

Sherborne Parish Council – Monthly Meeting Minutes

Held at Sherborne Social Club. 16th February 2026

Councillors in attendance: Y Blankley (YB), S Challis (SC), C Humphries (CH), T Whiffen (TW) & A Woolley (AW)

Apologies: Ed Richardson (ER), Hannah Greyson-Gaito (HGC)

1. Previous Meetings' Minutes

- The meeting opened by confirming that actions from the previous meeting had been considered.
- The minutes from the last meeting had not yet been circulated. ER confirmed they will be circulated the following week.
- Note: Matters Arising from the previous minutes were deferred and discussed alongside Any Other Business (AOB) in order to address all items as a whole.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *Once the minutes are received, provide a copy to CH to expedite the approval process.*

2. National Trust Engagement

a) Bi-Monthly Meeting Review

The Council reviewed the recent bi-monthly meeting attended by CH & TW from the PC and Andrew, Simon, and Laura from the National Trust.

- The National Trust confirmed they withdrew the planning application on advice from the planning department (CDC), citing tree officer comments and survey issues that could not be resolved within the application timeframe.
- Andrew and Simon advised that discussions relating to the brook are currently paused while future plans are considered. They explained that Jonny Loose does not wish to discuss the brook until there is more clarity on next steps.
- The Parish Council's position remains that silt can be managed effectively at lower cost without disrupting the listed landscape, primarily by addressing road runoff. Recent observations (following heavy and prolonged rain) show the brook running clear, suggesting upstream drainage improvements have been effective and existing silt is historic.

b) National Trust Engagement Strategy

- The group agreed to continue engagement primarily through Andrew, Simon and Laura, with the option to involve senior National Trust representatives where appropriate.
- This approach is intended to support clear, constructive communication and a positive working relationship. The Parish Council is disappointed that Jonny Loose declined the invitation to meet in January to discuss the year ahead. To ensure transparency and balance, the Parish Council agreed to ensure all National Trust news and updates are published on the website in a timely and impartial manner.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *PC to support timely and balanced publication of National Trust related updates on the website.*

c) Highways Meeting – Road Runoff Strategy

- YB has secured a meeting with Anne and Craig from Gloucestershire Highways on 26th February to discuss stopping road runoff, using a plan developed by Andrew (AW).
- The strategy is to secure an agreement with Highways before re-engaging the National Trust, to strengthen the Council's position.
- The local community and the NT have already performed significant clearing work, substantially reducing runoff into the brook. The experimental silt trap at Waterloo Bridge is no longer collecting significant debris.
- The plan is to have Highways enforce landowner responsibility for clearing ditches on both sides of the road.
- Andrew (AW) is unable to attend the 26th February meeting.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *AW to update the existing plan with further detail and provide the accompanying written description to YB before the Highways meeting.*
- *YB and AW to meet beforehand so AW can explain the plan to YB.*

d) Ragged Copse – Drainage & Silt Traps

- The grips into Ragged Copse have been kept clear by Tim Green and were observed to be working.
- A persistent problem remains where water from the upper road continues to deposit silt across the junction area.
- Silt traps require constant maintenance and cease to function once filled with debris. One specific trap by the bridge showed no new material, suggesting road silt is not currently running into the brook.
- Historical photographs taken by Roger two to three years ago showing brook cloudiness after rain events are available for comparative evidence.

e) Conservation Management Plan (CMP)

- The CMP was not mentioned in the most recent meeting — the first time in many months.
- A pollen expert from Reading University is taking core samples from the water meadows near the Roman villa to determine what was growing locally a thousand years ago. This research is intended for submission to the CMP, contradicting the expectation of a January release.
- The expert has offered to provide a summary of findings for the village website and may give a talk to villagers. Her husband, an archaeologist, has also expressed strong interest in the local Roman villas.
- Other new historical evidence has come to light: a 1733 map uncovered by Roger showing a bridge and widened waterway, and a 1633 reference to pools in a land audit.

