

LITTON CHENEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Litton Cheney Parish Council held on Tuesday 13th January 2026 at Litton and Thorner's Community Hall

Present:

Cllr John Firrell, (Chair), Cllr Quentin Blacke, Cllr Bill Orchard (Vice-Chair), Cllr Rob Matthews, Cllr Andrew King. Ms Debbie Hollings (Clerk)

Apologies

Dorset Council Cllr Sally Holland

1. Apologies for absence

None received.

2. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest received or dispensation requests.

3. Democratic time

No topics were raised.

4. Approval of Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday, 11th November 2025

Cllr Orchard proposed that the minutes were an accurate record. Cllr Matthews seconded, and all councillors agreed.

5. Matters arising since the previous meeting not part of this Agenda

No matters arising.

6. Dorset Council Overview - Ward Councillor for Chesil Bank.

In Cllr Holland's absence, Cllr Firrell presented her report.

The probable rise in Dorset Council's council tax to 4.99% was noted.

A multi-agency team is being set up to bring together stakeholders from the emergency services to review speed and accident issues on the coast road. Cllr Holland will provide further updates.

Rowden Farm has now been allocated for lease as a progression farm. Dorset Council will shortly be advertising for tenants to apply to take on the lease.

7. Parish Council Finance

7.1 Receive and discuss the options for setting the budget for 2026/2027

Information regarding the current budget situation and the proposed budget for the coming financial year 2026/2027 had been made available to all councillors for preparation before the meeting and to help them understand the precept request procedures.

Cllr Firrell and the Clerk talked all councillors through the current year's budget. Discussions on the different financial pressures on council spending were detailed and thorough.

Councillors agreed that the budget set for 2026/2027 was appropriate and that the precept request should be £17,000.00. This represents an approximate £20 increase on the previous year's Band D Equivalent Charge precept of £53.00 to £72.99. This addition for the year equates to 38 pence a week.

Proposed by Cllr Firrell that the council accept the proposed budget for the year 2026/2027, Cllr Matthews seconded and carried unanimously.

7.2 Agree and approve the Precept amount for 2026/2027

Proposed by Cllr Blacke that the Annual Precept for 2026/2027 be £17,000.00 Cllr Firrell seconded and carried unanimously.

7.3 Approval of invoices for payment – see attached report.

Proposed and seconded by Cllr Blacke and Cllr Matthews and carried unanimously.

7.4 Approval of Schedule of Regular payments – see attached report.

Proposed and seconded by Cllr Firrell and Cllr Orchard and carried unanimously.

8. Parish Plan: the next step

The council agreed at the November 2025 meeting to begin pulling together a new Parish Plan to replace the 2005 plan. A separate steering group, not part of the parish council, will be formed.

The plan should focus on gathering parishioners' views on how they want the village to develop over the next 10 to 20 years rather than housing needs. At least one parish councillor should be on the steering group, however, not as chair or secretary.

Cllr Firrell acknowledged that the steering group will need to recruit volunteers from the community. Potential members should be informed that the role is not onerous, though it will involve meetings and that the overall timeframe for the project is not known. The steering group should include around 8-10 people representing a cross-section of the community. Cllr Firrell urged all councillors to encourage people to come forward to take part.

Cllr Blacke suggested that a poster be created to publicise the project, with the Clerk offering help in designing one for social media. Cllr Orchard also raised the possibility of applying for grants to support the costs of producing a new plan.

9. Councillors' Portfolios:

9.1 Planning: Cllr Orchard presented his report and gave updates on the following:

- P/PABA/2025/07612 Ashley Chase, Litton Road. An application to build an agricultural building for housing livestock on the estate has been made to Dorset Council. The building will be sited within 500m of 1&2 Dairy Cottages, Litton Road and behind existing barns. It will be viewable from the nearby footpath. It is within Dorset National Landscape. The application deems it necessary to state that the cottages are not "protected buildings", presumably because the barn is relatively close to the cottages. Litton Cheney Parish Council are not a consultee on this application.
- Bride Place. The development is now in the hands of administrators. None of the properties have been sold. Cllr Orchard will look into Community Land Trusts. A Trust may provide the parish council with an option on the possibility of purchasing the buildings.
- Cllr Orchard and Cllr Firrell are due to attend a meeting on 3rd February with Dorset Council on Planning policy and Building Control.

9.2 Highways/Transport: Cllr Matthews presented his report and gave updates on the following:

- In early December, Cllrs Matthews and Firrell met with Martin Crabb of Ford Farm to discuss vehicle movements. The farm management has decided that, as well as reinforcing the need for the lorries to take the prescribed route through Long Bredy, they will also look to reduce the number of haulage companies used.
- Cllr Matthews agreed to check Dorset Council requirements and charges relating to road closures and signage for tree works.
- There has been a temporary change to the Communities Highway Officer covering Litton Cheney. James Stone covering the area for six months. Afternote – not now happening.
- Several blocked gullies have been reported to Dorset Council and will be followed up.
- The previously reported water leak at the entrance to Charity Farm, has been approved for repair. No timescale for the work has been given.
- Cllr Matthews has contacted Wessex Water regarding the water emerging through the road surface near the entrance to the Snicket, no inspection appears to have taken place yet.
- Wessex Water road works are planned between Hinds Mead Lane and the entrance to Baglake starting on 23rd January 2026.
- A scheduled Openreach road closure on Cow Lane in November did not take place, and despite signage suggesting works early in the year, there is no evidence they have been carried out. Further Openreach works are due at the far end of Barges Close between 10th and 12th February, with access to properties being maintained.
- Cllr Firrell mentioned that at the top of Chalk Pit Lane, when it rains, a large lake appears as the lane starts to go around the bend. Cllr Firrell feels that drainage in that area has become blocked and needs to be cut into the verge on the side of the road to enable the water to flow down in the field. The landowner should be notified.

