

The Annual Parish Meeting of Sampford Brett Council - Minutes Wednesday 13 May 2026



Minutes of the Sampford Brett Parish Council Meeting which took place on Wednesday 13 May 2026 at Sampford Brett Village Hall, beginning at 6.30pm.

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

In Attendance: 28 members of the public, Cllr H Davies, Somerset Council and Mrs T-A Biss (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

6.30pm - PRIOR TO THE START OF THE FORMAL MEETING:

a) **Question and comments from members of the public**

The Parish Council noted that correspondence had been received regarding the recent distribution of the *Call for Community Cooperation* leaflet concerning the free-roaming peacocks. Replies have been sent to all residents who contacted the Council.

b) **Public Participation – Comments Relating to the “Call for Community Cooperation” Leaflet (Peacocks)**

Several residents raised comments regarding the Call for Community Cooperation leaflet recently circulated in relation to the peacocks, and a summary of those comments is set out below:

- **Communication and Engagement** Comments were made that the Parish Council could do more to communicate effectively with the community. It was noted that an independently produced leaflet had generated 24 responses, demonstrating strong engagement when information is shared proactively. It was suggested that the Parish Council should have undertaken a survey prior to circulating its own leaflet.
- **Peacocks** Members of the public expressed the view that the Parish Council had listened to concerns previously raised regarding the peacocks and that the matter had been handled well. It was noted that peacocks are a non-native species and may disrupt the natural balance by competing with native wildlife for food. It was stated that peacocks should be deterred rather than encouraged, that residents should not be feeding them, and that numbers should be controlled.
- **Leaflet Circulation** Views were expressed both in support of and in opposition to the original leaflet. Some residents felt that the leaflet was well balanced and had been thoroughly discussed at Parish Council meetings prior to circulation. Others considered that the leaflet was ill-judged and should not have been issued by the Parish Council. It was emphasised that the matter should not become divisive within the community and that all parties should seek to move forward constructively.
- **Distribution of Second Leaflet (Non-Parish Council)** Concern was raised that the second leaflet had been left in a gate rather than posted through the letterbox, which could give the impression to passers-by that the property was unoccupied, particularly when residents were away.

- **Role of the Parish Council** It was observed that the Parish Council is a democratic body elected to make decisions on behalf of the community. It was noted that not everyone will agree with all the decisions made by the Council.

c) **Reports from Somerset Councillors**

Cllr Davies' report had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, but he provided the following updates:

- **B3191 Watchet Road Closure** Somerset Council advises that the B3191 at Watchet remains closed to vehicles due to ongoing cliff instability and coastal erosion. The Council has submitted a major funding bid to the Department for Transport, seeking £30–£40 million to either stabilise the existing route or create an alternative alignment. The Department for Transport has now confirmed that the bid has cleared its first stage and that it will support Somerset Council in progressing the proposal, but the Council is still awaiting the Government's final funding decision.
- **Community Support Services** It was noted that the Citizens Advice Bureau office in Minehead has now closed. However, the Talking Café continues to operate at the Williton Pavilion on Tuesdays, providing a local point of contact for advice and support.

THE MEETING FORMALLY OPENED AT 6.50PM.

1. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR OF THE PARISH COUNCIL FOR 2026–2027

The Council was asked to elect a Chair for the municipal year 2026–2027. Cllr Brian Martin was proposed by Cllr Simon Miles and seconded by Cllr Jan Swan. There being no other nominations, and all Members being in favour, the following resolution was made:

RESOLVED: *That Cllr Brian Martin be elected Chair of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2026–2027.*

Cllr Martin accepted the office, and the Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed and countersigned by the Clerk. Cllr Martin then assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

2. ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIR OF THE PARISH COUNCIL FOR 2026–2027

The Council was asked to elect a Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2026–2027. Cllr Jan Swan was proposed by Cllr Martin and seconded by Cllr Tracey Skinner. There being no other nominations, and all Members being in favour, the following resolution was made:

RESOLVED: *That Cllr Jan Swan be elected Vice-Chair of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2026–2027.*

Cllr Swan accepted the office, and the Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed and countersigned by the Clerk.

Cllr Martin expressed the Council's thanks to Cllr Swan for her service as Chair, a role she has held since 16 June 2011, following her earlier service as a Councillor from 16 May 2007. He had arranged a presentation to acknowledge and thank Cllr Swan for the guidance and leadership she has provided to the Parish Council during her years in office.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:¹

Apologies were received from Cllr Brodrick due to a prior commitment, and from Cllr Russell, who is currently convalescing. Members accepted the apologies.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS:²

Cllr Swan declared an interest in agenda item 13.3 related to Sonder Digital Ltd.

5. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

Cllr Swan requested the following amendment to Page 675, Item 7.5.1: that the list of future dates be corrected: ~~January~~, April and July, ~~February and May~~ 2026.

RESOLVED: *That the minutes of the Sampford Brett Parish Council meeting held on 11 March 2026, as amended, be approved as a true and accurate record and signed accordingly (Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Stephen Voller; All in favour).*

6. ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

6.1 Page 674, Item 6.3 – Constituency Surgery

Rachel Gilmour MP held a constituency surgery at Sampford Brett Village Hall on 27 March 2026. There was a delay to her arrival; however, it is understood that she subsequently made contact by telephone to discuss the matters raised.

6.2 Page 674, Item 6.2 – SALC Parish, Town & City Council Survey

The SALC Parish, Town & City Council Survey was completed by the Clerk and returned to SALC.

6.3 Page 674, Item 7.2 – Footpaths and Rights of Way

Issue #84702 (Step #2334) relating to the collapsed bottom step board on footpath WL20/2, reported on 1 December 2025, has been closed with the following outcome: *“Officer inspected – no hazard.”*

In addition, the section of footpath near the footbridge in Aller Wood has been cleared of brambles and a fallen tree by local parishioners.

7. TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE SAMPFORD BRETT EMERGENCY RESPONSE VOLUNTEERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 30 MARCH 2026.

RESOLVED: *That the minutes be accepted (Proposed: Cllr Voller; Seconded: Cllr Skinner; All in favour).*

8. “COMMUNITY COOPERATION” PEACOCK LEAFLET:

It was noted that the peacock population is likely to increase if no action is taken. Members proposed that residents should avoid feeding the birds, and that the Council should investigate—subject to legal advice and the permission of the landowner—whether egg removal may be possible. It was also suggested that, where feasible, the birds could be confined. Residents may also wish to form an action group to explore these options further, including the potential for relocating the peacocks.

¹ Local Government Act 1972, Section 85(1)

² Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests they may have in agenda items (as set out within the Parish Council’s Code of Conduct), and to consider any prior requests from members for Dispensations that corresponds with Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e). (NB this does not prevent any later declarations)

Members considered the feedback submitted by residents regarding the *Call for Community Cooperation* peacock leaflet. The Council noted that concerns about peacocks had been raised by residents over the past year and had been discussed at six consecutive Parish Council meetings, including this one, with all discussions minuted and publicly available.

Members reviewed the key themes of the feedback, including:

- differing views on whether peacocks should be regarded as wildlife;
- concerns about the leaflet's reference to legal responsibilities;
- comments on the tone and clarity of the information provided;
- questions regarding the use of *Pathways* for distribution; and
- concerns about communication and transparency in the process.

The Council noted that the leaflet was intended to provide factual guidance and practical deterrent options for those experiencing issues, while acknowledging that some residents value the presence of the birds. Members also noted the legal context relating to non-native species, statutory nuisance, and the responsibilities of those who feed peacocks.

It was further recognised that some residents continue to experience significant problems, including noise, property damage, and the potential for population growth if feeding continues. Members reiterated that the Parish Council does not own or control the peacocks and has no legal powers to capture, relocate, or cull them, but can continue to record concerns, seek advice from relevant agencies, and provide information to residents.

Members acknowledged the importance of improving communication with parishioners and noted that this would be addressed under Agenda Item 11 through the adoption of the Parish Council Community Engagement Policy.

Refer to Appendix A for presentation details.

9. **TRAFFIC SPEED THROUGH SAMPFORD BRETT:**

To review the issues and comments raised by residents at the Annual Parish Meeting on 11 March 2026 and agree any follow-up actions.

Members noted that, historically, the right of way at this junction had been prioritised towards "The Rocks". It was confirmed that there is no proposal to reinstate this previous priority arrangement or to add additional signage. However, the line markings at the junction—where three roads meet—are worn to the point of being unclear and should be repainted.

RESOLVED: *That Somerset Highways be asked to inspect the junction at "The Rocks" and consider repainting the worn line markings (Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Voller; All in favour).*

10. **Planning Applications:** The only planning application received within the Parish of Sampford Brett for 2026 is 3/28/26/001: *Erection of a stable block comprising 2 No. stables, tack room, hay storage and machinery store for private equestrian use at Clover Paddocks, Weacombe Road, West Quantoxhead, TA4 4ED.* Members had raised no planning issues in relation to this application.

