

The Orchards' and Margaret Marsh Parish Council (Group)

Minutes of the 181st meeting of Full Council Monday 18th May 2026 at 6:30pm at Child Okeford Community Centre, Child Okeford, DT11 8EL

These minutes do not constitute a true record until ratified at the next Parish Council meeting. Minute item numbers run consecutively throughout the Parish Council year.

Present: Cllr C Christensen, Cllr G Stokes, Cllr J Elliot, Cllr P Gay

In attendance: B. Barker (Clerk) and five members of the public.

The meeting started at 6:45pm

1/26 Election of Chair and signing of Declaration of Office

Cllr Christensen was proposed by Cllr Stokes and seconded by Cllr Elliott, with all in agreement. Cllr Christensen then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2/26 Election of Deputy Chair and signing of Declaration of Office

Cllr Stokes was proposed as Deputy Chair by Cllr Christensen and seconded by Cllr Elliott, with all in agreement. Cllr Stokes then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3/26 Chair's welcome

The Chair thanked fellow Councillors for their support and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

4/26 Public Participation

A resident enquired whether the council had any updates from Dorset regarding the flooding in East Orchard. Cllr Christensen noted that no further actions had been indicated and that the council would follow up.

5/26 To receive and consider apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Woodruffe

6/26 To receive any declarations of interest and consider any requests for special dispensations under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011

There were no declarations of interest from Members regarding the Agenda items.

7/26 To receive and resolve to approve the Minutes of the last meeting

It was RESOLVED to APPROVE the minutes as a true record of the 180th meeting held on Monday, 9th March 2026. The minutes were duly signed by the Parish Council Chair

8/26 To review and confirm the Council's governance arrangements remain appropriate

- i It was RESOLVED to APPROVE the continued adoption of the Code of Conduct
- ii Members were reminded of the pledges made within the Code of Conduct in terms of Civility and Respect.

9/26 To review and resolve to approve the continued adoption of the following policies (no changes):

All councillors RESOLVED to READOPT the following policies:

- Standing Orders 2026
- Scheme of Delegation 2026

Signed Chair

Date.....

- Financial Regulations 2026
- Co-option Policy 2026
- Grant and Donations Policy 2026
- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice 2026
- Planning Procedure Policy 2026
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2026
- Freedom of Information Policy & Publication Scheme 2026

10/26 To resolve to adopt the following policies:

All councillors RESOLVED to ADOPT the following policies:

- IT Policy 2026
- Health and Safety Policy 2026

Members noted that the IT Policy supports the Council's data governance and AGAR Assertion 10 responsibilities, including secure council email, website hosting and dedicated council equipment.

Action: Clerk to post new policies onto Council website

11/26 To receive and approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26 and associated documents

- The Certificate of Exemption AGAR 2025/26 (page 3) was duly signed by the Chair and RFO in the presence of all Members.
- Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 (page 5) was duly signed by the Chair and RFO in the presence of all Members.
- Accounting Statement 2025/26 (page 6) was duly signed by the Chair and RFO in the presence of all Members.
- The Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26 (30 April 2026), carried out by Nicola Phillip, was reviewed by the Council.
- The Asset Register 2025/26 was agreed and duly signed by the Chair.
- The Bank Reconciliation for full year 2025/26 was agreed and duly signed by the Chair
- The Elector's Rights Statement, prepared under Regulation 15(2.b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, was duly signed by the Chair and will be published on the website along with the full AGAR report and audit documentation. The AGAR public inspection period was confirmed as 3rd June to 12th July 2026
- Elector's Rights Statement to be posted to the council website and parish noticeboards

Action: AGAR and Financial Reports to be posted to the council website

12/26 Apologies were received from County Councillor Cllr Jane Somper

13/26 To receive the Clerk's Report on past subject matters arising from the minutes:

See OMM 181 Report Pack - Appendix A for the status and outcome of previous matters.

The Clerk confirmed that Council's insurers said no extra cover is needed for works at Margaret Marsh Pond, subject to appropriate health and safety guidance, volunteer briefing, and signage.

14/26 To receive Parish updates:

East Orchard:

- Following various approaches to Dorset Council, they have now agreed to undertake remedial drainage work, which will hopefully alleviate flooding at the bottom of East Orchard Road.
- The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Thomas Church continues to explore the potential transfer of maintenance responsibility for the churchyard, including the active burial area, to the Parish Council. Members noted that any transfer would be subject to the required legal closure process and statutory procedures (S215 LGA 72). Members noted that any future transfer would need to be passed to Dorset Council within the statutory notice period due to the potential financial impact on residents. The Council will report when any further updates are received
- Cllr Christensen informed the council that Andy Tebbutt-Russell resigned in March 2026. Fortunately, he has been replaced by Cllr Philip Gay, who will now be added to the UTB list of authorised signatories.

Margaret Marsh

- The Marsh Pond project was reviewed. Members discussed removing the protective fencing and regenerating the area as a small nature space with possible seating for walkers. It was agreed that local volunteers could assist with ongoing maintenance, subject to appropriate health and safety guidance and volunteer arrangements being in place. Suitably insured contractors would undertake any major clearance or machinery work. Cllr Elliott and Cllr Stokes agreed to progress the matter.

