

ILTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF ILTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 25th NOVEMBER 2025 AT MERRYFIELD HALL, ILTON (6.30pm to 8:30pm)

PRESENT:

Cllr. J Bennett (Chair)

Cllr. A Pidgeon

Cllr. J Easterbrook

Cllr. I Sherwood

Cllr. B Vance

Cllr. N Matravers

Mr T Heath (Clerk)

16 members of the public

Somerset Councillor J Roundell (left meeting after agenda item 5)

Cllr. Vance requested agenda item 10d be moved to agenda item 18. The Chair approved the request.

2025/199 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. A Gordon, Cllr. L Pike and Cllr. S Ripley

2025/200 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN AGENDA ITEMS

No declarations of interest in agenda items were tabled.

2025/201 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Members unanimously **RESOLVED to APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2025.

Proposed Cllr. A Pidgeon

Seconded Cllr. J Bennett

2025/202 PUBLIC SESSION

A member of the public (MoP) asked if the invoice for litter picking was paid annually, the Chair confirmed this was the case, however the Council have suspended this requirement. A question was raised regarding the Clerks salary not being detailed in the payments list. The exact gross salary of a parish clerk is considered personal data and therefore is omitted in the public minutes of a meeting. However, the total expenditure for employee's salary is publicly available as part of the council's annual accounts.

A MoP asked if Council had considered various options for the land at Copse Lane.

A MoP raised a point regarding a comment made at a previous meeting by the Chair.

2025/203 SOMERSET COUNCILLOR REPORT

Somerset Councillor Roundell briefed Council on the following:

The 2026/2027 budget process is underway

Severe weather provision is in place

Visiting special needs schools, support being offered to staff by Somerset Council

2025/204 FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) The bank reconciliation statement, dated 31st October 2025 was unanimously **APPROVED**.

Proposed Cllr. Matravers

Seconded Cllr. Sherwood

b) Members unanimously **APPROVED** a list of payments, detailed below

£32.54	Valda Energy	Electricity
£216.94	Bradfords	Various
£193.48	Ilminster Hardware	Various
£31.20	Scribe	Cemetery
£383.80	Walker Midgley	Tractor Insurance
£xxx.xx	Mr T M Heath	Salary
£322.02	HMRC	PAYE
£21.60	Mr T M Heath	Expenses
£12.99	Amazon	Polyester Rope
£400.00	Premier Landscaping	Ranger Duties
£57.23	Tesco	Fuel

Council **APPROVED** the increase in cost for the tractor insurance from £303.80 to £383.80. This was due to communication issues by the broker.

Council **NOTED** receipts for October 2025, detailed below

£346.00	Ilminster Youth Football	Hire Charge
£209.00	Wakely & Sons	Cemetery Fee
£27.50	Lloyds	Interest

c) Members **NOTED** receipt of the RFO financial report for period ending 31st October 2025 which included the latest accounting statement, detailed at appendix A.

d) Council **NOTED** the recent VAT claim of £5,120.63 covering period 1st April 2025 to 31st October 2025.

e) Council **NOTED** the closure of the Bath Building Society instant access account. On closure £1,435.55 interest was received.

f) Members **RESOLVED to APPROVE** the opening of a 35-day notice savings account with Redwoods Bank and the deposit of £80,000 into it. Council **AUTHORISED** signatories on the account to be the Clerk, Cllrs. Bennett, Sherwood and Ripley.

Proposed Cllr. Matravers

Seconded Cllr Vance

The Clerk reported the financial services compensation scheme threshold will increase to £120,000 from 1st December 2025.

2025/205 2026/2027 BUDGET AND PRECPT

The Clerk updated Council on the process and plans for delivering the budget for 2026/2027 and associated precept demand. An informal 'kick off' meeting had been held whereby a set of planning assumptions were discussed. The Clerk is in the process of preparing a draft budget which will be tabled at a full Council meeting in January 2026 for Council's consideration, the exact timing is dependent upon the timeframe to submit the precept demand to Somerset Council.

2025/206 EQUIPMENT SERVICING

Council **RESOLVED to APPROVE** the servicing of strimmers, mowers and the tractor at a cost of £675.00 plus VAT. Cllr Pidgeon to arrange.

Proposed Cllr. Bennett

Seconded Cllr. Sherwood

2025/207 COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The Clerk outlined key elements of a proposed policy, these being

- a clear objective to enhance communication and engagement with residents
- a dedicated Parish Council Facebook page
- more use of the village notice board and website
- introduction of a Parish Council surgery
- continue to fund and contribute to the Merryfield newsletter

Members **RESOLVED to ADOPT** a communication, engagement and social media policy which will be placed on to the Council's website, thus superseding the previously adopted social media and electronic communications policy.

