PORLOCK PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of Porlock's Annual Parish Meeting held at Porlock Village Hall on Tuesday, 7th April 2026 at 7.00pm.

In attendance: Members of the public (approx. 17) including Parish Councillors; Duncan McCanlis (Chair) Stephen Colson, Sue McCanlis, James Adlington and Martin Stenning.

Also present: Johnathan Jones, Parish Clerk, minute taker.

Signed: _____ **Dated:**_____

Min Ref:	Minutes	Action:

AP-2026-001 **1) Welcome, introductions and format for the evening**

Duncan McCanlis, chair of the meeting welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting.

AP-2026-002 **2) Resolve and sign the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 8th April 2025**

There were no comments to the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on April 8th 2025 and by show of hands the minutes were RESOLVED and signed by the chair of the meeting.

AP-2026-003 **3) Annual Report from the Parish Council & your questions**

The chair presented a report for 2025/26 and noted this is the final year of the current council ahead of the May 2027 elections. Focus remains on strengthening governance and ensuring an effective handover to the next Council.

The clerk is undertaking CiLCA. Standard Operating Procedures are being developed, and policies/procedures and the asset register are being maintained on the Council website. Councillors have completed core training. It was noted that a qualified Clerk and a majority of elected councillors (8/12) are key criteria for a Council to declare itself competent; the post-May 2027 Council may be able to do so.

Financial report: after grant-funded income/expenditure (including the Old School Centre refurbishment), the year-end outturn was slightly under budget. General reserves remain healthy, with earmarked funds for community projects and asset-related contingencies, providing capacity for unforeseen costs (including potential service devolution). The 2026/27 precept increased by just over 10% to reflect inflation and higher staffing, insurance and contracted service costs. Committee structure and their activities were noted: standing committees—Finance & HR and Planning; additional committees—Environment & Amenities and Burials & Memorials.

The new Old School Centre Community Hub and community room continues to be well used. Hawkcombe Cemetery: following inspection and making unsafe memorials safe, works to reinstate memorials are ongoing and were expected to complete by the end of April.

The events working group delivered Christmas trees/lights, a Wassail, Apple Day (with the community orchard) and the Coleridge and Walking Weekends, with further events planned.

Grants were awarded to Porlock Youth Club, Porlock Inspired and Dovery Museum among others; continuing responsibilities for Dovery Manor and Porlock Village Hall were also noted.

Grounds maintenance planning has been strengthened, clarifying management of green spaces and the council's biodiversity approach, including no use of weedkillers. Work with St Dubricius church continues through the Wilder Churches programme to improve churchyard biodiversity.

Rogers and Holes Charity: formed six years ago from the merger of two charities to support parish residents experiencing financial hardship. The charity's AGM was held in January 2026; it currently supports eight individuals and has made a donation to Porlock's school to assist pupils who could miss out. It was reported that the retiring charity clerk is handing over to the incoming clerk; the changeover of banking arrangements is proving challenging but is being pursued. Funds are held on investment in line with Charity Commission requirements.

AP-2026-004

4) Somerset Council update

The Somerset Council representative reported that the Boundary Commission review has concluded: 96 divisions (mainly single-member), with Minehead a two-member division. Exmoor will be a single-member division (Porlock to Brushford and as far east as Wootton Courtenay and Timberscombe) and the largest by area and population. Budget pressures continue, with around two thirds of spend on children's and adults' social care and the remainder on other statutory services. Increased investment in highway drainage is planned to support preventative maintenance. Engagement is being reviewed via Local Community Networks and town/parish councils. The Local Plan survey is live (current plan to 2031) with a focus on local housing. Support is available for residents affected by oil-cost increases; the scheme is administered by Somerset Citizens Advice as the West Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau is closing at the end of April.

Public – Have the government scrapped the elected police commissioner posts and has that saved council any money?
Somerset Council – Yes they will cease at the end of their current term. Somerset Council were not responsible for the costs incurred so no savings have been made.

Council – What is councils' current position on devolution? Street cleaning remains a particular challenge and priority for the council.
Somerset Council – The period of 'compulsory' devolution of services has receded, we are now in a period of elective devolution. Council are happy to discuss and consider any requests from council.

Public – Doverhay Car Park blocked drains why can we not get them cleared?
Council – Two have been cleared, one remains blocked. Several reports have been submitted to Somerset Council along with other drains in the parish.

i)Send drain reports to Cllr Pugsley. **JJ**

Public – Meadowhayes pond/soakaway does not take any of the excess water as it is meant to – has the pipe work collapsed?

 Initials: _____ Date:_____

Somerset Council – The issues will be investigated.

ii) Send Meadowhayes pond/soakaway report to Cllr S Pugsley. **JJ**

AP-2026-005

5) Community topics & feedback

a) Developing an Emergency Plan for Porlock

Cllr. Colson provided an overview of the outline approach for a parish emergency plan. The plan will be simple, practical and community-embedded, drawing on existing local arrangements (including the Porlock Flood Plan, current places of refuge/warm spaces and the Porlock Visitor Centre Information Centre (PVCIC) Good Neighbour Scheme). Its purpose is to strengthen community resilience for major incidents including flooding, fire, power/telecoms outages and pandemics. Proposed responses include risk monitoring and readiness (e.g. using forecasts and public health data), proactive action to reduce flood impacts, provision of refuge/warm spaces, support for isolated residents, maintaining a local responder group with appropriate equipment/PPE, and effective local communications and liaison with Category 1 and 2 responders. While not a statutory duty the Parish Council's role will be to coordinate and act as a central contact point, providing support and resources as appropriate. Given limited volunteer capacity, a decentralised model was discussed: a small emergency response team to coordinate activity, alongside a community awareness campaign and a network of volunteers across the parish. Possible plan elements include an identified response location; named shelters (e.g. Village Hall, Dovery Museum, Old School Centre & Library, Porlock Ford Hut); stored emergency supplies (generators, heating/lighting, water, blankets, chargers, radios and flood equipment); stakeholder liaison (Fire Station, Surgery, PCSO, Village Agent, local businesses and groups); links to wider responders (Somerset Council, Environment Agency, NHS/Ambulance, utilities and others); and appropriate insurance cover.

Feedback – The outline plan was positively received and in line with expectations. Concerns were raised with the need to monitor and maintain emergency equipment at locations to ensure that it is fit for purpose and includes equipment for the identified scenarios. Contact network needs to be extended to ensure coverage of the whole parish and power solutions need to be resolved at the refuge locations.

b) Community Pond Project at the Old School Centre

Cllr. D McCanlis gave an overview of the proposed pond project at the Old School Centre as a significant community project to enhance local biodiversity; it was noted that a naturally designed wildlife pond is expected to provide the greatest benefit for a range of species. The indicative location is the lower right-hand corner of the site. The council has sought initial advice to confirm that the proposed position and ground conditions are suitable for the establishment of a wildlife pond. The next stage will be the preparation of a more detailed design/schematic to illustrate the proposed layout and features. It was further noted that consultation with the local community will be a key element of the project before any proposals are finalised.

Feedback – There was no objection to the idea with positive input on how a pond could be achieved using local organisations for advice. Neighbouring residents in Pollards Court should be directly engaged with as their properties back onto the orchard. Safety and risk assessments and appropriate mitigations will be carried out.

c) Parish Priorities - What's important to you!

The floor was opened to hear what's the important topics in the parish. The below topics were raised:

- Understanding better the percentage of empty houses in Porlock.
- Pavements, more dropped kerbs for accessibility.
- Improving road safety on the A39 at Doverhay.
- No10 Bus Service and its vulnerability as a service.
- Waste and size of waste bins.

AP-2026-006 **6) Closing comments**

The chair thanked attendees for their contribution and closed the meeting.

Meeting closed at 8:30pm

Initials: _____ Date:_____