



Milborne Port

Annual Parish Meeting

May 2025 – Draft Report

Table of Contents

Chairman's Report	2
Planning and Environment Committee Report	3
Management Committee Report	4
Reports from Local Groups and Organisations	
- Milborne Port Village Hall	4
- Milborne Port History and Heritage Group	5
- ReBorne Community Church	6
- Friends of Milborne Port Library	6
- Milborne Port Parish Magazine	7
- Tuesday Lunch Club	7
- Milborne Port Gardening Club	8
- Spirit of Milborne Port	8
- Milborne Port Church House	9
- The Glovelies	9
- Milborne Port Opera Musical Theatre	9
- Milborne Port Football Club	10
- Milborne Port Foodshare	10
- Somerset Councillors: Hayward Burt & Nicola Clark	11

Chairperson's Report

Councillor Tim Carty



Councillors: We currently have 11 Parish Councillors against a notional full complement of 13. The year has seen Paul Scrivener join the Council, Alison Flynn rejoin, and they are both most welcome. Richard Warren has stood down and we very much thank him for his service.

Staff: Following the Unification of Somerset Council, and the significant financial issues they face, an increasing amount of activity is being cascaded down to Towns and Parishes. Further, the migration of Trusteeship of the Village Hall to the Parish Council has added further pressure onto our team. Consequently, we have added two additional part-time officers: Sue Hill - who will support us on financial reporting matters - and Phil Davis - who is joining as projects officer, initially for a year, focusing on driving through Parish Council initiatives, and where possible seeking external funding to support these. As Chair I would like to extend the thanks of the whole Parish Council to all our staff. We would not function without them.

Community Plan: In September, we surveyed the community, obtaining responses from some 374 residents (about 15% of the adult population). This provided a great deal of useful feedback which will inform the Parish Council in setting objectives, and in providing comment as a statutory consultee. It also prompted a series of specific actions, which we will be monitoring, and the setting up of working groups to address six areas of concern in more detail: Communication; Dog Fouling; Pavements and Accessibility; Flooding and Resilience; Youth; and Byways and Footpaths. Should any resident wish to engage with these groups they should contact Nathalie Hetherington at the Parish Council. Hard and soft copies of the survey itself are available from the Parish Council and on the website.

Somerset Council & LCN: It has been a tricky year for Somerset Council. It does seem that moving into s.114 (effective bankruptcy) will be avoided, but we have seen a considerable churn in staff, and in particular a lot of confusion and turnover within the Somerset (South) Planning team. In early 2025, there does appear to have been a push to address this, which is welcome, but we have seen some issues with haste, particularly around the details of s.106 payments. In a perfect world, it would be helpful were County officers to spend more time considering the needs and agendas of the communities they are there to serve, rather than driving forward on an introspective Council agenda. We do get significant support from our two County Councillors, Nicola and Hayward, both of whom have made a difference, and from Sarah Dyke our MP. We are still in the process of seeking an adjustment in the spending scope of the new s.106 on Outline Permission for the development on Wheathill Lane, and seeking to sort the renewal of our contract for Library Services from 2026.

The LCN is meant as a bridge between Towns and Parishes and the County, and to an extent this has worked over the year, particularly at the working group level, and around consultation regarding the new Local Plan for Somerset, which is in its early days of development. However, there remains an issue with balancing the scope of the LCN to reflect wider stakeholders in Health, Education and Policing (all of whom have existing networking structures already), particularly around the important but amorphous concept of 'wellbeing', and the practical day-to-day needs of Parish Councils. We have engaged extensively with the LCN but the past year has probably seen the balance favouring the former rather than the latter. This does mean that opportunities are being missed to provide concrete value to Parishes, both in knowledge sharing and in collective action.

Youth Project: This has now been up and running for about a year. We recently paid a visit to a Thursday evening session for young people aged 11+ years and found this a very positive experience. There was a very professional level of support from the youth workers, but the atmosphere was very chilled, and for the group attending it was an excellent forum for, perhaps non-alpha, young people to express themselves, socialise and be engaged in a safe environment. We will be looking to work with the team over the summer to try and increase the numbers attending, and possibly to reduce the Village Hall sessions by one or two a month, and instead look to do some outreach work within the community on the freed-up days. This would hopefully reach a different, but equally important, sector of our youth population.

s.106 Monies: The first completion threshold for the issuing of funds from the Redcliffe development has now been reached, and we anticipate that we will shortly have funds available for two initiatives, both at the Recreation Ground. The first of these is for the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), which is currently the third tennis court. Working with the Playing Fields Committee, the expectation is that this will be resurfaced and that the existing chain-link fencing will be strengthened, and markings and goals added, to make it functional for five-a-side football, as well as basketball and tennis. The second is a sizeable tranche of funding for the Equipped Play Area. As we significantly increased the size of this area and added new (and popular) play items just a couple of years ago, we are also considering some wider play equipment options, possibly including some outdoor gym equipment, or a children's cycling track.