f) Gardens Trust Site Visit

- Alison Jewel from the Gardens Trust has enthusiastically accepted an invitation for a site visit for 25 people plus guests, proposed for the third or fourth week of April.
- Roger is very pleased and has asked Bruce for permission to access the main house's gardens for a better view. The group plans to hold presentations, including one from Roger and one about the brook.
- The Council discussed inviting the National Trust to the session to facilitate engagement. Their attendance would increase credibility

g) Lady Sherborne's Walk – Working Group

- A simplified terms of reference document has been drafted to provide structure for the working group.
- Proposed composition: a Chair nominated by the National Trust (to ensure independence); one Parish Council member; three village members; three National Trust members (including the Chair).
- The group will meet monthly or as the Chair deems necessary, focusing solely on this specific topic. This initiative is viewed as a pilot model for positive, collaborative engagement on other community topics.
- A formal consultation window (similar to a CDC planning application) is proposed to allow the wider community to submit ideas and representations — ensuring transparency and demonstrating that all parties have been heard.
- It is crucial that residents near the proposed area have their views heard. At least two representatives should be from the affected part of the village.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *TW to forward draft 'Terms of Reference' document to the NT*

3. Verge & Grounds Maintenance

- The Council agreed the verges currently look scrappy. Relying on volunteers is not a viable solution and a contractor will be needed.
- Primroses and daffodils are already emerging, making a major spring tidy-up impractical. End of season verge tidying should generally be carried out in the autumn.
- A 12-month schedule is necessary to properly manage all verges. A key cutting period has been identified for late summer (July/August). Any spring work will be limited to ad-hoc tidying and provision of sight-lines at junctions.
- AW noted the hedge trimmer had already topped the verge on the downhill side (south of the crossroads) in November. The PC agreed that a general tidy-up using a strimmer (to avoid damaging daffodils, snowdrops, and primroses) would be appropriate in the short term.
- Anna Field (verge management expert) may also be able to assist with securing funding, as she did for Windrush, though she has indicated funding is only suitable for certain areas.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *YB to speak with Ed to get his definitive findings from Anna.*
- *YB and AW to develop a work schedule and brief based on Anna's recommendations, ready for May. AW to put forward the schedule of works once Anna's recommendations are available.*
- *AW to draft a brief/specification for verge maintenance work once the areas to be covered are identified.*
- *Note: Ed is the designated point of contact for coordinating with Anna on the verge management plan and potential funding.*

4. Neighbourhood Plan Light

- YB contacted Barbara Pond of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) regarding a "Neighbourhood Plan Light".
- A "neighbourhood plan light" is a streamlined, simplified Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) designed to focus on a few key local issues rather than a comprehensive, complex

document. It aims to reduce the time, cost, and complexity of planning, enabling communities to address specific concerns like design, small-scale housing or protecting designated spaces.

- The primary motivation is to give communities a bigger voice and more control. It does not stop development but ensures the community is a primary consultee.
- A colleague of Barbara Pond's is willing to present the facts to the group. Statistics indicate the village is "poor" in certain metrics, such as lacking green space for children. There is no funding available from the GRCC to help with creating the plan.
- The PC sees this as a way to bring the National Trust on board and ensure they liaise with the community.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *YB to continue investigating the Neighbourhood Plan Light initiative with Barbara Pond from the GRCC.*

5. Windrush Valley Emergency Plan Meeting

- An emergency plan meeting for the wider Windrush Valley is scheduled for Saturday 21st March at 6:00 PM at Windrush Village Hall.
- The meeting is for a select working party — not the full parish council — to ensure focus. Attendees will include representatives from Great Barrington, Little Barrington, Windrush, and Clapton. Farmington may also be invited, along with other beneficial individuals from the village and Carla from the school.
- The working party will report back to the full parish council following the meeting.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *NA*

