

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

MELLS PARISH COUNCIL (mells-pc.gov.uk)

Minutes of Mells Parish Council held in the Barn on Tuesday 9 December 2025

01.12.25 **PRESENT:** Cllr John Earl – Chair, Cllr John Henderson – Vice Chair, Cllr Jan Seewooruttun, Cllr Alan Brady, Cllr Steve West, Cllr Claire Freeman, Cllr David Seviour, Cllr Asquith,
In Attendance: Joy Book – Clerk, Cllr Barry Clarke – Somerset Councillor

Members of the public: None

02.12.25 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr Turner

03.12.25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None

04.12.25 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None

05.12.25 **APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2025**
Previously circulated. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

06.12.25 **SOMERSET COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR'S REPORT**

- i. **External Auditors Issue Somerset Council with multiple 'Red Flags':** Somerset Council has received its latest Interim Auditor's Annual Report for 2024,25, which identifies continued significant weaknesses in the authority's financial management, governance, and oversight of grant funded projects.
- ii. **Temporary Service Director for Planning** is being employed to provide additional leadership capacity within the Planning Service. The temporary post will cost between £800 and £1,000 per day equating to a maximum of around £250,000 over the full term and will be funded through a one off virement from planning fee income. Another Enforcement Officer has been employed.
- iii. **Election Costs and Responsibilities for Town and Parish Councils:** Somerset Council is advising town and parish councils to plan ahead for the significant costs (estimated to be £1,250 for a small council) associated with running local elections. Councils will be responsible for the full cost of any by elections to fill casual vacancies, including nomination papers, poll cards where requested, postal vote packs, ballot papers, accommodation hire, staff, and transport. This is a significant increase on the last charges of £118.50 in 2019 and £100 in 2022.
- iv. **Consultation Reopens on Future Electoral Boundary Arrangements:** The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has reopened its consultation on new division boundaries for Somerset Council, running to 14 January 2026. You are invited to share your views, with any previous submissions still being taken into account. The final recommendations will be published in March 2026 in readiness for the May 2027 elections. You can share your views here <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>
- v. **EV Charging Partnership with Blink Charging UK:** Somerset Council has partnered with Blink Charging UK Ltd to deliver the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure programme across the county. Blink has been appointed to install at least 1,606 low powered public EV charging sockets, with work scheduled to begin in early 2026. A new "Request a Chargepoint Location" webpage has been launched to gather local suggestions on suitable sites here <https://service.somerset.gov.uk/suggest-a-chargepoint-location>

07.12.25 MATTERS ARISING

- i. **Pavilion lease and future of recreation ground:** Directors have informed that there has been some advancement with this and they will try to attend the January meeting to give an update.
- ii. **Loose dogs bothering sheep:** New legislation has been issued which is more defined and has a minimum, higher fine for anyone found to allow their uncontrolled dog near livestock.
- iii. **Gate off in Vobster:** The gate is still off but the landowner has been notified.
- iv. **Data Management Compliance – Getting Assertion 10 ready:** Waiting for NALC to issue a draft policy which the PC can use to base their new compliance policy on.

08.12.25 HIGHWAY AND FOOTPATH ISSUES:

- i. **Speeding vehicles in Vobster:** Highways has responded and is now giving a figure of £20,000 to cover public consultation, surveys and installation. This is up from the maximum of £10,000 quoted 8 months ago to carry out the works. Clerk to copy Cllr Clarke into the correspondence received regarding this for him to investigate further on what can be done to move this forward and query the difference between the two quotes.
- ii. **Park Corner – rumble bars:** These have been painted on the road but are not very prominent.
- iii. **Layby by Vobster bus shelter:** This has now been filled in and will be seeded.

09.12.25 PLANNING

- i. **New applications:** None
- ii. **Other planning matters:** None

10.12.25 CORRESPONDENCE:

- i. Thank you email from Peter Corbett, Mells Magazine for donation of £500.

11.12.25 ACCOUNTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Bank account: Lloyds as at 1 December 2025 - £5,269.87
 Barclays as at 2 December 2025 - £12,955.55

i. **Payment of accounts – November**

Clerk's Salary & expenses (November)	£334.88
HMRC PAYE (Period 9)	£80.40
Toner	£18.97
Grist Environmental (P268950) bin emptying	£104.37
Easy website monthly fees (hosting & support)	£39.60
Cloud Payroll (CS-S26-13665)	£6.00
Shaun Robinson – bin emptying	£162.50

Receipts: None

- ii. **Preliminary budget:** Clerk had previously circulated a draft budget for 2026-2027 based on the suggested precept increase of £10,000. All present were supportive of this increase but the final decision will be made at the January meeting. This would be an increase of £21.73 for a Band A property and £62.50 for a Band H property.
Extra expenditure of note for the coming year:
 - £450 to replace some defibrillator pads and one of the batteries which are due to expire.
 - £1,250 election costs
 - £1,000 set aside for general upkeep of village
 - Help with funding projects eg. Vobster speed limit

12.12.25 ITEMS TO REPORT / ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- i. **Village Christmas tree:** The Estate will look into the possibility of providing a tree on the triangle of land by the shop.
- ii. **Car parking on Selwood Street during events:** This would only be relieved if the village had another car park closer to the village centre.
- iii. **Blocked drains:** The reported drains are still blocked and are unlikely to be cleared until the contractor is working in the area.

iv. **Weekend bus service:** This is unlikely to happen. A suggestion was made regarding starting a car share service. If it comes into fruition, the details would be put up in the shop.

13.12.25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 13 January 2026 at 7.15pm in the Barn.

Meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Printed name: _____