The next tranche of monies will become available when the Redcliffe development reaches 50 percent completions which we anticipate this summer. These funds are earmarked in the s.106 contract for the sports pavilion and for the playing fields themselves. We have planning permission for the extension of the pavilion and these extra funds should mean this project can be taken forward. The Playing Fields Committee have already secured support to improve the playing fields surface and this project has started. It may be possible to upgrade the surface of the land which forms an extension to the cemetery so it can be used as an additional junior football pitch, which would allow the existing junior field next to the tennis courts to be rotated and rested over the course of a season. No decisions made yet, and we are happy to take suggestions. We are working closely with the Playing Fields Committee on all these projects.

We continue to work closely with both Redcliffe and Somerset Council's Legal team regarding the Community Hub.

Planning Committee **Chair, Councillor Rob Lockey**

It has been a fairly quiet year for the Planning Committee.



There have been applications for three new dwellings (2 at Brook Street and one at Combe Hill) along with 5 applications for extensions (at Brook Street, The Meads, Wheathill Way, Plover Close, and Orchard Walk). There was also an application for internal works at West Cottage in Ven.

The Parish Council are notified about any requests going to Somerset Council for tree works. There have been notifications of various tree surgery works in Gainsborough, Newtown, Crackmore and East Street.

We have just been advised that the developers for the second Wheathill Lane site have put in their application. The developer, Wyatt Homes, recently presented their plans to the Parish Council and I believe it is going to be a good development with many benefits for the community, including extended parking for the cemetery and provision of allotments.

Away from Planning Applications we have been looking at improving the width of Bathwell Lane, following complaints from residents that they could not get to their homes due to cars parking both sides opposite Church House or not parking close to the bank. After discussions with Highways, we have now completed stage one of the project by trimming the hedging on and roadside of the wall. This has already made a difference and enables those parking to park closer to the wall (although there are still occasions where people stop their car rather than parking it!!) The next phase is to cut back where the bank has encroached onto the road, giving us about a metre extra road width. We are getting quotations for this work at the moment and hopefully it will be carried out shortly.

There has been an issue with bins and rubbish bags being left on the pavement outside the Guildhall, impeding access to the noticeboard and threatening to become a health hazard; we hope to resolve this shortly after consultation with residents/property owners.

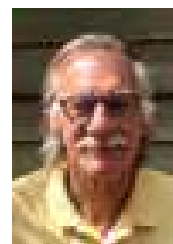
We were contacted a while ago about having a bike rack for the community's cyclists and a bike rack has recently been fitted next to the Town Hall.

I would like to finish off my report by thanking our Deputy Clerk, Nathalie Hetherington for all her hard work supporting us this year.

Management Committee Report

Chair, Councillor Chris Phillips

Our Committee met four times over the last year and one of the earlier issues of the year to deal with came as a consequence of the financial machinations of Somerset Council. The Parish Ranger service was terminated; consequently, the Parish Council, given that monies had already been put aside, decided to deploy two self-employed contractors, each working on specific defined areas of the Parish.



We continue to receive both quarterly and annual inspection reports for Gainsborough and Springfield play parks, and we recently renewed the contract to report the assessments for the next year. Upon receipt of reports, we react appropriately, according to priorities indicated.

Last Winter, after proposals and quotations, we carried out the planting of 7 trees of different varieties on the south side of the Gainsborough play area, all of which are thriving.

Although a contract was commissioned to carry out extensive repair work to the metal railings and gating around the churchyard early last year, the work, due to workload and weather issues, did not start until late Autumn. This work, as well the painting work to the railings, is now complete. Particular thanks to Cllr. David Grant for his support with this project.

Also last year, a contract was taken out with Courtstall to maintain the newly refurbished tennis courts for three years.

Other maintenance work carried out during last Summer and Autumn, all under the auspices of Cllr. John Price, were the rebuilding of an area of walling at the East Street car park and the repointing of the stub wall at the Ball Court in the High Street to the required restoration standard.

Around the same time, a survey was carried out, led again by Cllr. John Price, of all of the litter and dog poo bins in the parish; this work was prompted by a change in policy by Somerset Council and they needed to know which bins were Parish Council owned and which owned by them, as prior to the changes of April 2025, no charge was made for emptying bins on Parish Council property. Now all bin emptying is charged by Somerset Council.

Last Winter, we reviewed the cemetery charges, which have now been raised slightly, in line with similarly sized parishes. Allotment fees were reviewed, and it was decided not to increase them for 2026.

The office accommodation for our growing team has been improved and we gave the village's bins a new lick of paint. The stone pathways at the Cemetry have been renewed and this year the grass cutting of the cemetery will take place weekly in the high growing session.