The expiry date for determination of the Full Planning Permission application is 20 May 2026.

11. **PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

11.1 **To adopt the "Parish Council Community Engagement Policy"**

Councillors acknowledged feedback received from parishioners regarding the need to review how the Parish Council engages with the community. Members agreed that it is important to ensure an effective and consistent approach to communication and therefore recognised the value of developing a formal Parish Council Community Engagement Policy.

RESOLVED: To adopt the “Parish Council Community Engagement Policy” (*Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Voller; All in favour*)

11.2 Use of Facebook for Parish Council Communications:

Members considered the proposal to create a dedicated Facebook user account to enable the Parish Council to post notices and information on the *Sampford Brett Village* Facebook page. The purpose of the account would be to improve communication with residents by sharing agendas, minutes, notices, meeting dates, factual updates, and urgent community information already in the public domain.

It was noted that the account would be used solely for official Parish Council communication, administered by the Clerk, and would not engage in debate or discussion. A simple protocol would be adopted to ensure that all posts remain factual, non-political, and consistent with Council decisions.

RESOLVED: *That a dedicated Facebook user account be created for official Parish Council communication, to be administered by the Clerk and used in accordance with the communication parameters and protocol agreed by Members (Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Voller; All in favour)*

12. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO AGENCIES, ORGANISATIONS AND PARISH

12.1 Parish Council Representative – Defibrillator and Bleed Kit (including training)

RESOLVED: *That Cllr Simon Miles be appointed as the Parish Council Representative responsible for the Defibrillator and Bleed Kit (including training). (Proposed: Cllr Martin; Seconded: Cllr Swan; All in favour)* Cllr Miles accepted the office.

12.2 Parish Council Representative – Footpaths and Rights of Way

RESOLVED: *That Cllr Nick Brodrick be appointed as the Parish Council Representative for Footpaths and Rights of Way. (Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Martin; All in favour).*

12.3 Parish Council Representative – Liaison with Village Hall Committee

RESOLVED: *That Cllr Stephen Voller be appointed as the Parish Council Representative to liaise with the Village Hall Committee. (Proposed: Cllr Martin; Seconded: Cllr Miles; All in favour)* Cllr Voller accepted the office.

12.4 Parish Council Emergency Volunteer Response Coordinator

RESOLVED: *That Cllr Brian Martin be appointed as the Parish Council Emergency Volunteer Response Coordinator. (Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Skinner; All in favour)* Cllr Martin accepted the office.

12.5 Parish Council Representatives – Local Community Networks (LCN) Groups

RESOLVED: That Cllrs Swan and Skinner be appointed as the Parish Council Representatives to the Local Community Networks (LCN) Groups. (Proposed: Cllr Martin; Seconded: Cllr Miles; All in favour)
Cllrs Swan and Skinner accepted the office. Cllr Martin would deputise if either Representative is unable to attend.

13. FINANCIAL BUSINESS 2026-2027

13.1 Current Financial Position as of 05 May 2026

REVENUE BREAKDOWN		
Brought Forward		
Net Bank Balance as of 31 March 2026	£4,726.67	AGAR Section 2(1)
Gross Income		
Precept - Received 09 April 2026	£5,000.00	AGAR Section 2 (2)
VAT 126 Claim		
	<u>£5,000.00</u>	Gross Income
EXPENDITURE		
Staff		AGAR Section 2 (4)
Other	£425.95	AGAR Section 2 (6)
	<u>£425.95</u>	Current Gross Expenditure
BROUGHT FORWARD +INCOME - EXPENDITURE		<u>£9,300.72</u> Net Banked Balance as 05 May 2026
BANK RECONCILIATION		
	£9,300.72	
Less any un-presented cheques	£0.00	
Less: Petty cash float (if applicable)	£0.00	
Add: any un-banked cash	£0.00	
Net Banked Balance	<u>£9,300.72</u>	AGAR Section 2 (7)

