

CHARLTON HORETHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

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AGENDA

Charlton Horethorne Annual Parish Council at the Village Hall, Charlton Horethorne on Wednesday 20th MAY 2026 at 7.00pm.

1. **Welcome from the Chairman of the Parish Council Tim Archer**
Cllr Archer welcomed 22 residents of the Parish
2. **Present: Cllr Archer, Cllr Lynch, Cllr Pipe, Cllr McHugh, Cllr Thornham**
3. **In attendance: Cllr Hayward Burt, Ann Lee Parish Clerk and 22 residents form the Parish.**
4. **Apologies for absence Cllr Nicola Clerk**
5. **To receive the Chairmans report from the Parish Council**

Administration: Cllr Archer reported that this year has seen a continuation of the last in terms of general activity. He stated that the PC had held 6 meetings over the year, (not including the one Extraordinary Meeting held in June in order to ensure compliance with the AGAR submission timetable). He explained that attendance at PC meetings remains solid, with an average over the year of 20 members of the public.

He recorded his thanks the Parish Clerk, Ann Lee, for her reliable and detailed preparation ahead of meetings, the advice quietly offered during them and her accurate and timely records on completion.

Similarly, he thanked fellow Councillors for their respective contributions and efforts over this year, both in meetings and between, which are often unnoticed but no less significant. He reminded those present of the 2027 election year and encouraged anyone who feels they may have something to offer as a Parish Councillor to put their name forward.

Finances: Cllr Acher referred to a detailed report prepared by the PC Clerk in March this year concluding that the PCs cautious approach – in light of the general inflationary environment and lack of clarity over continued provision of some services by Somerset Council – had resulted in a healthy bottom line. He stated major factors for this highlighting the £5000 SALC Community Health and Wellbeing grant funding for the Community Plan (which was not expected to be used in full); the delivery of the Village Green refurbishment under budget last year, with excess funds carried over into this fiscal year with the possibility that some will remain even after the noticeboards have also been refurbished; and the fact that for two years running the budgeted grant funding has not been allocated in full.

Despite this, he clarified that the PC had taken the view that it would be prudent to raise the precept by 7%, to allow for unbudgeted / unforeseen expenditure in the coming year.

Grants authorised over the year were as follows:

- i. PCC £600 (Lych Gate repair)

ii. Village Hall	£750 (kitchen renovation)
iii. Bonfire Night	£200
iv. Parish Newsletter	£75
v. Millenium Green	£1000 (initial project costs)

He noted that the Millenium Green grant was authorised in light of the particular situation and importance of the recreational area to the Parish, and in order to allow the project to be started. It is subject to full quotes and / or receipts being received, which is likely to occur in 2026/7 and remains a restricted reserve for this purpose.

Community Plan Review: Cllr Archer clarified that the PC had originally considered conducting a review of the 2016 Community Plan in 2022 but had decided to wait in light of the planning application for Harvest Lane and the potential impact on the Parish. Cue forward to 2025, and that situation remained unresolved, but the 2016 Plan's lifespan would only last until 2026.

The PC resolved to test the Parish appetite for renewing the existing plan, and held a meeting in September 2025 to discuss the options available (in brief: a new Neighbourhood Plan, a new Community Plan or no plan at all).

As in 2016, there was broad support for a Community Plan and it was resolved that this should be pursued; Cllr Archer formed a WG with representation of other Councillors (Cllrs Pipe, Thornham & McHugh), volunteer members of the wider Parish (Chrissy Sutton, Simon Hicks, John Evered, John Saunders, Mark Harding-Rolls, Stephen Fisher, Sue Gillbert) and one external consultant (Matt Day) with prior experience of shaping both Community and Neighbourhood Plans. The latter element was important as, having secured a grant of £5000 from SALC to assist with the costs, the consultancies who would previously assisted alongside SSDC would have swallowed all of the grant funding. It was therefore agreed that the best approach would be for 'self-help' with the use of online tools to minimise the costs to the Parish.

Between October 2025 and January 2026, the working group built the survey (using Survey Monkey) with a number of small 'test-surveys', with the aim being to ask open questions that would allow respondents to raise their own issues (positive and / or negative) rather than being constrained by the biases of those creating the survey. At the same time, a 10-question Parish GK Quiz was created to raise awareness of the Community Plan Survey, test the Survey Monkey platform and output, and familiarise at least some of the Parish with it.

