



HENSTRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Ann Lee, 3 Sparkford Road, Sparkford, Yeovil, BA22 7FA

Tel: 07702667083

e-mail: clerk@henstridgeparishcouncil.org.uk

www.henstridgeparishcouncil.org.uk

The Henstridge Annual Parish meeting held on Wednesday 20 May 2026 MINUTES

1. Welcome from the Chair

Cllr Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the WI for their hospitality serving tea, coffee and cakes at the start of the evening.

2. Present Cllr Smith, Cllr Steel,

3. Apologies Ann Lee Clerk, Cllr Burt, Cllr Clerk, Cllr Graham, Cllr Petheram,

4. In attendance 50 residents

5. To approve the minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting held in 2025

Copies of the minutes for circulation were not available in the Clerks absence.

6. Parish Council Chair's report

Cllr Smith stated that the 2025/26 municipal year has been one of continued progress, practical delivery of ground work maintenance and active engagement and representation on issues affecting residents of Henstridge and Yenston. Throughout the year, Henstridge Parish Council has worked to maintain community assets, support local services, respond to planning and highways matters, strengthen governance procedures and ensure sound financial management.

During the year the Parish Council and its committees held **16 published meetings**, including Full Council, Annual Parish Council and Open Spaces Committee meetings. All meetings remained open to the public and residents regularly attended to raise concerns and contribute to discussions on planning, flooding, highways and wider community matters.

Achievements and Work Undertaken

The Council has continued to undertake a broad range of work across the parish during the municipal year. Key achievements and activities included:

- Progressing flood prevention and drainage mitigation work at Oak Vale Wood.
- Continued maintenance and management of recreation grounds, playground outside gym, pump track, and ongoing management of the Jubilee Boarder and parish open spaces, and revision of gates to the recreation ground to ensure direct emergency vehicle access.

Signed dated

- Oversight and support of allotments and cemetery maintenance.
- Footpath and vegetation clearance works on footways and bridge repairs for the parish.
- Liaison with Somerset Council regarding highways, drainage and planning concerns.
- Review and updating of governance and compliance policies, including Standing orders, financial regulations, GDPR, IT and Freedom of Information procedures.
- Participation in the Local Community Network (LCN) to ensure our voice is heard.
- Ongoing response to resident concerns relating to highways safety, planning applications, drainage and public rights of way.
- Continued maintenance and oversight of parish-owned assets and facilities.
- Continued work with other support organisations to assist vulnerable residents and support community wellbeing initiatives.

The Council also continued to support community organisations and local initiatives wherever possible throughout the year including the Village Fete Committee.

Planning Matters

Planning matters continued to form a significant proportion of Council business throughout the year despite changes to National Planning strategies. The Pc and wider network have all experienced significant delays in planning with applications and investigations taking longer than a year in some cases to resolve. The impact on redundancies is now telling. There is heavy reliance on outsourcing which inevitably will cost more. During the 2025/26 municipal year the Parish Council considered over **16 planning applications, 2 alleged planning breaches** across Henstridge and Yenston.

These included:

- Residential developments and extensions.
- Agricultural and rural applications.
- Reserved matters applications.
- Tree and conservation matters.
- Lawful development certificates.
- Breaches in planning regulations
- Infrastructure and drainage concerns.

Signed dated

11 applications related directly to Henstridge locations and 4 related to Yenston. The Council continued to represent the views of residents while carefully considering the impact of development on the character, infrastructure and environment of the parish.

Financial Position

Cllr Smith stated that the Council maintained a stable and responsible financial position throughout the municipal year and continued to monitor expenditure carefully against agreed budgets.

Regular budget monitoring, bank reconciliations and cashbook reviews were undertaken throughout the year to ensure effective financial control and transparency.

For the 2026/27 financial year, the Parish Council approved a precept of **£88,700**, representing an increase of approximately **4.95%**. The Council also maintained earmarked reserves to support future maintenance commitments, parish assets and contingency planning.

