

BISHOPS LYDEARD & COTHELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE BISHOPS LYDEARD AND COTHELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE BISHOPS LYDEARD VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH 2026

Present: Cllr A Roberts Chair Cllr C Hunt
Cllr M Orr Vice-Chair Cllr J Lewin-Harris
Cllr G Allen Cllr A Pattemore
Cllr P Bainbridge Cllr J Warmington
Cllr J Bletcher

In Attendance: Martin Elford Clerk
David Richards RFO

Apologies: Cllr M Rigby
Cllr C Salter

There were five members of the public present.

The Chair opened the meeting at 7.00 pm.

Agenda Item 1 – 047/26 - To receive apologies and to approve reasons for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr M Rigby (attending another meeting) and Cllr C Salter (attending Football Training). Cllr Hunt was not present at the start of the meeting but arrived soon after. The reason for absence was approved for Cllr Rigby and not approved for Cllr Salter.

Agenda Item 2 – 048/26 - Declarations of Interest.

Cllr Roberts declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in The Paper Shop and Cllrs Pattemore and Allen a DPI in The Village Hall (Agenda Item 18, Invoice Payments - list 2).

Agenda Item 3 – 049/26 - To consider the approval of the draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th February 2026.

Cllr Roberts proposed that the Minutes of the Previous meeting as published were a true and accurate record. This was seconded by Cllr Orr and carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 4 – 050/26 - Comments from members of the public.

There were no comments from the members of the public.

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Agenda Item 5 – 051/26 - Approval to use Hoblake Services for the annual Internal Audit at a cost of £700.00 (same as last year).

The RFO explained this was year 2 of a 3-year price freeze using Hoblake services for the Internal Audit.

Proposed by Cllr Lewin-Harris, seconded by Cllr Warmington and carried unanimously.

Note - Cllr Bainbridge warned against being “tied down” to one provider and that the Council should consider having some flexibility in selecting the auditor(s).

Agenda Item 6 – 052/26 - Approval of the quotation to replace the library strip lights (one at £80 or five at £273 plus VAT).

Following an explanation for the need for the replacement from the RFO (previous Clerk), it was proposed by Cllr Bainbridge, seconded by Cllr Pattemore and carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 7 – 053/26 - Approval to replace the leaking toilet cisterns in the public conveniences at cost of £580.00 per unit.

There was much discussion regarding the general state and age of the toilets as well as the recent large water bill received for the toilets. The Clerk and RFO (previous Clerk) further explained that whilst the leaking cisterns and associated plumbing issues would not have resulted in such a large increase in water consumption, they are still in need of replacement and modernisation. The Clerk reported that the increase in consumption (and therefore the bill) was being investigated with the water company.

It was proposed by Cllr Lewin-Harris to replace the cisterns, seconded by Cllr Allen and carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 8 – 054/26 - Review and approval of the Whisky Trail quotations received.

The two quotations for delineation of the Whisky Trail footpath were discussed. There was much discussion around the content of the quotations in respect of the number of posts that might actually be required to achieve the aim as well as whether there is a need to provide demarcation at all. This, coupled with the amount of money in the quotes lead to the decision to:

1. Obtain further quotes for a modified solution of the installation (just posts),
2. Try and confirm who owns the land,
3. Report the lack of signage for the footpath with Somerset Council, and
4. Defer this decision to a later meeting.

Action: Clerk

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Agenda Item 9 – 055/26 - Review of search results for the purchase of Sandhill Park Woodland.

The Clerk updated the Council on the latest situation with regards to the recent correspondence from the Council's solicitor on this matter. The Clerk explained that we now await answers to the questions posed by her to the Vendors and that he had had a verbal assurance from the Vendor that their solicitors had been given those answers. The Council discussed some of the points made in the correspondence including, VAT, road maintenance contributions and SDLT.

There was discussion regarding parking on the access road and the Council requested that the Right to Park was queried with the solicitor. (Action: Clerk).