The 2026 Survey was launched in late February and ultimately closed in early April with a total of 185 respondents – a fantastic return, which is similar to that of the 2016 Plan and reflects a high level of community engagement.

The themes and issues identified will be covered in greater detail in the Community Plan itself but were in line with those identified in 2016.

Cllr Archer announced that a draft document is close to completion, for presentation to the PC for approval, which will differ from the 2016 Plan in that it will not feature specific policies but instead identify themes that the PC

will be able to carry forward over the coming years. It will also be a requirement that the PC formally report on progress each year, and conduct a review biennially – which, if appropriate, may lead to a review of specific, discrete elements of the plan. Where a significant change is made, the document will be re-submitted to Somerset Council for approval. The aim is to enable the document to be ‘live’, and therefore remain more current, relevant and useful for the Parish.

Cllr Archer recorded his thanks to all of those who had given up time to assist with the 2026 Plan.

Village Greens: Cllr Archer stated that the refurbishment of the Parish Noticeboards remains an ongoing item being addressed by the PC.

Correspondence with Abri on Social Housing: Cllr Archer and Cllr Pipe met with Rob Barker of Abri on 5th March 2026, to discuss concern expressed by residents after the sale of two properties owned and maintained by Abri within the Parish in the last two years. The purpose of the meeting had been to more fully understand the process Abri follows when assessing properties for disposal, and in particular to what extent reference or allowance might be made with regards to the impact on local community / area from any sale.

He noted that a number of factors are considered (noting that some have been adopted over the last year as a result of feedback from our own parish and others):-

- A property will only be put forward for a disposal in the event of the end of a tenancy
- The key economic factor is an assessment of the ‘Net Present Value’ of any property – in simple terms the capital value of the property set against the expected return through the rent payments on a 30-year basis and the costs of any required improvements (NB the latter does not include ‘routine maintenance’ requirements)
- Abri has introduced a rule that precludes the sale of any bungalow that has level access - recognising the specific value of such properties in the social housing context.
- Having been prompted to look at the trend of sales within their portfolio, it was recognised that a disproportionate number of homes (c. 60% of disposals) being sold were within the Southwest region (Somerset and Dorset, accounting for c, 14,000 homes managed by Abri). Realising that there are significant regional differences in property values that could be distorting in their assessment above, Abri no longer applies a ‘one-size-fits-all’ assessment but give greater allowance for regional property and rental values. This has already resulted in fewer disposals in the SW region.
- He also noted that no ‘de minimis’ number exists for the number of properties to be retained in any region or local area, however this is something that Abri are considering closely as there is recognition that the potential loss of significant numbers of existing properties within a community is highly undesirable (and runs against the intent of a group such as Abri).

- Whilst there is no mechanism for ring-fencing funds received from disposals within any specific locality, the strategy for new construction is set regionally but he did note that there are c.100 properties being built by Abri in Templecombe.
- It is expected that the proceeds of the sale of one property is sufficient to provide the funding basis for the construction of 2-3 new social housing units (when additional finance and grant funding are considered)
- There are 19 Abri properties remaining within Charlton Horethorne (NB Abri are not the only Social Housing provider within the village). This comprises 6x bungalows (importantly, all of which feature level access) and 13x houses. Only one of these houses was felt to be at risk of a potential sale in the event of the end of tenancy.
- The majority of these of these properties have recently seen upgrades (for example solar PV panels as part of 'Warmer Homes' grant funding process) which preclude any sale in the near term; it is expected that these will also see further upgrades (e.g. heating) over the medium-term.
- At the higher level, Abri manages c.14,000 properties in the SW region, of which c.50 properties are expected to be sold in next 5 years.

At the meeting Cllr Pipe asked that the PC be notified in the event of any future potential sale, the possibility for placing restrictions or covenants on properties to ensure their continued use as social housing and lastly whether there may be any scope for exploring a PC / community-led acquisition of such properties.

Rob Barker undertook to notify the PC in advance of any future disposal. On restrictions / covenants he commented that these have been used in the past, usually in the case of specific locations – but can be problematic in the sale on the open market. He was very open to exploring the idea of disposal to a community group / not-for-profit organisation, noting that this would align with the values and intent of Abri whilst allowing for disposal. Interestingly, where normally a quicker disposal (e.g. through auction as opposed to a longer private market sale process) was seen as desirable, Rob Barker felt that if a sale to a not-for-profit organisation were to be contemplated, a longer-timeline could be accommodated. He is happy to pursue this further with the PC if desirable.

