

Response to FOI Requests dated 15 April 2026 and 06 May 2026

Prepared by: David Richards (clerk)

Date: 15 May 2026

FOI Email dated 6th May 2026 as follows:

Thank you for your response to my foI request (15 April 2026).

Unfortunately you have not provided a valid reason for your rejection of my foI request.

For clarity, I have made a valid foI request to Bishops Lydeard Parish Council and not to Somerset Council.

The information I have requested is held by Bishops Lydeard Parish Council and relates to decisions and accountability of the Parish Council relating to over £100K of CIL funds spent on "Roads & 9" project that has delivered no tangible benefits for the people of Bishops Lydeard.

So I will repeat the foI and detail the information I would like to see:-

- Invoices
- Contracts
- Consultant reports
- Email correspondence with named parties.

Response: List provided below.

In addition I would like to see copies of all sent and received emails to/from Joanna Zalewska (SC Project Manager) or any other Somerset Council Officer regarding my FOI, I would like to understand the extent of Somerset Council's input into decision making in a matter that I have solely raised with the Parish Council and if there has been a data breach as a consequence. This matter needs to be dealt with as a Subject Access Request (SAR) and the statutory timescales for a response apply (wef 6 May 2026)

The use of CIL funds in Bishops Lydeard continues to be the subject of close scrutiny by residents, focused on a very costly and protracted "R&T" project that has delivered nothing.

Your refusal to provide full information about the advice you are receiving from Somerset Highways about the viability of this costly project continues to highlight the lack of openness and accountability that has been evident in the Parish Council's conduct over many years.

Response: I have not refused to provide the information requested. Your original request was as follows:

Following the lack of answers I received to my questions at tonight's parish council, I would like to submit a FOI for all correspondence between the parish council and Somerset county council regarding the roads and traffic project over the last 12 months.

I'm sorry this will cause extra work but lack of transparency in the meeting causes this.

There is obviously some recent correspondence which has not been published to the public, from SC regarding the prudence of this project.

I did reply stating that you should ask Somerset Council for these emails which you have chosen not to do. As you will appreciate I need approval from Somerset Council to share any emails sent by them. These emails are internal to the project team and not normally available to the public. However, I am prepared to send you those emails that you are referring to and trust that Somerset Council will understand the need for me to do this. See list of emails below.

Parish Councillors must:

- Act in the public interest
- Be accountable for decisions
- Avoid misuse of public funds

Clerk (the proper officer) must:

- Ensure legal compliance
- Maintain records
- Facilitate transparency

I look forward to receiving a full response to my foi (15 April 2026) & SAR request (1 May 2026) within agreed timescales.

As a matter of immediate concern I would like you to send me the email regarding reputational damage from Somerset Council .

Response: I believe that you are referring to the email dated 26th March 2026. I have included this email below for your information - see email 11.

Your draft minutes say the R&T working group met online with SC and answered questions put by SC and as a result feasibility studies will now go ahead. Has the working group approved further expenditure?

Response: No further expenditure was approved.

Exactly what decisions were made in that meeting ?. Government Bodies Regulations 2014 states documents used as part of decision making should be made public.

Response: The purpose was to clarify the location crossing point of site 3 and issues around site 9. The Parish Council clarified that the crossing at site 3 can be as detailed in the TPA design as it is the only feasible location. Also, site 9 issues were discussed, however, the feasibility report needs to be completed before the Parish Council can decide how to proceed.

The minutes state the email was sent to all councillors, so why was it not on the agenda?

Please forward this as soon as possible.

Response: It was not on the agenda due to timing. The meeting with Somerset Council took place the day before the Parish Council meeting and the agenda had already been sent out. Also, no further decisions are now needed by the Parish Council until the feasibility report is delivered.

Full Responses:

Information relating to the Roads and Traffic project was provided on 25th July 2025 following an FOI request. This information can be found on our website:

<https://bishopslydeardparishcouncil.gov.uk/road-and-traffic-information/>

I have now prepared a paper outlining the timeline of the project since July 2025. See separate document '**Roads and Traffic Timeline 2025-26**'.