There was consensus that progress towards purchase was generally positive.

Agenda Item 10 – 056/26 - Review and approval of the request for information response requested by the external auditor to the objection raised to the AGAR 2024/25.

The RFO explained the response that he had prepared in relation to the objection that had been raised. After some discussion regarding the contents of the response, it was proposed by Cllr Orr that the response as presented be sent to the auditor. This was seconded by Cllr Bletcher and carried with abstention.

Agenda Item 11 – 057/26 - Lengthsman Schedule review and rate increase approval.

The Chair commented that the Lengthsman's Schedule was a recurring issue and that the copy attached to the agenda was from a council meeting held in 2025. She suggested the formation of a Working Group to thrash out what the council require of the Lengthsman and to come up with a revised Scope of Work which could be brought to the council for approval and sent out to tender.

A member of the public, who raised their hand, was invited to speak. They commented that they felt that the machinery used by the Lengthsman might not be of 'industrial size'.

It was proposed by Cllr Roberts that a Working Group be established to address the Lengthsman's scope of works. This was seconded by Cllr Orr and carried unanimously. Cllrs Roberts, Bainbridge, Bletcher and Hunt volunteered to be on said Working Group.

It was proposed by Cllr Orr and seconded by Cllr Lewin-Harris that the increase in Lengthsman's rates be accepted. Carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 12 – 058/26 - Review and approval of grant requests from Crimestoppers South West, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, Little Treasures Childminders and The HUB Youth Club.

Grant requests were reviewed discussed as presented. The RFO was asked to clarify what was left in the budget for Grants. He explained that the budget for the current FY had already been used and that the available budget for all of FY 26/27 was £750.00.

The request from Crimestoppers was discussed and it was decided that the application would not be supported as Crimestoppers is a national organisation.

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The grant application for Little Treasures Childminders was discussed and the application was not supported as it was from a business.

The application from the HUB Youth Club was discussed. The RFO explained that the Council had previously supported the Youth Club but the funds had come from the Community Projects budget and not Grants. After some discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Hunt and seconded by Cllr Lewin-Harris to support the Youth Club. This was carried with abstention.

The application from the Air Ambulance was discussed with a consensus that the Air Ambulance was a good cause to support. The amount of the award was discussed and it was proposed by Cllr Lewin-Harris that £250.00 be donated to the Air Ambulance. This was seconded by Cllr Pattemore and carried unanimously.

Cllr Hunt raised a point of order regarding the method for grant applications and to highlight how grants should be applied for. In this case, the request was submitted via an email to the clerk as well as to other clerks in the county. The clerk will review the policy. (Action: Clerk).

Agenda Item 13 – 059/26 - Approve the purchase of a mobile phone for the new Clerk (Nokia 110 4G at a cost of £39.99).

The approval was proposed by Cllr Orr, seconded by Cllr Bletcher and carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 14 – 060/26 - Approve the application for and use of a PO Box number with redirection (PO Box Deliver) at a cost of £445.80 per year.

After some discussion regarding the cost of the PO Box and possible alternatives, the approval was proposed by Cllr Orr, seconded by Cllr Lewin-Harris and carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 15 – 061/26 - Approve a request to support On-Your-Bike attendance at the Summer Fete (1 Mechanic for 4 Hours at a cost of £250.00).

Cllr Hunt explained to the meeting there was one On-Your-Bike session last September and this request is for a second session for this financial year. After a short discussion, the request was proposed by Cllr Hunt, seconded by Cllr Warmington and carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 16 – 062/26 - Planning Applications.

The following planning applications were reviewed;

[Case Ref: 13/26/0001](#) Proposal: Removal of Condition No. 07 (usage of garage) of application 13/08/0006 at Fennington Lodge, Fennington Lane, Cothelstone, Bishops Lydeard. Application Type: Removal or Variation of Condition(s).

