

NORTON ST PHILIP PARISH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Norton St Philip Parish Council 2023-2024

Chairman – Cllr Ian Hasell

Vice-Chairman – Cllr Michael Walker

Parish Councillors:

George Hitchins

Barbi Lund

Rupert Foster

Val Fox

Catriona Murfitt

Parish Clerk - Nicola Duke

County Councillors – Adam Boyden and Dawn Denton

REPORT FROM CLLR IAN HASELL – PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN 2023-24

This will be my fourth report as Chairman of the Parish Council. There continues to be a large amount of issues, some complex, with which this Parish Council has to deal. Once again, three main topics have occupied a lot of the time of the Parish Council - the aftermath of the Judicial Review, the Neighbourhood Plan, and Planning Applications - so I will concentrate on these three.

Former Mendip District Council's Local Plan part 2 (LPP2)

Once again occupying centre stage has been Mendip District Councils Local Plan Part 2 (MDC LPP2) - and in particular the outcomes arising from the Judicial Review and Lord Justice Holgate's order.

I am pleased to say that we have now received costs of £37,317.82 from MDC and Redrow Homes. In addition, we have been able to reclaim VAT amounting to £11,644.80 and that together with our neighbouring parish council of Beckington who have also generously contributed £3307.79 (one third of our costs) has left us with a net cost to the PC of £6,616.59.

I mentioned last year that Lochailort had launched a separate (but linked) Judicial Review against MDC relating to the status of their land which had now been de-allocated by the Order of the Court. The PC decided that it needed to be represented at this hearing because the outcome would likely have a significant effect on our village. So once again the PC obtained legal advice, engaged Counsel and members of the PC made the journey to the Royal Courts of Justice for the Hearing which took place on 29 June 2023 in front of the same Judge - Lord Justice Holgate. Judgment was handed down on 14th July 2023, with the case dismissed and also with permission to appeal being refused.

However, in connection with this the Judge was not at all satisfied with how the former MDC and now Somerset Council (SC) were complying with his original order of 16 December 2022. So, he reissued his Order with a strict timetable with which Somerset Council must now comply in allocating the 505 dwellings across the whole of the former Mendip District. That process is now underway and in the published draft allocation I am pleased to say that the Parish of Norton St. Philip does not have any allocated sites.

Quite separately the Parish Council has now written a formal letter of complaint to the Planning Inspectorate concerning the LPP2 Inspector who the Judge said had misread Local Plan Part 1, and had then incorrectly advised Mendip District Council despite our protestation that his advice was flawed. Consequently, we are requesting compensation. A response is still awaited.

Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

The PC has now been working on the NP for more than 6 years. A huge amount of time has been lost due to the legal battles with which the PC has been involved in and also by MDC's unwillingness to progress the NP due to the PC challenging MDC's adoption of the flawed LPP2.

Now we are once again at the stage of having a much redrafted and enlarged NP and have, through Locality, been provided with generous (and free) support to carry out the now required Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA), prior to going to another round of the required Regulation 14 consultation. We are endeavouring to get the revised plan to referendum in early 2025.

Planning Applications

The PC has dealt with many planning applications over the last year and has become dissatisfied with the new SC Planning Authority to such an extent that we have lodged a formal complaint with them regarding the non-determination of so many applications.

Of particular concern are the three planning applications submitted once again by Lochailort for Fortescue Fields west (i.e. the land between the existing development and Church Mead, the Laverton Triangle and land further along Mackley Lane and to which the applicant has now lodged an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate because of non-determination by Somerset. In effect this will be virtually a re-run of the applications previously dismissed at Appeal in 2015. We are awaiting details from the Planning Inspectorate as to how they will deal with this appeal.

The Parish Council

I have been fortunate to continue to have such a committed team of Parish Councillors and a Parish Clerk who in combination have all the skills, expertise and knowledge that I lack! My grateful thanks to them all.

I need to specially mention the contribution to the PC that has been made by Rupert Foster and Michael Walker as I have with great regret accepted their resignations from the Parish Council. This is because both have either moved or are moving away from the Parish.

However, Rupert who has served 5 years on the Parish Council, has said that he will continue to Chair the Church Mead Committee and stay as President of the Cricket Club - so it is only a partial loss.

Michael, who has served 10 years including being Vice Chair of the PC for 9 years will be moving away later this year. In my time as Chair of the PC Michael has been a fantastic deputy, taking a huge load off me by sorting all sorts of things in the background with a calm friendly demeanour. I will greatly miss the wise counsel from both of them.