Reports from Local Groups and Organisations

Milborne Port Village Hall

Cllr. Chris Phillips, Chair of the Village Hall Committee

The new Committee took charge on 17th June 2024 after the previous trustees stood down and were replaced by the corporate body of the Parish Council.

This Village Hall Committee oversees the strategic management of the Village Hall. Chris Sheeran, who joined us in April last year, oversees the day-to-day, week-to-week running of the Village Hall and has been doing a fantastic job. There have been several new Committee members, including Jimmy Flynn who has worked with Chris Sherran to upgrade and streamline the website. Further new members would be very welcome.



So, at the beginning of our taking charge, there was a period of consolidation, getting to know how the Hall operated, assessing what improvements were needed. We were able to act quickly: to clean all of the windows and to terminate the Biffa bin contract due to cost and litter-tipping. A further early project was the replacing of the rotten timber fire-escape doors in the Committee Room which have now been replaced with PVCu frames and doors.

We then carried out a consolidation of the internal and external locking systems, replacing the locks to nine internal doors, all now suited – one key for all relevant doors. The front door lock was also upgraded; the locks have been confirmed as being in accordance with insurance requirements.

Chris has negotiated a very competitive deal with a new electricity supplier, but we continue to monitor usage and look to ways of reducing waste. PAT testing of appliances has recently been carried out and is now recorded.

A fire safety risk report was commissioned last year and since receiving the report, all recommendations have been acted upon, for example, signage has been replaced or improved as required. A structure for weekly alarm tests has been put in place; the fire extinguishers have, as they always have been, tested. The emergency light has been attended to when required.

Late last year, the Parish Council provided the Village Hall with a grit bin, located in the Car Park, together with bags of grit.

In recent months, a new floor polisher has been purchased, the old one being very difficult to lift or manoeuvre by members of the team.

The number of bookings has improved immeasurably in the last half of the year; indeed, not only just the booking, but also the number of organisations that are now using the Hall's facilities; for instance, Chris has reported a considerable increase in the number of birthday parties being held in the Hall.

The film nights have continued to be popular and will continue later in the year. A recent gong bath was very popular and there is already talk of another session.

Future projects include: the upgrading of the ladies' toilets with facilities for baby-changing; the repair and redecoration of the ceiling in the disabled toilet following a recent check for leaks; a complete upgrade of the lobby and entrance area and improvements to the Committee Room, for which funding is required.

There are further improvement ideas being discussed for the future, somewhat influenced by the Long-Term Vision sub-committee of the Village Hall; this Committee would welcome new members.

Milborne Port History and Heritage Group

Nathalie Hetherington, Secretary

We have had another very busy year with our usual calendar of talks and in preparing for our second Milborne Port History Day on Saturday 10th May, commemorating the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (VE Day), building on the success of our first History Day last May. Our Monday evening talks have covered a wide range of topics: the Barter family that emigrated to America, the museum's best artefacts, balls courts and fives walls, Stowell Church, The Portable Antiquities Scheme, Milborne Port's Pubs and Inns, Nathaniel Ireson, A Tale of Four Houses, Commonwealth War Graves, and the West Somerset Railway. On Easter Bank Holiday Monday in April we showed people around St John's Church and Church Street. Many thanks to all our speakers who take such time and care to prepare their material for us.



We are very proud of our Facebook following, currently standing at 488 members, and there are regular visits to our website. Local research findings are published and celebrated; a recent post about a 1903 Sunday school

Bible found in Canada returning to its family of origin in the village reached a massive 593 people! Our monthly Milborne Port Magazine article aims to spread the word about how exciting local history can be!

Our small but beautifully formed Chapel Museum goes from strength to strength, regularly reorganised to maximise the space and make it appealing to our summertime visitors. Our Summer 2025 opening starts on Sunday 25th May, 2.30 - 4 pm.

There are still so many treasures to be mined from the rich seam of local history and we encourage anyone with an interest in Milborne Port's past to start their own lines of research.

ReBorne Community Church

Yvonne Bright

ReBorne is a Christian church operating across two locations: Sherborne and Milborne Port. In Milborne Port, we are based on North Street, while our Sunday morning services are held at Digby Hall.



We're delighted to share that our building refurbishment is now complete. It was a pleasure to welcome so many villagers to our recent open days. We're currently working hard to get the new coffee shop up and running, and we hope it will become a welcoming space for the whole community to enjoy.

We continue to be actively involved in local community outreach, including:

Toddler Group: Held on Monday afternoons at ReBorne, this group provides a warm and welcoming environment for parents, grandparents, and their children (up to school age). It is well attended and much appreciated by local families.

