

Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Group Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 5th February 2026 at Maiden Newton Village Hall.

Present:

Trena Fox (TF) (Chair)

Jeremy Edwards (JE) (Vice Chair)

Anne Clements (AC)

Georgina Stephenson (GS)

Carol King (CK)

Toni C-M (TCM)

James Meatyard (JM)

In attendance: Mrs M Harding (Clerk/RFO) Cllr Neil Eysenck and 20 members of the Public

26/02-1. Welcome and opening remarks from the Chair.

Welcome to the first meeting of 2026, we would like to thank our flood wardens and all those who assisted with the flood issues following the exceptional rainstorms and groundwater that affected many villages, flooding homes and properties. We will be discussing this later in the meeting.

We sadly announce the resignation of Emme Moore who was unable to continue as a Cllr due to family commitments we will look to co-opt in the future for this vacancy. This evening, we will be co-opting 2 new Cllrs, 1 for MN and 1 for FV, we look forward to working with them.

At this point the candidates addressed the meeting, one was unable not attend as unwell.

26/02-2. To receive and approve apologies for absence- none

26/02-3. To receive declarations of interest or grants of dispensation-Cllr TCM was granted a dispensation to vote on the co-option of Cllrs.

26/02-4. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 4th December 2025 and sign. These minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed AC Seconded CK All agreed

26/02-5. To receive any matters arising from the minutes for information only-none.

26/02-6. Councillor Vacancies-To consider the Co-option of 2 Councillors 1 for Maiden Newton Parish and 1 for Frome Vauchurch Parish.

Co-option – Maiden Newton Vacancy

Gareth Scott applied for the vacancy for Maiden Newton. As there were no other candidates, it was proposed by Cllr JE and seconded by Cllr CK that Mr Scott be co-opted to the Parish Council. Mr Scott was unable to attend the meeting. Arrangements will be made for the Acceptance of Office to be duly signed.

Co-option – Frome Vauchurch Vacancy

Georgina Stephenson and Joanne Clifford applied for the vacancy in Frome Vauchurch. A secret ballot was conducted, with Cllr NE overseeing the vote.

The votes were as follows:

Georgina Stephenson – 4 votes

Joanne Clifford – 2 votes

The ballot papers are available for inspection after the meeting.

Georgina Stephenson was duly co-opted to the Parish Council, signed the Acceptance of Office, and joined the meeting.

The meeting was closed for the public session.

26/02-7. Democratic Forum (15 minutes)

Flood Warden Lawrie Goff reported on the flood incident of 27th January, when the river rose to 2 ft 7 inches. Pumping operations went on until 2:30am, and a second pump had to be deployed. In total, pumping continued for nine hours.

As a result of the incident: 10 properties were flooded. 5 properties experienced major flooding

Chair

Date

Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Group Parish Council

One disabled resident was assisted and moved upstairs for safety. Sandbags were deployed where required. There were difficulties with vehicles, particularly 4x4s, attempting to drive through floodwater, which created additional problems due to bow waves worsening the situation. Thanks were extended to all those who assisted during the flood event for their significant efforts and support.

Flood Warden Alan Goff also reported on the earlier flood event of 18th December, during which two pumps operated for approximately six hours. Photographs of flooding issues inside and outside properties were taken by JE.

It was noted that there may be a need to purchase a larger pump, as the current equipment may not be sufficient. This will require consideration by the Parish Council in consultation with the Flood Wardens.

A resident sent a message via a councillor expressing thanks to the Flood Wardens for their support and assistance. Councillors also formally recorded their thanks to the Flood Wardens for their dedication in supporting the community during both incidents.

A resident brought to the attention of the Council and the village the proposed closure of the Fire Station in Maiden Newton.

Residents expressed strong opposition to the proposed closure, raising concerns about potential job losses and the increasing risks posed by major wildfires, flooding, climate change, and high winds. It was felt that this is not an appropriate time to reduce emergency services. Reference was also made to the possibility of strike action and the pressures faced by frontline firefighters.

A petition is currently being organised by village residents, and the group requested the support of the Parish Council.

An ex-firefighter addressed the meeting, stating that the station covers a very large and predominantly rural area and is considered essential to maintaining adequate emergency response provision.

The Parish Council confirmed that this matter would be discussed later in the meeting.

The business of the meeting was reopened

26/02-8. Eggardon Ward Councillor's Report

Flooding- Cllr Eysenck commented on the recent flooding and expressed his frustration that the issue has occurred again. He stated that the Environment Agency has not yet completed some of the works that were due to be carried out. Cllr Eysenck confirmed that he has been speaking with Edward Morello MP regarding these outstanding matters. The recent discussions within the village concerning the flooding were also noted.

