

Draft Minutes of Piddle Valley Parish Council

Tuesday 28 July 2026, 7.30pm

Piddletrenthide Memorial Hall

Present: Cllrs Ebdon (Chair), Lock, Latimer, Cox, Abbott, Spearing, Lloyd

Apologies: Cllrs Larden, Murray and Dorset Cllr Haynes

Democratic Period

Thanks were expressed to Andy Howard for his service to the Parish Council over many years following his resignation.

Dorset Cllr update

Dorset Cllr Haynes gave apologies for the meeting.

Police/Home watch update

No report received prior to meeting.

37/2026 Minutes of Piddle Valley Parish Council meeting including the reconvened annual council meeting held on Tuesday 30 June 2026

It was proposed by Cllr Cox and seconded by Cllr Abbott that these minutes are accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. All agreed. RESOLVED

38/2026 Action points from last minutes

- a) 191/25b) – Cllr Murray to explore criteria for a 20mph through Valley – Deferred pending adoption in other locations
- b) 29a)/2026 – Clerk to circulate ROI details - COMPLETE
- c) 29c)/2026 – Clerk to contact provider – COMPLETE
- d) 31a)/2026 – Clerk & All Cllrs to review Internal Auditors report – Agenda item
- e) 32c)/2026 – Clerk to respond to Road Safety – Clerk advised this happened and now awaiting the Road Safety Officer to return from leave.
- f) 35d)/2026 – Clerk to request signs – Awaiting response.

39/2026 Planning

- a) Planning Consultations

P/STA/2026/03616 - Armswell Farm, Plush - Energy and Industrial Strategy for consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 to install and keep installed above ground an electric line of any voltage.

It was proposed by Cllr Cox and seconded by Cllr Spearing that the council has no comments. All agreed. RESOLVED

b) Tree notifications

P/TRC/2026/03538 - West View Cottage, Alton Pancras - T1 & T2 Sycamore - Fell

c) Decision Notices

P/TRD/2026/03486 - Rectory House 5 Rectory Road Piddlehinton - T1 Gleditsia - Remove Under Regulation 14 (S198) - Decision: Tree Works - Reg 14 - Does not require consent

Decision Date: 29/06/2026

d) Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation Update

The Government has introduced a new system for preparing local plans and is bringing forward further significant changes to national planning policy. The new approach is intended to provide greater certainty in the plan-making process, simplify local plans, and enable them to be prepared more quickly. Dorset Council is proposing to move to the new plan-making system.

The new planning system includes a more structured programme with clearly defined stages and opportunities for public participation. This means there will be further opportunities for residents, communities and other stakeholders to have their say as the Local Plan progresses.

Details of the updated timetable and future engagement opportunities will be published on the Dorset Council website and shared through our usual communication channels.

40/2026 DAPTC meeting & training update

a) Register of Interests (RoI) – Cllr updates

Clerk to assist with Cllrs Lock and Abbotts submissions.

b) Email host

Clerk has circulated the breakdown of costs from the existing website provider but following the discussion it was agreed that the Clerk should clarify costs and storage with them before proceeding.

c) Training for new councillors

Cllr Ebdon advised Cllrs Spearing and Lloyd of the upcoming new councillor training evens being held by DAPTC and to contact the Clerk with dates they are able to attend.

41/2026 Defibrillator Working Group update

Cllr Ebdon advised that the new battery for the defibrillator at the Rugby Club has been delivered. Cllr Ebdon has approached the owners for a contribution towards the costs.

42/2026 Financial Matters

a) Payments

Mrs Paulley July expenses	£35.20
Piddletrenthide Memorial Hall	£27.50
Lantern Accounting (Internal auditor)	£145.00
Piddle Valley First School – Grounds	
Maintenance contribution	£913.09
Zurich Insurance renewal	£578.21

It was proposed by Cllr Latimer and seconded by Cllr Lloyd that these payments are made.
All agreed. RESOLVED

43/2026 Highway Matters

a) Defect responses

None received.

b) 30mph extension update

Awaiting update from Road Safety team.

Thanks were expressed to Dorset Council Highways for the surfacing works on Slyers Lane.

44/2026 News & Information

No updates.

45/2026 Playing field & Playground

a) Grass cutting agreement

Cllr Ebdon advised of the email received from the school. The school had experienced concerns regarding the standard and quality of the service being received by the incumbent supplier and felt that it was not meeting the level required, therefore there was a need to evaluate the market to ensure that the service met the needs of the school. Both quality of service and price were key factors in the evaluation process. While cost was an important consideration, it was essential that the successful contractor could demonstrate the ability to deliver a consistently high standard of grounds maintenance across the school site.

Grounds work that Dorset Council's grounds maintenance service were completing at other schools provided a referee for the quality of the work undertaken, other schools were very satisfied with the quality and reliability of the service they provided, which was evident in the upkeep of the grounds when viewed. Dorset Council was therefore identified as being able to meet the Academy's quality standards for ground maintenance, ensuring that their schools would have an effective grounds maintenance service that meets their needs.

- b) Playground sign

It was agreed that the contact sign for the playground needs renewing. Cllr Cox to arrange.