At the March 2026 meeting, councillors reviewed the latest financial reports ahead of year end and confirmed that the Council remained in a sound financial position. Final audited year-end balances for 31 March 2026 were still in the process of being completed at the time of the final published minutes of the municipal year.

Council Matters and Governance

The Council continued to address a wide range of operational risks and governance matters during the year, including:

Highways and road safety concerns.

Public rights of way maintenance.

Policy and compliance reviews.

A GDPR audit and activity to ensure compliance with Schedule 10.

Asset management

Community liaison and partnership working.

.

Conclusion

The 2025/26 municipal year has demonstrated the Council's continued commitment to maintaining parish facilities, protecting the rural character of Henstridge and Yenston and responding to the needs of residents. Despite increasing financial and operational pressures facing local councils, Henstridge Parish Council has continued to deliver practical improvements across the parish whilst maintaining stable finances.

The Council would like to thank councillors, staff, volunteers and residents for their continued support, commitment and contribution throughout the year.

Footways Progress - defects and repairs Frazer Cooke PPLO – Status report – May 2026

Signed dated

Mr Frazer Cook (our Somerset PPLO) continues to liaise between Henstridge Parish Council and Somerset Council Area Warden Eve Wynn regarding the numerous footpaths that crisscross the parish.

There have been some positive outcomes over the recent couple of years, by opening the access to the countryside by replacing stiles with gates and replacing damaged bridges.

Vegetation clearance is always a difficult issue due to undertaking the works outside of bird nesting periods. The PPLO has provided the Parish Council with a number of footpaths which require twice yearly cuts to ensure these can be enjoyed by walkers. The Parish Council is working with the appointed Somerset Council ranger and local landowners to keep the vegetation growth in check. Somerset Council is responsible in undertaking a once yearly cut along the pathway from Marsh Lane to Hackthorne Farm – WN 12/38.

Public Footpath users are requested to report any issues that they find by using the Explore Somerset map and by attaching a photograph via the website detailing concerns that are then screened and prioritised. The link is detailed here <https://roam.somerset.gov.uk/roam/map>

The reported issue raises an email to the Area Warden who should investigate the issue and request the landowner to undertake the necessary repair. It is ultimately the responsibility of the landowner to ensure that footpaths are maintained for access to the countryside.

As a Rights of Way team and with the cooperation of the landowners' footpaths can provide health and mental wellbeing to future generations for access to the countryside.

Bridget Hallett has been undertaking walks around Henstridge, which are advertised in the Wot's on. A big thank you goes out to her for organising these walks and undertaking vegetation clearance around the stiles/footpaths

Local people are aware of the impact of the proposed developments that are planned for the southern edge of our rural settlement. The 130 home development – Townsend Landing will have an impact on WN 12/25 and WN 12/41. Some residents attended the organised Community Planning Association Action day on 18th April to highlight their concerns which was registered on the Grassroots Map - <https://communityplanningalliance.org/>

Walkers do need to be aware of the Countryside Code to Respect, Protect and Enjoy nature. Local dog walkers need to ensure that dogs are always kept under control, in-sight and that dog poo is bagged/binned. It is a shame to see that dog poo is being left on the recreation ground and local footpaths. Further information can be found – www.countryside-code.org.uk

There are national/local organisations that people can get involved with walking groups for health and mental wellbeing:

Ramblers Association - <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/>

U3A - https://blackmorevale.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/walking-groups/

CPRE - <https://www.cpre.org.uk/about-us/>

CPA - <https://communityplanningalliance.org/>

Natural England - www.naturalengland.org.uk

Signed dated

Reports from local organisations including:

CLASH update Paul Dimishky Mr Dimishky reported that unfortunately judgement had not been successful and that permission at the interim judicial review to pursue a full judicial review. The true condition president regarding pedestrian safety was agreed as being due process. He emphasised that the high street is an accident waiting to happen especially with all the new housing developments.

Residents were reminded that there is an event on the 15th of August for Blokes Play Blues as a fundraising event.