Invoices:

Invoices received since 25th July 2025 as follows:

Invoice 32006422 dated 15th October 2025 for £12,506.00 for the outline design for Site 14. This was presented for approval at the Parish Council meeting on 12th March 2025 and approved for payment on 12th November 2025.

Invoice 32016780 dated 27th March 2026 for £16,996.00 for the detailed design for Site 14. This was approved at the Parish Council meeting held on 11th February 2026 and approved for payment on 15th April 2026.

Invoice 32016783 dated 27th March 2026 for £25,734.00 for the Feasibility studies for sites 3, 4 and 9. This was approved at the Parish Council meeting held on 11th February 2026 and approved for payment on 15th April 2026.

NOTE: No decisions can be taken for sites 3, 4 and 9 until the feasibility study with outline costs for full implementation are delivered by Somerset Council.

Contracts:

Since 25th July 2025 we have approved the following:

1. **MN004280 External Developed Brief Phase 1 Site 14 Detailed Design** at a cost of £16,996.00. Approved 11th February 2026.
2. **MN004280 Bishops Lydeard Phase 2 - Sites 3 and 4 and 9 - External Developed Brief** at a cost of £25,734.00. Approved 12th November 2025.

Both of these documents have been provided for you.

Consultant reports:

There have been no new consultants engaged. Somerset Council are project managing the full delivery of this project. However, each stage of the project for each site is agreed in advance of any costs being incurred.

Email correspondence with named parties:

NOTE: Parish Council meeting held on 13th August 2025.

1. Email dated 18th August 2025 to set up a conference call between Somerset Council and Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone Parish Council on 5th September

2025 to clarify the outcome of the Parish Council meeting decisions taken on 13th August 2025.

2. Email sent to Somerset Council on 8th September to clarify the outcome of the conference call held on 5th September 2025 to confirm the understanding of the decisions taken.
3. Emails requesting alternative quotations for the detailed design and construction were sent to RK Bell and M Lambe Construction on 29th September 2025. The contractors contacted did not respond to the requests.
4. Email from Somerset Council on 29th October 2026 with the Developed Brief (that includes design cost estimate and an outline programme information) for undertaking feasibility study on sites 3, 4 and 9 as requested in our email instruction sent on 8 September 2025.

NOTE: Parish Council meeting held on 12th November 2025.

5. Email to Somerset Council on 14th November 2025 confirming decisions taken at the Parish Council meeting held on 12th November 2025 i.e. 1. Site 14 to proceed with Somerset Council delivering the project. NOTE: We no longer wish to instruct any other contractors. 2. MN004280 Bishops Lydeard Phase 2 - Sites 3,4, and 9 - Developed Brief at a cost of £25,734.00 was approved.
6. A follow-up conference call was set up for 25th November 2025 with the Somerset Council project team and Roads and Traffic working group to confirm the scope and outputs.
7. Email from Somerset Council on 3rd December 2025 requesting a Pedestrian Survey for Site 9.
8. Email from Somerset Council on 17th December 2025 stating that a Pedestrian Survey is not required and they will proceed using the information they have readily available.
9. Email from Somerset Council on 27th January 2026 with the Developed Brief for the detailed design of site 14 - MN004280-017.
10. Email dated 12th February 2026 confirming that the Developed Brief for the detailed design of site 14 - MN004280-017 was approved at the Parish Council meeting on 11th February 2026.
11. Email dated 26th March 2026 from Somerset Council regarding queries on sites 3 and 9.
12. Email from Somerset Council on 27th March 2026 with Invoice 32016780 for immediate payment.
13. Email from Somerset Council on 27th March 2026 with Invoice 32016783 for immediate payment.
14. Email arranging a conference call on 14th April between Somerset Council and the Roads and Traffic working group to discuss the queries raised for sites 3 and 9 in the email dated 26th March 2026.

NOTE: This meant that the Roads & Traffic project could not be added to the agenda for the April Parish Council meeting as the agenda had been issued prior to 14th April 2026.

No further correspondence.