

# TOLLER PORCORUM PARISH COUNCIL

Chair Neil Farmer

Clerk Clare Smith

## **DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly**

**Wednesday 8 April 2026 at 6:45pm for 7pm at Toller Porcorum Village Hall**

Refreshments were served at the meeting

18 people were in attendance

### **26/04-1. Welcome by Chairman**

Meeting opened at 7pm.

### **26/04-2. Guest speaker, Emily Newton, from Frome Headwaters Chalk Stream Restoration Project**

Presentation followed by Q&A.

### **Break for refreshments**

### **26/04-3. Accept the minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held 9 April 2025**

Accepted.

### **26/04-4. Matters arising from minutes of the last assembly**

None arising.

### **26/04-5. Chair's report on 2025-26, Neil Farmer**

**Community** – thanks to Cllrs Billen and Curry

a. Telephone Box now in ownership of Parish – lets councillors know ideas as to how it might be used.

b. Grants

i. Supported community health initiative, THaW, church grounds and Post Office.

ii. Council offered to meet with Village Hall Trustees to discuss their issues - waiting to hear back.

iii. Increased grants budget by £1,000 for 2026/27 to meet more projected requests for community support.

iv. Would like to support church roof project and Council has instructed the Clerk to investigate a public works loan for various amounts and impact on council tax. No decision without full public consultation

c. Council's position on potential Fire station closures:

Signed by Chair: ..... Date: .....

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- i. Toller Porcorum Parish Council asks Edward Morello MP and Leader of Dorset Council to write to the appropriate government minister to request the funding formula for Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service be reviewed to take into account the rurality of large areas of Dorset and Wiltshire.
- ii. Toller Porcorum Parish Council objects to the proposed closure of Maiden Newton and other fire stations in Dorset unless assurances are provided that response times (as of the date of this meeting, 11 March 2026) to Toller Porcorum and the surrounding areas can be maintained at current levels or improved upon as part of any proposal to close fire stations and reduce the resources allocated to rural areas.
- d. 16 residents took Defibrillator and CPR training. Some residents have provided contact details inside the defibrillator box to provide help if the need arises.

## **Planning**

- e. Number of applications considered throughout the year. Council raised its own and residents' concerns about works that appear to be outside limits of the approved planning permission. Enforcement Officer has open file and matter yet to be resolved.

## **Environment** – thanks to Cllr Wardle

- f. Watery Lane works complete and gully works by farmer. It is hoped these deliver continued reduction in flooding to Lower Road
- g. Efforts to secure land to push through the Maiden Newton to Toller section of Trailway remain pitifully slow.
- h. Council submitted positive response to Dorset Wildlife Trust Wild Beaver Release consultation.
- i. Signed up to the Dorset Nature Recovery Strategy and Recreation Ground is registered as a recovery site with one 1/3 to be allowed to grow wild March – July.
- j. Fly tipping continues to be reported when necessary. Chair made national media and Radio Solent with dumped hot tub.

## **Recreation Ground** – thank to Cllr Hodson

- k. Employed new grounds contractor.

Signed by Chair: ..... Date: .....

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- l. Part of Dorset Nature Recovery Plan as described in 26/04-5.i.
- m. Continue to plant new trees and replace those lost to the elements.
- n. Cllrs to replace some boundary fence posts soon and any volunteers should make themselves known to Chair.

## **Admin** – thank to Cllr Crabbe

- o. Council has regained General Powers of Competence as Clerk became qualified in November. Gives the power to do anything legal an adult can do without searching for a specific act of parliament.
- p. Councillors and the Clerk continue to undertake training.
- q. The Clerk continues to ensure the Council is legally compliant in all we do by updating and bringing forward new policies.

## **Highways** – thanks to Cllr Jones

- r. Little progress regarding Powerstock Bridge from last year's report. Thanks to Dorset Cllr Eysenck who has been instrumental in progress that has been made.
- s. Barrowland Lane has been resurfaced.
- t. Lower Road as described in 26/04-5.f.
- u. Potholes and roadside erosion reported and filled only for others to spring up elsewhere. Council is concerned with methods used to repair roadside erosion.
- v. Potential weight restriction to High Street Bridge acted on by Council and options to repair/add support being discussed, see 26/04-6.a.

Please note: at the discretion of the Chair the following items were discussed in a different order to the published agenda

## **26/04-6. Open discussion**

### **a. High Street bridge**

- i. Cllr Billen provided excellent research to Council that a 7.5 CWT weight limit on the bridge is impractical. Letters were sent to MP and National Highways who, with Dorset Council, seem to agree and have suggested two potential options:
  - 1. Close bridge for at least six months to reconstruct.
  - 2. Close bridge for one week (and another at a later date) to infill under the bridge leaving access for Toller Brook and landowner access. Infill method to be decided.

Signed by Chair: ..... Date: .....

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- ii. There was general support for option 2 from those in attendance. A resident felt the 7.5 CWT limit was arbitrary and another raised concerns over infilling, whether it was a necessary option or a cheaper one than repairing the bridge and concerns about the impact on wildlife.

## b. Other topics raised by residents

- i. A resident thanked the Council for all that it does.

## 26/04-7. Clerk's finance report on 2025-26, Clare Smith

Figures presented are estimates and have not been accepted by Council.

|                      |                 |   |
|----------------------|-----------------|---|
| Precept:             | £9,850.00       |   |
| Interest:            | £90.84          | Significant decrease in rate*   |
| <b>Total income:</b> | <b>£9940.84</b> |   |
| <b>Spend:</b>        | <b>£9062.99</b> |   |
| Balance:             | £877.85         | unspent for assets into specified reserve for replacement, remaining into working reserve** |
| Total funds:         | £15,233.13      | £14,011.93 in interest generating account   |

\* Interest earned lower than budgeted for: £120. Council looking at other high interest accounts for better return.

\*\*Asset Replacement reserve is now £4,950 and considered enough. Aim for total reserves is £20,000 by 2031.

Significant spend:

- Increase in costs for Recreation Ground grass cutting due to new contractor on (almost) monthly basis
- Salary for clerk increased by 3 salary points: 1 awarded at annual review and another 2 on attaining professional qualification

Asset Register: £32,000 approximately

**Precept 2026/27:** increase of £765 (+7.8% year on year)

Band D property increase: 6.75% which equates to an annual increase of £3.72 or 7p a week.

## 26/04-8. Close and refreshments

Meeting closed at 8:23pm.

Signed by Chair: ..... Date: .....