

Minutes of the Barrington Annual Parish Meeting (APM) held on Tuesday 14th May 2025 at 18:00hrs

Present: Cllr Bourne (Chair), Cllr McLean, Cllr Harker, Cllr Oakes, Cllr Stenner, Julie Ferguson (Parish Clerk) and 28 parishioners.

18:00 Meeting opened

- 01. To receive any apologies for absence.** Cllr C Sheffield and J Sheffield had sent their apologies as the meeting date had been arranged prior to their co-option onto the PC and they had a previous personal commitment organised.
- 02. Chairman of the Parish Council's report**
Cllr Bourne thanked everyone for coming to the APM and presented report on the PC activities over the previous year. **Appendix 1.**
- 03. Village groups reports**

Woodland Group

- Led by Cllr McLean and is a group of 7 volunteers.
- Working hard to renovate the woodland, removing brambles, thinning trees, planting woodland plants – primroses, bluebells, snowdrops, red campion to name a few.
- All tree trimmings were chipped and used on the footpaths.
- By increasing the light in the woodland, more wildflowers will appear.
- Wildflower Meadow, requested by the parish at the APM in May24 is being funded by the PC
- Preparation involved scarifying the designated area followed by the sowing of 1kg of wildflower seeds and 150 yellow rattle plugs planted, but there has been very little rain!
- Starting to see some flowers, but should come to fruition next Spring.
- Volunteers will be needed around October time, to help with cutting back and clearing.

Barrington In Bloom

- Thank you to all of the volunteers who had helped with all the preparations throughout the village, ensuring that everything was looking its best for Judging Day
- The village achieved an impressive Gold Award and also the Newcomers Trophy.
- BiB team are now helping with the work in the parish woodland.
- Entering the competition again this year, with judging planned shortly after Barrington Day, all help once again appreciated.
- Phone box looked fabulous following the renovation, now home to a seed and book swap.

Barrington Players

- Aim to put on 1 play each year, usually around Feb/March.
- Funds raised helped to purchase the new stage lights for the Village Hall.
- Thanks for continued support from all villagers.

Footpaths – Appendix 2

- PPLO (Patrick) is very active Footpaths Officer and liaises with the SC Area Warden using funding provided by the PC.
- 2 Audits have been carried out with areas requiring attention identified and work planned in these areas.
- Signposts need changing and several kissing gates have been delivered to Cllr Oakes Farm ready for installation.

BARRINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Julie Ferguson

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- Thanks to Cllr Oakes for helping with hedge trimming.
- Thanks to all willing volunteers who turn up to help with walking and working on the footpaths.

Church Flower Group

- Small group of volunteers who support the Church from an Historic Point of View (not a Secular group).
- Ensure that flowers are always present in the Church when events are taking place.
- New members would be welcome, donations of flowers also welcome.

04. Public open session

Topics raised included:

- Speed of traffic through the village. Suggestions included setting up a Speedwatch team and investing in a newer SID to support any 20mph speed reduction in the village.
- Suggest installation of mirrors to help with visibility on corners and exiting side lanes.
- Parish Cllrs behaviour at a recent VH AGM bringing the PC into disrepute. Raised the Code of Conduct Policy governing Cllrs conduct in a public capacity. Clerk advised that the incident had been brought to the attention of the PC and was on the next agenda (May25) for Cllrs deliberation.
- Vehicles transiting through the village in excess of the 7.5 tonne weight limit restriction. Advised to report to SC Highways but believed enforcement action unlikely.

19.15 – Meeting closed

APPENDIX 1

Barrington Parish Council Annual Report

Year 2024-2025

Introduction

Good evening and welcome to the Barrington Annual Parish Meeting. As the Chairman of the Parish Council, it is my privilege to present the annual report for the year 2024-2025. This report highlights the key activities, achievements, and decisions made by the council over the past year, as well as outlining our future plans and ongoing commitments to the community.

Thank you

- I wish firstly to thank all the members of the council who have committed their time and energy to the parish this year. Since last year's meeting, councillors Debbie Eustice, Graham Weekes and Matthew Rowswell have served and now stood down, and we welcome Christine Sheffield, John Sheffield and Neil McLean who have joined most recently. A particular thanks must go to Julie Ferguson, our Parish Clerk, who not only does a sterling job with our financial management, but also guides the council on all matters they need to be aware of and ensure that they are in line with legislation.
- Thanks also to our county council representatives, Jo Roundell Green and Adam Dance who attend our meetings and give their support on county and district issues including infrastructure and planning.
- Our most important thanks go to all those who volunteer and members of local groups and organisations who contribute to the vibrancy of our community. Much of the hard work which makes Barrington a wonderful place to live is undertaken quietly by these parishioners who offer their time, energy and expertise. We will see more detail on some of this later in the meeting, but on behalf of all of us who benefit from their efforts, we would offer our sincere thanks.

Planning

This year has seen just one planning application for housing in the village which was considered by the council, and responded to.

