Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting for Norton St Philip held at the Palairet Hall, Norton St Philip on **WEDNESDAY 6th MAY 2026** at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllr Hasell (Chairman), Cllr Fox, Cllr Hitchins, Cllr Murfitt, Cllr Molian, Cllr Curwen and Cllr Lund.

In attendance: Nicola Duke (Parish Clerk), SCllr Dawn Denton and 6 members of the public.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting and introductions were made.

1. Apologies for Absence – Cllr Adam Boyden, a report had been provided and circulated to members.

2. Minutes of the APM 2025 and Matters Arising – The minutes were approved for accuracy and adopted (proposed Cllr Lund, seconded Cllr Murfitt). There were no matters arising.

3. The Chairman had provided a report covering the activities of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2025/2026, which was included in the Annual Report. A brief summary was given. The Annual Report was tabled and presented by the Chairman.

4. The Parish Clerk (RFO) had provided a report on the Parish Council's Financial Position and End of Year Accounts 2025/2026, which was included in the Annual Report.

5. A report from Somerset Councillor Dawn Denton had been provided and circulated. In addition Cllr Denton reported the following:

<u>Financial Update</u>

The council reported a challenging financial year, with the organisation remaining in a fragile position.

- This is the third consecutive year in which support from the County Council has been required.
- Reserves originally intended for short-term use continue to be drawn upon.
- Due to restructuring and redundancies, the council has had to rely heavily on external consultants, resulting in a £20–30 million consultancy bill.

<u>Customer Service and Digital Access</u>

Concerns were raised regarding:

- Customer frustration with service responsiveness.
- Digital exclusion, as many services are now online and not all residents have equal access or digital capability.

<u>Enforcement Capacity</u>

It was noted that only one enforcement officer is currently responsible for the entire Mendip area, leading to delays and significant resident frustration.

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Planning and Development Matters

1 Longmead (NSP)

- The council continues to work with the developer to ensure all required works are completed within the legal framework.
- Adoption of the roads is hoped for but not guaranteed; roads must meet the required standard before adoption can be considered.

2 Farleigh House (FH) Events

- Residents raised concerns about whether the parish was under undue pressure from an influential organisation.
- Assurance was given that the law will be applied consistently, regardless of influence.
- A meeting confirmed:
    - No further events will take place after October, other than those already contractually committed.
    - There will be no future corporate events or weddings at the site.
- A recent cash injection may explain delays in the planning application, but the situation has now been overtaken by events.

Parish Partnership Working

- The Parish Council was praised as excellent to work with, with strong collaboration and effective delivery.
- Cllr Fox thanked Somerset Council for its support on traffic and highways matters.

6. Reports from local organisations on their activities during 2025/2026 had been included in the Annual Report.

Church Mead Committee

Cllr Hitchins thanked the Committee and all residents who help make the parish a special place to live.

- Bins and waste collection remain a major issue, and the Parish Council is currently covering the cost, which has risen significantly.
- The 100 Club helps but does not come close to meeting the full cost.
- Thanks were given to those who have joined, and dog owners and walkers were encouraged to contribute if they are able.

Play Area & Boules

- The play equipment continues to be very well used.
- Decisions on the new surface and the size of the boules area are expected in the next one to two months.

Traffic Action Group (TAG)

- Cllr Fox expressed gratitude to everyone who attends and supports TAG.

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- Speed Watch volunteers were thanked for their continued efforts.

Pedestrian Safety

- Christopher Nixon was thanked for taking on the major task of improving pedestrian safety across the villages.
- Work continues toward securing additional Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs), with progress expected in the coming months.

Bus Services

- Good news: the bus timetable and route remain unchanged.

Footpaths

- Progress has been made on footpath issues in Farleigh Hungerford. A new, safer pedestrian route has been agreed with the support of Iford Manor, allowing walkers to avoid the stretch of road with no pavement.

Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs)

- A resident noted that SIDs are very effective at first, reducing speeds by around 50%, but their impact fades as drivers become used to them.
- It was suggested that turning them off temporarily and reintroducing them may help restore effectiveness.
- Cllr Fox noted that many drivers are regular commuters and that SIDs are especially important for school safety. Turning them off during school holidays may be considered.
- Cllr Hitchins reported difficulties in programming the devices, as they can be set to different modes at different times.
- The council may seek expert guidance when the new SIDs arrive.

7. Parish Forum – questions and discussion from members of the public.

<u>Youth in the parish</u>

A resident spoke about the need for more social opportunities for teenagers in the parish. At present, there are only two regular options:

- Football, and
- A monthly youth space held in the church.

The resident explained that while the parish is too small to offer a wide range of activities, it *could* support a weekly youth club using the church's existing facilities. To run this properly, a youth worker would be needed.

Funding Needs

- A youth worker would need to be paid at least £12.71 per hour.
- With around 3 hours per week, the estimated cost is £2,000 per year.
- The resident asked whether the Parish Council could help fund this or advise on possible funding sources, such as Section 106 or Somerset Council grants.

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The resident emphasised that adults have a responsibility to support young people, offering them a safe place to socialise—not for homework, but for connection, supervision, and showing that the community cares.

Questions & Discussion

CM asked about likely attendance.

- The monthly youth space currently attracts 12–16 teenagers, with some events drawing even more.
- Surrounding villages run youth clubs, and there may be opportunities to link with them or with the women's group.

This proposal is considered a tentative first step, with more information welcomed.

Next Actions

- Cllr Denton will investigate potential government funding pots, which may be ring-fenced for youth provision.
- Cllr Hasell will speak to counterparts at Beckington Parish Council (BPC) and Rode Parish Council (RPC) and report back at a future meeting.
- It may also be worth raising the matter at the Local Community Network (LCN).

Prof Giles Harrison and Assoc Prof Keri Nicoll University of Reading.

Presented information on their work as weather scientists and their plans to utilitise a local drone company to gain access to clouds and fog. An explanation of their work was given as well as information on local educational outreach being planned.

Thanks to the Parish Council

A resident thanked the Parish Council for its support of the community over the years. Their ongoing work often happens quietly and without recognition, yet it makes an enormous difference to village life.

The resident expressed deep appreciation for the Parish Council makes noting that their efforts are so consistent and reliable that we sometimes forget just how much they do for all of us.

There being no further business the meeting was closed 7.50 pm.

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