EXPENDITURE				
Category	Actual	Budget	Remaining	Comments
Bank Charges	£4.75	£60.00	£55.25	Average charge per month under £5.00
Election 2027		500.00	£500.00	Awaiting confirmation - Somerset Council
Emergency Provision		£500.00	£500.00	Defibrillator- Pad/Batteries; Bleed Kit
GOV.UK email/website		£350.00	£350.00	.gov Email £99+VAT per annum + £2 x 8 pm
Grants		£250.00	£250.00	Flood Group; Churchyard Maintenance
Hall Hire	£18.00	£150.00	£132.00	Meeting Venue
Insurance		£500.00	£500.00	Legally required to hold appropriate insurance
Internal Audit		£35.00	£35.00	Legally required of a yearly internal audit
Maintenance of Assets		£150.00	£150.00	Provision for repairs
Membership		£190.00	£190.00	SALC & NALC Membership
Office Equipment/Stationery		£50.00	£50.00	
Service Agreements	403.20	£770.00	£366.80	Website & Dog Waste Bin
Staff Wages		£3,030.00	£3,030.00	207hrs + % cover NJC Salary Award Apr 26
Training		£120.00	£120.00	Councillors' & Clerk Training
TOTAL	£425.95	£6,655.00	£6,229.05	

13.2 Maintenance Grant 2026–2027 – St George’s Churchyard, TA4 4LG

Members noted the maintenance grant request received from St George’s Churchyard for the financial year 2026–2027.

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council approve the 2026–2027 Maintenance Grant of £150.00 towards the upkeep of St George’s Churchyard, TA4 4LG. (Proposed: Cllr Voller; Seconded: Cllr Swan; All in favour)

13.3 Schedule of Income and Payments as of 05 May 2026

PO No.	Invoice No.	Payee	Description of Goods	Total	Action Required
PO26001	#13843	Sonder Digital Limited	Standard Website Hosting Package - 2026-2027	£403.20	<i>Ratify Approval</i>
PO26002	LCO00750	Clear Councils	Local Councils Insurance	£418.10	<i>Ratify Approval</i>
PO26003	n/a	Mrs M Francis	Internal Audit 2025-2026	£35.00	<i>Authorisation of Payment</i>
PO26004	Awaited	Idverde Limited	Renewal of Service Level Agreement Dog Waste Bin 2026-2027	£358.80	<i>Permitted to Budget</i>
PO26005	Various	Sampford Brett Village Hall	Hire of Village Hall for Parish Council Meetings 2026-2027	£147.00	<i>Permitted to Budget</i>
PO26006	May-26	West Somerset Flood Group	Contribution to the West Somerset Flood Group Website 2026-2027	£5.00	<i>Permitted to Budget</i>
PO26007	3017	SALC	Affiliation Apr 2026-March 2027	£152.64	<i>Authorisation of Payment</i>
PO26008	Wages	Mrs T-A Biss	Clerk's Wages Jan-Mar 2026	£523.78	<i>Authorisation of Payment</i>
PO26009	Grant	PCC of Sampford Brett	Maintenance Grant 2026-2027 – St George's Churchyard, TA4 4LG	£150.00	<i>Authorisation of Payment</i>
PO26010	Various	Lloyds Bank plc	Bank Charges from 10 March 2026 to 9 March 2027	£57.00	<i>Permitted to Budget</i>
PO26011	Awaited	Sonder Digital Limited	2026-2027 "@sampfordbrett-pc-gov.gov" domain registration/email accounts	£349.20	<i>Permitted to Budget</i>
PO26012	Awaited	Turtle Engineering Ltd	Replacement Battery for the iPad SP1 Defibrillator	£238.80	<i>Authorisation of Payment</i>
PO26013	3149	SALC	SALC Training Event - Chairpersonship	£35.00	<i>Authorisation of Payment</i>
Total:				£2,873.52	

RESOLVED: *That payment be made as set out in the Schedule of Payments dated 05 May 2026. (Proposed: Cllr Martin; Seconded: Cllr Voller; All in favour)*

14. AUTHORISATION OF CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION 2025-2026

14.1 Approval of the Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March 2026

Members noted that, in accordance with the requirements of the *Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26 – Form 2 for Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and Other Smaller Authorities*, the internal audit for the financial year had been completed. The Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 had been duly signed by the Internal Auditor.

RESOLVED: *That the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2026 be approved. (Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Voller; All in favour)*

14.2 Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2025/26

RESOLVED: *That the Certificate of Exemption for the AGAR 2025/26 be approved, signed, and returned to the external auditor. (Proposed: Cllr Swan; Seconded: Cllr Martin; All in favour)*

The Chair duly signed the Certificate of Exemption, which was also countersigned by the Clerk.

15. Next Parish Meeting – 10 June 2026:

Members noted that the next Parish Council meeting will take place on Wednesday, 10 June 2026. The following governance documents will be reviewed at that meeting:

- Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations

The Chair closed the meeting at 7.33pm and thanked all in attendance.

