

ENMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Draft

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6th January 2026

Present: Councillors Fergusson, Hopkins, Hubbard, Hucker and Jackson. RFO and acting Clerk for the meeting: A Stoye

1. Apologies: Clerk: D McIlroy.
2. There were no declarations of interest in relation to items on the agenda for the meeting.
3. The minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2025 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman.
4. As there were no members of the public present, and nothing had been submitted in writing, there were no public comments or concerns to be addressed.
5. Actions arising from the minutes of the previous meeting:
 - 5.1 Luke Manning, who will be monitoring the SIDs following David Comley's move, has been briefed by David as to what is involved. A discussion took place on the provision of a Windows laptop for this purpose (Luke only having an Apple, which is incompatible with the Elan City software). It was agreed that a laptop be purchased by the Parish Council for this purpose, subject to a maximum cost of £250 (proposed Cllr Jackson, seconded Cllr Fergusson, approved unanimously). The required specification for the laptop will be investigated and it was suggested that a refurbished machine might give better value. It was noted that remote access to the laptop might be required as part of Elan City's diagnostic support, making a stand-alone computer preferable to using a personal computer.

ACTION: A Stoye will relay this information to Luke Manning, investigate the required specification and then look for suitable machines, either new or refurbished.
 - 5.2 Horse and wildlife signage. Apologies have been received from Somerset Council for problems with the order for these signs. It is likely that the additional signs, not yet installed, will now be delayed until the next financial year. An invoice for the completed part of the work is expected in the current year.
 - 5.3 The hope was expressed that Luke Manning might be able to provide statistics about traffic volume and speeds for consideration at the March Council meeting. These could also be added to the website as requested by members of the public. When supporting data is available, further representations will be made for police presence at times when the most speed infractions occur.

ACTION: Notify Luke Manning accordingly.

6 & 7 Correspondence and co-option to fill the current vacancy on the Parish Council

The resignation of Cllr Comley was noted. This took effect on 12th November. The due process for advertising the vacancy was then started and written confirmation was subsequently received that no nominations had been received and therefore the Parish Council could proceed to co-opt a replacement Councillor. Cllr Hopkins expressed concern that there had not been sufficient notice of the vacancy given to local residents and proposed a further notice in the village magazine. However, all other Councillors present took the view that the vacancy had been prominently advertised for two consecutive months, with the possibility of co-option mentioned. Only one local resident had written to express interest and, whilst there was a majority of 4-1 in favour of her co-option (proposed Cllr Fergusson,

seconded Cllr Jackson, with Cllr Hopkins asking for his vote against to be recorded), it was agreed that she be interviewed and given the opportunity to ask questions. Subject to there being no impediments or second thoughts on the appointment, the co-option could be formalised at the March Council meeting. Interview dates of 3rd and 17th February were provisionally suggested.

ACTION: Notify the applicant and ask her to liaise over dates.

8. The Council has not been informed of any proposed planning applications.
9. Finance update and approval of payments.

Year to date accounts had been provided before the meeting. A Stoye noted that D Comley had been reimbursed for the purchase of mirrors (within the previously approved amount) and that Cllr Hucker had been reimbursed for the purchase of more robust clamps and fixings for the SIDs (within the RFO's discretionary level). This payment was approved retrospectively and Cllrs Hucker and Fergusson were thanked for the repair work they had undertaken.

A Stoye noted that David Comley had been a cheque signatory for both NatWest and Lloyds accounts and that the mandate would need to be changed to remove him. However, she proposed that the Lloyds account might be closed as soon as the Clerk had online banking access at NatWest. Recent service from Lloyds has been disappointing and bank charges are being levied. The Lloyds system for making payments is easier to operate than NatWest but regular transfers of funds between banks make extra work.

Cllr Jackson suggested that other banks, for example Coop Bank, be investigated and that some of the money in the NatWest deposit account might be invested elsewhere at a higher rate of interest and to diversify any risk.

ACTION: NatWest bank mandate to be amended. Progress on additional online access to be checked and chased up as needed. Lloyds account to be closed when NatWest online signatories have increased to three. Other banks' offerings and charges to be investigated.

10. Budget for 2026/27 financial year and precept request.

The RFO had prepared a budget for the following year and had also considered the level of assets and the extent to which these were needed for specific purposes or prudential reserves in accordance with guidance provided for local government. Her recommendation was that the amount of precept requested should be reduced from the current level of £5,253 (which has been stable for three years) for the following reasons:

*The original figure included approximately £800 for interest and instalments of capital repayment on the Public Works Loan (provision no longer needed now that the loan has been repaid in full)

*The original figure was excessively conservative to allow funds to build up for the then unknown cost of the Jubilee Meadow/cemetery car park (now completed at far lower net cost to the Council with the benefit of grants).

*The Council has significant free reserves for which it does not currently have any plans - these provide a substantial contingency margin in addition to prudent estimates of next year's costs.

However, Councillors voted unanimously to keep the monetary amount of precept at £5,253 on the grounds that the future was uncertain and they considered it prudent to leave the precept at this level. In particular it was noted that volunteers carry out many tasks without charge and, without them, additional costs would be incurred that might not be covered by the contingency margins in the budget. Furthermore, it was considered that it might be hard to ask for an increased precept at a later date after reducing it this year. It was noted that the change in the tax base would result in a slight percentage decrease in this element of Council Tax even with the same amount of precept.

ACTION: A Stoye to submit precept request form on the basis of £5,253 for 2026/27.

Cllr Jackson asked for provision in the budget of £250 for the Wilder Enmore project and all Councillors supported this. Cllr Jackson mentioned further work on the wilded part of the churchyard, the possibility of planting more bulbs in the Jubilee Meadow and working with Broomfield. A Stoye expressed concern that spending Parish Council money on the churchyard was not a proper use of funds.

When setting the budget there had been a suggestion that replacement notice boards might be purchased. It is now thought that repairs can be done.

A Stoye proposed to carry forward any unused part of the annual budget for SID repairs as a reserve towards their eventual replacement or upgrade, or unexpectedly high repair costs, and will allow for this in future finance reports and assessment of reserves.

11. Report from Footpaths' Officer

Cllr Hubbard had reported in writing. She noted that the footpath across the golf course was well marked in the middle but insufficiently clear at the start and end. She queried whether the Golf Club's liability cover was sufficient and whether their insurers were aware of the various footpaths, bridleways and rights of way across the land. From a golfer's perspective, Cllr Fergusson thought that there was inadequate information for players to be aware of walkers and riders. He reported that he had been invited to an informal meeting with the Golf Club manager later in the week to be made aware of some possible future improvements to the practice ground facilities. This would also be an opportunity to discuss the footpath (BW15/4) and to put forward the idea that making it possible to walk through the gully would be a safer and popular move, also benefiting golfers. Replacement steps would be needed at the lower end, but the strimming could be undertaken as part of the parish footpath maintenance. Once this route had been established, an application to reroute the official footpath was thought more likely to succeed, resulting in a more satisfactory state of affairs for all parties.

ACTION: Cllr Fergusson to report on meeting, after which further action is to be discussed.

Cllr Hubbard also reported that, although Slinky Bus arrangements had been reported as positive, they were still seriously inadequate.

ACTION: Cllr Hubbard and the Clerk to draft a letter on this subject to Sir Ashley Fox MP.

12. There was nothing to report at this meeting on Neighbourhood Watch.

13. Other business:

13.1 Emergency Plan. Dowsborough LCN recommended that Parish Councils have an emergency plan and proposed to organise a meeting on this subject. When details are known, an Enmore delegate will be sent and asked to report back. It is thought that the type of emergency envisaged is a coach crash with many victims and a blocked road.

13.2 Reimbursement of David Comley's retirement present. Councillors voted to meet this cost from Parish Council funds rather than through personal contributions. A Stoye to arrange payment.

13.3 The date of the next litter pick is to be Sunday 8th March.

The meeting closed at 7.34 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 3rd March, starting at 6.30 pm.