

# SUTTON WALDRON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026 - held at The Village Hall.**

## MINUTES

**Present: Chair:** David Smith **PC Councillors:** Iain McNeil, Sandy Millard & Mike Asher.  
**Dorset Councillor:** Jane Somper (absent) **Clerk:** Sam Smith  
**Residents:** Jane McNeil, Christl Pearson, Gill Samways & Tony Asher

**11/03/01 Apologies for absence:** Cllr Jane Somper. **Residents** Dick Hood, Martin Jelbert. Matthew Cripps. PC Cllr John Ellis has unfortunately resigned from the PC commencing on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2026. John had completed 16 years of service and a thank you was noted for all his past work on behalf of the village.

**11/03/02 Declarations of Interest:** None

**11/03/03 Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025 were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **11/03/04 Matters Arising:**

**a. Parish Council email address (.gov):** The PC now has .gov email address. The Clerk just needs to activate the service and start using it. The current email address doesn't expire until June 2026 so the two will run in parallel for the meantime. The new address is - **clerk@suttonwaldronparishcouncil.gov.uk**. Once the new email is active the Clerk will inform villagers & Cllrs. The new email is free for small PCs, and we qualify for the service.

**b. 20mph speed limit in the village:** Cllr Smith had spoken to Jane Somper and asked could the temporary 20mph limit on the A350 (Dinah's Hollow works) be extended through Sutton Waldron village? The answer was unfortunately a no. The limit on the diversion has already been reduced in some places from originally 30 down to 20mph. Cllr Asher is keen to look further into the possibility of a permanent 20 mph limit in the village. The traffic would need to be surveyed at a cost of around £350 to the PC. Community support is key to any application along with collision history, traffic flow, average speeds, number of cyclist & pedestrians etc. Cllr Asher thought it would be better to contact Dorset Council first to see if we would even be considered before any money is spent. Cllr Asher to contact Tony Burden, DC Road Safety Manager for some further guidance. Cllr Asher with assistance from Cllr Smith to take this matter forward.

### **11/03/05 Correspondence/other Parish matters:**

**a. Report from Dorset Councillor:** Jane Somper was absent from the meeting but sent a report as follows – **Household Recycling Centres Changes to Access** - Dorset Council has confirmed that from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 a booking system will be introduced at four household recycling centres in the county including our local centre Shaftesbury. Residents wishing to visit the site will need to reserve a time slot in advance. The council says the change is intended to manage demand and improve the running of the sites. Blandford has not yet been allocated this scheme so it is likely that some residents will migrate to Blandford. One reason given for the move is that residents from neighbouring authority areas can currently use some Dorset recycling centres without charge, while Dorset residents may be required to pay to use sites in other counties. The council also says the new system will help staff prevent businesses from using household recycling centres to dispose of commercial waste, which is supposed to be taken to licensed trade facilities. Under the new arrangements, visitors will need to book online or by telephone. Each site will have around 430 bookable appointments per day, with bookings available up to two weeks in advance and a 30-minute arrival window. Same-day bookings are expected to be available where capacity allows. While Dorset residents will not be charged to use the affected sites, people living outside the county will have to pay a fee per visit.

**Planning Enforcement** - The Council has a Development Management Local Enforcement Plan in place, which sets out how planning breaches are handled. The aim is always to resolve issues through negotiation first, wherever possible. This is set out in law. It is important to note that although someone may breach planning regulations, this does not always mean they have committed a criminal offence. Planning enforcement is discretionary, and the council must act proportionately when deciding how to respond. Some inconsistencies have been found across different area teams. However, officers now have access to a range of high-tech tools and often receive photographic evidence from the public, meaning a site visit is not always needed at the start. A public Section 188 register will soon go live online for ward members. It will show the notices that have been issued, the locations involved, and the requirements for each case. This should be available within the next six months. Elected members will also receive a login to check whether an enforcement notice exists for a particular address. This will help us respond to enquiries more effectively and keep parish councils updated. The North Dorset team is currently managing around 191 live cases, while the Minerals and Waste team separately handles about 40 cases. Officers use a set of clear priority criteria to determine which cases require immediate action. Residents can report planning enforcement concerns online using the council's webform

**Planning enforcement - Dorset Council** or by emailing

[planningenforcement@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:planningenforcement@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk). If someone does not wish to make a formal complaint themselves, particularly because their identity could become public in the event of a court case, a concern can instead be raised by the Parish Clerk or by me on their behalf.

**Statement of Reasonable Expectations** - A number of parish and town councils have recently been considering Dorset Council's proposed *Statement of Reasonable Expectations* document, and concerns have been raised in discussions taking place across several parishes. The document encourages parish and town councils to expand their role in local service delivery, community leadership and place management. However, the principles set out are quite broad and lack detail about how these proposals would work in practice. There is concern that the document may signal a gradual transfer of certain non-statutory responsibilities from Dorset Council to town and parish councils. At present there is little clarity about how any new arrangements or structures – such as the suggested area boards – would operate, what authority they might have, or how they would be funded. Another issue raised by several parishes is the potential financial impact on residents. If town and parish councils begin taking on services previously delivered by Dorset Council, the cost of those services would likely have to be funded through the local precept. Unlike council tax set by the principal authority, the parish precept is currently uncapped. This raises concerns that residents could effectively end up paying twice: once through their Dorset Council council tax for services, and again through an increased parish or town council precept to maintain those same services locally.

