

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 11 May 2026 at the Stourton & Kilmington Home Guard Club

Present: Cllrs G Cotton (Chair), E Hames, C Reeves, J Brooks, J Moore, R Flower, T Day.
In attendance: S Willis (Clerk) and 3 members of the public.

The meeting opened at 7.30 pm

1. Apologies for Absence. None.

2. Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting. The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Participation. A member of the public outlined plans for a community event on 22 August. The Parish Council was asked to consider use of equipment and potential financial support. The Chair advised the matter would be considered further and a response provided outside the meeting where possible.

4. Chairman's Annual Report. The Chair presented a report summarising Parish Council activity over the past year, including:

- Representation at South West Wiltshire Area Board and LHFIG
- Ongoing highways matters, including Church Road drainage and Norton Ferris junction safety concerns
- Planning matters, including the Knoll Farm application
- Continued work with Wiltshire Council on flooding and drainage
- Progress on broadband connectivity

The Chair recorded thanks to:

- Volunteers maintaining the war memorial, playground and defibrillators
- Members of local organisations
- The Unitary Councillor
- Former Clerk Ruth Burrows

- Current Clerk Steven Willis
- All councillors, including former member Andrew Reeves
- Newly co-opted councillor Tonia Day

A full written version of the Chairman's report is attached at Appendix A.

5. Report from Unitary Councillor G Jeans. In his absence, the Clerk presented a summary of his annual report.

Key points included:

- Ongoing highways maintenance priorities
- Progress on speed limit reviews, including Kilmington Common
- Continued concerns regarding Norton Ferris junction safety
- Updates on Wiltshire Connect bus service
- Limited mobile connectivity, with progress on fibre broadband rollout
- Continued work on flood risk and drainage issues
- Opposition to the proposed closure of Mere Fire Station
- Updates on Wiltshire Council finances and support schemes

The report also included thanks to parish councillors and residents for their engagement.

A full written version of the report is attached at Appendix B.

6. Reports and Accounts for Parish Organisations

Kilmington Amenity Fund. Cllr Mrs Hames reported the number of subscribers to the village draw has increased slightly and now stands at 203. Contributions remain at £6 per person annually. The monthly prize draw continues with a total payout of £50 divided between three prizes.

During the year, the Fund supported the annual fireworks event, purchased additional folding chairs for use at village functions, and generated modest income through equipment hire.

The Fund has begun incurring monthly bank charges of £4.25 and alternative arrangements are being explored.

The Fund concluded the financial year on 31 March 2026 with a balance of approximately £3,106.15.

Kilmington News. Cllr Mrs Hames reported that income for the year was £339.50, with expenditure of £258.68, resulting in a balance of approximately £80.82.

The publication continues to face challenges relating to banking arrangements following the closure of local branch services.

John Hooper Charity. The Clerk reported that a final update had been received.

Income and expenditure were minimal, and the trustees have resolved to close the charity, as it no longer fulfils its original purpose.

This represents the final report for the charity.

7. Close of Meeting. The meeting closed at 7.50 pm and was followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Signed: (Chair) Date:

The minutes will be reviewed and formally ratified by the PC at the next Annual Parish Meeting in May 2027

Appendix A – Chairman’s Annual Report

Over the past year I have represented Kilmington Parish Council at meetings of the South West Area Board and the Local Highway and Footway Improvement Group (LHFIG). In all these forums I have sought to represent the best interests of our village.

Highways

- Church Road: Issues relating to Church Road and the pipe carrying spring water beneath the road remain ongoing and continue to be monitored.
- Speed limits: We have recently been advised that Stourton Parish Council has received official approval for the existing 30mph speed limit on New Road and Kilmington Common to be extended to include Stourton Lane.
- Norton Ferris – Coombe Barn Lane junction: There has been no progress to date on improvements at this junction. Councillor George Jeans continues to work with Wiltshire Council to explore longer-term options to redesign the layout. At present, there appears to be no short-term solution to address this serious issue.

Planning

- The retrospective planning application for Knoll Farm, Norton Ferris is due to be considered by Wiltshire Council’s Planning Committee under the call-in procedure. This follows concerns that some of the conditions attached to the Parish Council’s support for the application have not been met.