ReBorne Kids Club: This after-school club offers children the chance to spend time with friends, take part in a variety of activities and crafts, and learn about positive citizenship and contributing to both local and wider communities. We are passionate about helping young people reach their full potential.

Youth Hangout/Club: This is currently on hold while we arrange staffing and logistics. Once relaunched, we hope it will provide a safe, warm, and fun space for young people to spend time with their peers.

Community Café: We hope that the café will soon become a place where villagers can gather, relax, and feel at home in a welcoming and safe environment.

Our newly refurbished building is also available for hire. For booking inquiries, please visit our website: www.rebornechurch.org.

These activities reflect our ongoing commitment to serving and supporting people of all ages within the Milborne Port community.

Friends of Milborne Port Library

Rick Jones, Chairman & Trustee

The main issues with Milborne Port Library this past 12 months were working with Somerset County Council as a Community Library Partnership (CLP) while continuing to monitor the construction progress of the proposed Community Hub with the Parish Council (PC). We have had communications by email and face to face meetings with the Parish Council and Yeovil and County level representatives of the Library Service Village in the Town Hall to ensure that the CLP is providing a suitable Library service for the Village.



Technical issues were few this year. In the Town Hall, the Parish Council are the controlling authority while the Library Staff are the main users and will be the first to respond to floods or electrical issues. Wi-Fi has been a bugbear, with the Community Wi-Fi being at the end of several elderly connections. The room heating has been

recently improved with a wall mounted fan heater which can respond quickly if the room is deemed too cold. Latterly, the Parish Council received a significant grant towards its costs from the 'Help through Winter Fund', a Council organisation found by the Library Service.

Where the Community Hub is concerned, the Parish Council continues to liaise with the developer, though the construction of the hub seems to remain on the developer's back burner.

This year, one of our two Library Staff retired and a new villager replaced her.

Milborne Port Village Magazine

Linda Mumford, Editor

The Milborne Port Magazine is an important element in village communication and is highly valued by people who prefer printed information. We would suggest that it's also a valuable and handy additional resource for those who tend to go first to social media for updates. The magazine is produced by members of St John's Church as a service to the village and contains a wide range of community information every month. Regular features include reports from the Parish Council, the Village Hall, Spirit of Milborne Port, Sarah Dyke MP and Milborne Port Primary School, along with many village organisations. Forthcoming events are fully advertised, and we also have regular features on topics of interest, such as birdwatching, with a focus on birds to be seen in the village, and astronomy month by month. If you have an event or a regular gathering which you would like included in the magazine free of charge, just email magazine@milborneportchurches.org.uk. We also have a wide range of small ads signposting a great range of services in the village.



The magazine currently finds its way into 600 homes in Milborne Port every month. The price is 45p. It's available from Wayne's Butchers, the Co-op and the Post Office. Did you know that it can also be delivered to your home for no extra charge? We would love to make sure that newcomers to the village know about this service – if you have new neighbours, please do show them a copy!

Tuesday Lunch Club

Anne Salkeld

The Tuesday Lunch Club (TLC) is where older people can meet for a chat over a 2-course lunch with tea/coffee for £6 a head. This gives them a chance to meet with old friends and make new ones and serves Milborne Port and the surrounding area. At present we have 28 members.



The volunteers are in 5 teams and do a lunch every 5 weeks for about 42 weeks a year. There are also 2 drivers who take people to the lunches if they need.

In the last year, we have continued to liaise with the school so that the older children can come and serve the lunches, an event greeted with enthusiasm by both the children and the members. We hope this will continue as the school looks for a new Headteacher.

We have also been rolling out the food handling and hygiene course to our volunteers and exploring how similar schemes work locally and identify best practice.

In Autumn 2024, the dishwasher in Church House (where we provide our lunches) broke down and needed replacing. We discovered that the original machine had been bought by TLC years ago and Church House Management assumed we would buy a replacement, but we had no spare funds to do that. We applied to the Parish Council and were very grateful to receive a grant to help us meet the shortfall.

We are always delighted to welcome new members and new volunteers. Contact details are in Milborne Port Magazine.

Milborne Port Gardening Club

Samantha Dean

Regardless of how you describe yourself, be it experienced, an enthusiastic amateur or someone in-between, Milborne Port Gardening Club welcomes everyone. We continue to see well attended meetings and excursions. Our membership stands at 50 for the 2025 year and hopefully growing. The Club is fortunate to have a good mix of long standing and newer members, all bringing something to mix.



Our programme for the year has started well with our meetings seeing excellent numbers attending, enjoying a convivial atmosphere and engaging speakers. We tried to keep our outings within a reasonable distance so as many members as possible could attend. We started our outdoor events with a wonderful and well supported Plant Sale in Grove Gardens, Church Street, followed on with visits to Frith House in Stalbridge, Kilver Court Gardens in Shepton Mallet and rounded off the visits with a wonderful tour of the Gardens at Ven House.