**Flooding** - Over recent months I have been dealing with a number of very challenging situations relating to flooding across the ward, including incidents where homes have been affected. These situations have required ongoing engagement with residents, Dorset Council and other relevant bodies. With increasingly intense rainfall events and existing drainage pressures, it is something our communities will continue to face and which requires sustained attention. While funding has been announced to support flood management, much of this funding is directed toward capital projects such as new infrastructure or large-scale mitigation schemes. However, many of the problems residents experience arise from day-to-day maintenance issues such as blocked drains, ditches, culverts and watercourses which do not always fall within the scope of these capital funding streams. As a result, there remains a gap between the availability of funding for major projects and the ongoing maintenance work that is often needed to prevent flooding problems developing in the first place.

**Dinah's Hollow Project Update** - The first phase of tree clearance has now been completed. This work was undertaken under specific environmental licences due to the presence of protected species, including bats and dormice. These licences form a formal agreement between Dorset Council and Natural England. Any residents wishing to see details of the licence arrangements should contact Natural England directly. Drainage operations are continuing and remain a significant element of the scheme. While some activities have been rescheduled due to recent weather conditions, the overall programme remains on target. The main construction phase is due to commence in April. This will include further vegetation clearance and soil nailing works. As a result, there will be a noticeable increase in activity on site, with works taking place on both sides of the hollow within a restricted working area. Highways officers have inspected reported potholes on the affected lanes. Repairs have been scheduled in accordance with Dorset Council's maintenance policies. Parish councils are encouraged to remind residents to continue reporting

highway defects via the council's online portal. The impact of increased traffic on surrounding roads has been factored into the project budget. Once the Dinah's Hollow scheme is complete, road conditions in the surrounding area will be reassessed and any necessary permanent repairs will be undertaken **Cllr Jane.Somper@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

**b. Inspection of The Spinney, Bus Shelter & Telephone Box:** In accordance with the Risk Management Policy the Chairman confirmed the Spinney, the Bus Shelter and the Telephone Box had been inspected. The bust stop needs a sweep; Cllr Smith will complete this. Malcolm had stated to Cllr Smith that he would like to sow some wildflowers on the grass verge. All Cllrs agreed to the wildflowers and some planted baskets but not hanging ones.

**c. Community Speed Watch:** Gill Samways had received an email from the Police to say that Speed Watch can still go ahead with current road works/diversion in place. Unfortunately, two volunteers have recently temporarily resigned whilst the temporary limits are in force. The team will complete a session this Friday afternoon as a trial to see if Speed Watch works smoothly with the current road situation.

**d. PC Cllr resignation:** John Ellis has resigned from the PC. The Clerk has informed DC Democratic Services, and a vacancy notice has been posted on the noticeboard. After the 25<sup>th</sup> March deadline we can co-opt another member on to the PC, this could be actioned at the next PC meeting in May 2026. The PC needs three serving Cllrs to be quorate, at present we have four Cllrs serving.

**11/03/06 Planning Applications: P/TRC/2026/00229** Proposal: T1 Horse Chestnut fell - 7 Napiers Way DT11 8PE **approved by DC. P/TRC/2026/01293** Proposal: T1, T2, & T3 - Spruce - Fell. Location: Pilgrims Hatch, Church Lane DT11 8PB. **PC NO OBJECTIONS** to both applications.

#### **11/03/07 Finance:**

**a. Bills to be paid** It was agreed that the following should be paid:

S Smith **£134.30** (Dec 2025 salary & expenses)

S Smith **£119.70** (Jan 2026 salary & expenses)

S Smith **£119.90** (Feb 2026 salary & expenses)

S Smith **£147.59** (Mar 2026 salary & expenses)

HMRC **£28.64 £62.80 £28.76** (Clerks PAYE)

Lloyds Bank **£4.25 x 3** (monthly bank charges)

Village Hall **£48** (2025 room hire PC meetings)

**Received:** VAT refund of **£105.90**. The reconciled bank and cash balance as of March 2026 was **current account £498.95 savings account £4,319.50**

**11/03/08 A.O.B open forum:** Cllr Smith has received an email from St Johns Ambulance Service looking for volunteers. Jane McNeil will publish the info in Sutton Seasons.

#### **11/03/09 Reports:**

**a. Church:** Cllr Asher reported that the Governments scheme enabling churches to reclaim VAT has now ended. This means all costs for the church will increase by 20%. David John (Vicar) is taking a sabbatical leave of 3 months from April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2026. The Curate will be standing in. The PPC is investigating repairing and painting the churchyard railings which are grade 2 listed. A large Ash tree on church land has been inspected & given the ok, it was suggested to check again once tree is in leaf for signs of Ash dieback. A Concert will be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2026, and two weddings are booked for the end of June.

**b. Village Hall:** The committee has proposed some new events this year, but unfortunately these did not get enough support from the village to pursue further. Finances are ok, but do not provide a buffer for emergencies or extra spending. A questionnaire will soon be circulated to households asking for volunteers and opinions on the future of the Village Hall. Sutton Waldron walk is on the April 26<sup>th</sup> and the plant sale on the May 9<sup>th</sup>. The easter egg event will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

**c. Footpaths:** Everything is very wet and muddy but ok.

**Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be on the **13<sup>th</sup> May 2026 @ 7.30pm.**

Sutton Waldron Village Hall. There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.10pm.

**Signed by the Chairman .....** **Date.....**