Kingston St Mary Parish Council
Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting, Held on 16th April 2026 at the Playing Field Pavilion, Kingston St Mary, starting at 19:00

1. Attendance and Apologies

In attendance:
Cllr P Townsend (Chairman)
Cllr D Darch
Cllr A Simpson
Cllr D Stripp
Mrs K Gibbins (Parish Clerk)

Apologies:
Cllr S Hancock
Cllr P Boyce
Cllr N O'Donnell (Somerset)
Cllr D Perry (Somerset)

There were 2 members of the public in attendance.

2. Councillors' Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Approval of Minutes of Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 10th March 2026

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting were approved and will be signed as a true record at a future date.

4. Planning

Applications:

Case Ref: 20/26/0001/T - Notification to fell one cypress tree and one eucalyptus and to carry out management works to a group of 7 trees (along the front boundary, crown-lift to 2.4 metres above ground level, crown-clean and thin by up to 10%) within Kingston St. Mary Conservation Area at Winpenny House, Winpenny Lane, Kingston St. Mary
The Council resolved to fully support this application.

Case Ref: 20/26/0012 - Variation of Condition No. 02 (approved plans), for amendments to the design and appearance of dwelling, of application 20/22/0020 at Newtons, Nailsbourne, Taunton
The Council resolved to support this application.

Please note that the Parish Council's full response to the above planning applications can be found on Somerset Council's website or by following the link below:
https://www3.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/asp/webpages/plan/plapplookup.asp

Other matters:

Somerset Local Plan 2045 – Spatial Strategy
The Chair summarised the draft Spatial Strategy for the Somerset Local Plan to 2045 issued by Somerset Council. The draft Spatial Strategy Topic Paper sets out the pattern, scale and distribution of development across Somerset providing a spatial interpretation of the plan's vision and plays an integral role in coordinating development and infrastructure delivery. Kingston St Mary is mentioned 8 times in the document. The document provides the potential housing requirement in the parish based on 6 options. He explained the 6 options and the number of homes which are proposed under each option in KSM. According to this document Somerset needs to provide 75,000 more dwellings by 2045 based on the Government's targets. The Council had a lively discussion about this and the Chair agreed to continue to read and summarise the document and start drafting the Council's response to the consultation. The final version of the Plan will be available in June/July and open for public consultation. The Chair agreed to ask Cllr Perry to meet with the Council to discuss the Local Plan and its response to the plan and the Spatial Strategy.

5. Matters Outstanding from Previous Minutes

a. Internet Banking – To be carried forward to a future meeting.

b. Councillor Training – Cllr Darch passed around a handout summarising the training she had received around crisis communications for local councils. She talked to the Council about the content and said it made her think about crisis in a different way. She summarised the Human Resource and Reputational types of crises. She felt the road closure and gas works could have been categorised as a communications crisis and felt the PC dealt with it very well. A Special thanks went to the Chair for his work in managing this crisis and to the webmaster for his work ensuring the information was published accurately on the website.

c. Annual Parish Meeting – The Clerk referred the Council to the list she circulated of organisations invited and who has accepted on behalf of these organisations. She said she will be sending reminders out.

d. Somerset Community Foundation: Stronger Communities Fund – The Chair advised that an application had been made by the Playing Field Management Committee for a grant of £1250 to the Stronger Communities Fund for the village fete.

g. The Spinney – The Chair advised he met with the management contractor which looks after the Spinney. They were very helpful and explained they look after the footpaths and keep the main area clear. They will report back about the benches which are in a bad state of repair and will look at cutting back the brambles to the tree line in August/September. The Chair went on to say the PC would like to talk to the Woodland Trust about the role of volunteers, improving the pathways for the winter months and the management of the orchids as well as the possibility of obtaining an grant from the SRA for a natural flood management feasibility report which would need the agreement of the Woodland Trust.

h. Somerset Residents Health and Wellbeing Survey 2026 – Cllr Stripp reported back and said he attended the meeting last night in Monksilver and it was a very good event. It was organised by Spark and SALC and brought Councils and other stakeholders together around community engagement to discuss how Councils, volunteer organisations and environmental groups can work together and support one another.

6. Noticeboard – review and approve draft licence agreement

The Clerk advised Legal Services has sent through a draft licence which the Council needs to review and approve. The Clerk would prefer the address on the licence was not her personal address and she agreed to speak to Legal Services about this. The Council resolved to approve and sign the licence.

7. Family Fun Cycle Ride 21 June 2026 – KAPACC funding appeal

The Chair asked the KAPACC rep to talk to the Council about the Family Fun Cycle Ride. She said she is organising the 2026/2027 cycle rides and needs to renew the insurance for the events. The cost is £88 and she also requires publicity material. She said the event has grown to 70-80 people. The Council agreed to donate £100.00 to KAPACC.

The Council went on to discuss the Active Travel Route and Cllr Stripp updated the Council on its progress. It was believed there may be a fund of £10k available to purchase land, money donated from a will. He said the priority was to get the stretch from the Playing Field to Parsonage Lane completed to have an example of what the Active Travel Route will look like to use to show other landowners and hopefully encourage them to get involved. The Council went on to discuss the £10k SALC grant (received 27 October 2025) and the importance of progressing this project to secure the funding.