This year we will be venturing to Burton Grange in Mere, Batcombe House, Shepton Mallet and Bennetts Water Gardens in Weymouth. We also continue to have a varied list of speakers and of course our annual Plant Sale, once more this year will be on 10th May and at Grove Gardens.

As ever, new members are always welcome to our talks and outings. We take advantage of sharing our news with the wonderful Parish Magazine for those not on our members mailing list. The Club's membership to The Gold Club, run by Castle Gardens, provides benefits such as a guest speaker and discount shopping evening (members only), as well as an annual plant and club growing competitions.

The Spirit of Milborne Port

Claire Andrews

2024 was a comparatively quiet year for The Spirit of Milborne Port, as a decision was made not to hold a Fete and Party@The Port due to organizational difficulties and shortage of volunteers. The 2023 Fete, whilst thoroughly enjoyed, was not great financially and it was decided to take a break for a year.

We did, however, run an Easter Egg Hunt at Church House, which proved extremely popular and raised £184. We also funded the placing of poppies in the High Street for Remembrance Sunday at a cost of £175

The Christmas Trees and Light Switch-On was again a great success, with over 15 local traders attending, enabled by the Church kindly allowing stalls inside the Church as well as in Church House and on the grounds in and around the Church, raising £3,029 with costs of £2,078, including £300 donation to the Church for the Christmas Tree Festival.

Other administrative costs comprising insurance, raffle tickets and advertising totalled £842.

The overall result was that we achieved a surplus of £118, which with opening funds standing at £6,276, meaning we carried a balance of £6,394 into 2025.

This year we are asking on social media for groups which benefit the community to let us know if we can help with funding; so far, we have been approached by Henstridge's Honesty Jar and we have given a donation of £250; we are aware that many people in Milborne use The Honesty Jar. We have also been approached by Milborne Port Opera for a donation of £1,000; we are hoping to be able to give a donation but have decided to wait until after the Fete when a decision will be made based on funds available. The Church House Committee has also asked for a donation towards the dishwasher and table tennis table, to be discussed at our next meeting.

This year's Easter Egg Hunt held at Church House was another success - a free event funded by previous events.

Plans are well underway for the 2025 Fete, this year being held on June 21st from 1pm – 6pm.

The Spirit of Milborne Port
Working together for our Community

We are always on the lookout for new members who wish to get involved in our events; should you be able to help or wish to find out more about what we do, please do get in touch.

Church House

Trevor John, Chair, Church House Management Committee

Church House is the Parish Hall of St. John's Church, Milborne Port and serves as a church and community facility which provides a venue for religious activities, meetings, social gatherings, educational and recreational activities for the people of Milborne Port and the surrounding area. It is used by a good number of regular users and by private bookings for parties, wakes and other events. The Foodshare group also continues to use the hall regularly for food storage and distribution. Use was also made of the building and gardens at the Village Christmas lights switch-on in December again and this is proving to be a really successful event.



During the past year, we have had to replace the kitchen dishwasher, and we are grateful to the Parish Council for a donation towards this. It has also been necessary to repair a section of the roof due to slippage of tiles; in undertaking this repair, we have also taken the opportunity to improve the roof insulation.

The Glovelies

Christine Porter

'The Glovelies' is the Milborne Port branch of the Somerset Federation of the WI. There has been a branch of the WI in Milborne Port for a great many years. We changed our name to 'The Glovelies' a couple of years ago in the hope of getting away from the rather stuffy image of the WI in the hope of attracting some younger members. We generally meet on the second Thursday of the month in the Community Room of the Town hall, which we now share with the library. This year, our winter meetings usually took place in the afternoon, changing to summer meetings when the clocks went forward in March.



We have a membership of 25 and our programme has been very varied this year. Three speakers in the village have given us talks on homeopathy, skin care and hypnotherapy. We hired the village hall for our October meeting when we had a surgeon from YDH talk to us about joint replacement. This was open to the village and we had a good turnout. Socially, we had a tea party in June, to which other local WIs were invited, our usual fish & chip supper in December and we dined out by lunching at The Clockspire in February. One evening, we enjoyed a talk by a lady who runs an owl sanctuary and she brought some of her owls along to demonstrate. Another time we had A Murder Evening, where we all acted out parts and then had to guess who the murderer was.

We also serve coffees/teas on a Friday morning and have quite a few regulars who appreciate this.

