

# LITTLE SOMERFORD PARISH COUNCIL

## Annual Parish Meeting Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026 held Little Somerford Village Hall

Minutes	
<b>Present</b>	Cllr P Cameron Cllr A Simmons Cllr D Orchard Cllr R Taylor Cllr A Beer Cllr S Orchard Cllr P Tilley
<b>In Attendance</b>	R Nuttall (Clerk) Cllr Threlfall (Wiltshire) 5 members of the public
25APM/1	All Present
26/APM/2	No declarations of interest
26/APM/3	The Minutes of the last APM held 6 <sup>th</sup> May 2025 were approved and signed as a true record of the meeting. Proposed: Cllr Cameron; Seconded: Cllr S Orchard
26/APM/4	Over the last 12 months, we have welcomed Paul Tilley and Alison Simmons to the Parish Council. Sadly, in September, we lost Robert Simmons following a fatal accident. He was a dedicated and hard-working member of the Parish Council. The Parish Council would like to thank Wilts Councillor Threlfall for her help and support over the last year, both to the PC and to the village as a whole.  The Councillors gave their annual reports on each of their areas of responsibility. These are appended to the end of these minutes.
26/APM/5	The 2025/26 accounts are currently with the auditor for review. They will be put to the Parish Council for formal approval next month. The Council ended the year with a deficit of £802, having originally set a deficit budget of £4614. As of March 31st 2026, the Parish Council had £23261 in the bank. In 2024 the Parish Council had committed to verge repairs near to the Post Box, the invoice for this was not paid until April 2025 giving a rollover from one year to the next. The main source of income is the Precept. The main expenditure is on salary for the Clerk (15 hours per month) and grass cutting. Proposed: Cllr Cameron; Seconded: Cllr D Orchard  The Council has set a £6421 deficit budget for 2026/27 to allow it to invest in improvements to public spaces. The Precept has increased by £500 to £12500.

**Public Bodies**

26/APM/6.1 Wiltshire Councillor Threlfall gave a report which is appended to the end of these minutes.

No other representatives available.

26/APM/7.1 **Speed watch Group.**

The administrator is stepping down from his role, and several other team members are standing down, leaving a team of three which is too small for the group to continue. The Parish Council considers speeding to be a major issue in the village and considers the work of the Speed watch team to be very important. The Councillors resolved to try and recruit new team members by advertising in The Signpost, on FB, on the noticeboard and by personal request. **Action: All**

The Parish Council would like to thank all the members of the Speed watch team for their work in this area, with special thanks to Mr & Mrs Free for leading the team for many years.

26/APM/7.2 **Little Somerford History Group**

Arlene Bishop gave a report on the work the group has been doing in the past year and plans for the next few months.

The group along with other volunteers are currently transcribing the logbooks from Little Somerford Village School. An exhibition was held in the church at the beginning of May ' A Celebration of Village Life' showcasing historical artifacts including wedding dresses and photos. Over 700 people visited with £1200+ being raised for the church and the history group.

Another project is the village history trail, with a local artist drawing up a map, and various interesting buildings being featured. The Parish Council would like to thank Arlene and her team for all their work helping to keep the cemetery neat and tidy. In support of the History Project, and particularly the History Trail, the Parish Council has agreed to host the map and associated information on its website.

26/APM/8 **Public Question Time**

A question was asked as to why the Speed Indicator device displays in red, orange and green. It just does; we are not able to change it.

The Garden Club and the Village Hall committee were given permission to use the Millennium Green for the Plant Sale and Teddy Bear Trail respectively.

### **Allotments/Community Orchard**

The annual allotment holders meeting will take place later in May. All the allotments are being used productively. The water to the allotments was turned off for the winter to prevent freezing and pipes bursting.

The Community Orchard trees have been in flower so hopefully that means a good crop. Paths in the orchard will be cut so that the fruit can be accessed.

### **Cemetery**

The cemetery is overall in good condition and well maintained. Most graves are tidy with minimal weeds, reflecting the continued efforts of volunteers and families of the deceased. Where vegetation is present, it is predominantly grass and not causing concern. Faux flowers continue to be placed around the cemetery but are not creating any issues. Some of the wooden slats along the path need replacing, and the path would benefit from more gravel. The Parish Council has a project for 2026 to improve the Cemetery Path.

The black bench: would benefit from repainting but remains serviceable; the Memorial bench is in good working order, and the newly donated bench is in excellent condition and well positioned in a sunny spot.

A small number of older graves have fallen over; this appears to be due to age and does not present a safety concern - Some graves require minor attention, though overall condition remains good.

There are several molehills present, but these do not impact the overall use of the cemetery.

The rear fence is sturdy and in good working order; the metal railings and gate are in good condition, with paintwork still sound and not requiring attention.

