

MUDFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Petra Galloway

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Minutes of Mudford Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 24th April 2025 at 18:30hrs

Present – Jo Dalton-Leggett (Chair of Mudford Parish Council)

In attendance: Petra Galloway – Parish Clerk/RFO and 18 members of the public.

01. To receive apologies for absence.
Apologies were received from S. Bartlett and P. Blackwood.
02. To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th April 2024.
RESOLVED: The Chair of Mudford Parish Council has signed the minutes from Annual Parish meeting held on 25th April 2024 as the true and accurate record of the meeting held.
03. To receive report from the Chair of Mudford Parish Council.
The report was received (Appendix 1).
04. To receive village groups' reports.
 - I. 3 Villages Flood Group – The Chair of the group presented a report of the of the group's work since its establishment in August 2024. The Chair has reported success with the official launch event held on 5th April 2025 with noted appearance of Sarah Duke MP and councillor Mike Stanton (Chair of Somerset Rivers Authority). The Chair has provided updates on its recent grant application and its future plans. The Group is looking for more volunteers especially Flood Warden Volunteers.
 - II. FOMAG (Friends of Mudford Action Group) – The Chair of the group presented a report of the recent events including two meetings of the group held in November 2024 and March 2025. The Chair has explained the situation with 14/02554/OUT Primrose Lane development situation and the current wait for the s106 agreement being signed and Somerset Council's Decision Notice being issued.
 - III. Village Hall Committee - The Chair of VHC presented a report (Appendix 2).
 - IV. Speed Watch – The representative of the Speed Watch presented a report (Appendix 3).
 - V. St Mary's Church, Mudford – A churchwarden presented a report (Appendix 4).
05. To receive Somerset Councillors' reports.
None present.
06. Public open session.
No comments were received.

Appendix 1

Report by the Chair of the Parish Council to the APM April 2025

I took the position of chair in May, 2024, after a period of some turbulence for Mudford Parish Council. The Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer had recently resigned, and a fitting tribute was paid to her in last year’s Chairman’s Report. In the public open session of the APM, the Council was strongly criticised by one resident for incompetence and failing to act democratically. Another queried the increase in the precept and several people raised the issue of speeding on the A359. I will return to these issues later in this report.

At that time, the Human Resources Committee had been in existence for under a year and was busy navigating a very complex recruitment process. They were successful in being able to recommend to the council the appointment of Petra Galloway as Parish Clerk/RFO, and what an asset she has proved to be. She impressed at interview and has demonstrated throughout the year her ability to research a wide range of issues thoroughly, to navigate her way through regulatory and legal minefields, to set up and operate effective and efficient administrative systems and to accomplish a variety of disparate tasks with courtesy, grace and good humour. Petra and I enjoy a very positive working relationship, and she works collaboratively with all the councillors, the HR Committee, now chaired very professionally by Cllr Dave Brown, the cemetery caretaker, the local groups, many of whom are represented here today, and all the other individuals and organisations she encounters in the course of her duties. Residents of the parish particularly appreciate that she has made herself known to them and can frequently be seen supporting the Thursday café in the Village Hall.

Following concerns about failing to observe of the Code of Conduct at meetings, we have taken steps to address this issue. Almost all councillors have now done the training on the Code of Conduct provided by SALC (Somerset Association of Local Councils) and I have completed training on chairing meetings effectively. I feel that we have made considerable progress towards conducting our business in a respectful and orderly fashion, which allows for debate and the expression of differences of opinion, and which reaches decisions in a fair and democratic fashion.

It is the fundamental aim of this council to represent the interests of the residents of Mudford parish. We always take careful note of parishioners’ views, whether expressed in public sessions or in writing to the clerk, and we take action whenever we can. Although we hope to canvass people on their priorities more formally in future, we currently have the sense that most people are concerned about three important issues, namely flooding, traffic on the A359 and the new housing developments.

We believe from everything we have heard from local residents that opposition to the developments and concern about their impact continues to be strong. There is a very real fear that existing issues with flooding and traffic will be exacerbated. The council worked alongside FOMAG to oppose the developments effectively, through engaging consultants and lawyers to represent us. We were deeply disappointed when the proposed development to the north of Mudford Road was allowed on appeal and, last October, despite very strong arguments put forward by our consultant and councillors who are also members of FOMAG, the Primrose Lane development was approved by the planning committee. Six months on and S106 agreement has not been signed off and the decision has not been published. Meanwhile the Parish Council is keeping the matter under review and will determine any future action democratically.