GRANTS 2023/2024

In 2023/24 the Parish Council awarded £10,951.12 in community grants and Service Level Agreements:

- £751.10 – Palairret Hall SLA for insurance
- £3,998.90 – Palairret Hall SLA grant payment
- £4,451.12 – Church Mead SLA for fireworks
- £750.00 – Friends of St Leonards Church
- £1,000.00 – Hardington Vale PCC

PRECEPT 2024/2025

The precept for 2024-25 has been set at £54,747. It was noted that the precept requirement represented a Band D equivalent of £105.26 an increase of £1.31 per annum on the current year and a percentage increase of 1.26% - a very modest increase in the light of the current inflationary pressures.

Due to the increase in the council tax base figure this represented no increase to individual households, although an increase in overall precept was generated which matched the requirements shown in the budget. Copies of the approved budget are available from the Parish Clerk or can be viewed on the PC website.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Parish Council's end of year Finance report is as follows:

	31.03.2024
INCOME	
Precept	£53,212.00
Judicial Review costs and contributions	£40,625.61
Total other income	£8,998.15
Other grants	£0.00
Total income	<u>£102,835.76</u>
 Parish Council operational expenses	
Audit fees	£478.00
Hire of hall for meetings	£158.00
Insurance expenses	£786.33
Office expenses	£2,470.49
Professional Fees	£11,369.62
Salaries and wages	£16,374.16
Subscriptions and books	£565.83
Parish maintenance	£1,743.46
Total Parish Council operational expenses	<u>£33,945.89</u>
 Community grants	£10,951.12
Operational costs	£33,945.89
Expenditure from Capital Fund	£365.82
Neighbourhood Plan	£260.40
Total Expenditure	<u>£45,523.23</u>

PARISH COUNCIL RESERVES 31.03.2024

At the close of the financial year 2023/2024 the Parish Council held the sum of £98,788 in Reserves:

Capital Funds	31.03.2024
Street Furniture	£500
Recreation Land BF	£1,000
Allotments BF	£1,500
Church Mead	£5,695
Palaiet Hall	£2,000
General Capital Project Fund	£5,000

Total Capital Funds	£15,596
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Earmarked Funds	31.03.2024
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Road safety audit	£2,500
Highways and Rights of Way	£7,700
Jig with a Pig MUGA	£1,231
Speed Sign	£300
Legal and Professional Fees	£45,225

Pension Fund	11,200
Devolution Support Fund	4,000

Total EMR	£72,156
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General Reserve	£10,937
Capital Funds	£15,695
Earmarked Reserves	£72,156

TOTAL ALLOCATIONS	£98,788
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REPORT FROM THE CHURCH MEAD COMMITTEE MAY 2024

The 2023 Bonfire and Fireworks was a record breaking event for the second year in succession. Feedback received was very positive with favourable comments about the new addition of “quiet” fireworks. The Committee would like to thank the many volunteers who efficiently managed the record attendance. Lee Hodgson had spent a great deal of time and effort preparing the display with the resultant great effect.

There is no 100 Club proposed at present. The Committee are looking at ways to take it online and hope to relaunch it in the autumn.

Following an untraceable water leak in the metered mains supply from Fair Close, a new water main has been laid to the Pavilion. The supply now runs from the main in the Old Vicarage garden and across the Tollworthy’s field. This was approved by Bristol Water and a new meter installed. Alice and Ben Tollworthy could not have been more helpful; without their agreement a new main would have had to have been run from Fair Close at much greater expense.

At the 2023 AGM Jan Scarrow resigned as Chair- a position she has held since 2016. During that time Church Mead flourished; her warmth and leadership was greatly valued.

Colin Purser, Vice Chair and past Secretary also resigned. Colin was on the Committee for over 10 years and helped navigate some difficult times with great humour.

Lindsay Tripp stood down as Secretary after 5 years. During that time, she dealt with the increasing amount of red tape with great efficiency and effectiveness. Thanks to her great efforts there are now systems in place to deal with these requirements.

At a meeting following the AGM Rupert Foster was proposed and appointed Chair and George Hitchins was reappointed Treasurer. There are five new Committee members; a full list is on the Church Mead website, which can be accessed through the link on the PC site.

REPORT FROM PALAIRET HALL COMMITTEE MAY 2024



Registered Charity No: 1065947

Chairman's Report - 1st May 2024

I believe The PalaiRET Hall has continued to provide the community of Norton St Philip with an extremely valuable resource during the last year, facilitating regular Pilates, yoga and dance classes; weekly Drop In coffee mornings; monthly film nights; a well-attended Art Club; a monthly Photography Club; meetings of the Norton Women's Group; the occasional Repair Café; various birthday parties; English lessons for our Ukrainian friends; fund-raising evenings; monthly Parish Council meetings; an alternative meeting place for the Norton Chapel and a polling station for the village.

