

MILTON ABBAS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th January 2026
in the READING ROOM, MILTON ABBAS, at 7.30pm

PRESENT

Mr I. Baker (Vice Chair)
Mr S. Gould
Mrs J. Jordan
Ms D. Wyatt

Mr S. Driver (Chair)
Mr T. Ives
Mr L. Usherwood

IN ATTENDANCE Mrs E. Sellen (Clerk) and 6 members of the general public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr P. Ford (holiday) & Mrs. Emma Parker (Dorset Councillor, convalescing). Mr S. Martin had submitted a written request for a dispensation from meetings until further notice, due to personal circumstances which was accepted unanimously. LU arrived during the open forum.

2. DISPENSATIONS

SG confirmed that he is still lead of the Hambro Steering Committee.

3. OPEN FORUM

The following points were raised:

Mrs F. Oliver asked whether the accounts for the Street Fair had been published. Mr M. Castle-Smith confirmed that an article had been published in the November Bulletin. SD confirmed that he will liaise with the Street Fair Committee's Treasurer with a view to publishing final accounts in the Bulletin when they become available.

Mr T. Harley raised the issue of Wilson Wood (formerly known as Exchange Cottage Woods), pointing out that he has had unimpeded access for 23 years until 15th September 2025. SD confirmed that this had been covered in great length during the last meeting, following which, LU and SG had met informally with the owner. The Clerk reported that Mr J. Wilson (owner) had obtained a £2,000 legal pack which clearly confirmed that there is no public right of way through Wilson Wood. The previous owner did not document any public access rights in the sale and Dorset Council have confirmed there is no public right of way. In addition, the land at either end of the footpath is private, so there is no resultant journey through the woods, but there is an adjacent right of way through land above Wilson Wood. JW had been minded to allow permissive access, but when necessarily closed for maintenance, the resulting vandalism of fences, gates and signage deterred him from extending this. JW considers that to allow public access to continue, he would require liability insurance and 3 yearly tree inspections to be carried out by a qualified arborist, along with regular

documented interim inspections especially following storms etc. He asked whether the Parish Council would be willing to contribute to the insurance to facilitate ongoing public use. JW also pointed out that when he is in the woods with his own dogs, they are usually tethered due to the animal conservation works that he is carrying out, whereas visitors usually allow their dogs to roam freely, despite the hedgehog nesting boxes and fox and badger communities that he is seeking to protect. An additional risk is that due to ash die back there are new branch drops most weeks, and he deems it unsafe to grant public access currently whilst he is assessing the scope of the required maintenance programme.

TI also confirmed that although he understands the need to close for maintenance, access has been enjoyed by residents and visitors to the village for many decades and links the church to the cemetery, without the need to walk in the street.

MCS, expressed his disappointment in the loss of amenity, having used this path for 35 years. MCS has spoken to Dorset Council and is prepared to apply for a right of access under the 20 year rule and asked whether the Parish Council would be prepared to support or lead the application. TI pointed out that DMMO T491 was led by a member of the community, but the Parish Council promoted the Dorset Council process for residents to submit their evidence, without expressing support for either the applicant or the land owner, and allowing due process to be carried out by Dorset Council. Some discussions ensued regarding legal due diligence, the permissive path legalities and landowner responsibilities. SD asked for a show of hands as to whether the Councillors were mindful to support or progress the application. There was one vote in favour and one against. SD acknowledged that the Councillors are not in a position to lead or support the application, however they can impartially promote the Dorset Council process to residents without adopting an opinion in favour of the applicant(s) or the landowner.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th November 2025 had been circulated. It was proposed by SG, seconded by JJ, and agreed by those who had attended the previous meeting, that they should be accepted as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

LU, SG and the Clerk met with Mr J. Wilson, landowner of Wilson Wood as detailed above.

The Clerk has spoken to Ms J. Harrison, who is liaising (as representative of St James PCC) with the Street Fair Committee with respect to a replacement bench to commemorate Lieutenant Commander Dickie Dyer.

The Clerk is still in possession of the cheque from the Community Fund towards the Jubilee Bench, as both Lloyds Blandford and Dorchester branches have now closed, so a trip to Poole is required.

