

Minutes of Cotford St Luke Annual Parish Meeting

held at The Community Centre, Bethell Mead, Cotford St Luke on

Thursday 22nd May 2025 at 6.45pm

Present: Cllr Sarah Draper-Gammon – PC Chair, Helen McGladdery – PC Clerk and 14 members of the public

1. To receive apologies for absence

Cllr Harrison
PCSO Henderson
Rugby Club representative
Primary School headmaster
Youth Club Representative

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 19th May 2023

As no-one at the meeting was present at the 2023 meeting the minutes were taken as read and signed by the Chair

Action: To be added to the website

3. To receive the Local PCSO Report – attached

4. To receive report from The Hub and Youth Club – Did not attend and report not submitted

5. To receive report from The Pickleball club

Dave Stockton organiser of the local pickleball club was present and gave a presentation. He advised a group of 12 players regularly use the tennis court and currently chalk the pickleball lines, so they were really pleased permanent lines will be painted. The Parish Council will be purchasing a pickleball net as well. When the court is ready the club will offer some introductory sessions for young people and adults.

6. To receive report on the - Cotford 2025 / Village fete

Lisa Davis attended and gave a report on the upcoming fete which will take place on Saturday 6th September. They will use the Community centre and playing fields. There will be games, stalls, vintage and super cars. The theme is "Give it a Go" and there will be opportunities to take part in arts and crafts as well as sporting activities. There will also be live music and performances. The CSL organisation are looking for volunteers as well as donations of prizes for the raffle.

7. To receive report from Local Farmer

Richard Payne who owns the 700 acres of farmland that surrounds the parish was present and gave an update on their farm. They grow arable crops, wheat, barley, oil seed, rape seed and beans. They farm in a regenerative way. Their sheep are in

some of the fields, and they ask that when walking dogs please keep them on a short lead so as not to stress the sheep and lambs. They maintain the public rights of way around their fields and ask that residents stick to the footpaths to protect the crops. Footpaths can be found here: <https://roam.somerset.gov.uk/roam/map>

8. To receive report from CSL Primary School – attached

9. To receive report on proposed new rugby pitch and club in the Parish – attached

10. To receive report from Parish Council Chair - attached

11. Have your say

Raised made the following comments and raised the following concerns:

- Compliments to the Parish Council on the grass cutting
- Thank you to the Parish Council for their communication with residents
- Concerns regarding trees on the flood plain
- Concerns over the exposed fence on the bridge over the railway line
- Parking in the village
- Queried the progress of the cycle path to Taunton

Meeting closed:...7.35pm....

Chair.....

Attachments:

- 1. Police report**
- 2. CSL Primary School report**
- 3. Rugby club report**
- 4. Chairs report**

1. Police report



"I patrol the village every shift and my colleagues and I, including my Sergeant, patrol late on the weekends. Officers from other stations have also been asked to patrol whenever they have down time.

If response officers have been called when I am off shift, I check the details of the incident and gather any evidence to identify who the suspects are and deal with them robustly.

I am working with Rev. Suzy, the Parish Council, the Co-Op, schools, youth workers, parents of the youths and youths themselves to try to deal with the issues. I have youth workers from another area coming in on a Friday evening to work with the youths and engage them in a pattern of work for 12-15 weeks.

I have had youths into the police station to be dealt with using police powers and given banning notices from the Co-Op, should they be required..

Due to working with the Hub and Rev. Suzy CCTV went up around the Hub/Church, this has captured any ASB and helped me and my PC colleagues evidence any issues and deal with the correct people.

I have advised members of the public to report through 999, 101 or online at Avon and Somerset police website. There will be notices being put up by the parish council explaining how to report issues to the police.

I need people to report to police through correct channels (999 or 101) so this can be recorded and a need for extra officers can be shown, that way I can get more officers over to Cotford.

Due to members of the public reporting, we have been able to identify suspects, and they have been brought into the police station. Others are being brought in to be interviewed regarding their offences."

Victoria HENDERSON

Police Community Support Officer

Neighbourhood, Avon and Somerset Police

Wellington Police Station, Victoria Street, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 8HR

Tel 07889655302

Email Victoria.Henderson@avonandsomerset.police.uk

www.avonandsomerset.police.uk

2.CSL Primary School report - from Michael Wright, Headmaster

Cotford St Luke primary school:

We currently have a little over 230 children in the school in addition we manage the nursery that has around 30 children attending a range of sessions.

This year the school has provided children with multiple enrichment opportunities. Where possible we aim to go local, such as a visit to West Somerset Railway to investigate the influence of Brunel. We also try to keep trips affordable families and the school, such as a visit to Somerset Museum. We have had numerous visitors into school as well, such as story tellers and historians.

We have also been one of the first primary schools to work on 'start small, dream big' project. This builds on a secondary school initiative where children are exposed to a range of professional and work environments. Wherever possible the people involved try to break stereotypes. For example, we had

talks and workshops from female engineers. The school also works closely with PCSO Vicky Henderson, she has also spoken to every class on a range of topics, most recently to our oldest children about anti-social behaviour. We have a very active PTA who fundraise for vital equipment and opportunities for the school. We are thankful for their support in challenging financial times. They also run events that are open to the whole community such as Bingo, summer and Christmas fayres. The PTA are very dedicated and hardworking; however, they could use any extra volunteers as the majority of the work falls to a small core of volunteers.

Our currently funding challenge revolves around improving our external Early Years provision. We have been challenged to improve the offer for core physical development. We have received a quote for £21,000 to provide an all-weather surface and climbing equipment, something we would like to proceed with but don't have all the funds available at the moment.

The summer term is in full swing and there are lots of opportunities for the children: year 6 children have residential, sports day, summer fayre, leaver's assembly and school production. We are also looking forward to the 25th anniversary day in the village. Our children will be producing artwork for display on the theme 'what Cotford means to them'.