One of the highlights of the year was the celebration of our Centenary in September when we were delighted to welcome Edward PalaiRET, a descendant of our benefactor, Henry Hamilton PalaiRET, to join our celebration and cut our 100th Birthday cake. We used the event to showcase what happens in the PalaiRET Hall and in the evening, we were treated to an excellent film and meal by the PalaiRET Players.

We have continued to make improvements to the hall, re-plastering part of the outer wall affected by damp in April, installing a new cooker in the kitchen in August and updating the heating controls in November so that heating can be tailored more efficiently to the use of the hall.

Looking forwards to the next year, we have plans to improve the access to the hall by installing electrically operated entrance doors and to replacing the projector as digital technology continues to advance.

Thanks to Anne Twist, our website is regularly updated with details of the up-coming events and receives many enquiries. We are also now on Facebook.

My grateful thanks go to Sara Willis for taking on the role of Honorary Secretary to the committee; to Andrew Morrison, Honorary Treasurer, for managing our financial accounts and invoicing our hirers; and to the rest of the committee members for their forbearance and support for the new chairman. I would also like to thank the Parish Council for its continued financial contribution towards the upkeep of the hall.

It is also appropriate at this point to give special thanks Michael Walker, the Parish Council representative, for his valuable contribution to the maintenance of the hall over recent years. Unfortunately, Michael will be leaving us at the end of June and we wish him and Caroline, the chair of the PalaiRET Charity, all the best in their new work.

David Lockley

REPORT FROM THE TRAFFIC ACTION GROUP MAY 2024

TAG has met six times this year and has dealt with many issues that other rural communities also face:

- speeding traffic
- heavy lorries
- pedestrian safety
- dangerous or inconsiderate parking
- bus frequency and timetabling
- visibility of highway signs
- litter on verges

Meeting notes can be found on the TAG page of the PC website. James Kiff resigned as meeting Chair in October 2023 and it was agreed to 'rotate' Chairs subsequently, which has proved satisfactory.

Traffic

Community SpeedWatch - We now have 12 trained volunteers and five teams who each commit to regular sessions on both roads through the village at three approved locations. We are grateful for the commitment of these volunteers. PCSOs have also supported us on several occasions. Our thanks to David Lockley for his perseverance in organising sessions, liaising with the police and uploading results to their database so that they can follow up.

Speed Indicator Device - The device's battery no longer functions so, since modern devices are cheaper and easier to handle it was agreed to replace it with two new devices if funds allowed.

Traffic issues on the A366 west of NSP - Ian Biggerstaff, Rex Eastment and Ian Mills presented to TAG a very helpful report on the problems of dangerous driving on the A366; this was subsequently ratified by NSP and Hemington PCs, with whom these traffic issues are shared. Cllr Dawn Denton forwarded this report to Somerset Council Highways, requesting proposals for solutions.

Heavy Lorries

Residents have been encouraged to report sightings of illegal HGVs direct to the company transport managers. Regular notices in the Parish News and a dedicated page in the TAG section of the Parish Council website gives guidance. A TAG email address has been set up and is monitored by Val Fox. Copies of recorded incidents can be sent to this address for following up. This year we have recorded at least 11 successful correspondences with such companies, preventing future 'mistakes'.

Pedestrian safety

Two TAG members, Anna and Christopher Nixon, have initiated a report to detail this problem.

Parking

The Parish Council has been in talks with Somerset Highways about this difficult problem, with the support of County Councillor Dawn Denton.

Buses

TAG, with the strong support of PC Chair Ian Hasell and the Frome and Villages Bus Users Group (FAVBUG), has continued to press First Bus to improve the D2 service through NSP, which has worsened in recent years.

Highways signs

Grateful thanks go to Michael Walker for keeping the road signs clear of vegetation.

Litter

14 residents joined in a successful litter pick session around the roads of NSP on 30 March. We collected 14 sacks, a TV, three highways warning signs, several tyres – and a police sign.

Val Fox May 2024

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024-2025

Wednesday 11th June 2024

Wednesday 9th July 2024

Wednesday 14th August 2024 – if required

Wednesday 11th September 2024

Wednesday 2nd October 2024 – Farleigh Hungerford

Wednesday 13th November 2024

Wednesday 11th December 2024

Wednesday 8th January 2025

Wednesday 12th February 2025

Wednesday 12th March 2025

Wednesday 9th April 2025 – Farleigh Hungerford

Wednesday 14th May 2025 – Annual Council Meeting/Annual Parish Meeting

For more information about parish affairs:

Norton St Philip Parish Clerk

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**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL TAKE PLACE ON
WEDNESDAY 12th JUNE 2024 AT 7.00 pm
in THE PALAIRET HALL, NORTON ST PHILIP.**