The trip hazard on the pavement outside Little Westwood has now been resolved, the trees opposite the Old Hospital and up the Street have been cut back, but the leaves have not yet been cleared by DWP, despite a further request.

The Clerk has spoken to Mr A. Whale regarding the beech trees on the Millennium Orchard, and AW is happy to wait until the next tree works are to be carried out. SG has contacted Wessex Internet regarding the fibre cables on the Millennium Green. Ms T. Jones has confirmed that they will be buried as soon as possible.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence had been circulated by email or was available on the table.

The clerk drew attention to the following:

Mr P. Goodland has now retired as Dorset Council Highways Officer and has not yet been replaced. All queries in the interim should be directed to Mr S. Mephram. Mrs. V. Macnamara has sent an email regarding the proposed WhatsApp groups for tree works and defibrillator alerts.

Winterborne Stickland have been in touch regarding the Speed Indicator Device (SID). The spare battery has now been returned to WS at their request, and JJ's contact information has been conveyed to the WS representative twice with respect to clarifying the rota misunderstandings. There was also reference to improved maintenance and servicing. JJ has not heard from the WS representative yet, the Clerk will follow up with WS Clerk.

The former website domain has expired and notice has been received that it will be deleted.

A complaint regarding an overgrown bridleway at Delcombe has been received, the Clerk is liaising with Dorset Wildlife and Dorset Council.

Chair of Melcombe Horsey Parish Meeting, Mrs C. Eastment has sent two emails relating to the DCT Plusbus service.

SSEN are hosting two Think Tank sessions – Energy Systems Catapult 19th January and Priority Service Register 22nd January both online 1pm-4pm.

NPPF seminar on 20th January online 12.30-1.30pm.

Dorset Planning & Building Control seminars, 3rd February Dorchester 10-12.30 and online 2.30-4.30pm (local plan update, Dorset Design code, nature recovery strategy and planning enforcement).

MP Mr S. Hoare round table 30th January 10-12 at Blandford Corn Exchange, for Clerk's and Chair's.

The Pensions Regulator re-enrolment is due by 31st January 2026 to be reported by 31st March 2026. The Clerk does not automatically qualify for automatic enrolment and has confirmed that they will not be requesting enrolment as an entitled worker.

The Post Office have retired the post box outside the former post office and a resident has asked for an alternative location to be found for an additional post box safe for drivers to park up and use. FR advised that the post box at Milton Mills has been stolen and the Post Office refused to replace it.

A resident has requested a copy of the latest Street Fair Accounts. The Clerk has deferred to the Street Fair Treasurer for further information.

A resident of Catherine's Well has sent photos of the resultant flooding of personal property in part due to a dropped kerb outside the property. The Clerk has sent the photos to Dorset Council Highways (SM) for further investigation.

The Local Plan is due to be published for final consultation in Summer 2026 for adoption in October 2026, which will result in pre-existing Neighbourhood Plans having less weight in future planning considerations. Mrs F. Robinson encouraged the Parish Council to consider reviewing the NP, as a priority.

7. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCILLOR None

8. REPORTS

ELLIEGRAM/COMMUNICATIONS

SD confirmed that the Bulletin continues to be published monthly by Ellie-gram and additional Ellie-grams are circulated as required. JJ advised that a resident without internet access has requested paper copies of the Bulletin. It was agreed that two copies of the Bulletin should be left in each of the Dr Surgery, The Views Coffee Shop and Steeptonbill Farm Shop.

MATCH/JANE'S WOOD/MILLENNIUM GREEN

SG reported that the trees require a deal of work. LU will carry out a site visit. DW reported that the dog waste bin is broken and spilling out the contents. The Clerk will report to Dorset Council.

SG added that the Millennium Green signpost has been snapped and requires repair.

It was noted that there has been an increase in damage at the Play Park / Millennium Green in the last few months.

PLAYPARK

SG advised that all identified repairs have been carried out, except for the replacement bolt on the MUGA (SG will speak to PF) and grass seeding, which he will do nearer April.