The Memorial Garden is clean, tidy, and well presented. All trees appear healthy and safe; the grass is regularly cut, and the wildflower area is well maintained.

In the past 12 months there have been 3 burials, 3 x inscriptions added to memorials, 1 x teak bench donated.

### **Defibrillator**

The parish defibrillator remains in good working condition and, fortunately, has not been required for use during this period.

- Replacement pads are due this year and will be arranged accordingly.
- A defibrillator training session has been scheduled for 12th May at 7:00pm in the village hall, open to all residents who wish to attend.

This ensures continued readiness and promotes community awareness and confidence in using the equipment.

### **Highways Matters**

The list of jobs is updated monthly of things such as potholes, drains needing clearing, sign cleaning, strimming etc for the Parish Steward to complete.

The village sign on Dauntsey Road has been moved to the other side of the railway bridge in an attempt to reduce speed on entering the village. A traffic survey near to the Vale Leaze junction showed most vehicles travelling within the speed limit.

Flooding at the bottom of The Hill near to the Somerford Arms has been sorted with broken pipes under the road being replaced. We continue to request other highways issues be dealt with, notably the flooding at the railway bridge near the village hall.

### **History Trail Project**

Progress has been made in developing the village history trail concept and its integration into the parish website:

- A meeting was held with Arlene Bishop after Christmas to review how the village’s extensive historical archive can be incorporated digitally.
- A draft webpage has been created, including a placeholder interactive map and template data sheets for individual properties/sites.

Completion of the project will depend on:

- Securing agreement from featured property owners to be included;
- Finalising and uploading the associated data sheets;
- Developing the final version of the interactive map and illustrations.

This remains a valuable initiative to showcase and preserve local heritage.

### **Litter Pick & keeping our village tidy**

There has been 2 very successful litter picks this year. Many bags of litter picked up and rescued from our hedges and ditches back in the autumn and the same again this spring. We encourage people to report litter on the My Wilts App for areas outside the 30mph zones for W.C to pick up. Thank you to all who helped at the litter picks and those who continue to pick up litter on a regular basis, I’m sure our village would not look this good without these people as it comes back daily.

### **Millenium Green**

Grounds maintenance continues with Greenscape and the grass continues to be all mown on a regularly. The Christmas tree on the Green was in place again (donated by Willis Bros) and lit up each evening. Thank you to everyone involved in setting up the Christmas tree and getting the lights up as it looked lovely lit up again this year. The small one is doing well for the future generations. Carols on the Green took place in the village hall this year rather than try to set up on the green when it can be very cold & wet. The Salvation Army band played carols for us all, and took some requests, it was a beautiful evening and our sincere thanks go to them for playing for us. A collection was made on the night and raised £132.50 for their Christmas appeal in support of their valuable work. The Green was used for 2 events during the year – The Garden Club plant sale and Teddy Bear Trail.

### **Paddock**

The small paddock in Meadow Lane was advertised again this year and it has now been let for the coming year. Last year the grass was kept down by a few sheep from a local farmer. The Roadside hedge has been cut during the winter thank you to a local contractor. At last, the tap for the paddock water tank has been located so we can ensure this is turned off in the winter to prevent freezing up.

### **Planning Applications**

There have been various Planning applications including 4 x Tree surgery, 2 x House extension, 1 x new dwelling, 1 x agricultural barn, 1 x class Q conversion.

### **Playpark**

The playpark has had its yearly RoSPA report, which was very good, the wood chipped areas have been dug over and weeded. The slide steps and some of the wooden sides have been replaced and painting of the wood will take place soon. Small maintenance jobs and regular checks are ongoing throughout the year. It’s always lovely to see so many children playing football at the play park. A bug hotel in the corner of the playpark continues to provide a home for insects and the left-hand edge of grass is left to grow to increase the biodiversity in the play area.

### **Rights of Way**

Most rights of way remain easy to access with gates and stiles in good order. Where there are issues, the Parish Council is working with landowners to resolve these. The Parish Council has compiled a

comprehensive report detailing all public rights of way within the Parish to ensure any problem areas are dealt with effectively and efficiently. The Parish Council continues to work with landowners to replace stiles with gates to enable easier access.

### **Speed Indicator Device**

The Little Somerford Speed Indicator Device (SID) has been moved between two locations since the 2025 Annual General Meeting (May, 2025). Initially located between May and September 2025, on 'The Hill' facing towards the B4042 and from September 2025 to date, located on Park Lane, facing Great Somerford.

The SID is in a good state of repair, with no known defects to any of the SID, the solar panel charging system or the batteries. We additionally have a spare mounting bracket and a small number of attachment straps available to support ongoing movements etc. around the village.