The Bird in the Hand Public House Community Asset update. Hugo Barton Mr barton reported that the Pub opened on the 1st of April. The associated administration has been extensive. The annual members meeting will be held on the 24th of June at 7pm. He explained that the steering group will now retire and a newly elected management committee will reside in its place. It has been a phenomenal achievement, and he thanked everyone for their support in saving this special community asset. He explained that the share option is still open and that share certificates will be presented to members at the opening night.

Henstridge Fete Ashley Shirlin Mr Shirlin reported that the fete held in 2025 successfully raised a net profit of £1,700 despite the windy weather. He thanked those who had volunteered for their support.

The Village Shop team Cllr Howlet

The Village shop opened on the 14 February 2026 and had been in operation for the last 3 months. An Alcohol licence was issued in March. The shop is well stocked. The team are seeking additional staff and can accommodate requests for BBQ's cold drinks, weekly shops and emergency supplies. An application has been made to reinstate the Post Office.

Village Hall Committee

The Village Hall has hosted the following activities during the year:

Pilates, Yoga, Table Tennis, Line Dancing, Cameo Club, Bridge Club, Youth Club, Women's Institute, Art Group, Sewing Group, Thursday Local Market and, each Friday, the Loose Ends social group followed by community Warm Room. The Village Hall also provides facilities for one-off parties of all kinds, including wedding receptions, dances, christenings and wakes. It also provides the voting booths for local and national elections. In short, it is and continues to be an essential part of our local community, adding much to the social fabric of the Parish.

Many of these activities are designed as a service, not for a profit, and rely on the work of unpaid volunteers.

Over the year there have been several changes in the composition of the Committee, as can be seen above. Chris Savage, who has been with us for many years, latterly as Chairman, and whose dedicated and meticulous work has done so much to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization will be greatly missed.

The Committee work has focused on policy and expenditure. A major change has been the way we handle the care and maintenance of the fabric of the building. Until his resignation Bob Steel took responsibility for this, and his considerable personal skills meant that much of the work required was done or supervised by him. His departure left us without this expertise, so Ashley Shirlin has taken on the

Signed dated

role of Building Manager and has taken on a qualified worker on a retainer. A suitable commercial organization will be employed to carry out any work beyond our voluntary capability. The Committee have agreed that all electrical work will be contracted out.

The Treasurer's report shows a healthy balance to deal with emergencies and improvements which the Committee sees as needed in the future. As with all buildings there is a constant demand routine maintenance, for cleaning and for rubbish disposal, and, just occasionally, repairing the damage done by accident or vandalism.

Mrs Zoe Godden is thanked once again for being our independent examiner. The Village Hall's income from payment by users is not enough to keep us running. Like all charities we have to raise funds through activities designed to do this.

These included:

- Car boot and tabletop sales monthly, re-introducing bacon butties.
- The film club for 2026 which attracted 20-25 attendees monthly, with numbers increasing.
- A Race Night at the end of last year.
- The Police Choir visiting on the 16th of May and a Ceilidh and Race Night planned for the Autumn.

There has been little capital expenditure this year, though serious consideration and research have gone into the matter of refurbishing the kitchen and costed plans produced. It will be the task of the Committee in the current year to decide what is needed and to implement any plans.

Loose Ends

Loose Ends Coffee morning continues to run each Friday morning at the village hall with c15 to 20 people attending. It is a fun and relaxed morning, meeting in the lounge of the village hall or on the patio if the weather permits, to enjoy each other's company, eat cake and drink tea and coffee! We meet every Friday morning in Henstridge Village Hall from 10:30 until 12.

The Loose Ends team have been active in helping the village in the last couple of years. They ran the Macmillan coffee morning and have donated to support the village fete and the air ambulance appeal this year.

While it's always nice to see friends, we would love to welcome new faces. Do come along and join us one Friday morning. We look forward to seeing you there.

St Nicolas Church report from Hugo Barton and Jacky Manning Church Wardens

Recruitment of new priest in charge

No one has applied for the priest in charge vacancy but we are continuing to advertise for a new priest-in-charge for the Bow Brook Benefice.

Services

The weekly pattern of Sunday services continue and these are led by qualified members of the benefice or retired clergy. All the services are advertised in Wot's On and are displayed on the church noticeboard.