Dorset Council Budget-Cllr Eysenck briefly spoke about Dorset Council's overall budget position. AC asked NE for an update on the Maiden Newton Country Cars scheme, he explained that he is still pursuing this with the head of travel.

26/02-9. Flood Update

Following reports from the Flood Wardens, the Parish Council discussed the current flooding situation and the actions required going forward.

Cllr Eysenck spoke initially on the issue, expressing frustration that flooding has occurred again. He advised that he has been in contact with Edward Morello MP and the Environment Agency (EA). It was noted with concern that some of the initial actions previously agreed by the EA have not yet been completed.

Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Group Parish Council

The MP has indicated that he would be willing to attend a meeting. Cllr Eysenck will liaise with his team to arrange this and consider who should be in attendance. The Flood Wardens requested that they be invited to attend any such meeting.

Discussion took place regarding recent flooding events, including which properties had been affected. It was queried whether residents are aware of the correct process to follow during flood incidents. It was noted that the Parish Council does not currently hold a copy of an Emergency Plan or Flood Plan for the village. However, the Flood Wardens advised that a plan is in place. A copy will be sought and provided to the Parish Council at a later date.

It was agreed that Cllr Eysenck will seek to arrange a meeting with Dorset Council and the MP. The Flood Wardens expressed the view that they would prefer the EA and Dorset Council not to be in attendance, and this was noted.

Further discussion covered the sump, the swale, the sluice, and a tree in the river. CK reported that the Flood Risk Officer, Andrew Thorne, had visited and met with a resident, advising that a £5,000 repair to a storm drain was scheduled to be carried out. Neither the Parish Council nor the Ward Councillor had been made aware of these works.

It was also noted that flooding appears to be originating from The Drift and/or the allotment area.
Resolved:

That a site meeting be arranged.

That the Parish Council obtain and review the existing Emergency/Flood Plan.

That preparation or review of an Emergency Plan be included as an agenda item for the next meeting.

26/02-10. Council property:

i. To consider a lease for the Playing field with the MNYFC

It was noted that a meeting will be held with the Football Club on 9 February. The matter will be further discussed at the March meeting.

Members noted that the purpose of granting a lease would be to enable the Football Club to apply for grants in order to maintain and improve the field.

It was further noted that the field would remain available for community use, as it is at present.

ii. Skips field update and consultation results

The Council received a report on the village-wide consultation regarding the potential community purchase of Skips Field.

Response rate: 120 responses, considered a strong indication of community opinion.

Support in principle: 81% support the idea of purchasing the field; 11% do not; 8% are unsure.

Importance of community ownership: 82% consider community ownership or control important (54% very important, 28% quite important).

Willingness to assist: 42% willing to volunteer; 37% may assist with more information; 21% not able or willing.

The Council noted that the consultation findings have been shared with both the Community Land Trust and the landowners. At this stage, the Parish Council is unable to progress the matter further, as the landowner is currently reviewing the fields and has appointed an agent to explore potential planning uplift options for the upper field.

The Council agreed that it will await feedback from all parties before considering any next steps. Members expressed their thanks to everyone involved in distributing the consultation and to all residents who took the time to respond

Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Group Parish Council

iii. Play area actions following the quarterly inspection

The Council noted that further repairs are required to the chain-link fencing, as new damage appears to have occurred since the previous repairs were completed. In addition, the large gate to the play area has become stiff and is difficult to open and will need attention. JM will take a look and report, so the Clerk can arrange for these issues to be assessed and for the necessary remedial work to be carried out.

iv. To receive and note any asset reports for action.

Bollards at the Cross- It was noted that Dorset Council Highways have installed two new bollards at The Cross to replace the previous wooden posts, which had rotted. Members expressed that the new bollards are not the preferred style for the location. Highways have advised that the installed bollards meet current safety requirements but confirmed that if the Parish Council wishes to source more aesthetically suitable bollards or posts, they would be willing to fit them. Options could include solid wood or recycled composite materials.

A resident has offered to source suitable timber and explore options on behalf of the Council. Quotes will be obtained for bollards that meet Dorset Council's safety requirements, and these will be submitted to Highways for approval before any replacement is arranged.

MUGA – Surfacing and Fencing Update- It was noted that the MUGA fencing has been fully completed. The first payment for the works is due following this meeting. The new surfacing will be laid once weather conditions improve in the spring.

Councillors expressed that they are very pleased with the quality of the work carried out to date. New signage will also be installed at the time the surfacing is completed, to reflect the requirements associated with the upgraded area.

Allotments – Vehicle Access and Track Condition- Due to recent prolonged wet weather, the vehicle track leading to the allotments has become severely churned up, with additional damage also occurring along the Drift. An email has been sent to all allotment holders advising them not to use vehicle access at this time. To prevent further deterioration, the gate will remain locked until the end of February. The condition of the track will be reassessed once it has dried out sufficiently. Allotment holders were reminded that vehicles must not park along the Drift in a way that obstructs the bridleway.