6. Empty Properties

- Cotswold District Council has been in contact regarding empty houses. YB has been monitoring the clerk's email address while the council is without a clerk.
- The Council discussed the possibility of the National Trust placing empty properties on long leases (999 years) rather than returning them to housing stock, creating a marketable asset while retaining ownership and encouraging external investment in upkeep.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *YB to identify empty properties, take photographs, and send addresses to the council for potential enforcement orders.*

7. Defibrillator

- A complaint was received that the defibrillator contact list is completely out of date (e.g. former residents still listed). The books stored near the defibrillator are also an obstruction that could impede access in an emergency.
- YB volunteered to be on the updated contact list, as their shop is open most days and they live next door. The defibrillator access code was confirmed as C-123-X.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *TW to update and print a new, more concentrated contact list for the defibrillator.*

- *PC to cull books stored near the defibrillator to ensure clear access. Options include donating to a doctor's surgery, hospital, or charity shop. A sign reading "Please do not block the door of the defibrillator" to be added.*

8. National Trust – Tim Green / Deer Fencing

- Tim Green, Project Delivery Manager at the National Trust, took prompt action after being alerted by a villager (Sarah) about a fence design causing deer fatalities — at least three in three weeks.
- Tim met with the responsible tenant (Matt Taylor) and all but one of the fences have been amended. The final fence has not been fixed due to access issues. He reportedly planned to visit on his day off to inspect.
- The Council agreed Tim Green should be publicly thanked in the "Friday update" for his prompt and effective response. Rationale: to praise the National Trust when they act positively and demonstrate good collaboration with the village.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *SC to draft the text for the Friday update to thank Tim Green, noting his role at the National Trust and describing how he took ownership of the issue and ensured the fences were fixed.*

9. Speed Monitoring & 20 mph Speed Limit

- YB reported back on efforts to get speed signs. Highways confirmed that a licence is required to place a camera on Highways land, and the village does not currently meet the criteria.
- TW shared parallel research from Quenington and Coln St Aldwyn's parish councils, who found their data-sharing enforcement scheme (£4,500 per camera) to be ineffective, and now prefer the simpler "Smiley Sid" speed information device (£3,100).
- There is significant confusion regarding the implementation of a 20 mph limit: the police are resistant, Cotswold District Council is actively discouraging new 20 mph limits citing political concerns, and Gloucestershire County Council's previously funded "community twenties and safer roads" scheme has now been disowned by the same department that ran it.
- The primary path forward is to prove a consistent speeding problem exists in order to qualify for a licence. This may involve the use of portable speed cameras or rubber speed-monitoring lines, both requiring police involvement.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *YB to contact the relevant police department to arrange an assessment of the speeding situation in the village.*

10. War Memorial & Funding

- Memorial currently in poor condition: weeding needed, paving a trip hazard, concrete slabs considered inappropriate.
- Julian keen to be involved. Historical drawings (Cherwell archive) and 1920s/30s photographs could inform the design.
- Fundraising ideas: York stone donations from residents; a "buy a stone" scheme with benefactors' names recorded.
- Children climbing on the memorial (including the cross) poses a safety risk. Proposed: ER to lead a school project on the individuals named, fostering respect and ownership.
- Most community funding has been stopped. Key exceptions:
 - Historic England grant available for war memorial repairs.

- GAPTC fund (~£150,000–£400,000) offering grants of £400–£4,000, potentially applicable to verge management and speed signs.
- Flower Show funds ring-fenced for the village (war memorial or speed signs); a detailed proposal with plans and schedules is required to access them.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *Council to agree on a restoration plan; revisit York stone quote with a full materials/labour breakdown.*
- *Consider a letter to the headmaster regarding the safety issue.*
- *Roger to be asked to apply for the Historic England grant for war memorial repairs.*
- *Roger to be asked to apply for the GAPTC grant to fund verge management for the first three years.*

11. Administrative

- Previous clerk to be removed from the WhatsApp group.

PC Actions Post Meeting:

- *Remove previous clerk from the WhatsApp group.*

Next Meeting

Monday 16th March 2026