

Duntisbourne Parish Council Chairman's Report May 2025 to April 2026

It is with pleasure that I present this report to the meeting. It is the 3rd full year of the current Parish Council which was returned in a non-contested election on Thursday May 4th 2023 for a period of 4 years. We held 5 meetings throughout the year.

The Duntisbourne Councillors:

There are Five Councillors: Jane Edwards - Chair, Andy Beckett - Vice Chair, Rupert Lane , Michael Lowe, Julian Weston.

For Electoral purposes Duntisbourne Rouse (which includes Middle Duntisbourne) is a separate Parish Council. Duntisbourne Rouse PC is represented by Councillors Valerie Dyson and Samantha Scott White.

We meet as one body sharing a meeting venue, AGM and a combined Precept.

There are currently 255 electors in the Parish, this number has increased from 252 the previous year.

County and District Councillors

Councillor Mark Harris is our County Councillor for Cirencester North and Ermin Ward. Cllr Harris recently took up the position of Cabinet member for Highways.

Councillor Julia Judd is our Ermin Ward District Councillor and provides detailed monthly reports, covering various aspects including Planning reports of meetings and committees. Our gratitude to both councillors for advice and support this past year.

Staffing.. Gwen Durland is the Parish Clerk for the Duntisbournes. Gwen was appointed on February 1st 2025. employed for 5 hours a week.

Currently Gwen is completing the final modules for her CILCA Certificate of Local Council Administration in conjunction with GALC our Council Association. Previously known as GAPTC.

Gwen brings a wealth of experience having been the Miserden clerk for 6 years. Providing advice and guidance on all Parish Council matters, including procedure, finance and governance. Recently setting up systems for councillors to easily access Policy documents. All meeting documents can be conveniently viewed by Councillors and added to as necessary.

This year she has liaised with our new email provider **Easy Websites** setting up the website so we are now fully compliant with **Assertion 10** which basically means we have to **own** our domain, not shared with other local organisations and be either .gov. uk or co.uk email addresses.

Gmail and other accounts are no longer considered to be appropriate for PC use.

As a PC we initially resisted the new website and .gov.uk email addresses but these are now a specific requirement and checked at Audit. Our PC website contact is:-
clerk@duntisbourne-pc.gov.uk

At this point I wish to thank Paul Smith who set up the Village local website some years ago now, Duntisbourne Voice. He generously contributed considerable time, valuable experience and expertise on our behalf. This web site still flourishes and continues as a source of information for other village

organizations e.g. the Village Hall and the Church has useful information, including a village archive of wonderful photographs of years gone by. The Memorial page is an especially interesting tribute to those lives lost in the Wars. As we move to our new PC website. The previous PC listings on Duntisbourne Voice will remain as an archive record.

Finance

In November we set our precept for £8800, an increase of 10% after two years of no increase. Councillors came to this decision based on the increased costs associated with staffing, web site design, .gov.uk email addresses and monthly running costs. HMRC payments and other commitments.

This equates to a Council Tax of £40.53 for a band D property in the Duntisbournes an increase of **5.71%** for year 2026-2027

Council has reserves to cover any upcoming election costs in May 2027 and future community projects. We are currently considering the *Community 20 mph* Speed limit initiative for some villages in the county. And if successful we may need to provide match funding. There has been considerable support for this particularly in the Ealy Hill area of Duntisbourne Abbots. Councillor Harris is aware of the strength of feeling in the village. A questionnaire to obtain all residents' views will be circulated.

Parish Councils have been advised by NALC and our local organisation GALC to make sure reserves are robust as after devolution the role of PC's and their contributions may be altered. For example, being responsible and paying for more local services.

Council received no CIL money this 2025 -26 financial year. (C.I.L stands for Community Infrastructure Levy,) a charge levied against planning applications to be applied where the overall floor area is over 100 square metres.) Anything over is calculated at £85.00 a metre the PC receive a contribution of 15%

R.F.O Councillor Andy Beckett is our Responsible Finance Officer, I wish to express gratitude to Councillor Beckett for his continued hard work and diligence with the accounts. Councillor Beckett has been working alongside Gwen Durland (Clerk) on finance matters.

We changed to an online bank account with a 3 way councillor authorisation system and which has saved time and expense for the Council.

Audit there were no issues reported by the internal auditor or our external Auditors PKF Littlejohn.

Payments/Grants were awarded to The Duntisbourne PCC --Council received new guidance and amended legislation to the Government Act 1894. This was passed through Parliament at the end of December 2023. Thus, enabling Parish Councils to fund church repairs or improvements. .

At the November 2024 PC budget meeting we increased the payment to the PCC to £500 for upkeep of the War Memorial .Increased grant to the Village Hall to £500.00 to pay for the Meeting room and other improvements for the community.