Milborne Port Opera Musical Theatre

Tony White

Milborne Port Opera has been rebranded as MPO Musical Theatre which better reflects the wide range of shows that we produce. MPO only puts on one show a year, the week after Easter, starting rehearsals in September. In 2024, we performed The Drowsy Chaperone to widespread acclaim from an audience of over 550 people. We were nominated in six categories for the Somerset Fellowship of Drama David Beach awards, the premier competition for musical theatre in the whole of Somerset, resulting in two winners. MPO are most grateful to the residents of Milborne Port who have since 1990 allowed us to have exclusive use of the Hall for one week of the year and in 2025 our 35th production will be The Witches of Eastwick. We encourage anyone in the area who would like to take part in our shows, whether as a performer or behind the scenes, and over the years over 200 people have been involved. Production costs increase inexorably, and we are indebted to the Parish Council and other local businesses for their financial support.



Milborne Port Football Club

Ben Tupman

It has been a successful year on and off the pitch for the football club.



Our adult Reserve side managed to win the Yeovil Premier League for the first time in over 40 years and they also won the Charity Cup. Our adult first team retained its place in the Dorset League Division one.

This season we have continued to promote the club locally and have over 200 players signed across the Mini, Youth and adult sections. Our youth section continues to develop and we are very proud that our Under 8s, 9s, 11s and 14s have all reached their cup finals this season, our Under 18s have had a good first season and we look forward to continuing to develop that age group. The adult A team have reached two cup finals and are very much in the race to win its league. Our first team also reached its league cup semi-final.

Looking forwards, the club is looking to get back to having three adult sides, as well as the under 18 section to encourage youth players to continue their journey into adult football.

Off the pitch, the club was awarded a grant, with the support of the Parish Council and Playing Fields Management Committee, to enable us to improve our pitches over the next six years. We are also actively involved in the work to develop the current pavilion and help shape the future at the rec.

We would like to place on record our thanks to the Parish Council, the Playing Fields Management Committee and the wider Milborne Port community. We are fully committed to being a safe space for all players to develop in both sport and as young people as well as a place for adults to continue their sporting journey in a fun and competitive environment at all levels of ability.

Milborne Port Foodshare

Jacquie Hall, Trustee

Milborne Port Foodshare started up in 2020 as a way of meeting obvious hardship and need in some parts of our community. The fundamental aim is that anyone in receipt of some sort of benefit, debt counselling or who is undergoing an exceptional crisis in circumstances can access essential produce and products for their kitchen or household. Kind donations of food and toiletries from members of the community are supplemented by collecting produce from the Co-op which has reached its use-by or best-before date. These are then distributed every Thursday by volunteers in Church House.



Foodshare used to be supported by the Sherborne Foodbank, who gave us an allowance each month to buy essential products, also supplying us with fresh vegetables and fruit. However, pressure on their own funds meant that from July 2024, Sherborne Foodbank were no longer able to support us. Initially, the Parish Council offered a grant to purchase frozen ready meals, which are always extremely well-received. Following the withdrawal of Sherborne Foodbank, the additional financial support provided by Milborne Port Parish Council over these last 6 months has been essential to its continuation as a food project in the village. The Council grant is now used to purchase all extra supplies needed to offer a basic range of food, including fresh fruit and veg, frozen meals and a few essential household consumables. We are particularly grateful to the Parish Council for their ongoing and very generous support.

Other funding has been sought for the past few months, mainly from individual donations (£75 / month plus one-off gifts) and grants from several sources such as St John's Church. We have recently obtained a grant from Citizen's Advice for Food Resilience for the purchase of non-food items such as slow cookers and vegetable steamers.

One of the other most important developments is that Foodshare is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), a legal standing which enables us to apply for a wider range of grants and funding, as well

as Gift Aid on donations. However, our need for help is as great as ever exacerbated by external circumstances such as the cost-of-living crisis, energy prices and increasing prices.

Financial donations are also more than welcome, in particular regular gifts via BACS.

We do need more volunteers to help! Two people are needed for collecting short-dated produce from the Co-op each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening (8 pm for less than an hour) and four each Thursday for distribution (12.15 - 3 pm).

Please speak to Rob Lockey or Jacquie Hall if you feel you can help us in any way. We are currently trialling a monthly change in distribution time to 3 - 6 pm to enable attendance by those who would find a later time more convenient.

Thank you all for your continuing support!

Somerset Council **Cllr. Hayward Burt**

Since being elected in November it has been a busy and challenging time for the Council. Finance and Restructuring are the 2 most dominant items, and I would ask that any residents who are struggling to get replies from the council to please ask for our help in find an answer, if not always a solution.



The one thing that truly sums up what is happening in the council, and with changes outside from Government is uncertainty, and this relates to 3 things:

1. The Council's Budget and Staff Restructuring
2. Planning and Housing, The Government National Target
3. Local Devolution – A Mayor of Wessex

Somerset Council Budget and Restructuring

The budget was again set using Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) measures offered by the Government, which includes increasing Council Tax by 7.49% – above the referendum limit of 4.99% – and a capitalisation direction of £43m. Capitalisation direction is a form of one-off assistance which allows the Council to finance everyday revenue costs by selling assets or borrow money.

