

Minutes of Holt Annual Parish Meeting
Thursday 19th March 2026 at Holt Village Hall 7:30pm

	<p>Attendance</p> <p>Cllr Sue Barnes Cllr Geoff Chopping Cllr Jonathan Cutts Cllr Jackie Egan Cllr Peter Finney Cllr Geoff Pike Cllr Guy Reynolds (Chair of the Parish Council) Cllr Janet Wallace Cllr Sarah Weaver Cllr Janey White Cllr Will Chakawhata (Dorset Councillor Stour & Allen Vale Ward) MP for Mid-Dorset & Poole, Vikki Slade Lisa Goodwin (Clerk to the Parish Council) 28 members of public.</p>
01	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed those present including Cllr Will Chakawhata and MP Vikki Slade.</p>
02	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Cllr Wrettham Ladbrooke-Chartres Cllr Stella Jones (Chair Dorset Council)</p>
03	<p>Good Citizen Award 2026</p> <p>The Parish Council received several nominations and after careful consideration were pleased to present this years award to Vicky Gerrell for all her hard work and enthusiasm in organising social activities which have undoubtedly brought the community of Holt together.</p>
04	<p>Confirm the minutes of the last Annual Meeting held 13th March 2025</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr Peter Finney and seconded by Cllr Geoff Chopping that the minutes of the last meeting held 13th March 2025 were confirmed as correct and signed by the Chair. RESOLVED.</p>

05	<p>Matters Arising from the minutes of the last Annual Meeting</p> <p>None.</p>
06	<p>Annual Report of the Parish Council written by the Vice-Chair, Cllr Wrettham Ladbrooke-Chartres and presented by Cllr Janet Wallace</p> <p>Introduction & Council Changes Good evening, everyone. It is my pleasure to present the annual report for what has been an active year for our Parish Council.</p> <p>We began our civic year in May with the appointment of Guy Reynolds as our Chair. I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Jonathan Cutts for his dedicated service in that role over the previous two years. All Parish Councillors are of course volunteers so I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their time and hard work throughout the year, and without which none of what I am going to report would have been possible. We were also pleased to welcome Sue Barnes to the Council in May 2025, representing the ward of Furzehill; she has already made a significant impact, joining the Highway Working Group alongside Jonathan Cutts, Peter Finney, and Geoff Pike.</p> <p>It is heartening to see such strong community engagement: we have welcomed 111 visitors to our meetings this year. A large portion of this attendance related to the Shady Glades planning application and, crucially, our ongoing concerns regarding fire safety.</p> <p>Public Safety & Highways Community safety has been a dominant theme this year. The Holt Heath Fire was an alarming and distressing time for many of us. Following the fire, we had a number of visitors to our subsequent Council meetings and also held a well-attended meeting on August 20th with 38 residents, followed by a collaborative session in Holtwood with the Commoners Association. Guy was expertly placed as Parish Council Chairman and Secretary of the Commoners Association, bringing his thoughtfulness and experience to guide us through a very difficult time. We heard very movingly the thoughts and concerns of the resident and these meetings resulted in practical outcomes, including a new WhatsApp group for the swift sharing of emergency information. We also worked closely with experts, inviting the Dorset Heaths Partnership in April and Stuart Tucker, the Wimborne Station Commander, in June to advise on the Firewise project.</p> <p>On our roads, we continue to address speeding. Our SIDS (Speed Indicator Devices) programme now includes Lodge Road, and I am pleased to report that all poles are now solar-powered. While Dorset Council manages deployment, our own Community Speedwatch is active, including a new location at Smugglers Lane, with sessions set to resume this Spring, when hopefully there will be less fog. Most significantly, we expect the new speed limits in the three agreed areas to be in place by Easter. We have one of the best relationships possible with the Highways Department and the Parish Council and its Highways Working Group continue to make improvements whilst working within the constraints of the established systems.</p>

If there are any problems on the highways, from potholes to near-misses and crashes we encourage every resident to report what has happened on the Dorset website on the roads and highways tab. We are always looking for new members of the Speedwatch Team; if that could be you then please talk to any of us afterwards or email the Clerk.

Planning, Land & Environment The Council remains the voice of the parish in the planning system. This year, we commented on 58 planning and tree applications and submitted a formal response to the Dorset Local Plan Options Consultation in August. We also held a meeting in February with Councillor Will Chakawhata and Council officers to address security concerns at the former Council Offices which have caused concern to many of us.

Closer to home, we take great pride in maintaining our local assets. We have planted a new hedge at Holt Cemetery and continue to look after the Village Green, which now boasts a beautiful new Millennium Sign crafted by a local contractor. Our traditional Dorset fingerposts at Broomhill and Higher Row have also been refurbished in their original style, supported by grants from the CPRE.

Grants & Community Celebrations Supporting local causes remains a priority. This year, the Council awarded grants to the Chained Library (£250), the Reef Youth Club (£500), and the Citizens Advice Bureau (£500). We were also delighted to provide £500 to St James School for their peace garden and outdoor seating. Our community spirit was on full display on May 8th, 2025, when we celebrated VE Day by lighting the Lamp of Peace on the village green—a poignant event that was very well attended.

Finance To fund these essential services and maintain our local infrastructure, the Parish Council has increased the precept from £27.00 to £28.00 per Band D household for the 2026/27 financial year. This will raise a total of £23,881.20, ensuring we remain financially resilient while keeping the increase to just £1 per year for the average household.