Chairman's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix A

Summary of Presentation on the “Call for Community Cooperation” Peacock Leaflet

This appendix summarises the presentation delivered under Agenda Item 8, outlining the background, issues, resident feedback, and legal context relating to peacocks within the parish.

1. Background

- Concerns about peacocks were first raised by residents over a year ago.
- The matter has been discussed at five consecutive Parish Council meetings, all of which are minuted and publicly available, and this meeting represents the sixth discussion (*the minutes for which are not yet published*).
- Approximately **nine** peacocks are present in the main village, with a further **six** near Mill Farm.
- The leaflet was produced following advice from **Somerset Council, DEFRA, Environmental Health, Peacocks UK**, and other councils with similar issues.

2. Potential Issues Identified

Residents have reported a range of problems associated with peacocks, including:

- Noise, particularly at dawn and dusk during the mating season.
- Large droppings and unsanitary mess.
- Damage to gardens, including scratching of flower beds and vegetable plots.
- Damage to vehicles, including pecking at shiny surfaces and windows.
- Pressure on local wildlife due to their size and feeding habits.
- Rapid population growth, especially when birds are fed.
- Territorial behaviour among males.
- Potential spread of avian diseases, including bird flu.

3. Process Followed by the Parish Council

- The Council reviewed concerns at each meeting over the past year.
- Information was gathered from statutory bodies and specialist organisations.
- A leaflet was drafted to provide practical deterrent advice for residents experiencing problems.
- The leaflet was displayed on the noticeboard in January and distributed in March to areas considered affected.
- Copies were inserted into Pathways for relevant households, with hand delivery to non-subscribers.

4. Summary of Resident Feedback

4.1 Wildlife Status

Some residents felt peacocks should be treated like other wildlife. The Council clarified that peacocks are **not indigenous** and are considered **domestic**, meaning those who feed them may be regarded as “keepers” under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

4.2 Legal References

Some residents felt the leaflet overstated legal risks. The Council noted that the leaflet provided factual information based on established legislation.

4.3 Tone of the Leaflet

A small number of residents felt the leaflet was patronising. The Council explained that the leaflet was intentionally **instructive**, offering options for those experiencing issues.

4.4 Distribution via *Pathways*

Concerns were raised about using *Pathways*. The Council noted that inserts do not reflect editorial control and that this method is commonly used for efficient distribution.

4.5 Transparency and Communication

Some residents felt that the process had not been widely communicated. The Council highlighted that the issue had been discussed at every Parish Council meeting for the past year, with minutes publicly available, and acknowledged the need to improve communication. It was noted that this will be addressed through the new **Community Engagement Policy**.

It was also queried why a survey had not been undertaken. The Council considered that a survey would not help to resolve the matter, as it would simply confirm that some residents are content with the presence of the peacocks while others have concerns, and that the percentage split would not alter the underlying issue.

4.6 Concerns from Affected Residents

Residents experiencing problems reported:

- Costs and effort required to protect property
- Damage to porches, gardens, and vehicles
- Worries about the issue becoming divisive
- Fears of rapid population growth if feeding continues

5. Legal Context

The presentation summarised the following legislation:

- Environmental Protection Act 1990 – feeders may be deemed “keepers” and liable for noise or damage.
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Section 14) – illegal to release non-native species.
- Animal Welfare Act 2006 – protects all animals from harm.
- Animals Act 1971 – keepers liable for damage caused by non-native animals.
- Biodiversity Duty (NERC Act 2006; Environment Act 2021) – the Council must consider biodiversity in its functions.

The Council emphasised that it **does not own or control the peacocks** and has **no legal powers** to capture, relocate, or cull them.

6. What the Parish Council Can and Cannot Do

The Council *Can*:

- Record concerns raised by residents.
- Include the matter on future agendas.
- Seek advice from Somerset Council and relevant agencies.
- Provide factual guidance to residents.

The Council *Cannot*:

- Capture, relocate, or cull peacocks.
- Instruct residents to take control measures.
- Act outside statutory powers or biodiversity duties.

7. Possible Approaches Identified

The presentation outlined potential options for residents and the community:

- Avoid feeding peacocks.
- Use humane deterrents.
- Confine birds to a specific area (e.g., aviaries).
- Remove eggs with landowner permission and legal advice.
- Community-funded humane relocation via specialist organisations.
- Formation of a resident group to explore solutions collaboratively.