Planning: The PC is a statutory consultee, and we receive applications via CDC. Planning Portal. DPC continues to consider every planning application and now additionally environmental matters with a balanced approach. We are guided by the same criteria CDC follows e.g. Local Plan and National NPPF Policies.

Further Planning policy modifications took effect in December 2025. Several significant modifications were made to the NPPF. There are more revisions to come. There is a changing pressure on planning officers, due to changes in national policy

Previous numbers of 850 homes have been more than doubled by government to 18650 new homes by 2043 .With increased targets of housing to be delivered from Government.

Guidance for Planning Applications can be found in a useful document ‘Material’ and ‘Non’ material reasons which we will add to our website. The PC does not make an actual decision on any planning applications; it is the Planning Officers’ role. This year has again been particularly busy with applications.

During the year we received numerous treeworks applications (removal, felling, lopping etc) and significant applications for house improvements. Two applications went to Appeal, one application rejected by the Planning authority and subsequently rejected by the Planning Inspectorate.

A second application went to the CDC Planning Committee and was initially refused on grounds of Highways and landscape concerns. This application was subsequently approved by the Planning Inspector.

Other significant applications include 3 Pondlets and associated works in Duntisbourne Abbots remain undecided. As a PC have liaised with The Friends of Gumstool Brook who monitor the flow and health of the Dunt each month. We think it is important to ensure that water extraction is recorded and monitored on a monthly basis to avoid any unintended consequences to the local network. **Water courses.** The F.o.G.B have also been very helpful with identifying species of unprotected American crayfish .

Governance Policies.

The DPC reviewed all Policies at the May 2025 meeting.

Highways issues remain with severe damage caused by delivery lorries to the walls and verges. Pot hole repairs deteriorate quickly. The best way to report any potholes, damaged signs etc is on CDC Website Fix My Street and actioned within 28 days of registering the report. The Duntisbourne Leer Village road is in need of Total resurfacing; it hasn't been resurfaced for 36 years! Many residents experience expensive suspension problems and tyre punctures.

The road to the Centurion garage will only be resurfaced when the A417 bypass is completed.

The A417 works are certainly moving at a pace some unexpected overnight closures have caused problems . Scheduled Opening Spring 2027.

Village Hall, Charity Continues to flourish and be a centre for many village events.The PC arranged a First Aid Defibrillator course in December at the VH which was attended by 17 residents in 2 sessions. Our gratitude to Logan Mckelvie for his excellent presentation. We have revisited and updated our skills .The defibrillator is checked on the 1st of each month, and reported as in Service to The Circuit, a national reporting network which records all active devices in every part of the country . We now have additional paediatric pads for the defibrillator as well as the adult pads.

Village Archive collection a dedicated group meets at the VH to collate documents for the village archive project. This is taking shape and good progress is being made.

The PC refurbished the bench outside the VH our thanks to Andy Beckett .. great job.

Duntisbourne Watch. The Duntisbourne Neighbourhood Watch continues to be very well supported by over 100 residents, our gratitude to the Co-ordinator. Residents are encouraged to join by email request to: duntisbournewatch@gmail.com

There are many residents who quietly support our communities in a variety of voluntary ways; Cutting of Village Greens, clearing culverts, maintenance and repairs; going that extra mile - thank you, it is greatly appreciated

Looking Forward. We are now in the last year of this Parish Council significant changes/proposals are being considered for **Devolution** of the current system. District Councils in a years' time will cease to exist and we will become a single Unitary Authority. The proposals are concerning and as a PC we feel we are in danger of losing our local identity. A feeling of being more remote from where decisions are made and our concerns not being heard.

Councillor Valerie Dyson and Councillor Jane Edwards attended a Symposium at The Royal Agricultural College in 2025 on Wednesday June 4th. More than a hundred attended. There were different views expressed. Main speakers included representatives from Chippenham who shared their own journey in devolution . Jackie Weaver, the famous Handsworth Parish Clerk, was very entertaining. Jackie remains a prominent advocate for local government and is chief officer for Cheshire Association for Local Councils.

The Parish Council meets on the 3rd Tuesday in May, June, September, November, also in January (if budget is not decided in the November meeting) and March. Residents are always welcome to attend with suggestions

I would like to thank all Councillors and our Clerk, for their support and time given to this Parish Council and its community. It is greatly appreciated. Parish Councils could not exist without a group of volunteers who are willing to generously give up their time to share their expertise and knowledge for the benefit of all. So if you think you have the time and ideas to stand in next year's elections . Do come forward!

We are certainly in a time of significant change for Local Government, it is important to maintain a strong local voice.

Best wishes

Jane

J. R Edwards ,Chair: Duntisbourne Parish Council

Email

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