Creation of new benefice

Signed dated

One of the ways in which the Church of England is trying to address the shortage of clergy is to create groups of parishes, or benefices, which are run by one ordained minister. When Rev Kevin Rogers was here, we were part of a benefice of three parishes with Abbas and Templecombe and Horsington. Since he left a new benefice has been created: Bow Brook Benefice which also includes Holton and North Cheriton.

Changes in the Bell Chamber

After many years as Tower Captain Ellen Edwards has retired and her position has been taken over by Helen Howlett. New bell ringers have been training during the winter and are now ringing for Sunday services. The Tower has also hosted visiting teams. The bells may fall silent during the coming months when the new bell ropes arrive and are installed but won't be quiet for long.

Community larder

Volunteers continue to collect food from local supermarkets for the community fridge and larder which is well used. People can come into the church whenever it is open, apart from when services are being held, and take what they need.

Toddlers' play group

Unfortunately, the play group had to close for several months due to illness, but we hope that it will open again in the autumn.

Use of church by outside groups

During the year a number of groups have used the church for concerts or for meetings and this has lifted some of the pressure from the village hall when there has simply been so much going on and numbers dictate. Hugo Barton Jacky Manning Churchwardens

Brownies: Run from Henstridge school. Numbers of Henstridge attendees remain low both for Brownies and Girl Guides. Others attend from Templecombe and as far as Shillingstone due to Henstridge being the nearest for their area.

Youth Club: Jane Rose Henstridge PC Representative for Youth.

The number of young people registered with the club is 83. The age ranges from 11 to 19 years. The average attendance per session is 30.

Sessions include:

- 1) **Sports:** continue to be particularly popular, with young people regularly requesting activities such as chair volleyball, basketball, football and dodgeball which is especially well-liked in Henstridge. These sessions encourage teamwork and leadership skills, while also supporting young people's physical and mental wellbeing.
- 2) **Cooking:** remains a popular activity, with young people enjoying everything from making toast and pizzas to preparing larger meals such as chilli con carne and spaghetti Bolognese. One young person has taken on a leadership role, supporting others during sessions. Through these activities, young people are developing important life skills, including safe knife use, weighing and measuring, food hygiene and personal hygiene.

Signed dated

3) Trips: A winter trip to Clarks Village Ice Skating Rink was arranged and well attended by young people from Henstridge.

Fund Raising: Our young people made book angels to sell at the Stalbridge Christmas Fair on 13 December, helping to raise funds towards a residential trip planned for this summer (2026). Young people are actively contributing ideas for further fundraising activities in 2026.

Recognition Award: One of our young people was awarded the Volunteers Award at Youth Connect's Celebration of Young People Awards. She was delighted to have been nominated and to receive a trophy and certificate in recognition of her achievements. This success was celebrated at Stalbridge Youth Club via a live video link to the ceremony in Bath, with staff and volunteers present to congratulate her.

Young Peoples' Voices: One group of young people expressed a strong desire for increased provision, with two young people commenting, *"I wish we could have this more times a week."* This conversation took place while they were seated together engaging in craft activities. They spoke positively about having a quieter space where they could chat, relax and take part in creative activities, which they clearly value.

Older Youths: some of our older youths were struggling with the challenge of wanting to attend the only provision for young people in the Parish and yet finding they had outgrown many of the activities on offer. This resulted in them presenting with challenging behaviours at times.

However, with a consistent approach of adhering to the Code of Conduct alongside giving the older ones the time and attention they have needed to chat and share, they are now attending and actively mentoring alongside assisting with cooking, washing up etc.

Open Forum

Questions centred on reserve matters for the 52 houses and assurance that residents know about **pedestrian safety**.

Is there any provision for child play areas in any of the new 130 home development?

Will the parish retain its rural status? What is the timetable for Somerset Councils local plan? The Village plan is now outdated. We need to ensure our input is heard. Cllr Burt outlined the process.

Cllr Smith stated that Cllrs will, in due course have more details to share regarding all these matters over the next year.

Ann Lee Parish Clerk

Signed dated