Action: Cllr Cox

46/2026 Policy documents update

- a) Motion to adopt revised Model Code of Conduct based on the Local Government Association Model 2020 (circulated with Agenda). – Cllr Ebdon

It was proposed by Cllr Ebdon and seconded Cllr Spearing that this is adopted. All agreed. **RESOLVED**

- b) Motion to confirm the re-adoption date of policies and procedures approved at the AGM to June 30th 2026 – Cllr Ebdon

It was proposed by Cllr Ebdon and seconded by Cllr Cox that these are readopted. All agreed. **RESOLVED**

- c) Employment Policies and Procedure

Next agenda.

47/2026 External Correspondence received

- a) External Audit objection update

Following a parishioner objecting to the external audit regarding the 2024/25 audit, the external auditor has now completed the investigation and has confirmed in writing to the parishioner and the council advising the following.

Given that we have not found any evidence that the Council substantially impeded proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations, we have decided not to exercise our discretion to apply to the court for a declaration in respect of this matter. Although we consider that the Council may have reclaimed VAT unlawfully, in this case we have decided, whether or not unlawful, not to exercise our discretion to apply to the court for a declaration. This is because of the disproportionate cost, lack of public interest in the matter, and the small sums of public money involved.

It was noted that, in addition to the correspondence received, an unexpected invoice of just over £2,000 has been issued for the exploratory work undertaken in relation to the single parishioner's objection to the 2024/25 audit. Councillors expressed serious concern that a substantial sum of parishioners' money is being expended as a direct result of one individual's complaint. It was agreed that the Clerk should request a full breakdown of the costs and seek clarification on whether, in the event that none of the objections are upheld, the total charge would be reduced.

Action: Clerk to contact external auditor

b) Councillor Code of Conduct complaint

Cllr Ebdon advised the meeting that he has now received a response from Dorset Council regarding a complaint made about him after the Meeting in February 2025. In considering the complaint, independent advice was sought to determine whether the allegations warranted progression through the Councillor Code of Conduct process. Having reviewed the matters raised, the independent person did not consider that the complaint should proceed to formal investigation under the Code of Conduct framework. Accordingly, the complaint was assessed as not requiring further action and was closed.

The parishioner who made the complaint was advised of this decision. As he remained dissatisfied with the way the matter had been handled, he was signposted to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Any consideration by the Ombudsman would relate to the Council's administrative handling of the matter rather than a reconsideration of the substantive Code of Conduct complaint itself. To date, Dorset Council are not aware whether that avenue has been pursued.

Dorset Council regret that Cllr Ebdon were not advised of the outcome at the point the decision was made.

c) Request to inspect accounting records

The Clerk advised that a parishioner had requested to inspect the accounts as is their right during the inspection period and following the inspection an exchange of emails has taken place with a further request to inspect further accounting documents. This has been arranged for Friday 31 July at 6pm.

d) Failure to elect Chair at Annual Council Meeting

The Clerk reported that extensive correspondence has been received from a member of the public, who is not a parishioner, regarding the absence of minutes for the Annual Council Meeting scheduled in May. The Clerk advised the individual that the meeting could not lawfully proceed due to the failure to elect a Chair, and therefore no minutes exist. Despite this explanation, the individual has continued to challenge the Clerk's responses and has escalated the matter to the Internal Auditor.

The Clerk further advised Councillors that the cumulative volume, tone, and persistence of correspondence from this individual, together with ongoing communications from a parishioner concerning the accounts, is causing significant distress and is impacting wellbeing. The Clerk expressed concern that the nature of these exchanges feels intimidating and harassing, and highlighted the governance implications of sustained pressure on the Council's sole officer.

e) Flood assessment

Cllr Ebdon advised that a meeting has been arranged for 17 August with Dorset Cllr Haynes and Dorset Council's Community Highway Officer to discuss the issues the Valley experiences. Cllrs Lock and Cox will also attend.

f) Piddlehinton Traveller Site

Cllr Ebdon advised that Dorset Cllr Haynes has set up a meeting with the Economy & Environment Executive Director and Greenspace Manager from Dorset Council, on site as there have been a number of problems with travellers in the transit site. Cllr Ebdon will attend in his capacity as Parish Council Chair.

g) Geocaching

A request has been received for Geocaching to be placed within the Valley. It was unanimously agreed that the Valley is not appropriate for this due to the parish council not having available land and it raises concerns regarding parking and traffic flow.

Clerk to respond to applicant.

h) Field at White Lackington being used for events

The Clerk reported of an email received from a parishioner with concerns about a field in White Lackington being used for camping and parties.

It was agreed that this should be reported to Dorset Council enforcement.

Action: Clerk to report to enforcement

48/2026 Items for next agenda

Air ambulance donation in lieu of works within the Valley – Cllr Abbott
Manor Farm visits to see Highland cattle – Cllr Abbott
River clearance – Cllr Cox
30mph extension in Piddlehinton – Cllr Ebdon/Clerk
Employment Policies and Procedure – Policies Working Group
IT Policy – Cllr Spearing

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2113 with notice that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 25 August 2026 at 7.30pm at Piddletrenthide Memorial Hall.

All Agendas & Minutes can be viewed at www.piddlevalley-pc.org.uk