During the last year, the council has been very active in helping with the establishment of the excellent Three Villages Flood Group, through advice, support and a grant. The group has already had a great impact, and the council will continue to support any activities that help to mitigate the flood risk and increase resilience.

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We have, also, sought engagement with Somerset Council on our concerns about the A359. We were disappointed that hopes for a 20 mile an hour limit were dashed because we do not meet the criteria. We have decided to put into place some low-cost measures and monitor whether they have any impact but, ultimately, we may find that expensive traffic calming measures will be our only option. It is a huge help that the Speedwatch group is so active and provides us with very valuable data. It also helps that the clerk has managed to get the SIDS system working much more effectively. Accurate figures will hopefully assist our case for more effective action.

Through the clerk's efforts, our administrative and financial procedures have been regularised and improved. Measures have been put in place to diminish any risk of financial or other irregularity or impropriety. A case in point is the cemetery. The clerk and the caretaker, together with the HR committee, have worked extremely hard to ensure that all administrative procedures and necessary paperwork are in place to comply with a very complex set of regulations.

We have, also, negotiated a new contract for grounds maintenance around the parish, including the playing field. There had been complaints about the regularity and effectiveness of the grass-cutting. The cost of picking up cut grass proved prohibitive, but hopefully regular cutting and closer monitoring, with extra cuts when needed, will bring about improvements. We will, also, continue to watch the situation concerning dogs off the leash and fouling, although the actions available to us are limited.

We were pleased that our financial position and budget allowed us to lower the precept this year. This is welcome as council tax has generally gone up considerably. Increasingly, it is likely that we will have to take on more responsibility for services that Somerset Council will no longer be providing. This is already happening, as increasingly we are required to pay for services such as emptying litter bins. Additionally, we continue to chase the council for promised actions, such as on the provision of a bridge and the reinstatement of a footpath between Mudford and Hinton.

I wish to extend my thanks to the clerk, the cemetery caretaker and to my councillor colleagues for their hard work and support throughout the year. Much of what they do goes unnoticed, but it keeps things running smoothly. I wish, also, to show my appreciation for the work of the village groups, some of whom I have already mentioned. Their activities sit at the very heart of our community. In particular, as we meet in this lovely hall, I extend my thanks to the Village Hall Chair and Committee, who work tirelessly to provide us with not only a venue but the primary social hub for village life. Finally, my thanks go to those of you who attend our council meetings, contribute valuable ideas and give us your support, often as we trudge through hours of tedious, but necessary, business. It is by working together that we get things done. Thank you.

Appendix 2

Annual Village Hall Report

We have had a very busy year in Mudford Village Hall.

As well as our regular weekly cafés, we have had the annual events of Easter café; a summer afternoon "strawberry tea"; McMillan coffee morning; & very popular Christmas Lunch. These were all well attended & ensured 2024 ended on a 'high'.

At our AGM in October, Jean Jones retired as Chairperson after many years in the post. At this meeting it was my privilege to be asked to follow in her footsteps, & ensure all her work in making the Hall a community centre continues for the future.

Early 2025 the Hall has closed for a week in order for maintenance & deep cleaning to take place.

Hall bookings are increasing steadily & working well with the enhancement of the Hall website. Weekly cafes continue to be generally well attended.

A new venture in the form of a weekly Craft Club is enjoyed by those who participate. We bring a craft project & learn new techniques, whilst enjoying a chat with cuppa & biscuit! Generally sharing ideas on how to put the world to rights!! Unsuccessfully of course! We did share a few bingo sessions, but being poorly attended have been shelved for the time being.

Every month, usually last Friday, we have Enrico's Pizza evening from 5pm to 8pm. We can Order pizza early & collect it at an agreed time. The Hall has a bar & is open for everyone to come, eat & relax. All are welcome.

This March, after many years, decided due to poor attendance & lack of people to organise it, the Garden Club folded. The Hall has been in receipt of the final funds. Part of the transferred funds are going to 2 large planters for the Hall Courtyard. There will be a memorial plaque on each planter.

Our present project is to create a garden in the Courtyard to rear of the Hall. This will be a pleasant & relaxing outdoor space to be enjoyed by all; possibly during Village Cafes...weather permitting!

This year the Annual Village Flower Show will take place on Saturday 19th July in the Hall, with all the usual activities – eg Cream Teas, Tombola etc. We hope everyone will enter the classes & join us to make this a real success...& enjoy the changes in the Courtyard.

The Hall Committee look forward to your support for all our activities. We are always ready to welcome new friends, who may have new ideas.