- Cllr Matthews inspected the gully opposite Charity Farm Cottages, partially cleared it, but suspects deeper issues such as roots or a collapsed pipe. As drainage firms have declined to investigate and the gully is thought to be Dorset Council's responsibility, the issue will be raised with the Community Highways Officer.

9.2.1 Stream tunnel options

Cllr Matthews has reported a resident's concern about the safety of the stream culvert next to the Jubilee Hut and Bus Stop. Councillors discussed ways to reduce or modify the opening to improve safety for children and pets. Cllr Matthews has contacted the Environment Agency and Dorset Council and will follow up to ensure a response, while Cllr Firrell will speak with Russell Randall to explore practical solutions.

9.3 Playground/ Playing Field/Allotments: Cllr King reported that the Allotments Annual General Meeting is due to take place on 2nd March 2026. Allotment fees will not be raised for the coming year.

Dorset Council will be contacted in February for a quote to continue the grass cutting contract, and two additional quotes will also be sought. Hedge cutting at the playing field is still outstanding due to poor weather causing delays.

9.3.1 Discuss and agree on further options for new play equipment

Cllr King surveyed pupils at the local school on their preferred play equipment from three quotes, and they unanimously chose the most expensive option. He requested a revised quote from Huck with minor changes, bringing the cost slightly down. The parish council had already approved up to £8,000 for the project in November 2025, but an additional £1,460 is required. All costs exclude VAT. It was suggested that CIL funds cover this extra cost, and Cllr King will also approach the Litton Cheney Trust for potential financial support.

9.4 Countryside Matters/Footpaths/Rights of Way:

Cllr Blacke reported that the footbridge at Rowden Farm between Puncknowle and Long Bredy is in disrepair and requires replacement, with Stuart Semple, the Ranger from Dorset Council, confirming no repair funding will be available until at least April 2026.

The parish council agreed to approach Long Bredy and Kingston Russell Parish Council about sharing repair costs, as the bridge is situated in their parish but used by Litton Cheney residents. Cllr Firrell will contact the Chair of Long Bredy Parish Council, while Cllr Blacke has secured a £300 funding pledge from the Litton Cheney Trust and contacted the West Dorset Ramblers, who may also contribute. A public fundraising appeal in the Bride Valley News was also suggested. The cost of a new bridge is estimated at £3,500, based on a recent replacement at Chilcombe. An update on progress will be given at the next meeting.

Cllr Blacke has not contacted Stuart Semple about the Rocks footpath since the November 2026 meeting, but the path has been pressure-washed, which has reduced slipperiness. Cllr Blacke was asked to follow up with Stuart Semple on the possibility of installing a non-slip surface at the top of the path.

On-going flooding at Litton Lane near the campsite, caused by the gap in the hedgerow for tractor access, was noted and has been reported to Dorset Council.

9.5 Village Fabric/ Maintenance/ DAPTC/BLAP/Administration and Probit:

Ford Farm has developed a landscaping plan and schedule, which has tentatively been agreed with Dorset Council and Ford Farm. The plan will not be formally signed off until all parties, including the parish council, are content with progress. The plan includes creating several bunds to shield the car park from view from the village and the A35, improving the visual outlook towards the cheese factory from the north.

Dorset Highways indicated that National Highways had offered to handle both the A35 signage and the weight limit on Whiteway, though no timescale has been provided. The parish council has asked for confirmation of this from National Highways.

DAPTC noted a delay in Dorset Council adopting the Statement of Reasonable Expectations (SORE), the partnership agreement with town and parish councils. This delay has caused DAPTC to postpone their AGM until Dorset Council's decision on the matter is expected.

9.5.1 Discuss and agree on any change to the position of the litter bin near Manor Farm House.

The council discussed at length the possible relocation of the litter bin outside Manor Farmhouse. The current location serves most dog owners and footpath users and, together with bins at the bus shelter and White Cross, provides good coverage across the village. Other locations have been considered. It was agreed to move the bin slightly further into the Snicket, pending Dorset Council's approval. Cllr Firrell will follow up with Dorset Council and inform the Manor Farmhouse residents of the

10. Planning matters No further applications.

11. Date of next meeting: The next meeting of the Parish Council will be at 7.00pm on Tuesday 10th March 2026

12. Meeting close. 8.58pm

Debbie Hollings

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, Litton Cheney Parish Council

Report 6th January 2026

Parish funds	Total
Balance brought forward as at 1 April	£29,931.60
Income to date	£12,258.74
Expenditure to date	£11,750.34
Parish funds as at above date*	£30,440.00

Of which the following is held in reserves or CIL

Earmarked reserves	£17,750.00
CIL	£6,741.82
Playground (ringfenced)	£100.00
Community Fund (ringfenced)	£423.00
Total reserves/CIL held	£25,014.82

Approved spend since last reported/meeting

Scheduled: November & December Clerk's wage	£885.92
Scheduled: Clerk's Expenses	£52.00
Bank A/C service charges	£8.50
BV Churches Annual Donation	£600.00
	£1,546.42

Income since last reported/meeting

Interest	£23.87
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Invoices/Payments for approval at time of publishing agenda

Expenses to John Firrell for payment of Christmas tree	£29.99
Expenses to John Firrell for payment of Christmas tree lights	£63.47
DAPTC Health and Safety Essentials - online training	£14.00
Vision ICT - Domain Hosting	£60.00

Invoices arrived after the publication of the agenda

Schedule Payments due (as detailed on Budget and Commitments for

the coming year)	
Scheduled: January and February Clerk's wage	£885.92
Scheduled: Clerk's Expenses	£52.00
Bank A/C service charges	£8.50
	£1,113.88