Both Cllr Archer and Cllr Pipe felt that the meeting was a great deal more positive than expected; it is reassuring that Abri have adapted their assessment process as outlined above. and specifically, Rob Barkers comments on the remaining properties (though of course this does not form any sort of guarantee over the long-term).

Charwell Fields: This remains a work-in-progress - Cllr Archer has approached respective landowners but the outcome, whilst broadly positive was not conclusive.

6.To receive reports from the following organisations: - Cllr Archer welcomed organisations to deliver their reports

The Parochial Church Council (PPC)

Charlton Horethorne and Stowell churches are now part of a benefice of eight churches, with three new parishes having joined us last year – thus spreading the vicar, Rev Rona, evermore thinly. A number of retired clergies assist regularly with

services, but even with this support, we now have only two regular services here a month – an evening service on the second and third Sundays of each month; and one service a month in Stowell. While the regular congregation is around 15 people, special services have a significantly higher attendance - Harvest Evensong, Remembrance Service and particularly our very popular Christmas Carol Service which was attended by c180.

Despite trialling an additional Family Service once a month, for 6 months, sadly, numbers attending were small, often with no families/young children, so this has, for the time being, been discontinued. Links with the primary school have, however, continued, with weekly visits by Rev Rona and regular hymn-singing practice with two members of the congregation.

Throughout the year, home communions continue to be offered to villagers who are unable to attend church, by one of the retired clergy.

The church is also used several times a year for weddings, baptisms, and funerals or thanksgiving services for people living in or connected with the village.

Other events held at the church include the popular annual Music for Pleasure in May, a local drama group's performance of "To Win the Day" in October, and an upcoming Flower Festival, Gift Day and Songs of Praise on 27 June.

Thanks go to volunteers from the village who provide flowers, cleaning, brass polishing, a rota for opening the church for private prayer every day, and who participate in twice-yearly churchyard clean up days.

Much needed renovations of the lychgate were undertaken last Autumn, funded largely by donations, including a £500 grant from the Parish Council, all very gratefully received.

As reported last year, though, there is a growing stress on rural parishes, with an increasing shortage of vicars, parishioners (especially younger people), money, volunteers, etc. It has recently been announced that we will be losing Rev Rona, as she is ceasing stipendiary ministry, leaving in August this year. We will be seeking a re-appointment, but the timing of this is in the hands of the Diocese, beyond our local control.

Everyone is invited to the Flower Festival, Gift Day and Songs of Praise event on 27 June – details will be in the village newsletter and on noticeboards.

The Millennium Green Trustees

Simon Purcel reported that since the charity was initiated 25 years ago, the pond liner and play equipment needs timely replacement. Sue Gilbert is managing the grant application process to secure thirty thousand for a new playground. The charity is grateful for the grants provided by the council which has contributed to maintenance and insurance cover.

The Village Hall Trustees

Over the years Pat Lynch reported that the Village Hall had benefitted from support from the Parish Council in maintaining the building which is classed as a valuable community asset. The Village Hall Trustees very much appreciate this support.

In 2025, the Parish Council gave a grant of £750.00 which was put towards the cost of a major refurbishment of the kitchen necessitating the complete replacement of the flooring and supports together with the installation of new kitchen units and redecoration. The total cost was £8856.00 with the flooring being carried out by a contractor who, coincidentally, lives in the village. The stripping out of the kitchen and installation of the units was carried out by a team of volunteers from the village is seen as a major community effort.

The Village Newsletter

The Newsletter has replaced the parish magazine. A total of 21 have been produced and there are c250 people on the email distribution list. 10 printed copies are placed in the village shop, and 5 copies are personally delivered. To date, approximately 2 new recipients are added each month. It costs £75 a month to produce and a whole day to pull text together and edit. Those present at the meeting agreed it was an extremely important and valued community asset.

Village Bonfire and fireworks organiser (Catherine Mathew)

November 5th once again went off with a bang! Amazingly, the weather was perfect for the event dry, bright and calm. Over 800 people came and enjoyed the bangers, hot dogs, soup and mulled wine as well as the glow sticks. Then the bonfire was lit, and finally, the fireworks.

The beneficiaries from the evening were:

- Royal British Legion £1,100
- Millenium Green Trustees £600
- Air Ambulance £300
- Firefighters Charity £300

Catherine extended her thanks to her supportive team of helpers and to everyone who came and supported the event.

Open Session

The Meeting Closed at 7.25 PM.