TRANSPORT

CE has sent an email expressing concern that a wider community is benefitting from the PlusBus and that the corresponding Parish Councils are not meeting their share of the overheads. There is a further meeting in March to discuss.

DCT are considering an inter village "taxi" style connection route.

WELCOME PACK

SD will ask TK whether it's possible for an updated version of the WP to be released for the new financial year in May.

CSW

TI observed that neighbouring communities have now got implemented 20mph limits. Whilst this is now Dorset Council policy, communities must have an active CSW team to apply for consideration for a 20mph limit.

JUBILEE BENCH

FR had forwarded an email to the Clerk (not received) detailing the proposed location for the new bench. This information will be circulated by email to facilitate an informal decision during February.

MILTON ABBAS SPORTS CLUB None

EMERGENCY PLAN None

REPORTS FROM OTHER PC OFFICERS

TI reported that the Milton Abbas Health & Disability Fund have no applicants for funding and therefore are considering a suitable charity to donate the closing funds to. No donation will be required this year, or in the future.

SG reported on behalf of the Hambro Steering Group to thank the 54 residents who attended the public meeting on the 5th January. It was announced that there is a buyers offer and 50 people voted not to invoke the moratorium, so that the pub can be sold and re-opened as soon as possible. DW confirmed that the potential buyer's architect visited the Hambro yesterday.

9. PLANNING

Decisions

P/LBC/2025/05472 Threshing Barn, Long Ash Farm – Convert barn to dwelling - Granted

P/HOU/2025/05987 Spring Cottage, 1 Long Close Cottages - Erect single storey rear extension with roof lantern (Demolish boot room) - Granted

P/FUL/2025/06359 Land Adj Chalk Stone 1A Catherines Well Milton Abbas Blandford Forum DT11 0AT – Retain storage building - Granted

P/PABA/2025/07017 Long Ash Cottage - Erection of agricultural storage building – Prior approval required

Applications

P/VOC/2025/07206 P/VOL/2025/07157 46-47 St James Cottage - Erect replacement extension, (demolish existing lean-to), with internal & external alterations and associated landscaping (with variation of condition no.2 of planning permission P/HOU/2023/07131 & P/LBC/2023/07132). MCS commented on the 25 documents relating to this application and encouraged Councillors to review the details within applications. He noted that during works, all windows and casements had been removed and replaced with stick on "leaded" windows, along with an out of style brick plinth. The owner has now dealt with the brick plinth, but the windows need to be replaced with proper leaded glass. He exhorted the Councillors to ensure that the applicant will be required to use restoration glass in the replacement windows, before expressing their support (or otherwise) of the application. SD asked the Clerk to liaise with the Planning Officer and respond to Cllrs by email, prior to any decision being made.

P/HOU/2025/07586 & P/LBC/2025/07587 61 Milton Abbas - External alterations to include replacement windows, roof lantern lights and new flat roof covering. Change of door paint colour. The Councillors have no concerns at this time.

10. REVIEW HIGHWAYS & RISK REGISTER CONCERNS

IB reported that the verges down the street are cracking up and the centre of the road is also beginning to disintegrate. It was noted that a significant water flow is running down the street, likely as a result of silted up drains at Catherine's Well. DW advised that they have had to use sandbags to minimise the ingress of water (reported to Dorset Council Highways) and other residents in Catherine's Well have suffered similar issues. SG advised that the gullies had been emptied in the

street around September / October 2025 and asked the Clerk to enquire whether Catherine's Well can be included in this route.

It was also reported that the pothole in the road adjacent to the bus stop in Catherine's Well is almost as bad as it was prior to the repair.

11. RECEIVE TREE REPORTS AND CONSIDER WORKS REQUIRED

The Clerk noted that following the extensive works carried out at the end of 2025, only five trees in Jane's Wood and Seymour Woodland are reported to warrant attention within the next year. LU recommended that the same arborist be approached to provide quotations for both these works and those required at the Millennium Green (Beech trees and Orchard), with consideration for scheduling the work after the nesting season.

