

MINUTES OF NETTLECOMBE PARISH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

At EMN HALL, MONKSILVER

TUESDAY 12TH MAY 2026 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Oliver Reynolds, Becky Marsh, Shelagh Laver, Justin Nichols and Acting Parish Clerk Sophie Wichard.

IN ATTENDANCE: Two parishioners attended.

Apologies for absence: Cllrs Iain Mackie (Vice Chair), Elizabeth Scott and Wendy Perry.

1. Welcome and report of the work of the Parish Council during the past year by Robin Wichard, the Parish Council Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked colleagues for their work and support over the past year. He particularly wanted to record his thanks to Carol Juffs who had been the Parish Clerk for many years but who had now retired from the role. Sophie Wichard had agreed to take on the role until a permanent replacement could be found.

The Chairman explained that the past year had, in many ways, been quite frustrating for the council.

Somerset Council have been devolving service responsibilities down to parish level where possible but this left small parishes like Nettlecombe challenged, because we do not have the funds to take advantage of available scheme schemes. The forum for sharing issues with other councils (the Local Authorities Network) is also a challenge because the larger parishes face very different problems to small rural parishes like ours, where, for example, our need for a high-quality broadband provision is not relevant to them. Sadly, this situation has not changed from last year's report.

We still face the challenge of engaging with our parishioners. Despite having put adverts in the parish magazine and promoting the council through our website, we have largely failed to attract parishioners to our meetings (although this is a common problem across most Parish Councils).

Nettlecombe Parish Council has continued to be represented, as far as possible, at the ENPA and Watchet Local Community Network. We have supported our colleagues at Old Cleeve Parish Council with their campaign to add signage to limit heavy vehicles

accessing Roadwater via Woodadvent Lane, and colleagues at Monksilver Parish Council in their campaign to impose a 7.5 weight limit on the road from Elworthy to Fair Cross. We have also monitored, and advised on, planning applications within and bordering the parish.

2. The Clerk's report on the finances of the Parish Council during 2025-26

The annual financial statement was tabled by the Clerk and accepted by all present.

During the course of this year the Parish Council has lost its Clerk – Carol Juffs – after many years of service, While the search for a permanent replacement goes on, the role has been temporarily filled by Sophie Wichard. Given that her role is temporary she has chosen not to take payment for the role which has given the Parish enough funds to purchase a replacement for the Parish laptop (which is now at least 14 years old).

The financial situation remains challenging with limited reserves held and so the Parish Council had to take the hard decision to increase the Parish Precept by 20% this year (having remained unchanged for many years). This will give a small reserve to allow for unforeseen expenses. It was noted that further invoices, still to be received, would further diminish the reserve.

3. Any Other Business

There being no further meeting, the Chair thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 19.18 pm

MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on TUESDAY 12th MAY 2026 – 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Oliver Reynolds, Shelagh Laver, Becky Marsh, Justin Nichols and Clerk – Sophie Wichard

IN ATTENDANCE: there was one resident present.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr Iain Mackie

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Chair: Oliver Reynolds chaired this part of the meeting. Oliver Reynolds proposed that Robin Wichard should be re-elected to the post, seconded by Justin Nichols. Robin Wichard accepted the post.

Vice-Chair: Oliver Reynolds was proposed by Robin Wichard and seconded by Shelagh Laver.

Other Committee Responsibilities: The current portfolio holders all offered to remain in post and this was accepted nem. con.

Highways: – Becky Marsh (although other commitments may mean that she cannot make all meetings);

Planning: – Shelagh Laver

Footpaths: – Robin Wichard

West Somerset Flood Group representative: – Justin Nichols

3. CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLORS:

There were no prospective councillors. The Chair noted his disappointment that the campaign to attract interest in the work of the Council through the Parish magazine etc, had failed to have any real impact. It was however recognised that this is an issue shared by many parish councils and other volunteer organisations.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE FORMS

The Acceptance of Office Forms will be completed by the Councillors after the meeting and witnessed by the Clerk.

Cllrs Wendy Perry and Elizabeth Scott have resigned from the Council. They were thanked for their service and the Council wished them both well in the future.

5. REVIEW

Subscriptions: It was agreed to continue with the subscription to SALC to remain affiliated.

Churchyard Maintenance: It was agreed to continue the contract with Daren Grellier, Garden Care & Creation, for the closed church yard around the church, and the embankment of the overflow ditch in Woodford.

Yearly Charity Donations: It was agreed to not support any charities in this financial year, due to the constraints of our limited budget once again.

6. SUMMARY REPORTS April 2025 – March 2026

Chairman's Report for the Year (as detailed in the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting).

The Chairman expressed his thanks to colleagues on the Parish Council for their continued support and guidance in what has been a challenging year in many ways. He also wished to express his gratitude for the tireless work of Parish Clerk Carol Juffs who had resigned from the Council earlier in the year after years of invaluable service. The Chair also expressed gratitude to Sophie Wichard for stepping into the breach as Acting Clerk until a permanent replacement could be found.

Nettlecombe Parish Council has continued to be represented, as far as possible, at the ENPA and Watchet Local Community Network. We have supported our colleagues at Old Cleeve Parish Council with their campaign to add signage to limit heavy vehicles accessing Roadwater via Woodadvent Lane, and colleagues at Monksilver Parish Council in their campaign to impose a 7.5 weight limit on the road from Elworthy to Fair Cross. We have also monitored, and advised on, planning applications within and bordering the parish.