26/02-11. To consider all planning applications in circulation any other planning matters

P/CLE/2026/00123 Proposal: A conservatory attached to the house Location: Lynchett Chase Barn, Tollerford Lane, Higher Frome Vauchurch, Dorchester-No objections

26/02-12. Finance:

i. To consider managing the Play area Funds in the PC accounts.

The friends of the play would like to place their funds into the PC account ring fenced for future equipment.

Proposed CK Seconded TCM

ii. To ratify the new internal auditor for 2025-26 and confirm internal audit dates.

The new Internal auditor is Fox associates Paula Harding- this will take place on week commencing 20th April **Proposed JE Seconded CK**

Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Group Parish Council

iii. To confirm the Precept request has been sent to Dorset Council.

To note the precept was submitted on 13th January

iv. To consider all payments and receipts due or paid since the last meeting.

The Council received the financial report for the period January–February 2026.

Receipts: £322.69

- Allotment rents: £240.00
- Bank interest (Lloyds): £82.69

Payments: £40,782.41 Key payments included:

- Electricity at MUGA (Valda Energy): £22.51
- Bank charges: £6.35
- Play inspections: £77.50
- Grass cutting contract: £512.39
- Admin: £1,277.06
- MUGA project (Blakedown Sports Play): £38,886.60 (to be approved)

The Council noted the significant expenditure relating to the ongoing MUGA project.

Proposed JE Seconded CK All agreed

v. To receive the latest financial reports and bank reconciliation.

The Council received the bank reconciliation as at 31 January 2026, confirming that the cash book balance matches the combined bank statement balances.

Total Cash in Hand: £114,350.49

Current Account (Lloyds): £5,058.18

Savings Account (Lloyds): £82,947.13

Lloyds 32-Day Notice Account: £26,345.18

The reconciliation was noted and approved.

26/02-13. To receive any Highways reports-the access to Pound Piece will be closed for resurfacing works, this will need careful consideration for access to the Dr's Surgery.

26/02-14. To receive any Rights of way reports- Chris Slade noted some emails has been sent to the definitive map team, these had not been received by the PC so will be re sent to the newer email address.

26/02-15. Correspondence- To consider items of correspondence received or for noting- Fire Service Provision in Maiden Newton

That Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Parish Council notes with serious concern the proposed closure / reduction of fire service provision affecting Maiden Newton and Surrounding villages.

The Parish Council believes that the proposal does not fully reflect the specific rural risk profile of the parish, including response times, road access constraints, vulnerable residents, and local property risks.

The Parish Council resolves to formally object to the proposal and to request that the Fire Authority reconsider the decision, including consideration of alternative arrangements such as

Maiden Newton and Frome Vauchurch Group Parish Council

retained recruitment support, revised crewing models, or a time-limited pilot rather than permanent closure.

The Clerk was instructed to write to the Fire Authority, copying the Dorset Council Councillor(s) and Member of Parliament, setting out the Council's concerns and requesting further engagement before any final decision is made.

Proposed JE Seconded AC

Village Clock – Maintenance Update

The Council noted that the village clock is currently showing different times on each of its faces. The Clock repairer has been contacted and will attend to inspect and assess the issue in due course.

26/02-16. To confirm items for the Parish Council meeting to be held on 5th March 2026 -

Playing field lease, Old Fire Station

26/02-17. Democratic forum 15 minutes- members of the public to raise any other items that may form future agenda items

Frome Vauchurch-Back Lane – Drainage and Sandbags

A resident from raised concerns that the drain is not being cleared and that sandbags are not being used appropriately. It was noted that the issue may have been reported previously but no action appears to have been taken.

There is uncertainty regarding land ownership where the sandbags have been placed. The Parish Council will contact the new Highways Officer, as the previous officer retired at Christmas. Cllr NE will also follow this up with Highways.

Playing Field Lease and Use for Village Events

A resident asked whether the playing field will continue to be available for village events under the new lease arrangements. It was confirmed that the area will remain available and that the grant is intended to support pitch maintenance going forward.

Allotments – Bridleway Access

An allotment holder reminded attendees that the bridleway must not be blocked, particularly if the gate is to be locked.

Skip's Field – Drainage Considerations

A resident commented that if the Parish Council considers taking on Skip's Field, additional and wider ditches may be required to alleviate flooding. This should be taken into account in any future discussions.

Debris Removal from the river

A resident expressed thanks to whoever removed the debris near the sluice gate.

Fire Station – Petition

A resident reported that the petition regarding the Maiden Newton fire station is now ready for signatures.

CloudyIT – Data and Email Management

A resident asked when the CloudyIT data file and email management work will take place. It was noted that this is scheduled to commence in early March.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 20.17.