8. The British Hedgehog Preservation Society

The Chair said the PC had received a letter from a lady who travels through Kingston regularly and was concerned at the number of squashed hedgehogs on the road through the village. She wondered if we could appoint a Hedgehog Ambassador. The Chair did some research and found the British Hedgehog Preservation Society. The Chair felt it would be a good idea to ask the school if they would like to become the village's ambassador. There is a small joining fee and the PC could give them a small budget. Cllr Stripp agreed to approach the school about this.

9. Enhanced Highways Maintenance Scheme

The Chair asked IF to talk to the Council about the Enhanced Highways Maintenance Scheme. IF went on to say changes had been made to the programme and all requests for work to be completed will now be routed directly through Somerset Council rather than through its contractor, Kier. The other option is to employ our own contractors. To place an order and make payment, it was believed we would need to do this through a Parish Council with the General Power of Competence as we don't have the power to hire contractors. It is believed the problem lies in having the expertise to ensure contractors comply with insurance/qualifications/legal requirements, etc. It makes sense for Somerset Council to issue a list of approved contractors for local Parish Councils to use to complete works on the Highways. The Clerk agreed to investigate this further.

The Chair asked IF if the PC can access any of the additional £5m funding which has been allocated over the next 3 years for routine highways maintenance activities such as gully clearing, refreshing road markings, vegetation clearance, etc. The Chair also asked IF to enquire if Kingston Road from Taunton to KSM's Primary school and to the top of Buncombe Hill could be included in the winter gritting programme. IF agreed to put the PC's questions forward to the next LCN Highways Working Group and tabled for the agenda for the meeting on the 7th May which he is unable to attend.

10. Climate Emergency

Cllr Darch spoke to the Council about the screening in Taunton of the film, 'People's Emergency Briefing'. She gave the Council the background about the film and said it was produced by Prof Mike Berners-Lee. The film is the result of leading experts and concerned citizens joining forces to encourage UK decision-makers to step up their response to the escalating climate and nature crisis. It has only just been released and is a hard watch but it does end on an uplifting note. It isn't meant to be held as just a screening it is meant to facilitate a discussion afterwards and to encourage people to lobby government for systemic action. The Council spoke about and agreed to apply to have a screening of the film in the village hall after the Annual Parish Meeting. The Council felt it was important to have the discussion afterwards facilitated and Cllr Darch agreed to ask a representative from Climate Action Taunton to do this or another individual(s). It was agreed the format for the Annual Parish Meeting would be Annual Meeting, refreshments, and then the screening of 'People's Emergency Briefing'. This will allow those who don't want to view the film an opportunity to leave.

11. Playing Field Committee

The Chair advised he has now got 3 competitive quotes for replacing the play tower in the toddlers' area of the playing field. The quotes are from Absolute Play, £20k, Sovereign, £18.7k and Proludic, £24.3k. The Council discussed the quotes and specs and agreed the Absolute Play quote was its preferred option. It was agreed the Absolute play tower would give the same play value as the Proludic play tower but was superior to the Sovereign play tower. The Council agreed to accept the quote from Absolute Play and the Chair said he would confirm this with the company. He also said he will query the cost of removal of the existing tower as it is higher and ask if the tower can be installed before the village fete which will be held on 13th June. The Chair said he would ask for clarification on the optional costs which the Council agreed were not required. He also advised he will be applying for a Section 106 grant towards the cost of the new play tower

The Council then approved the quote for repairing the fence of £325.00 + VAT which was hit by a lorry. The Council went on to discuss the quote of £1.2k for new doors on the pavilion and agreed to the Playing Field covering this cost. Cllr Simpson talked to the Council about the playing field shelter replacement and said the general feeling was to have a clear transparent structure more like a dug out. It may be possible to purchase 2 shelters with the funding available. Cllr Simpson agreed to do more research on these types of structures.

12. Local Community Network

The Annual meeting of the LCN will be held in the village hall and is scheduled for 10th June. The Clerk agreed to ask if any refreshments were required to be provided.

13. Kingston St Mary Community Land Trust

Cllr Stripp talked briefly about setting up a community wealth fund and using the CLT to do this. After doing some research, he believes a separate charity will need to be set up to do this.

14. Kingston Community Partnership

Cllr Darch reminded the Council about the litter pick which is scheduled for the weekend of 25th/26th April. Cllr Stripp updated the Council on the progress of the fete and said a meeting was scheduled for 29th April at the Swan to discuss the running of the fete.

15. Financial Matters

The Council noted the monthly bank reconciliation, authorised the following payments, noted the receipts and approved the quotations:

Payments

£200.00 – Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance, donation towards portable life-saving equipment
£52.00 - Information Commissioner's Office, renewal of KSMPC data protection registration fee
£202.80 – Somerset Council, Qtr 4, 1st Jan-31st March 2026, 2 x dog waste bins emptied once weekly
£40.00 – Somerset Association of Local Councils, Breakthrough Training Event - Crisis Communications for Local Councils 17/03/2026

Receipts

£1,824.33 – VAT Refund for 01APR2024 – 31MAR2025

Quotations

£596.00 – Paolo van der Steenhoven, quotation for web services
£830.64 – Zurich Insurance Company Ltd, Renewal of Parish Council Annual Insurance Premium
£290.00 – Jack Council, cutting of village green for 2026 season

16. Items for Next Agenda

Please give any items to the Clerk.

17. Items for Link Up and KSM Website

The Chair will produce a report for Link Up.

18. Meeting Closed

21:15h

19. Date of Next Meeting

12th May 2026