Councillors have continued to monitor Planning applications within the Parish and those potentially impacting us, and given considered views in each case. We have also monitored issues with Highways and Footpaths running through the Parish, and have ensured that issues needing attention are addressed in a timely manner. Furthermore, we have also continued to meet our obligations towards the maintenance of the grounds of the Parish Church.

The Council will continue to try and engage with our Parishioners. Engagement with the parishioners we represent if the Parish Council is to remain relevant in these rapidly changing times.

Highways:

Somerset Council retains a statutory obligation to maintain the roads in the Parish and we continue to report faults through the link on the website and also to urge parishioners affected to do likewise. Cllr Marsh noted that the response to issues raised appears very slow at the moment.

We have supported colleagues in Monksilver Parish Council in their campaign for a 7.5 ton weight limit on the road from Elworthy to fair cross and also colleagues in old Cleeve Parish Council in their bid to improve signage on Woodadvent Lane to prevent access by heavy goods vehicles trying to get to Roadwater.

Planning:

There had been varied activity throughout the past year but with some pleasing successes. The limitations we recommended to the barn at Beggearn Huish had been accepted which shows that Parish councils do have a voice and are listened to. It remains important however that we contribute our response in a timely manner.

There are ongoing concerns about Pipers at Beggearn Huish with a lack of planning applications at present. This has been raised and we are assured that 'they are onto it'.

It was noted that National Guidance will likely be amended to give a positive response to applications unless there are strong reasons to object. This is a worrying development.

Footpaths:

There is nothing to report of concern on local pathways.

West Somerset Flood Group:

It has been a quiet year overall with no major issues arising in the Parish. It was pleasing to note that measures taken in previous years to alleviate flood risks appeared to continue to work well. A proposed flood group in conjunction with Monksilver Parish council appears to have made little further progress towards regular meetings.

The issue of riparian rights remains a grey area with no clear guidance. The Environment agency appears to have gone very quiet on this matter.

It was a matter of concern that some properties within the Parish have been identified as being on a flood plain yet are clearly not which creates problems with future sale and insurance. Getting such errors corrected seems to be a logistical nightmare.

7. DATES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS FROM MAY 2026 – MAY 2027

On the second Tuesday of every third month

Tuesday August 11th 2026 at 7.00 pm

Tuesday November 10th 2026 at 7.00 pm

Tuesday February 9th 2027 at 7.00 pm

Tuesday May 11th 2027 Annual Parish Meeting 7.00 and 7.30 AGM

The dates and times were all agreed for the year ahead and will be confirmed with the EMN Hall.

8. ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE

No matters were raised.

9. OPEN FORUM – FOR ALL RESIDENTS

A question was raised as to whether there should be a further weight restriction imposed through Beggearn Huish given the narrow road and damage caused to the road edges by heavy vehicles. It was explained that the issue for this Parish is cost – we can support other parishes as there is no cost to us. It was suggested that this matter be referred to County Highways.

10. MINUTES of the Meeting on February 10th 2026 (already circulated)

The Minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

11. MATTERS OF REPORT from 10th February 2025

Cllr Perry had seen a small plastic container which was intended to be used to store important medical information for use in the event of an incident at home. The Chair confirmed that he had found that these had been produced in a partnership between the police, Lions Club and St. John's ambulance service. As yet he has not found who is the distributor or the mechanism by which they can be made available.

12. SOMERSET COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

Regretfully there were no Somerset Councillors available for our meeting again.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk received confirmation that the revised Precept payment of £2656 has been paid to the bank account.

Invoices had been received from SALC, Zurich insurance and Black Cat Computers. These were accepted and the cheques signed.

14. REPORTS – CURRENT

Chairman's Report and LCN: covered in Minute 6 above.

Highways: nothing additional to report.

Planning: as detailed above with nothing additional to add.

Footpaths: nothing further to add

Flood Group: as per report above.

Finance: Retrospective payments were approved, proposed by Oliver Reynolds and seconded by Robin Wichard - for SALC, Zurich Insurance and Black Cat Computers.

It was noted that we have still not received invoices from Darren Greller (Garden Care) or for the hire of the EMN Hall. These would be chased up.

15. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The completed Annual Governance Statement was not quite ready and will be circulated for approval at a further meeting.

16. ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2025 - 2026

The Accounts for the year had been circulated prior to the meeting but have not yet been returned by the internal local Auditor. The Accounts were accepted but will be circulated for approval at a further meeting upon receipt.

17. THE FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF NETTLECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

It was recognised that the issue of finding volunteers to become councillors is a challenge for any council – and indeed for any voluntary organisation. Suggestions included offering a drop-in session at the Notley arms (although outside our parish).

18. FUTURE BUSINESS/MATTERS FOR MEMBERS INFORMATION

Nothing raised.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – TUESDAY AUGUST 11TH AT 7.00 PM

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

MINUTE OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD JUNE 22nd 2026

PRESENT: Cllrs Robin Wichard (Chair), Oliver Reynolds, Shelagh Laver, Becky Marsh, Justin Nichols and Clerk – Sophie Wichard

1. APPROVAL OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS

This was a single item agenda to approve the audited accounts. These were presented by the Acting Clerk and approved by all present.