Council Response: No Comment

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Case Ref: 06/26/0006 Proposal: Erection of single storey extension to rear and side of Croft House, Cothelstone Road, Bishops Lydeard. Application Type: Full Planning Permission.

Council Response: No Comment

Case Ref: 06/26/0008 Proposal: Erection of car port at Croft House, Cothelstone Road, Bishops Lydeard. Application Type: Full Planning Permission.

Council Response: No Comment

Case Ref: 06/26/0009 Proposal: Change of use, with internal refurbishment, of the old school teacher house (Class C3) into a nursery (Class E) at Bishops Lydeard Primary School, Mount Street, Bishops Lydeard. Application Type: Full Planning Permission.

Council Response: The Council fully support this planning application.

The following Planning Application was noted:

Case Ref: 06/26/0003/T Proposal: Application to fell one young sweet chestnut tree (T69) and to carry out management works to two beech trees (crown reduce by 7 to 8 metres height (T48) and crown-reduce by 2 to 2.5 metres (T64)) included in Taunton Deane Borough (Bishops Lydeard No.2) Tree Preservation Order 1997 at Sandhill Park, Bishops Lydeard (TD705). Application Type: Felling of Tree(s) covered by TPO

Agenda Item 17 – 063/26 - Authorisation of Clerk’s and RFO’s pay and expenses for March 2026.

Cllr Allen proposed that the Clerk’s and RFO’s pay and expenses are authorised for payment. This was seconded by Cllr Pattemore and carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 18 – 064/26 - Finance.

18a – January 2026 Bank Reconciliation and Cashbook reports (papers).

18b – Scribe Summary Report (actual Vs budget).

18c – Review of the Earmarked Reserves including forecast CIL spend for 2025/26 (papers).

The Finance Reports (above) were explained by the RFO. There was some discussion regarding the traffic improvement schemes and their costs vs remaining funds as well as the roads affected by speeding motorists and the data that can be downloaded from the SIDs. There was concern that there was no signage on the corner of Pound Lane off High Street/Cothelstone Road, directing pedestrians away from walking up the road and towards the footpaths through to Darby Way. The Clerk was tasked with requesting such signage from Somerset Council. (Action: Clerk).

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Payments:

The payments in List 1 were discussed. The Clerk and the RFO explained that the water bill was unexpectedly high and that an investigation into potential leaks and use of the water supply was already underway. In the meantime, it was suggested that the bill be paid as we would not want to be in debt to the water company.

Cllr Lewin-Harris proposed that the invoices listed at List 1 be approved for payment. This was seconded by Cllr Orr and carried unanimously.

List 1						
From:	Number:	Date:	For:		£ Excl. VAT	£ Inc VAT
GTH	INV-2752	17/02/2026	Moorland Gate Heavy Duty Dog Waste Bin		£1,132.94	£1,359.54
SALC	2719	23/02/2026	Training - An Introduction to AI		£45.00	£45.00
Porter Dodson	INV787153	25/02/2026	Woodland surveys		£324.58	£389.50
Jacks Garden Mtce	2451	28/02/2026	Lengthsman - January 2026		£1,647.81	£1,977.37
Water 2 Business	6069964955	19/02/2026	Water Rates - Public Conveniences		£1,465.59	£1,465.59
South West Hygiene	355174	27/03/2026	Sanitary bin disposal - Library		£100.99	£121.18
Fairy Dust Cleaning	0226	28/02/2026	Cleaning the Library		£135.00	£135.00
Fairy Dust Cleaning	0226	28/02/2026	Cleaning the toilets		£299.45	£299.45

Cllrs Roberts, Allen and Pattemore left the meeting due to their declaration of interests.

Cllr Bletcher proposed that the invoices listed at List 2 be approved for payment. This was seconded by Cllr Hunt and carried unanimously.

List 2						
From:	Number:	Date:	For:		£ Excl. VAT	£ Inc VAT
The Paper Shop	1047-260228	28/02/2026	Newspapers		£8.62	£8.62
Village Hall	1041	15/02/2026	Parish Council meetings - Oct – Dec 2025		£60.00	£60.00

Cllrs Roberts, Allen and Pattemore returned to the room.

The Direct Debits listed below were noted.

From:	Number:	Date:	For:		£ Excl. VAT	£ Inc VAT
EDF	000026804943	11/02/2026	Library Electricity		£165.53	£173.81
Bristish Gas	802526123	03/03/2026	Public Conveniences Electricity		£44.53	£46.75

The Bank Charges listed below were noted.

From:	Number:	Date:	For:		£ Excl. VAT	£ Inc VAT
Unity Trust Bank		28/02/2026	Bank charges		£9.30	£9.30

The Receipts listed below were noted.

From:	Number:	Date:	For:		£ Excl. VAT	£ Inc VAT
CCLA Bank	N/A	03/02/2026	Interest Payment		£1,733.28	£1,733.28
Library Cash	BLDLIB_Banking_27	27/02/2026	Library cash		£62.70	£62.70

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Agenda Item 19 – 065/26 - Correspondence List.

The Clerk apologised for the incorrect title on the Correspondence List, this was an oversight during Clerk handover activities. Cllr Bainbridge underlined the need for correspondence from any auditors should be forwarded to councillors immediately. The RFO (previous Clerk) apologised for the tardiness in distributing the information. The Correspondence List was noted.

Agenda Item 20 – 066/26 - Somerset Council matters.

Cllr Rigby was absent from the meeting so did not deliver an update from Somerset Council however, the March 2026 Councillor Update from Somerset Cllrs Sully and Rigby had been distributed to councillors.

Agenda Item 21 – 067/26 - Lengthsman's Monthly Report.

The Lengthsman's monthly report was reviewed and noted. Cllr Bainbridge commented about the litter picking that the Lengthsman had carried out and that she felt that the council should strive to make litter picking more of a community event in line with the national Keep Britain Tidy campaign. The Chair agreed and expressed her support for such an effort.

Agenda Item 22 – 068/26 - Avon & Somerset Police Report.

The PCSO's Report was reviewed and noted. The Clerk informed the Council that the PCSO for our Parish had informed us of a change to the policing boundaries and as such, the PCSO would be changing. The new PCSO is Mike Bell. He will be invited to the next meeting for mutual introductions. The Chair mentioned that she had met him and summarised which areas he was responsible for. He will be invited to the next meeting for a formal introduction and no doubt further explanations.

Agenda Item 23 – 069/26 - Clerks Report and action tracker.

The Clerk explained that the Clerk's Report had been mostly collated by the (now) RFO and that he had had little to add during his short tenure. Previous clerk (current RFO) explained that the previous ten days had been a very busy handover due to the volume of work that was handed over. The Clerk informed the council that it was his intention to make better use of the Action Tracker in order to ensure that items do not get overlooked and to provide a better picture of where things are with respect to projects which are in progress. The Action Tracker items were reviewed and discussed, particularly the Hearing Loop action.

Agenda Item 24 – 070/26 - To note planning permissions granted or refused.

There were none.

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Agenda Item 25 – 071/26 - To note planning applications withdrawn.

There were none.

Agenda Item 26 – 072/26 - Any Other Business – for report only

Cllr Allen commented that with respect to the dormant telephone box at Darby Way, he had seen an item on television showing a similar box being utilised to house a defibrillator.

Cllr Warmington encouraged everyone to report any pothole they see to Somerset Council via their website as it is important that they don't know about them unless they are reported.

The Chair reported to the council that she had attended a meeting of the Somerset Wildlife Trust and that they were launching a re-introduction of nature programme based on the River Tone and its tributaries.

Agenda Item 27 – 073/26 - Date of next meeting.

The Clerk reminded the Council that the next meeting of the Parish Council is scheduled for Wednesday 8th April 2026 at 7pm in the Bishops Lydeard Village Hall.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.55 pm.

Martin Elford
Clerk to the Council

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