The Council is facing a budget gap of £52.2m for next year, despite finding new savings of £48m which includes £34m of savings agreed by significantly reducing the number of staff and managers employed.

By agreeing to increase Council Tax by 7.49%, above the usual cap of 4.99%, this will reduce the gap by approximately £9.2m a year, leaving a £43m gap which will be covered by the capitalisation direction.

Planning and House Building. The Governments National Target

A couple of points to pick out from this locally important subject.

Funding to support local plans delivery

Somerset is just starting its consultation to create a new Local Plan (Broadly the rules which guide planning applications). Local authorities may be eligible for funding if they fit into certain criteria. A survey of local councils revealed just how expensive this process can be. It is vital that the Government fully funds all additional costs.

Housing targets and land supply

The new NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) being brought in by the Government increases the total annual national target from 300,000 to 370,000. It is likely therefore that Somerset will have a higher target for building more houses.

There is a concern that making housing targets mandatory with the rigid, centrally calculated methodology proposed in the consultation risks leading to a large number of new planning permissions that will saturate the market and not be built out.

But analysis by the Local Government Association found that 1.1 million homes granted planning permission had not yet been built. If we are to ensure delivery of homes, councils need new levers to unlock stalled sites.

The Government needs to help councils address the endemic problem of protracted conversations with developers about viability and to revisit the question of how we can capture more of the land value uplift for the benefit of local communities rather than developers and landowners.

And the Five-Year Land supply (the amount of land identified by a local council as being available and suitable for residential development over the next 5 years) which was not reached in South Somerset, and therefore made the policies of the local plan redundant, and therefore meant that it was far more difficult to defend an area against unwanted, or unneeded development. The Governments announcements have not addressed this

While we recognise the importance of forecasting housing supply, the practical effect of continuing the requirement to demonstrate a five-year land supply will be to undermine existing Local Plans.

This risks precisely the type of speculative development that the Government says it wishes to avoid. It will also damage local community confidence in the planning process.

There is a helpful proposal to allow local authorities to set their own planning fees to reflect the actual costs. This change to ensure that cash-strapped councils and local taxpayers are not subsidising developers.

Devolution – A Mayor of Wessex?

Why did the council join in with a devolution bid with the councils in Dorset, and Wiltshire ?

To put it simply, the new Government is determined that there will be devolution deals for the whole country, which means two things, firstly a single tier of local government (as Somerset already is and there will be (I will call it a Mayor, though the term is confusing) a Mayor for every area responsible for more strategic decisions.

If Somerset hadn't put in a plan the Government could have imposed one, it was a tight timetable.

What does devolution mean?

The devolution of certain powers and budgets from central government to a more local level. In theory devolution could have a lot to offer Somerset. It could be a means of negotiating long-term funding allocations from Government. For example, the budget for adult education could be transferred from central to local control.

Shortly after the General Election the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all local authorities stating the new Government's commitment to widening and deepening devolution. At the moment, detail is lacking, but the Government has indicated it is looking for scale in the geographies for devolution, with the expectation that where local authorities collaborate across boundaries, they are likely to have access to greater levels of devolution (and funding).

Somerset has made an initial response to Government. In this we expressed an interest in working with our counterparts in Dorset and Wiltshire in a 'Heart of the Wessex' devolution deal.

Like Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire do not currently benefit from any devolution agreements. This would not be a new authority, but a vehicle through which Somerset could work with these neighbours to secure devolved powers and funding. We also expressed an openness for extending these conversations to other neighbouring local councils.

Next steps: At the moment there is no information on timescales or next steps from Government; other than that there will be a white paper this autumn.

DEFRA SCRAPS ENGLAND DEADLINE TO REGISTER THOUSANDS OF MILES OF RIGHTS OF WAY.

The deadline for registering historic rights of way is to be scrapped.

The last government set a deadline of 2031 for all rights of way in England to be added to an official map. The new government has now said it will repeal this new deadline when parliamentary time allows.

Once recorded as rights of way and added to the definitive map, paths are protected under the law for people to use. In an announcement timed to mark the traditional Boxing Day stroll by many people, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced it would remove the registration deadline.

Update on the Boundary Commission Review for Somerset.

The deadline for stage 1 of phase 2 of the consultation was extended by the Boundary Commission (at the request of Somerset Council) to 4 March 2025. Somerset Councils submission was agreed at the Constitution and Governance Committee on 3rd March for submission by the deadline on the following day.

This is the link to the submission papers

<https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=7579>

Supplement 1 - Appendix A has the details of the proposed structure of electoral divisions. The overall electorate of Somerset, based on the projected 2030 figures is 467,274; the target figure for 96 divisions per member was 4,867, and the Council has endeavoured largely to stay within 10% of that figure.