We have three sites currently able to be utilized in speed awareness campaigns:

- The Hill 30 mph Traffic passes the local pub, which encourages many parked cars and pedestrians
- The Street 30 mph Traffic passes the village playground, which means an increased risk of younger children being in the vicinity
- Park Lane 40 mph Traffic is coming into a 40-mph zone (the fastest within the village) from a stretch of 60 mph limited road

Throughout the 2026-2027 year, it is intended to re-site the SID device between both "The Street" and "The Hill" locations, aiming to safeguard younger road users during the summer months, prior to returning to The Hill to allow repeated data collection to see whether driving behaviours have improved since the last SID campaign on that site.

### **Website**

The parish website continues to operate reliably, with no issues reported from our hosting provider. Over the period, several improvements have been implemented to strengthen functionality and compliance:

- Google Analytics has been set up, enabling us to better understand website usage and inform future improvements.
- An Accessibility Statement has been added, outlining current compliance and highlighting areas where further enhancements are required to meet accessibility standards.

These steps provide a stronger foundation for ongoing development and ensure the website remains both informative and compliant.

### **Wildlife Friendly Village**

This long-term project to increase the biodiversity in our village. The grass cutting regime to encourage and increase biodiversity continues in the Cemetery and Community Orchard encouraging our green areas to become less fertile and native wildflowers to come back with pathways cut through. The long-grassed areas were cut and cleared at the end of the growing season. The wildflowers are coming through which is great to see, there were so many cowslips in the Cemetery this year.

### **Wiltshire Councillor Threlfall Report**

At the Annual Parish Meeting, as your Cllr I report on Wiltshire Council activity over the last year.

It has been an interesting and challenging year with a new LibDem minority administration making lots of changes. I have some concerns about their latest budget and its impact on residents. These include the increase in parking charges in WC car parks, the change to 3 weekly bin collections and £20m of new borrowing.

Changes to parking in WC car parks – blue badges have now been given free parking all day but for other charges will go up 20% in 2026 plus a further 5% in 2 years’ time, hours of charging will be extended to 7am - 7pm and include Sundays. My concerns are the damage to our town economies, the costs to enforce additional hours and the greater difficulty for shoppers - which will only benefit online shopping.

Changes to waste collections – from 2027 residual waste will only be collected every 3 weeks. This may cause problems for groups such as families with small children and nappies. Recycling collections will include plastic film and weekly food waste collections will be introduced with caddy bins.

It had been announced that two main Household Recycling Centres (or tips) in the North would be closed at once – leaving us only Marlborough and Stanton - but the resulting outcry led to a U-turn, and both will stay open for now while another site is identified. However, slots will have to be booked online – despite the evidence during Covid that this increased fly-tipping.

Concerns about road conditions and potholes still fill my inbox. I am now being asked for suggestions of which road repair would bring the greatest improvement for the most people – I welcome your thoughts today. I was glad to see that Clay St was being resurfaced. I also spotted a new generation speed camera being trialled in Swindon which I am trying to find out about.

A reduction in money being invested in road maintenance is a concern, about £4 down per annum on previous allocation and this despite the decision of the majority LibDem administration to borrow £5m a year to put towards road maintenance. Worryingly the budget papers show this will cost future generations £58.8m over 60 years) I consider that having roads without bad potholes is the top priority and in my opinion is more urgent than changing speed limits.

One bright spot is that an opposition budget proposal for ‘lane charging’ was adopted – this is charging utility companies for the length of time they close off roads. This should raise over £2m a year and encourage companies to speed up their works and reduce disruption.

Also cheering was the reversal of the decision by the administration to defund the LINK community transport scheme – although it is not yet clear where the money for this will come from in the future.

Other changes: Area Boards are going to have a change of name and be reduced to 3 meetings a year from 4.

LHFIG (Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group which deals with small scale road improvements like dropped kerbs) will have its budget halved and be more focussed on larger substantive bids - which are likely to be those in towns. Parish Stewards will be more centrally controlled.

The administration is very keen on renewable energy projects and keen to get parishes involved in hosting them – but we in the North seem to have been left out of this offensive for now – perhaps because of the hostility shown against Lime Down and Minety BESSs.

My last piece of gloom is the Planning Inspectorate’s decision to reject Local Plan after many years of work, and much money has been invested in it. There is a suspicion of politics behind the decision – the assessment was delayed until there was not enough time to amend the Plan. Had it been adopted

it would have secured a few years using the previous government's target for housing. Instead, we will now we have the Labour government's much higher target (+ 82%) against which to make decisions on planning applications. This will exert huge pressure on committees and officers to approve any applications or risk losing at appeal. I already have 4 speculative applications being considered on sites which would never have been in contention before.

This also affects the Gypsy and Traveller Plan which now must be started again with reassessment of numbers and need using the Labour government's extension of the definition of travellers to include non-travelling 'travellers'.

Finally, I wanted to mention the wonderful exhibition of village life in the Church and to thank the parish councillors and clerk for all their hard work for the community.

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