12. CONSIDER PURCHASE OF A BACK UP DEFIBRILLATOR

The Clerk reported that a second hand Zoll AED Plus could be obtained for approximately £525 + VAT with 1 year warranty, or a brand new unit can be obtained for £875 + VAT with a 5 year warranty. It was proposed by SD, seconded by SG and unanimously agreed that the purchase of a new defibrillator should be funded by savings in the existing year.

13. COMMUNITY BUS EXTENSION OF SERVICE TO NEIGHBOUR VILLAGES

To be included on March agenda following the next meeting of the Transport Group.

14. CLERK'S CONFERENCE

It was proposed by SD, seconded by JJ and unanimously approved for the Clerk to attend the Clerk's Conference in February at a cost of £30.

15. BUDGET & PRECEPT

The budget had been circulated by email with accompanying notes as follows; Existing year underspends totalling £1,536 include Clerk's Expenses £170, Stationery and Admin £110, Website £62, Bank Charges £20, Room Hire £30, Insurance £14, Play Park Inspection £10, Training £250, Sundries £170, Defibrillator £500 and BT Kiosk £200.

Donations not to be distributed; MAHD £250 confirmed, Bulletin £150 & PlusBus £500 to be confirmed.

Overspends totalling £184 include clerk's salary £12, DAPTC subscription £45 and Audit £127 which are all adequately covered by the underspends in other budgets, even after providing for the previously unplanned purchase of a backup defibrillator £875.

The Neighbourhood Plan requires updating, no grants are available, and therefore costs of £8-10k may be incurred within the next two years. It was proposed by SG, seconded by SD and unanimously agreed to budget £4,500 towards the first year costs in 2026/27 to be funded from reserves.

It was proposed by IB, seconded by SD and unanimously agreed that the insurance budget should be increased to £1,250 to cover increased premiums following the accident and facilitate selection of a more suitable insurer.

It was proposed by SG and unanimously agreed that the increase in play park maintenance should be used to pay for an annual zip wire inspection and additional monthly professional inspections in addition to the existing informal inspections. It was unanimously agreed that the costs of consulting the community regarding the sale of Parish Council land should be funded by reserves (with a view to being repaid following sale of the land).

It was unanimously agreed that no budget would be required for the Bulletin next year, any excess over £500 for the Plusbus would be funded by reserves (on the understanding that our contribution is more likely to reduce as more communities benefit and contribute).

FR asked the Parish Council to retain the underspend on the Jubilee Bench towards the costs of staking the bench in the Millennium Green.

Following the consideration of legal costs towards bridleways and easements, it was proposed by SD, seconded by IB and unanimously agreed that the precept should be set at £23,562 which represents a 3% increase over the previous year and results in a £78.25 increase on the Band D council tax bill.

16. FINANCE

The receipts and payments spreadsheet, latest bank statements and list of cheques for payment had been circulated by email and was available at the meeting.

Balances:

Current A/c	£60,026.72
Playpark A/c	£8,196.84

The following cheques were authorised:

Current Account

Hugo Fox Website INV-20346	DD 18/11	£11.99
Hugo Fox Emails INV-20484	DD 24/11	£20.99
Mrs E Sellen Clerk's Salary November 2025	1491	£419.48
Mrs E Sellen Clerk's Expenses November 2025	1492	£60.41
Lloyds Bank Charges to 09112025	DD 06/12	£7.05
Hugo Fox Website INV-21375	DD 16/12	£11.99
Hugo Fox Emails INV-21427	DD 22/12	£20.99
Mrs E Sellen Clerk's Salary December 2025	1493	£419.48
Mrs E Sellen Clerk's Expenses December 2025	1494	£25.64
Dorset Council Tree Inspection	1495	£739.20
Lloyds Bank Charges to 09122025	DD 05/01	£5.45

Playpark Account

Lloyds Bank Charges to 09112025	DD 06/12	£4.25
Lloyds Bank Charges to 09122025	DD 05/01	£5.45

Charles Lovell Play Park Maintenance Apr – Sept	0169	£700.00
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17. CHAIRMAN'S URGENT BUSINESS None

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Councillors were reminded that the next meeting would take place on 11th March 2026 and, there being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Signed:
(Presiding Chairman)

Date: