

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF BUTLEIGH PARISH
COUNCIL HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON 7th April 2026**

PARISH COUNCILLORS PRESENT: T Willmott (Chairman), A Coleman, K Otton,

APOLOGIES: D Sharland

OTHERS PRESENT: P Keggin

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Butleigh Annual Parish Meeting. Chairman's report 2026

So long as Centralisation is seemingly the name of the game at all levels of decision making, the growing sense of cynicism, especially among young people, towards politics and politicians in particular, is perhaps understandable. A sense that power and decisions are held in the hands of a relative few, only reinforces an increasingly held view that the "local" is irrelevant. I was recently asked what's the point of a Parish Council if all the decisions which matter are taken at a higher and more remote level. My response was immediate: "faced with the fractures in our society, I believe the need for the local voice to be heard is even more critical". For me, and thankfully for many in our village, I sense that community still has relevance and is worth fighting for.

While much of our monthly agendas is taken up with the seemingly mundane, overgrown footpaths, blocked drains, speeding through the village, potholes, and the increasing threat of flooding to name but a few of the issues we've discussed over this past year, taken as a whole they reflect a widely held view that our village matters to us. Inevitably, Planning continues to feature strongly in our work especially when it's hard to achieve a consensus in the face of strongly held and often opposing views. As we look forward, I think we need to have a wide-ranging discussion as to what we would like the village to look like in terms of size, resource, and affordability. If we are to be a living village questions of affordable housing for those who are starting out on the ownership ladder as well as for those who are keen to downsize but remain part of the community cannot be avoided. I've said on numerous occasions that in my judgement if we are to be a sustainable village, we need to grow. The challenge of course is what sort of growth, and will our current infrastructure, especially drainage and roads, be sufficient. I'm not the only one, I think, concerned about the increasing traffic flow through the village, and the difficulty faced by buses and emergency vehicles trying to negotiate the often-blocked High Street, especially at the pinch point around the school.

One of the issues which seems to be of ever-increasing concern to many within the village is that of social isolation. The loss of the shop has had wide-ranging consequences for those among us who relied on it not only for shopping but perhaps more importantly as a place to meet, to catch up on local news, The huge numbers that turned up to say thank you to Paul and Glynis demonstrated the high regard with which they were and are held in our community. Time and time again, they went the extra mile to help out those in need, to ensure that no one was forgotten. The loss of the R & P deprived us of another meeting place, an opportunity to make connections and build relationships.

I welcome this opportunity to thank those groups and individuals within the village who do so much to sustain our common life; Dave and Lucy at Sourdown; the Village Committee; the BPFA; BATS; the All-age Worship and New Beginnings Groups at St Leonard's; the Fete

Committee; those who turn out regularly to help with the village litter pick and the churchyard tidy-up and the school – forgive me if I’ve forgotten anyone or any group!

The one group I haven’t mentioned is the Parish Council itself. The judgement as to our value and effectiveness lies with you, the parishioners, who elected us and whom we continue to seek to serve, but I welcome this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors, Mary, Keith, Andy and Dave, for their hard work and commitment, especially when it comes to turning out on a cold, wet, December evening for one of our monthly meetings. Together, we thank Sheila our indomitable clerk, without whose energy and professionalism nothing would ever get done.

If anything I’ve said in my report or the issues I’ve raised connect with you, why not consider coming to join us on the Council? You’ll also be more than welcome to join us at one or more of our regular monthly meetings.

Trevor Willmott. Chair

FINANCE : A comprehensive report of the year end finances (unaudited), was given by the Clerk. The unaudited book was unavailable for inspection due to it being with the Internal Auditor. The accounts prepared for the Internal Auditor.

BUTLEIGH PCC REPORT : Mr Roy Moody sent a report: April 2026

We are exceedingly grateful for your contribution to the maintenance of the churchyard. That becomes particularly clear in early Spring when the churchyard is carpeted with snowdrops and has a fine display of cyclamen, both much appreciated by many from the parish and further afield. So thank you.

The churchyard also attracts in the warmer months a number from here and further away who wish to enjoy the feeling of peace.

The Church is open daily during daylight hours and that continues to be used by many people as a resource for quiet and thought.

In the past year, there have been 7 baptisms, 2 weddings and 1 funeral. The church belongs to all the residents of the parish and continues to provide a space for the important ceremonies of human life.

It is our desire that everyone will feel it exists for them.

BUTLEIGH PLAYING FIELD ASSOCIATION REPORT: – Gillian Wright reported:

Overview

The BPFA is a Registered Charity with responsibilities to both the Parish Council and the Football Foundation. The play park at Holm Oaks and the large playing field at Backtown are owned by the Parish Council and are leased to the BPFA.

The BPFA is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of both these facilities.

Committee Officers

Adrian Barnes took on the Chair of the Committee

Richard Flenk remains as Treasurer

Gillian Chadburn, Secretary although will have reduced time to input next year.

Financial Position

In the last financial year, a profit of £2,345 was generated. This compares with a loss of £2,347 in the previous year, therefore breaking even over the two-year period. We will endeavour to continue this trend.

Our income continues to be dominated by the Precept from the Parish Council, for which we are very grateful.

As regards the current year, we have a problem with our water bill. Our latest bill was £2,800 whilst it is normally c £300. We are in the process of investigating it with Bristol and Wessex Water. We have 3-year gas and electricity contracts which fix our prices until December 2027 and February 2028.

Pavilion / Playing Field Bookings

Work continues to take place to generate income as well as opportunities for the village:

- Pilates – having secured 3 sessions over 2 mornings a week, this has now reduced to only 2 sessions one morning due to lack of numbers
- Having lost Tor and Street FC this year we will be hosting Wessex Youth FC for matches whilst Walton Playing Field is closed and continue to host 2 teams for training into the summer.
- Weekly Café and various other BVC events.
- Croquet – will be commencing back on Wednesdays and Sundays
- Various Ad hoc bookings

As a cost saving the Mowing team has expanded this year to take on both the Holm Oaks and the Playing fields so thank the team for their time.

Holm Oaks Play Park

The condition of the Playpark continues to be of concern, the Rospa Inspection will be completed in June and should provide us with a good base line however a review of the future of the space / the usage needs to be carried out to shape its future and level of investment required.

Fundraising

We are delighted that The Butleigh Motor Cavalcade is returning on 17th May.

The committee have again not had the resources to do any fundraising this year however we hoping that a number of volunteers will support Dave Sharland at the Beer Festival.

The Future

Unfortunately, as per previous years our concerns are both financial and Committee Members able to dedicate their time.

We continue to work towards a solid income base to pay for the necessary expenditure that is required to keep both the Pavilion and Playing Fields plus the Holm Oaks play park operational for all users to enjoy and most importantly in a safe condition and in line with the insurance requirements.

On behalf of the BPFA – April 2026

BATS REPORT: Mr Peter Keggin sent a report.

BATS continues to operate an important service to those in Butleigh and Butleigh Wootton in need of transport.

We undertook 26 trips for 21 different passengers with 8 drivers which were mainly for medical reasons (Doctors, hospitals, opticians and dentists) but included vets, railway stations, garages and hair appointments.

We have not re-joined the Mid Somerset Car Scheme, we continue to operate on a cash basis with no significant expenses. We do not use the Somerset County bus pass scheme because of the admin involved and bank account issues.

Fares were last fixed in March 2023.

Thanks are due to all the volunteers for their time and commitment especially David Pusey who has left Butleigh and of course to our passengers.

Operating accounts to year end 31st December were attached.

SOMERSET COUNCILLORS REPORT- Circulated.

Thanks to the litter pickers.

Benches on the village green to be re-painted.

Thanks to all who make the village a good place to live

Meeting closed at 7.20 p.m.

Chairman 5th May 2026