Acknowledgements Finally, I must offer our thanks to the many individuals who keep our parish running:

- **To our representatives:** Jackie, for her work on the Parish Hall Committee; Jonathan, on the St Margarets & Stones Almshouses Charity; Jonathan, Peter, Geoff and Sue on the Highways Working Group; and Sarah for her diligent reporting on our footpaths.
- **To our local 'doers':** Richard Lonsdale, for his work on the Furzehill BT Box and our new nameplate for the noticeboard; and Bill Warren for organising the vital Holt Neighbourcare Scheme.
- **To our maintenance team:** Charlie Hiscock, Mike Clifford, and Ian Mulliner for their work at the cemetery, and Limecove for the Village Green.
- **To the gardeners:** Everyone who has helped plant and maintain our three BT boxes, and Stewarts Garden Centre for their generous donation of plants.
- **To Cllr Will Chakawhata:** For his dedicated hard work at the (County) Council and his continued support and liaison with the parish.

- **To our Clerk:** Without Lisa the cogs of this machine would not run smoothly or quietly. It is due to her hard work, expertise, and careful stewardship of all of us, that we are able to work on your behalf to make sure that Holt Parish remains a lovely place to live and work.

Thank you all for your time this evening and for your continued commitment to our parish.

Holt Halls – Annual Report by Cllr Jackie Egan (Parish Council Representative on the Parish Hall Committee)

A brief update of the year for the Parish and Village Halls.

Both halls have continued to be well used by regular groups and societies and by private parties.

This year saw notable anniversaries for the halls – the Parish Hall 90 years and the Village Hall 50 years. A celebration was planned for the village green in the summer – unfortunately this had to be cancelled but a party took place in October with a 30's theme, cake and fizz, games, displays of memorabilia and a film show of holt at the Millenium made by and starring local people speaking about Holt and life in the Parish.

The party was organised by the Holt social committee which was set up during 2025 to organise events for the residents of the parish. This committee has proved a huge success – due mainly to the hard work of Vicky Gerrell and Maryanne Pike. The community of Holt has come together on many occasions over the year and enjoyed various activities organised by the committee. These include Scottish dancing, yoga, craft mornings, quiz evenings and a Gatsby themed evening which saw the Village Hall transformed into a speakeasy!

I would like to thank Vicky, Maryanne and all the residents who have come together to organise these events and give Holt a new sense of community – we look forward to future events!

Both halls have seen changes to their committees – saying goodbye to people who had served the community and welcoming new faces who have agreed to take on the vacant roles. Both Halls are run by volunteers who give their time and energy to keeping the Halls running and functioning safely for the use of the community. This year has seen the Halls working closely together with representatives from both halls on the Social Committee.

I would like to finish with a huge thank you to all those who are involved with the Parish and Village Halls - providing the residents of the parish with 2 amazing spaces for their use and organising great activities in the halls for everyone to enjoy.

07	<p>Matters arising from the Parish Council Annual Report.</p> <p>None.</p>
08	<p>Audited Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2025</p> <p>The audited accounts for the year ending 31 March 2025 are available on accounts page of the parish council website www.holt-dorset-pc.gov.uk</p>
09	<p>Dorset Councillors Report</p> <p>The Chairman introduced Cllr Will Chakawhata and thanked him for his hard work supporting the Parish Council for which members are extremely grateful.</p> <p>Following the 2024 election, Will reported that he has gained valuable insights from parish councillors, particularly regarding planning applications. It has been an honour to serve as the elected Dorset Councillor and collaborate with parish councils in supporting local residents. Will recognises the strong sense of community in Holt, especially in response to the Holt Heath wildfire, and has contributed to initiatives aimed at improving road safety, including the resurfacing of Furzehill Road and ongoing support for Holtwood Community Farm, which is a valuable asset to the parish.</p> <p>Will is available to assist residents with any concerns and is committed to representing your interests. Councillor details - Councillor Will Chakawhata - Dorset Council</p>
10	<p>Public Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents are frustrated with the lack of progress with site of the former Council Offices at Furzehill and security concerns and asked what is the actual obstacle to selling the property? <i>The Chairman responded that the Parish Council is not entirely sure of all the issues that are holding up the potential sale. Cllr Geoff Chopping reported that the route of the footpath is of concern to the potential developer and needs to be resolved by Dorset Council. The Chairman added that Dorset Council are currently assessing options to improve security of the site which come at significant cost. Concerns of residents are repeatedly raised with the Parish Council. Dorset Police are aware of the security issues.</i> A resident asked if the National Trust's Holt Heath fire action plan is finished? The Chairman advised that the Commoners Association has requested to view it, and it will be shared when completed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resident asked if there are any other Dorset Council assets in Holt to be sold (other than the former council offices)? <i>The Chairman responded that the Parish Council has expressed an interest to acquire the Holtwood Community Farm that operates on land owned by Dorset Council - this land would not be put of sale but transferred as a community asset.</i> • A resident asked for an update on the sale of Holt St James Church as residents would like to ensure the contents are kept safe and preserved for parishioners? <i>The Diocese advised in February that the building is inspected weekly and the interior of the building and contents have not markedly deteriorated. Following the withdrawal of the building for residential use, the Diocese is currently in discussions about it being acquired by local persons as a cultural/community venue and await a business plan.</i>
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The Chairman closed the meeting at 20:08

After a break for refreshments, the Chairman introduced MP Vikki Slade who gave a fascinating insight into her journey to becoming an MP and answered questions from residents.

[Vikki Slade MP - Mid Dorset and North Poole Liberal Democrats](#)

These minutes are to be signed by the Chairman after approval at the next Annual Meeting.

Signed..... Date:.....