More information about the review can be found here: - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>

Somerset Council's review of car parking.

At the Executive Meeting on 3 March, it resolved -

- to EXPAND Sunday charges covering the whole county.
- on NEW on-street parking charges – e.g. parking bays/Blue Anchor

After review it was decided to not proceed with NEW overnight charges.

So, what happens next? These proposals have been supported by the Councils Executive and they are all now subject to a formal consultation process.

Once resources have been secured the draft parking orders will be prepared – it is anticipated that this will happen in May with bespoke notices being produced for each location with specific changes being identified. This will provide more of the detail.

The public 6-week statutory consultation will then follow, possibly commencing in mid to late May. This will be followed by a review of the responses to determine whether they can proceed as planned or whether changes, including mitigations are needed. The decision will then be made as to whether to proceed or not. The final decision will then be made by the Executive possibly during August or September – dates yet to be confirmed.

Somerset Tree Planting Register

Somerset Council published a 10 year Tree Strategy in June 2023 to enhance and protect Somerset trees and woodland across the county. Amongst its ambitious aims, the strategy sets out a plan for planting 240 hectares of new trees and woodlands each year across the county until 2033. From Somerset's famous apple orchards to Exmoor's mighty oaks, the aim is to increase the county's tree coverage from its current 8% to the national average of 13% and more if possible. We know there are many groups, farmers, residents, organisations and businesses that are involved in planting trees and hedgerows, so it's important that we record and celebrate their efforts. By mapping your tree planting, it will help us to know if the county is on target to meet its important planting goals.

Why your views matter - We are building a map of new tree planting across Somerset. We would like to hear about tree planting activities you are involved with, to allow us to measure the increase of Somerset's tree coverage and recognise the collective efforts of the people of Somerset. **Closes 31 Jan 2033**

Somerset Council

Cllr. Nicola Clark

Somerset Unitary Council Report – Year ending May 2025

Introduction: Over the past year, the Blackmoor Vale division has seen significant developments across highways, planning, governance, environment, and community services. Despite severe financial pressures, the commitment to supporting residents and improving local services has remained strong.



Key Themes and Achievements

Planning and Development: Planning matters have remained a top concern for residents, particularly around Milborne Port. Several large applications, including housing developments and road proposals, faced strong community scrutiny, with revised plans successfully challenged. Milborne Port were commended by the Council for their willingness to work with the planning team. Planning enforcement casework has been high, and efforts to improve response times are ongoing.

Highways and Infrastructure: Somerset Council launched an extensive highways maintenance programme. The partnership with Kiely Bros brought the 'Multipatcher' vehicle to the county to help tackle potholes more efficiently. A new Enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot was introduced, allowing Parish Councils to commission minor works directly, alongside the development of a volunteer training scheme to support local maintenance initiatives.

Financial Challenges and Council Budget: The 2025/26 budget faced a £52.2 million gap, with £48 million in savings identified, including significant staffing reductions. A 7.5% Council Tax rise was approved under Exceptional Financial Support arrangements, though Somerset's rates remain below the national average. Further balancing measures, such as asset sales and capitalisation directions, are being used.

Community Resilience and Environment: There has been strong progress in environmental initiatives, including tree planting campaigns, a new biodiversity strategy, and partnerships to boost recycling rates. Community resilience has also been strengthened through events like the Somerset Prepared Resilience Day. A new partnership with Volker Highways is supporting the drive to transition Somerset's street lighting to 100% energy efficient LEDs.

Public Engagement and Consultation:

Extensive public consultations were held throughout the year on matters including Council Tax Reduction, SEND services, pharmacy services, and planning validation. Residents were encouraged to have their say via surveys and public meetings.

Public Transport – Bus Services: Public transport has been an important focus. Following discussions with First South West, concerns were raised that the 58/58A Yeovil to Wincanton service would be withdrawn without further funding. To prevent the loss of this vital service, Somerset Council stepped in under the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) scheme.

From 22nd April 2025, service adjustments include merging weekday journeys at 1710 from Yeovil and 1815 from Wincanton, and consolidating Saturday journeys. The service continues with a slightly reduced but viable schedule, ensuring continued rural connectivity without the need for a full-service withdrawal.

Supporting Vulnerable Groups: The Council continued to champion support for vulnerable residents. Initiatives included fostering recruitment, urgent appeals for more volunteer drivers, and expanded programmes for unpaid carers. Homelessness prevention also received a major funding boost.

Looking Ahead: Despite continuing challenges, including ongoing financial constraints, I remain focused on representing local residents, protecting rural services, and building a greener, more resilient community.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our community's strength and spirit over the past year.

Blackmoor Vale Division 07429 831737 / 01935 840667 nicola.clark@somerset.gov.uk

Report compiled by Nathalie Hetherington, May 2025