Upgrading the rising main from Martinstown to Dorchester would require massive infrastructure upgrades all the way to the treatment works.
- Defra ruled this out because the groundwater inflow must be tackled first.

Private Sewer Responsibility

Wessex Water stated:

- Martinstown has 14 km of public sewer and 16–31 km of private sewer.
- Even if Wessex Water sealed every metre of public pipe, infiltration from private drains could still overwhelm the system.

Residents responded:

- Many homes are centuries old.
- Private drains are underground and inaccessible to homeowners.
- Residents asked how Wessex Water expect individuals to fund repairs.

Wessex Water acknowledged the challenge but stressed the regulatory boundary.

The Wetland Proposal

Wessex Water clarified:

- The wetland aims to treat groundwater-heavy overflows at the end of the network.
- It does not solve infiltration by itself – sealing work continues in parallel.
- If the wetland fails to deliver, Wessex Water must propose an alternative within 18 months.
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Residents asked:

- Why not simply upsize the sewer from the west end of the village?
- Why spend years trialling solutions instead of acting decisively?

Wessex Water stated:

- Larger pipes simply fill with the same groundwater.
- Reducing infiltration is the only permanent fix.

2.3 Chair's Summary and Way Forward

- The Chair thanked Wessex Water for attending despite difficult questions.
- He emphasised the need for better communication, especially with advance notice of pumping or road works.
- He proposed establishing a named liaison officer and regular check-ins.
- Wessex Water agreed to explore this.

3. 2026/2027 Budget and Precept setting

A lengthy discussion took place with Cllr Pemberton expressing the following concerns.

- The underspend figure used by the Finance Committee was inaccurate.

- Several cost lines (stream clearance, tree pollarding, election reserve) were misallocated or double-counted.
- Some items should be taken from CIL, not revenue.

Finance Committee response:

- The precept of £13,589 reflects realistic operational needs.
- Stream clearance is recommended to return to revenue to protect CIL for infrastructure.
- Underspend calculations were based on figures available at the time.

It was proposed by Cllr Nuttall and seconded by Cllr Fitzgerald that the budget for 2026/27 and precept is agreed at £13589.

This was agreed with Cllrs Pemberton, Hutchings and Walker against.

RESOLVED: Precept set at **£13,589**. Band D property £37.91 per household based upon 358.4 tax base

3.1 High-Interest Account

A discussion took place concerning moving of monies into a high interest account and there was general agreement that the Council should place some funds into a higher-yield account.

A parishioner raised a question regarding whether an Investment Policy is required first. The Clerk will seek advice on this.

The Finance Committee agreed to bring a proposal detailing amount and term.

4. Martinstown Cricket Club

Additional documentation had been provided to all Cllrs on the day of the meeting so it was agreed that more time will be required to review the documents.

Item deferred to the meeting on 28 January 2026.

5. Willow Tree near Brewers Arms – Safety Concerns

A discussion took place regarding the funding of the works required to the tree amid safety concerns. This has been discussed at a previous meeting where it was agreed that a second quote should be requested. The following points were raised.

- Strong resident concerns about limb fall risk in high winds.
- Tree appears to have significant rot at base.
- Hardy Tree Surgeons have provided a quote; a second quote recommended.

A debate took place over whether CIL monies may be used, Cllr Hosford advised CIL is not appropriate; this is maintenance, not infrastructure.

Cllr Nuttall stressed the importance of swift action due to the safety concerns.

Decision made to defer to next meeting with a possible motion to fund under Section 137.

6. Planning consultations

- i) P/FUL/2025/07482 Land and buildings known as Valley View, Bridport Road, Martinstown DT2 9DS – Continue use of land for a residential gypsy/traveller site, 2 pitches for two families (1 day room, 1 static and 1 accompanying touring caravan per pitch) and ancillary hardstanding.

A discussion took place with the following comments being made.

- Objection to retrospective applications on principle.
- Residents noted occupation has been in place “10–15 years”.
- No new development proposed beyond formalisation.

It was agreed that no comment is made for this application with Cllr Eversden and Cllr Pemberton against.

- ii) P/HOU/2025/07399 – Limbury, Weymouth Road, Martinstown – Installation of a new dormer window on northwest elevation. Install double doors and create terrace to northwest elevation.

It was agreed that no comment is made for this application.

- iii) P/FUL/2025/01469 Steepleton Manor residential home B3159 junction A35T to Rew Manor, Winterborne Steepleton, DT2 9LG – Erect new extension in the walled garden of the existing main building at Steepleton Manor, to comprise of 7 x 1 bedroom 2 person apartments (Use Class C3) with bin enclosure and new link building to connect with the main building (Amended plans/information)

A discussion took place and the following concerns raised:

- Increased sewage loading contrary to Wessex Water’s statements earlier.
- Existing infrastructure already failing.
- Although previously a care home, the application creates new dwellings.

It was proposed by Cllr Pemberton and seconded by Cllr Eversden that the application is refused with the reason of further development will have a significant impact on the existing sewer capacity and environmental constraints.

All agreed.

- iv) P/FUL/2025/07124 Grove Hill Dairy, Grove Hill, Martinstown, DT2 9JP – Erect new agricultural dwelling and garage

Cllr Marsh left the room whilst this application was discussed and voted on because he had declared an interest.

A discussion took place which included the following comments.

- Query over whether this differs from previously refused applications.
- Concerns about visibility, landscape sensitivity, and isolation.
- Applicant has septic tank, and soakaways reducing sewer impact.

- Some councillors believe it supports local agriculture and reduces pressure on village housing stock.

It was agreed that the Council are neutral on this application and therefore the majority voted to make no comment. Cllrs Hutchings and Eversden were in favour of the proposals.

Cllr Marsh returned to the meeting.

7. Provision of path on land approaching East Lodge and on opposite side to the milk machine.

Discussion.

A discussion took place with the following comments being raised.

- Persistent public safety concern: verge becomes “impassable with mud” and pedestrians walk in the road at a blind corner.
- Chair noted a serious accident elsewhere involving similar conditions.
- Dorset Council previously claimed maintenance responsibility but not ownership.
- There was concern expressed that this could set a precedent for areas within the village elsewhere with no footway.

It was agreed that Cllr Hosford will contact Dorset Highways to clarify ownership, feasibility, and potential materials. It was agreed that this could be a suitable CIL project if approved.

8. Parish Garage – Repairs

Cllr Nuttall requested that someone take the lead on the maintenance required for the garage and advised the following needs attention.

- Garage door stiff despite lubrication.
- Timber at base has rotted.
- Paintwork failing.

Cllr Fitzgerald volunteered to take this on and agreed to obtain quotes and report at next meeting.

9. Discharge of Sewage into Winterborne on 17th December 2025 by Wessex Water.

a) Opportunity for public discussion

Discussion and action plan. Appointment of Councillor from PC to lead on this.

b) **Motion:**

"This Council will object to any new development:

- (1) which risks increasing the surface or groundwater flows towards the Winterborne.
- (2) impacts in any way on the sewage system, until such time as we are confident that the sewage system can cope."

Proposed by Cllr Pemberton and Seconded by Cllr Walker

Following brief discussion Cllr Pemberton requested the motion is withdrawn. All agreed.

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There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.05pm with notice that the next meeting will be the January meeting which will be held on Wednesday 28 January 2026, 1900hrs at Magna Community Room.