Proposed Cllr. Pidgeon

Seconded Cllr. Easterbrook

2025/208 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

a) Copse Lane Land

Cllr. Pidgeon read out a statement. As tasked by the Full Council, the Task & Finish group for the Copse Lane Land, in association with the Rec & Play Park Task & Finish groups, met to consider the need to generate capital from the sale of the land in Copse Lane. After careful consideration and much discussion, it was resolved that, at this moment in time, there is no formally agreed financial requirement to raise capital from the land. Therefore, the Task and Finish group recommend to Council that the group be dissolved."

The recommendation from the task and finish group was **ACCEPTED** by Council

b) Recreation Ground

Cllr. Bennett reported the task and finish group have met a number of times, no recommendations have been formalised.

c) Play area

Cllr. Easterbrook briefed Council on the work of the group.

Following a review of the risk-based play-park area inspection report Council **APPROVED** funding the following at a cost of £2,338 plus VAT

- Cone-climber wet pour surfacing
- replace 5 in number wooden steps on small multi-play unit ladder with durable textured finish
- replace 2 in number cradle seats (exact match) and 2 in number flat seats (like for like) on swings
- replace 2 in number 200mm diameter treated timber step logs
- replace rubber button seat with like for like Sutcliffe seat and inspect cable runner and chain attachment to confirm integrity
- Inspect 360-degree ball joint to confirm integrity to construct and replace 5 in number triangular floor decks using 33mm thick treated softwood decking boards on the Hags castle multi-unit

Members **AUTHORISED** the task and finish group to obtain quote(s) for repainting of metal framework on swings/small multi-play, repurposing of basketball area to accommodate ground graphics and purchase and installation of free-standing activity panels suitable for toddler/pre-school children within play-park area

2025/209 REQUEST TO LEASE COPSE LANE LAND

Cllr. Bennett, seconded by Cllr. Easterbrook proposed to **REJECT** an offer from a local business to lease the land at Copse Lane. The motion was **ACCEPTED** by 5 votes to 1. The Clerk to inform the local business of the outcome.

2025/210 GRANT APPLICATION REQUEST

Members **APPROVED** a grant application received from St Mary and St Peter's Church School for £800.00 to contribute to KS2 children attending a residential trip to Bristol in June 2026 to experience a range of activities. Activities include We are Curious, SS Great Britain, Museum, Aquarium, a Theatre show alongside 2 nights stay in a Youth Hostel. Council **RESOLVED to APPROVE** that the expenditure is commensurate with the benefit to the community and utilise the s137 local government act 1972 power.

2025/211 GRANT POLICY

The Clerk presented to Members an updated grant policy which Council unanimously **RESOLVED to ADOPT**. A copy of the policy and application form to be placed on to Council's website.

2025/212 PLANNING

No applications presented for sanction

Council **NOTED** the position of current applications that are awaiting determination

25/02309/HOU - Old Leggs Farm, Podgers Lane, Ilton, Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 9HE

Application to extend the two chimneys to minimum 1800mm above the level of the ridge.

25/02105/LBC - Ye Olde Well Cottage, Cad Road, Ilton Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 9HF

Internal remedial works to floor, walls and joinery (Implemented)

23/00404/FUL - The Stables, Ashford Old Farm, Isle Abbotts Road, Ilton, Ilminster, Somerset TA19 9ED

Change of Use of land to a travelling caravan site consisting of 3 pitches each containing 1 mobile home, 1 touring caravan, 1 utility dayroom and associated works (partly retrospective)

17/01068/AGN - Land At Ilford Farm, Frost Lane, Ilton, Ilminster, Somerset

Notification of intent to erect a general-purpose agricultural building.

2025/213 VOLUNTEER GROUP

Cllr Pidgeon reported on tasks undertaken by the volunteer group during the last month and made Council aware of a number of positive comments made by residents to the volunteer team regarding the work they undertake.

2025/214 RANGER TASKS

The ranger has been in the village for 2 days since the last meeting, tidying verges and clearing drains and gullies. Council requested this work continue in December 2025 as a priority task.

The Clerk reported there is an online tool that identifies Somerset Council's maintenance schedule for gullies and drains.

The ranger has recommended to Council that clearance of the ditch in Frost Lane would help with the flooding issue in the road. The Clerk was asked to write to the applicable agency to request clearance work on the ditch be undertaken.

2025/215 CRIME, DISORDER AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

No matters were discussed.

2025/216 HIGHWAY MATTERS

Following a meeting with a Somerset Council highways office Council were briefed on the following;

- (a) A recommended solution to parking issues experienced opposite the entrance to Merryfield Hall was provided, this being marking of a white 'H Bar' Council to consider at a future meeting.
- (b) A one-way system along Copse Lane would cost the Council in excess of £10k and may not be supported by County Highways and the Police as data records show the mean speed for the road is between 14.4mph and 17.4mph. Evidence suggests a one-way system increases the speed of traffic.
- (c) Confirmation was provided that the traffic monitoring strips along St. Peters Close were not deployed by Somerset Council officers. They have also reviewed their records, and there is no application on file for this deployment. Therefore, it appears to be a non-compliant installation.