3.Rugby Club report

Written Update to Cotford St Luke Parish Council

Introduction

This short update has been provided by the Wyvern RFC to Cotford St Luke Parish Council to help keep the neighbouring parish of Cotford St Luke, updated on the proposal for the establishment of a Rugby Pitch at Dene Farm adjacent to the A358.

Background

Wyvern RFC has been established since 1970 and was originally a social rugby side that played (and still plays) at the Wyvern Social Club on Mountfield Rd in Taunton. Since then, it has changed to a more conventional style of club, playing in the Somerset leagues. The Wyvern is probably the smallest club in Taunton both in terms of players and resources but has been enjoying a resurgence over the last three or so years after a tough couple of seasons through the Covid period.

Pitch

The reason that the club is now looking to establish itself at a new location is simply linked to an increase in problems relating to flooding and competition from other uses at the current venue. The Pitch at the Wyvern Club is a temporary pitch created on the outfield of the Cricket Pitch and shared with football teams. It has flooded badly in recent years and doesn't allow space to train while cricket is in season. Heavy usage in the winter also prevents training on the pitch as it causes damage with little time to recover.

After a pretty extensive search, the site at Dene Farm was identified.

The reason that we have ended up at the site is simply that:

- It's flat – so we don't have exorbitant landscaping costs

- Isn't rocky or stony
- Doesn't have overhead wires
- Isn't a flood plain or a flood zone
- Has a landlord willing to rent it to us
- Is not too close to an existing club so we don't risk damaging both clubs
- Is close to housing developments so we can tap into players moving to the area
- Has good access and is easy to find

Proposal

We are not a wealthy club, nor do we have a huge following. We are a grass roots community club that is looking to evolve over a period of time from a social club that has a rugby team, to a rugby team based at a social club to a small but vibrant rugby club in its own right.

This will take time and effort and be an evolution not a revolution. This planning proposal is simply to establish the change of use. The first step will be to create a pitch.

4. Annual Parish Meeting – 22nd May 2025

Chair's Report

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting. The aim of this meeting is to provide you with an update on what we, as your Parish Council, have been doing over the past 12 months. It also gives you the chance to ask questions about the services we offer or raise any other issues within the Parish Council's remit. I am now pleased to present the Annual Report on the activities of Cotford St Luke Parish Council for the 2024/25 Local Government Year. It is a factual account of activities during the last year.

In May 2024, following the resignation of previous councillors and clerk, Somerset Council setup a meeting to co-opt new councillors and conduct other Parish Council business.

Councillors Draper-Gammon, Freeman, McCrea and Birch were co-opted at this meeting and Somerset Council appointed Councillor Mike Best, Chair of Somerset Council, as acting Clerk and RFO until such time as CSL PC were able to recruit our own.

At the June meeting, Councillors Hand and Grover were co-opted, but subsequently resigned late in the summer, however remain supportive. Throughout the summer, we worked together to gain a clear understanding of the Parish Council's responsibilities and the areas that needed to be prioritised. We also undertook training and are grateful both to SALC, Somerset Councillors and other qualified advisors for the help they gave us during this time.

In July and August, we advertised for a new clerk and were delighted when Helen agreed to come and work with us, starting in late September. We are

pleased to have such an experienced clerk and are grateful for all her hard work and dedication.

We also setup a meeting so that Hallam could come and present to the village their plans for the development of land that they own.

September and October saw us launch the new website and work with landowners to ensure the ditches were properly cleared so that the village's flood defences would work well for the winter.

During Helen's first few months with us, she reviewed various policies and governance procedures to ensure everything was in place as it should be and was in line with SALC and Somerset Council guidance. We are continuing to work through and update and/or adopt new policies where necessary, and they can all be found on the website for those who would like to take a look.

The start of 2025 has been very busy! We have so far:

- Co-opted Councillor Harrison

There remain two Councillor vacancies, and we would welcome applications for new councillors as there is lots to do in the Parish.

- Applied for a grant from the Somerset Rivers Authority

We applied in February to enable us to carry out much-needed maintenance on certain areas of the floodplain and in April we were granted £15,000. We are in the process of prioritising the work and identifying relevant companies to carry out the various tasks.

- Tennis court and MUGA

We have had the tennis court and MUGA cleaned and arranged repairs to the court surface. We are working with Courtcare to get the surface painted and have new lines put on. We will re-open the court and launch the new, online booking system as soon as we are able.

- Community Engagement

We are engaged with the school, the Community Association, the PCSO, the church, the youth club, the Pickleball players and the group organising the fete. We aim to form collaborative working relationships with all village organisations so that we may work together for the good of the community.

- 2025/26 Budget

We went through the process to set our budget for this financial year and agreed not to raise the precept as it was raised significantly last year in light of the planned devolvment of powers, plus the reserves are quite healthy. We also have a 3-year forecast (available on the website) so residents can see how we plan to raise the precept and manage our finances, going forwards.

- Tree Maintenance

We've had a tree survey done so that we understand what works are necessary and can put together a comprehensive, multi-year tree maintenance plan. During our meeting later, we will discuss and approve a contractor to carry out works recommended to be carried out within the next 3-4 months.

- Community Association

I have been working to find new trustees for the Community Association, and we are aiming to have the new people in place to start in June. We hope they will be able to increase use of the community centre and work with other groups in the village to grow their engagement.

- Benches and Picnic tables

We have had benches installed on the village green and memorial ground after feedback from residents and work has commenced to install 3 picnic tables on the playing field.

We are already very busy with the general maintenance of the village, plus other on-going projects and there is more we'd like to do, but we really need more volunteers to help out. Please get in touch with us if you're interested in being part of the Parish Council's work.