West Orchard

- Councillor vacancy noted; residents encouraged to express interest.
- The wider Dorset planning and building issues were discussed, noting that the Dorset Local Plan has not yet been approved, which could lessen their ability to challenge private developer plans. In addition, existing neighbourhood plans can have some influence but should not be overruled by national policy. Cllr. Christensen will attend the next Planning and Building Control forum on 16 June in Dorchester.
- Local police have been putting up posters to highlight the local neighbourhood policing initiative. Additional posters to be put up in East Orchard.
- It was noted that several noticeboards are in poor condition and repairing them could be costly. Cllr Stokes will explore repair options. Additionally, the noticeboard at Bleax Close is often used to promote council activities, and the council agreed that it would be beneficial to adopt this noticeboard at no cost to add to the council's assets.

Action: RFO to organise for Cllr Gay to receive UTB Application and Submission forms.

15/26 To discuss any Highways, Bridleways and Footpaths issues:

Recent urgent closures have been posted on WhatsApp.
 Aspects of flooding were discussed elsewhere in the meeting. See item 14.
 Members of the public are encouraged to report any new faults or existing defects to Dorset Council at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/report-a-problem-on-the-road-or-pavement and www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/report-flooding

16/26 To comment on current Planning Applications:

Applications can be viewed at dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land.
 16.a/26: (P/HOU/2026/01811 and P/LBC/2026/01812) covering alterations to outbuildings at Gulliver’s Farm, East Orchard. Following a review, the PC has supported the applications.
Action: Cllr Christensen agreed to post application notices to the local WhatsApp group.

17/26 Financial Matters

See OMM 181 Report Pack - Appendix C for supporting reports.
 17.a/26: The Bank Reconciliation for April 2026 was APPROVED and SIGNED by the Chair alongside copies of bank statements.
 17.b/26: The YTD budget and forecast were received and noted.
 17.c/26: It was RESOLVED to APPROVE the new insurance quote and accept the reduced price offered for the three-year commitment for June 1st, 2026, to May 31st 2029
 17.d/26: It was noted that Unity Trust's monthly service fees are now £7
 17.e/26: It was noted that the direct debit of £47 Data Protection Fee is in place.
 17.f/26: It was RESOLVED to APPROVE payment of the Clerk's salary by standing order through to end of August 2026
 17.g/26: It was RESOLVED to APPROVE payment of Employer’s and Employee’s contributions to LGPS DC through to the end of August 2026
 17.h/26: It was RESOLVED to APPROVE Cllr Gay as an additional signatory on the UTB account.
 17.i/26: It was RESOLVED to APPROVE the following payments already made

Date	To Whom	For What	Total	[VAT]	Net
30/4/26	Service Charge	Unity Bank	7.00		

17.a/26: It was RESOLVED to APPROVE the following payments. It was noted that a reduction from £30 to £15 had been negotiated for the hire of Child Okeford Hall.

Date	To Whom	For What	Total	[VAT]	Net
13/3/26	Hall Hire - Child Okeford	Hall Hire	30.00		
31/5/26	Service Charge	Unity Bank	7.00		
30/6/26	Service Charge	Unity Bank	7.00		
31/7/26	Service Charge	Unity Bank	7.00		
31/8/26	Service Charge	Unity Bank	7.00		
20/5/26 - 30/8/26	Beverly Barker (April-August)	Clerk Net Pay £183.81 x 5	919.05		
20/5/26 - 30/8/26	LGPSDC Pension (April-August)	Employee + Employer £56.66 x 5	283.3		

Action: RFO to organise bank transfers for approval by two councillors

18/26 Communications:

The PC continues to contribute to the Orchards & More WhatsApp group. Communication to be removed as a standing item.

19/26 Training:

Cllr Christensen to attend Planning and Building Control forum on 16 June, in Dorchester.
Clerk to attend DAPTC webinar on the Introduction to Martyn's Law.

20/26 Correspondence:

- East Orchards defibrillator team has a new volunteer who has been added to the maintenance rota.
- Notification reminder of landline switch-off is planned for Feb 2027.

21/26 Matters pertinent: None reported.

22/26 To note any decision/actions taken by Parish Clerk

As per "Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, Part 3, Paragraph 6-10" Record of decisions and access to documents (for reporting purposes only). None reported.

23/26 To record any items for the next meeting agenda: Noticeboards: Adoption of Bleax Close Notice Board and costings for repairs

24/26 To record the date of the next meeting: Monday, 7th September 2026 at 6:30pm at Child Okeford Community Centre.

The meeting closed at 8:00 pm.

The draft minutes will be approved as a true record of the meeting when signed by the Chair.

Signed (Chair) _____ Date _____

Recorded by: Beverly Barker: Parish Clerk & RFO

Email: clerk@orchardsandmargaretmarsh-pc.gov.uk

Further information:

Parish Council information is available at www.orchardsandmargaretmarsh-pc.gov.uk. Please report highways and footpath issues to Dorset Council: Dorset Council Website: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/