Flooding

- Holding pond, The Street: I am pleased to report progress has been made following improved cooperation between Wiltshire Council Highways and the National Trust. Work has been carried out on the pond and associated pipework. Willow trees located on National Trust land have been removed, as their roots had penetrated the drainage pipes. Once the roots have fully died off and are removed, this should further improve water flow through the system.
- Surface water drainage: I have been actively involved in ensuring Wiltshire Council Highways’ drainage team carried out surveys and remedial works between the bottom of Church Road and the junction with the B3092. This work has been undertaken to reduce the risk of a repeat of the flooding experienced in The Street last winter.

Broadband and Mobile Connectivity

· Councillor George Jeans has been advised that Kilmington has been included in one of the Wessex Internet BDUK projects, provisionally scheduled for summer 2026. Further details are awaited, and Councillor John Brooks will provide an update when available.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

I would like to record my sincere thanks to the following individuals for their contributions during the year:

- Tony Chubb, whose continued efforts on behalf of the village are greatly appreciated.
- Ian Cameron and John Brooks, for diligently monitoring and maintaining the defibrillator units — a vital service.
- Georgina Muir, Peter Sansom, and Nomi Miller, for their ongoing commitment to maintaining the area around the war memorial, which is always presented to a very high standard.
- Darren Davis, for his hard work in maintaining and reporting on the condition of the playground.
- Eugene Read, for carrying out the Parish Council's annual internal audit.
- John Harrison, for his chairmanship of the Playing Field Committee and his continued research into future funding options.
- Councillor George Jeans, for his tireless work at Wiltshire Council level on behalf of the village.
- Ruth Burrows, who retired as Parish Clerk in December after seven years of dedicated service, and whose support across many areas of council business is gratefully acknowledged.
- Steve Willis, our new Parish Clerk, for an excellent start in post — I am confident he will be a valuable asset to the Council.
- All Members of the Parish Council, for their continued support. I would particularly like to thank Andrew Reeves, who has resigned after many years of service, and to welcome Tonia Day, who replaces him. I am confident she will make a valuable contribution to our work.

Appendix B – Unitary Councillor Report (Cllr George Jeans)

Overview

This report provides a wide-ranging update on local issues, council decisions, community initiatives, and future plans affecting the Mere Division (Mere, Kilmington, Stourton, West Knoyle, and Zeals), alongside broader developments across Wiltshire. It highlights ongoing pressures on services, infrastructure challenges, and significant policy changes expected over the coming years.

Roads, Transport & Infrastructure

Road conditions remain a major concern across the division, with several areas in poor repair. While repairs have been carried out (e.g. West Knoyle), issues persist, partly due to utility works undoing improvements. Encouragingly:

- Over **2,700 potholes** have been repaired this year.
- An additional **£5 million** is being invested in preventative maintenance.
- Wiltshire has received a **“green” national rating** for road maintenance, indicating relatively strong performance.

There are also ongoing concerns about **HGV traffic**, particularly around Maiden Bradley and key junctions like Coombe Barn. Plans are underway to explore better enforcement of weight restrictions.

Speed management is progressing:

- 30mph limits introduced in places like Mere and Kilmington.
- New housing developments are expected to adopt **20mph limits**.

Public transport has seen a major shift with the launch of **Wiltshire Connect**, an on-demand bus service replacing several traditional routes. While innovative and flexible, it has caused some confusion and teething issues.

Flooding remains a recurring issue in parts of the area. Residents are increasingly expected to take **personal responsibility** for flood protection (e.g. sandbags), as council resources prioritise key infrastructure.

Broadband, Mobile & Digital Connectivity

Digital connectivity remains inconsistent:

- **Mobile signal “not-spots”** (especially in Kilmington) limit access to modern services like smart energy tariffs.
- Fibre broadband rollout has **stalled in several areas** due to funding issues and competition between providers.
- Some progress is expected through government-backed schemes (e.g. Project Gigabit), with **Kilmington scheduled for 2026 rollout**.

However, uncertainty remains, and residents are encouraged to register interest to improve chances of future investment.

