

Sampford Brett Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 11 March 2026



Minutes of the Sampford Brett Annual Parish Meeting which took place on Wednesday 11 March 2026 and was held at Sampford Brett Village Hall, beginning at 6.30pm.

Parish Councillors Present: J Swan (Chair), B Martin (Vice Chair), S Miles and S Voller

In Attendance: Izzy Silvester, Village Agent, seven Members of the Public, and Mrs T-A Biss (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

The meeting was formally opened at 6.30pm.

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair, Cllr Jan Swan, welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** (LGA 1972 s85 (1)): Apologies were received from Cllrs Brodrick and Skinner due to prior commitments, and Cllr Russell is convalescing.

3. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

Resolution

That the minutes of Sampford Brett Annual Parish meeting held on 19 March 2026 approved as being a true and correct record and signed as such.

4 ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 None.

5 OVERVIEWS OF THE WORK OF A VILLAGE AGENT – Izzy Silvester

Thrive (formerly the Community Council for Somerset – CCS) is a charity and key community partner in West Somerset, working alongside the NHS. They are the organisation behind Somerset Carers, providing practical, community-based support for people facing challenges related to health, finances, housing, or loneliness. Their work includes delivering the Village Agent service, supporting carers, and running community initiatives such as Talking Cafés.

5.1 What can a Village Agent do for individuals and families?

Village Agents help bridge the gap between isolated, excluded, vulnerable, or lonely individuals and the statutory or voluntary organisations that can offer appropriate support. They work closely with GPs, hospital services, and other agencies to coordinate the care and assistance needed by carers and the person being cared for.

- Source pre-cooked meals to provide respite for both the carer and the person being cared for and help access food boxes.
- Support those who are struggling as a young person, an older person, or as a family and need advice but don't know where to start or who to turn to.

- Connect people with local groups, events, and activities.
- Help find the most suitable micro-provider for individual needs.
- Locate information and support agencies for both carers and the person being cared for.
- Provide emotional and practical support for individuals and whole family.
- Offer guidance on financial assistance, benefit entitlements, and related matters.
- Support local carers groups.

5.2 Talking Cafés

- Talking Cafés are held across Somerset, including a weekly Tuesday session at Williton Pavilion, Killick Way, Williton, TA4 4QA, from 1.00pm to 3.00pm.
- They provide a welcoming, informal space where the community can access several agencies in one place. It's a relaxed environment where you can drop in for advice and support from trusted professionals and volunteers. Whether individuals need help with health, finances, or general wellbeing, support is available.

5.3 Somerset Carers

"Thrive" provides the universal carer support service, helping those over 18 in an "unpaid" caring capacity.

The Chair thanked Izzy for her presentation.

6 ANNUAL REPORT ON PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES DURING THE LAST YEAR – Cllr Swan (Chair)

It has been a relatively quiet year, with no additional meetings required to discuss planning applications.

6.1. Footpaths

6.1.1 Church Path erosion (near Aller Farm)

After more than a year of reporting the erosion on Church Path and repeatedly pressing the council for action, the issue was finally addressed. Unfortunately, this only happened after someone suffered a serious fall, resulting in a head injury that required hospital treatment and stitches. The delay was completely unacceptable and reflects the wider challenges caused by the lack of funding available to Somerset Council.

6.1.2 Ongoing erosion concerns

The repair work included the digging of a new drainage channel, but this has only been partially successful. The erosion cycle has already begun again, and a longer-term, more sustainable solution is needed at this location.

6.1.3 Removal of hazardous metal fence posts

Also on this footpath, the old metal fence posts embedded near the bridge have finally been removed. While we would like to say this was done by Somerset Council following our requests, the thanks instead go to a resident who spray-painted them to make them visible, and to a walker from Williton who subsequently removed them. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

6.2 Emergency Plan

6.2.1 Emergency Plan update

Considerable work has gone into updating our Emergency Plan this year, and particular thanks go to Cllrs Martin and Voller for their time and commitment.

6.2.2 Trigger for the review

The update was prompted largely by Storm Darragh, during which most of the village lost both power and mobile phone signal for an extended period. The risks associated with

power and communication outages have now been assessed and incorporated into the revised Emergency Plan, which is available on the village website.

6.2.3 Practical equipment and preparedness

On a practical level, we have purchased six hard hats and four walkie-talkies, which are stored in the emergency shed in the Village Hall car park. Thank you to Colin Draper and Phil Swan for advising on suitable walkie-talkies and for carrying out testing to ensure they meet our needs.

6.3 Flood Defence

6.3.1 Flood risk within the Emergency Plan

The updated Emergency Plan also addresses local flood risk. The Flood Response Group met twice during the year to share information, review activities, and ensure preparedness.