Council agreed to write to Highways regarding the traffic lights along Cad Road and the issues they are causing.

Cllr. Vance reported on behalf of the speed watch group. A meeting had taken place with a neighbouring speed watch group; valuable information was received. The group will face numerous challenges in siting a speed indicator device. Cllr. Vance to discuss logistics at a future Local Community Network meeting as well as opportunities for increased markings on the road. Volunteers to support potential schemes were called for. Council agreed to write to businesses on the business park to respectfully ask drivers to consider their speeds whilst driving through the village. The Chair agreed to add a piece on speeding in a future Merryfield newsletter.

2025/217 CORRESPONDENCE

Council **NOTED** a request from Merryfield Hall to utilise the land at Copse Lane as a car park on 20th December 2025, 10th January 2026 and 25th April 2026. The Clerk briefed Members on a recent communication with Council's insurers which identified that if the land is owned and maintained by the Parish Council then their insurance policy covers it. However, if the land is used for an event, organised by a third party then they must have their own insurance, Council is not covered in this case. A risk assessment must be undertaken before each event and shared with the organiser. Council must receive a copy of the organiser's insurance certificate.

If the Council offers the land to a third party for use as a car park, its use sits under the Council's policy. However, Council must ensure the land is sufficiently maintained for its intended use and therefore cannot be seen as negligent in the event of injury or damage. A risk assessment shall be developed, with appropriate, reasonable and practical mitigation actions being taken. This assessment should be updated regularly. The outcome of the assessment must be that there are no obvious issues that may cause damage or injury. Council must approve and minute the land's use as a car park for each occurrence and ensure themselves they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent damage or injury.

Taking the advice from Council's insurance provider, Members **AGREED** to authorise the use of the land on the 20th December 2025 and 10th January 2026, subject to a risk assessment being undertaken ahead of the December date, with no significant issues identified. The Clerk along with Cllrs. Vance and Pidgeon to carry out an urgent risk assessment and email Members the output.

Following multiple receipts of correspondence relating to the union flag and remembrance Sunday, Council confirmed they are not responsible for the remembrance service.

Members **AGREED** with the Clerk that when minuting the public session, a summary of points raised shall be provided along with decisions taken by Council and actions given.

Council **AGREED** to support a proposed apiary at the solar farm, Merryfield Lane.

Cllr. Bennett confirmed that when the Copse Lane Land was acquired by Council it was not solely for the purpose of an overspill car park

Following correspondence, the Clerk was actioned to write to the three equestrian centres reminding them that Brook Green is for walkers only. Council confirmed a notice is given on the information board at the entrance to the Common and reference to this issue has also been put in the Merryfield Messenger due for publication at the beginning of December.

2025/218 ITEMS OF INTEREST AND AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING

None raised at this time

2025/219 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 27th January 2026 starting at 6.30pm

2025/220 CHAIRMANS CLOSING REMARKS

Tonight is the last meeting of the year and I would like to record my thanks to the Councillors and volunteers for all you have done this year for our village. To all of you for your support when I have been running around like a headless chicken and helping me out, calming me down and to Andrew Gordon for his hosting throughout the year, to Nick for saving this Council thousands of pounds by taking the waste away but to all of you for making this village look as good as it has this year. I don't think there has been a day this year when a Councillor hasn't been out doing something. A special thanks though must go to our new Clerk, who really has had a baptism of fire, but gently and firmly led us through what a Parish Council can and can't do, although this has taken some adapting too. I think we are now a stronger Council who are working as a team. As for Parish Council meetings for this year, that's it. I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and new year. As we go forward, we aim to keep the village looking good and a happy place to live.

Appendix A

		£
1	Lloyds Current Account	5,909.77
2	Lloyds Instant Access Account	48,800.70
3	Bath Building Society	89,244.06
4	Hinkley and Rugby Building Society	50,000.00
5	Outstanding Payments	0.00
Total as Cashbook		193,954.53
 Less Ringfenced Lines		
6	General Reserve	27,742.02
7	Rec Field Development Project	97,045.28
8	Play Area Refurbishment of existing Equipment	3,973.01
9	Play Area Procurement of new Equipment	12,874.21
10	Asset Maintenance/Refurbishment (non play area)	4,800.00
11	Procurement of new Assets (non play area)	11,888.00
12	CIL	4,212.18
13	Legal Cost Provision	5,000.00
Sub Total		167,534.70
 Working Capital		
		26,419.83
14	2025/2026 Expenditure Budget	77,872.86
15	2025/2026 Expenditure	45,650.67
Remaining 2025/2026 Budget		32,222.19
16	2025/2026 Receipt Budget	74,390.09
17	2025/2026 Receipts	68,587.73
18	2025/2026 Receipt Forecast	5,802.36
 Unallocated Funds		0.00

Approved by:

Date: