

# BISHOPS LYDEARD & COTHELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

## **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in St Mary's Church Centre, Bishops Lydeard on Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 6:00pm.**

In addition to the Chair, six Parish Councillors and the Clerk of the Parish Council, there were 20 members of the public present.

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming and said refreshments were available.

### **Agenda Item 1 - Adoption of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 21st May 2025**

Cllr Roberts proposed that the minutes were approved. This received unanimous support and the minutes were adopted. The chair signed the meeting minutes at the end of the meeting.

### **Agenda Item 2 - Introduction to the new PCSO Sean Johnson**

Sean Johnson introduced himself and explained the region that he covers including Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone. He said that he was new to the PCSO role in the police force but had many years experience in previous roles including the Airforce, ambulance service and police force. He is planning to start monthly Beat Surgery's which will be published later on. He said crime figures for this area are quite low (6 reported in March, 11 reported in April and 5 reported so far in May). Regular patrols will be undertaken as needed.

Please report any crimes on 101 (or 999 if a life threatening) and online at <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/>

### **Agenda Item 3 - Presentations from Fiona Underwood regarding the People's Emergency Briefing.**

Fiona Underwood spoke about the People's Emergency Briefing.

She explained that the People's Emergency Briefing (PEB) is about the nature and climate crisis as part of a national initiative (more information here <https://www.nebriefing.org/>)

The PEB includes a screening of a 45-minute film featuring contributors such as Chris Packham, leading scientists, a former general and Jennifer Saunders all being frank about where things are heading and what can be done. This is followed by time for the

audience to reflect on what they have seen and connect with others locally to consider how society could respond.

The aim is to help communities come together around a shared understanding of the risks, and to create a welcoming space for people to engage, especially those who have not previously been involved in climate or nature discussions.

The PEB film will be shown at **Bishops Lydeard Village Hall on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at 7pm** – see the poster on our website for more information. The film is also being shown at different location in Taunton and surrounding villages.

Please see the poster and paper she provided on our website at:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/meetings/annual-parish-meeting/>

#### **Agenda Item 4 - Presentation from Fiona Jackson – Wilder Environment.**

Fiona Jackson provided a presentation called ‘A WILDER ENVIRONMENT’ which is a WILDER ENMORE AND GOATHURST PC INITIATIVE. See the presentation on our website at:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/WILDER-ENMOREPCVERSION26.pdf>

#### **Agenda Item 5 - Update from James Dakin regarding the renovation of the Old School House to create an expanded nursery.**

James Dakin provided an update on the progress of the renovations of the Old School House. See the paper provided on our website at:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/School-Update-Report-for-Parish-Council-12.05.26.pdf>

#### **Agenda 6 – Chair’s Report**

Cllr Roberts, the chair of the Parish Council read her annual report, the report is available on the Parish Council website at the following location:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Chairs-report-to-Annual-Parish-Meeting-2026.pdf>

#### **Agenda Item 7 - Comments and questions from members of the public**

Richard Brooksbank thanked that Parish Council for approving their grant application at the last Parish Council meeting. He then provided an update on the Russet Cider Trail. The presentation slides can be found at:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/TRCT-Presentation-BLPC-20May26-copyVs2.pdf>

A member of the public asked if Sandhill Park Woodland was purchased as an investment or an amenity for the village. The chair said that it was an investment in nature and the preservation of the woodland, and we do hope to have it accessible to the public. Some work needs to be done to make it safe and accessible.

A member of the public asked where the woodland was located. This was explained.

A member of the public asked what works are being planned for the woodland. The chair said that is not a simple question to answer at this time as we have only just bought it. A new working group has been set up which will look at what works need to be done, however, the working group hasn't had time to meet yet.

A member of the public said that you can't walk from Bishops Lydeard to Taunton as the footpath stops at the Norton Camp and it would be really nice to have a footpath all the way along the main road. She said it is not safe for women to use a footpath away from the main road. The chair explained that this is not something that the Parish Council can do as it is outside our area (parish). However, the new cycleway (Russet Cider Trail) could be used when completed. The member of the public said that would not be safe as it will be in the middle of nowhere.

A member of the public asked where we are with the Co-op (planning application). The chair said that it is expected to be approved within the next few weeks.

A member of the public asked how long it will take to build the new Co-op. The chair said she understood that the Co-op hoped to have it completed with a year but was not 100% sure. The member of the public asked if there was any information about what was happening with the present one. The chair said she didn't have any information only that it is a privately owned commercial building.

A member of the public said it is for the people of Bishops Lydeard to decide what they want the woodland to be used for. He said that there used to be an area of the woodland (on the right of South Drive by the Ballifants Farm) that used to be used until quite recently for grazing. He suggested that the area should be cleared so it would create an open space (village green) for people's recreation, picnicking and for people to meet up. He regards to rest of the woodland with the fish pond to be in contrast to the open space proposed. He said he thought it was a wonderful thing for the village although the challenge is to manage it and find the volunteers. He suggested a 'friends of' group is set up like the Quantocks. The chair said that is something the Parish Council would consider. The member of the public suggested that the woodland should be listed as an open space creating a common which means it can't be touched and would be a good way of protecting it for the future.

A member of the public asked if the working group (Sandhill Park Woodland) would be open to the public to join. The chair confirmed that this will be possible. He also said that you should start work on what is achievable such as opening up the path that goes through and out the other side past the pond. The chair said it will be an enormous job

and we will be aiming for small victories. The member of the public mentioned the pond and clearing the branches around it.

A member of the public asked who is chairing the working group (Sandhill Park Woodland). The chair said that the group hadn't met yet and so hadn't selected anyone.

**The meeting ended at 7.30pm**

DRAFT