The work is underway for the new unitary authority of Somerset County Council to bring forward a local plan in the next two years to ensure that the Government's housing targets can be met. We have been active in meeting with other local parish councils and Somerset Council staff to ensure that we have our voice heard in the development of this new plan so that the interests of the village may be considered.

Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council continues to work hard to support our community.

Its responsibilities include the provision and maintenance of leisure and recreational space and equipment. This includes the recreational field and support for the allotments.

We support local organisations and liaise with other district and county councils regarding such areas as highways and infrastructure.

We are responsible for green spaces, footpaths, litter, rights of way, signage amongst others.

The most important responsibility is to represent the views of all residents within the Parish, and to understand the views and needs of different groups in the community, (such as the young or the elderly.)

Key Activities this year

- Provision of a second defibrillator at the far end of the village. Barrington now has easy access to two life-saving devices in the village, which is a great benefit to the community.
- Renovation of the wood at the recreation field. The Parish Council has helped to bring together a team of volunteers to reinvigorate the wood which had many dying trees, and was choked with brambles. The project will continue into the future to create a space for parishioners to enjoy.
- Supporting Barrington in Bloom with grants for planting, renovation of the phone box, and now for seeds to renew the wildflower meadow which has been overrun with grass.
- Clearing landslips blocking roads out of the village during the last storm event.
- Meeting with agencies regarding preparedness for further flood events.
- Support for the Village Fete.
- Grass cutting and maintenance of the exercise equipment.
- Footpath maintenance

Financials

The status of the Parish Council's finances are shared with the village by means of the minutes of meetings on the Parish Council's website.

One of the key responsibilities of the Parish Council is to set the Precept. This is the money we raise from our parishioners via the Council Tax process.

The precept for 2024-25 was set at £21,180. We have increased the precept for 2025-26 to £22,196.

The increases on the previous year's budget are primarily to cover bin emptying costs devolved from Somerset Council which is a new budget item this year; increased budget to cover running costs (+£950 for salaries, I/T & website & insurance) and slight increases for grants (+£100 for the Church grant budget). The PC also supported the renovation of the phone box, and have most recently transitioned to a .gov.uk domain to come in line with other local government organisations.

We have also resolved, as part of the budget setting, to put any underspend from the Ranger budget into the Highways and Drains reserve, which will put the reserve at around £6K at year end should it be required to assist with drain management. In fact, a small part of the budget of around £1200 each year goes into reserves for the defibrillator replacements, footpaths, outdoor fitness fund and the aforementioned Highways and Drains funding.

This year the Parish Council has awarded a grant to PCC of £750 and £500 towards the Wildflower Meadow.

Challenges

This year we have seen yet another 'once in a lifetime' event with the recent heavy rains causing flooding in the village due to surface water run-off from the surrounding fields and blocked drains. It was heartening to see the village come together to help their neighbours, and significant work to clear mud slips and clean up the roads. Work is underway to develop and more structured group to act as a response, and we are taking advice on what may be available to help us in the future.

One of the biggest challenges for us as a Parish is the state of the Somerset Council's finances. Parish Councils have been asked to identify services which we can undertake to replace a central provision. We are now paying Somerset Council to empty the dog bins, and there may be more to consider in the future.

Community Involvement

In the coming year we will reach out to the community to seek feedback to ensure that everyone has ample opportunity to contribute to our planning, so that we are able to deliver on what is important to the village. Our goal is to build a more inclusive and responsive council that truly represents the voices of all parish members.

Public Session

We will now take any questions you may have.

Groups and Volunteers

Wishing to end on a positive note, we will now hear from some of those organisations and individuals who work tirelessly to make Barrington such a great place to live.

Over to you!

APPENDIX 2

Patrick has been voluntary parish pathways liaison officer (PPLO) for one year,. His role is primarily to support the Area Warden, who is a paid employee of Somerset County Council (SCC), in deciding how to address issues that have been reported via the Explore Somerset Interactive Map or direct to him. Priority is given to issues that present a safety issue to the public.

Two audits of parish pathways have taken place in the last year from which a two year priority plan has been drawn up. Work completed includes repairing/replacing three kissing gates and four sign posts as well as repairing the bank of a brook by a walkway that crosses Court land.

The maintenance of the pathways has been greatly helped by village volunteers. Some volunteers have taken on responsibility for keeping an eye on/doing basic trimming back of different sections of the pathways network. Others have joined voluntary walks trimming back greenery and replacing way markers. Others have cleared paths blocked by trees and landslips. Peter Oakes has been particularly helpful in storing a range of pathways furniture donated and delivered for free by SCC.

Volunteer help is sought for the following:

- Saturday, August 9th (9.30am-11.30am) Trimming back greenery during the growing season (using hand tools) on some of the more commonly used pathways
- Saturday, August 30th (9.30am-11.30am) a bigger pathway job on Lobbs Lane clearing fallen trees and branches

It would be helpful to know if there was a second strimmer previously donated by Somerset CC to the PC for use on the parish pathways.

Patrick Wenham (PPLO)