Cost of Living & Financial Support

Wiltshire Council continues to provide support through the **Household Support Fund**, with:

- **£4.8 million allocated** for 2025–2026 (a 12% reduction from the previous year).
- Support targeted at vulnerable groups, including families, pensioners, and disabled residents.

Assistance includes:

- Food and energy vouchers
- Help with housing costs
- Essential household items (e.g. furniture, white goods)

Notably, over **1,200 residents aged 80+** received £300 energy payments due to gaps in national winter fuel support.

Additional cost-saving initiatives include:

- **Thermal imaging cameras** available from libraries to help identify heat loss.
 - Advice services and energy efficiency support.
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Public Services & Community Safety

Several key public services are under pressure:

Fire Services

- The proposed **closure of Mere Fire Station** is a major concern.
- A public consultation is ongoing, with strong local opposition.
- Concerns focus on increased emergency response times, especially given proximity to the A303.

Policing

- Local policing presence has reduced, with response teams moved to Trowbridge.
- This has led to concerns about **longer emergency response times**.
- A national restructuring of policing is being considered.

Healthcare (Dentistry)

- NHS dental access is declining.
- The Mere dental practice will largely stop treating NHS adults, reflecting a wider national trend.

Social Support

- **Carer Support Wiltshire is closing** due to funding issues, though services will transfer to another provider.
- A new **Dementia Awareness Group** is being developed locally.

Council Governance & Finance

Following the 2025 elections:

- No party has overall control.
- A **Liberal Democrat minority administration** now leads the council.

Key financial decisions:

- **£567 million budget** approved for 2026/27.
- Council tax increased by **4.99%** (including adult social care levy).
- Average Band D total council tax: ~£2,571/year.

Other notable decisions:

- **Free disabled parking reinstated.**
- Continued recruitment drive for foster carers.
- Concerns raised about low parish council election participation and voter ID awareness.

🏠 Planning, Housing & Development

Planning policy is undergoing major disruption:

- The current **Local Plan has effectively been rejected** after years of work.
- A new plan may not be adopted until **2029**.
- This delay increases the risk of **unplanned/speculative development**.

Housing pressure is significant:

- Around **50,000 new homes** required by ~2042.

There are also moves toward **regional (Wessex) planning structures**, reversing previous decentralisation.

♻️ Environment, Waste & Sustainability

Environmental policy is evolving in response to national legislation:

- By **2027**, households must separate:
 - Food waste
 - Flexible plastics
- Wiltshire plans to adopt a **three-stream recycling system**.

Other initiatives:

- Investment in **electric vehicles and vehicle-to-grid charging**.
 - Air quality improvements required in new developments.
 - Strong community involvement in:
 - Litter picking (thousands of bags collected)
 - Environmental and biodiversity projects
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👥 Community Initiatives & Local Life

There is strong emphasis on community engagement:

- Over **143,000 people benefited** from council-funded projects.
- Youth programmes (FUEL) provided activities and meals to over 1,700 children.

- Continued promotion of fostering opportunities.

Health and wellbeing initiatives include:

- Smoking reduction targets (aim to halve numbers by 2030)
- Mental health campaigns (e.g. Blue Monday support)
- Encouragement to participate in national campaigns like **Stoptober**

Tourism and culture are also supported through:

- Local festivals and events
 - Participation in national tourism partnerships
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Key Ongoing Issues

Several recurring concerns stand out:

- Dog fouling complaints increasing
 - Flood risks and limited council support
 - Connectivity issues (mobile and broadband)
 - Pressure on emergency services
 - Rising costs and reduced funding
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Positive Developments

Despite challenges, there are notable positives:

- High local election turnout (above Wiltshire average)
 - National recognition for road maintenance performance
 - Community awards (MBE/BEM recipients)
 - Strong volunteer participation across the area
 - Investment in local projects and infrastructure
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Overall Conclusion

The report reflects a period of **transition and pressure**:

- Public services face **financial constraints and restructuring**

- Infrastructure is improving but still uneven
- Communities are increasingly expected to **take greater responsibility**
- Significant **policy changes** (planning, waste, transport) are on the horizon

At the same time, there is clear evidence of **strong community engagement**, local resilience, and ongoing investment in key services and initiatives.

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