6.3.2 Broadening the group's remit

At one of these meetings, volunteers agreed to widen their scope to cover responses to all types of emergencies—such as prolonged power outages—not just flooding. As a result, the group has been renamed the Sampford Brett Emergency Response Volunteers.

6.3.3 Monitoring and alerts

The stream telemetry gauges continue to work well, as does the WhatsApp alert group that notifies volunteers when action is needed. Although muddy water has overflowed onto the road on a couple of occasions, there has been no threat to properties during the past year.

6.3.4 Thanks to our volunteers

On behalf of the Parish Council, sincere thanks go to all our Emergency Response Volunteers. It is truly heartening that people respond to WhatsApp alerts in the middle of the night, often in heavy rain, when the stream is threatening to overflow. Additional thanks go to Cllr Martin and Simon Tremlett, who are regularly woken by the pings from the stream gauges.

6.4 LCN Meetings

6.4.1 LCN meetings continue to be held bimonthly and are attended by Cllrs Swan, Skinner, or Russell. They provide a useful channel for maintaining liaison with Somerset Council, although they can be time-consuming and not always directly relevant to parish matters. There is also a Highways subgroup, attended by Cllr Skinner, and a new Transport and Active Travel subgroup focusing on buses and cycle paths.

6.5 Planning – A Relatively Quiet Year

6.5.1 Tremont (33 Tower Hill)

Following the dismissal of their original application on appeal, Tregenna Homes submitted a second application, which was subsequently approved. Three houses will now replace the existing single property.

6.5.2 Applegarth (35 Tower Hill)

Two applications were submitted during the year:

1. A revised driveway layout – approved and implemented.
2. Single-storey extensions to the side and rear – also approved.

6.5.1 Thornes Farm, Weacombe

Notification was received regarding the change of use of two agricultural buildings into a single dwelling. As this fell under permitted development, no comment was required.

6.6 Telephone Box

The telephone box was expertly repainted last June by Joseph Peterson, and the shelves were refurbished by Cllr Martin.

6.7 Defibrillator

6.7.1 The defibrillator has been taken out on standby during the year but has not been used in an emergency.

6.7.2 A bleed kit has been purchased and is stored inside the defibrillator cabinet. In the event of a serious bleed, residents who do not have adequate first-aid resources at home are welcome to make use of it.

6.8 Speeding on Tower Hill

Speeding continues to be a concern. Williton Parish Council's SID at Raglan's Cross helps to reduce the speed of traffic heading towards Williton, but unfortunately there is no suitable location for one in the opposite direction.

6.9 Litter Pick

The Parish Council organised a litter pick last June as part of Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean. It was well supported, and only a small amount of litter was collected—which is, of course, a positive sign.

6.10 Peacocks

6.10.1 This remains a very polarising issue. Some residents enjoy having the peacocks in the village; others find them noisy, messy, and destructive to cars and gardens. If left unmanaged, the population could increase rapidly.

6.10.2 Although the Parish Council has no responsibility for these feral birds, the Council has researched several approaches that could help stabilise the population and reduce nuisance:

- There is no intention to cull the existing population.
- Humane capture and relocation are possible but cannot be justified due to the high cost (approximately £2,000+).
- Residents should be discouraged from feeding the birds.
- Egg removal would be a humane method of stabilising the population.
- Under UK nuisance law, including the *Environmental Protection Act 1990*, a resident who feeds birds to the extent that they cause a statutory nuisance (noise, mess, vermin, property damage, etc.) may be held responsible and could face enforcement action. Feeding birds is not illegal in itself, but the consequences of feeding can make the resident legally responsible for the nuisance.

A leaflet advising households not to feed or encourage the birds has been produced and will be distributed shortly.

6.11 Precept

The precept has been reluctantly increased from £4,500 to £5,000 from 1 April due to rising costs.

This will be Cllr Swan's final Chair's Report as she will be stepping down as Chair at the Parish Annual Meeting in May 2026. Members thanked Cllr Swan for her report and expressed their appreciation for her dedicated service as Parish Chair over many years.

6 Public Participation – views and questions from residents to Parish Councillors

- 6.1 Members of the public raised concerns about the speed of traffic travelling through the village, particularly at the junction where the roads from the Rocks and Manor Farm meet the main road through the village. It was noted that although the national speed limit on most rural C-class roads is 60 mph, drivers are expected to adjust their speed according to road and visibility conditions.

A suggestion was made that the Parish Council request Somerset Highways to re-paint and refresh the road markings at this junction to improve safety and driver awareness.

Action:

To raise as an agenda item at next regular Parish Council meeting to be held on the 13 May 2026.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.

Chairman's Signature: _____ Date: _____