Lastly, many many thanks to the Committee who work so hard to ensure our activities are well planned & run smoothly, helping to make Mudford Village Hall the centre of our community.

Lydia Gane
24th April 2025

Appendix 3

Mudford Annual Parish Council Meeting 24-05-2025.

My name is Philip Sargent and I am the Mudford community speed watch co-ordinator. The speed watch calender goes from Jan to December. Mudford CSW, has the huge benefit of 11 dedicated volunteers, who give between 30 mins and 2 hours per month if required. We are funded for equipment by A & S Police who have a dedicated team supporting us and other volunteers around the South West. I am delighted to advise we will shortly be gaining a new volunteer who has successfully passed her induction and just requires roadside training to join our team. This will provide an excellent 12 Volunteers.

A total of 35 speed watch sessions were completed from Jan 24, to Dec 24. For 2 months no SW was carried out, due to weather conditions. The sessions were carried out over 6 sites along the A359 within the Parish. We saw an overall percentage decrease in high end speeders (that is 43mph and above in a 30 zone and 54 mph in a 40 zone) whilst attending with high viz clothing. (Unfortunately, data from the 2 village speed indicator devices show, we suffer from a high number of speeding vehicles 24/7. It shows every hour speeds of 50mph and above. This month, the Southern SID recorded 90mph and the Northern SID 85mph). I have taken the speed of an Ambulance travelling from the South and on a blue light, 45mph and that looks very fast. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Clerk, for her consistent data collection from these units. The highest recorded SW speed was 61mph in the 40 zone and 45mph in the 30 zone. The 40mph zone at East lanes records the most high end speeders, with 41% speeders recorded being high end speeders. A 1% drop from the previous year. The average high end speed was 58mph. Main street saw a drop from 39% to 17% high end speeders through the year. Where next? Keep recording data. Use the data to advise Authorities of our issues. We have a small voice, but factual data is key.

We have carried out fewer SW sessions last year and this. The reason being, apart from the weather last year was:- Due to personal experience on the lack of Police support in recent years, I have become more concerned if an issue arose whilst conducting SW, even though from the SW quarterly meetings together with A&S Police I attend and I quote, "A & S Police, will take matters of abuse to our members seriously". Our volunteers are covered by the Assaults on Emergency workers (offences) Act 2018. Recently, 2 volunteers recorded a vehicle at 55mph in the 40 zone. I cannot go into details at the moment, but the motorist stopped, carried out a barrage of accusations together with very bad verbal life-threatening language to 1 volunteer. The volunteers moved to another site but cancelled the session after 8 minutes due to shock. To date, my fears of support from A & S have been justified. While the situation is ongoing, I feel it is best to postpone SW sessions until further notice. To make the situation more disconcerting, the motorist lives in the Village.

Thank you.

Appendix 3

St Mary's Church, Mudford

Report for Annual Parish Meeting

24/04/2024

The number of church members continues to decline. There are now only 12 people on the Electoral Roll and some of them do not live in the parish. Only a handful are regular worshippers. Our little group of 6 PCC members generally do much of the work, but we hugely appreciate the work of others on flowers, providing music, cleaning, keeping the grass cut, the clock wound (when working) and the flag flying.

We only have one regular service a month. It is quite well attended because people from elsewhere in the benefice attend and swell the numbers. Some services do attract more people, the Christmas Eve Christingle and Crib is always packed out and the All Souls' service attracts good numbers, obviously catering to a need. Other efforts like Harvest, Remembrance, Good Friday and Mothering Sunday, though appreciated, are not so well attended. We love it when parishioners come to church. We are not lying in wait to give you jobs.

We meet regularly in Milton House Lounge, courtesy of a couple of residents and Abri, for bible study sessions. Generally, 6 or 7 people come along, although the Benefice Lent Study regularly went into double figures.

We maintain our regular presence at the café and are grateful for the permanent shelves that have replaced our stall at the café. People do take books at other times and income from this has increased slightly.

We struggle to maintain the fabric of our ancient, historic and beautiful building. We would welcome offers of help from folk who appreciate it for its architectural importance. You do not have to be C of E to support the church. Financially, we are struggling. We run at a heavy loss annually and reserves are diminishing. We have increasing issues with damp inside, damaging the Jacobean wood and the organ. How bad it has become is underlined by the story of the bones found in the lane after recent floods.

Our great joy is that we have a lively, friendly, amusing but very interesting Rector. We are delighted that he often comes to café. We hope his presence might inspire more people to get involved with keeping the church open and active in this village. We would love to hear ideas about how this might be achieved.