

Minutes of Somerford Keynes Parish Council Meeting **Village Hall, 12th January 2026**

Present: Cllr A. Clark (AC), Cllr M.H-Oldland (MHO), Cllr J Whitwell (JW), CDC Cllr M McKeown (MM)

Also present: Clerk K.Holdsworth (KH), Mike Wilding (Village Lake) and one member of the public

1. Apologies

Cllr M. Keegan, Cllr H.Collins (HC), Cllr N.Hunt (NH), Cllr G.Valentine

2. Declaration of Interest

None

3. Public Session

There were no questions asked in the public session.

4. Approval of Minutes of 10th November 2025 Meeting

Proposed MHO , seconded JW

5. Report from CC Lisa Spivey

See Appendix One

Given the state of our local roads, there was some surprise expressed that Gloucestershire was one of only 16 authorities (out of 154) rated green in relation to its approach to dealing with the issue of potholes. The criteria are road conditions, what is being spent to make good and the following of best practice (for example, more permanent than temporary repairs). Whilst we appreciate there is large area to cover we want to ensure that our part of Gloucestershire is being addressed.

Action: MHO to draft note to LS to understand where our local roads fit within this programme.

6. Report from District Cllr M.McKeown

See Appendix Two

7. Report from Mike Wilding Village Lake

See Appendix Three

Over the past couple of years attendance has fallen at the Village Lake volunteer mornings. The Lake Committee are looking to set up an informal 'Friends of the Lake' group so if you could spare the odd hour to do a bit of work (and especially if you are someone who regularly enjoys the benefits of having the Village Lake space) the committee would be very grateful. Please drop a line to clerk@somerfordkeynes-pc.gov.uk

8. Finance and Governance

8.1 Precept for 2026/27

The Parish Council (PC) voted to keep the precept at the same level as last year, that being £6,300. A full report can be found in appendix four.

8.2 Auditor

It was agreed to appoint GAPTC (Gloucestershire Association of Parish & Town Councils) again.

8.3 .com e-mail address

This is now up and running, please note the PC's new email address is

clerk@somerfordkeynes-pc.gov.uk

The PC would like to thank Keith Holdsworth for his help in organising this.

8.4 Parish Council Policies

There seems to be more rules and process around the operation of even small parish councils. As such, we must have and publish various policies as we will be audited on such things. The following have all been agreed;

Risk Management Policy
Updated Financial Regulations
Standing Orders
Code of Conduct
IT Policy
Data Protection Policy

These will be published on the website under Parish Council Statutory Documents.
Thanks to KH and GV for their work on putting these together.

8.5 Clerks Salary

We had not changed the Clerk's rate of pay since 2023. An increase backdated to April 2025 has been agreed with a further increment added from this April. Hourly rates are based on those published by the National Association of Local Councils.

The work of the Clerk is essential to the functioning of the PC. Over the past couple of years the amount of money within SKPC has significantly increased which has created a larger and more complex workload. Additionally there are new regulations to follow as set out in 8.4. The PC thanks Karen for all her diligent hard work.

8.6 Church Staircase

A further payment has been made and work will be done towards the end of this month. We look forward to viewing the parish from the tower!

9. Dates for Diary

Village Litter Pick Saturday 28th March

PC AGM will be held on Friday 15th May 2026 in the Village Hall

10. Planning

25/02963/FUL

Full Application for Erection of garage, extension to west elevation, erection of two dormer windows and landscaping works at The Orchard Mill Lane Somerford Keynes Cirencester Gloucestershire

No Objection

25/03558/FUL

Full Application for Implementation of garden redesign including new pergola, outdoor cooking area, decking, updated paving, compacted gravel area replacing lawn and associated works at Dragonfly Island 57 Clearwater Village Lower Mill Lane Somerford Keynes Cirencester

No Objection

25/03759/FUL

Full Application for Erection of a garden machinery storage outbuilding at Somerford Keynes House Somerford Keynes Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 6DN

No Objection

25/03760/LBC

Listed Building Consent for Erection of a garden machinery storage outbuilding at Somerford Keynes House Somerford Keynes Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 6DN

No Objection

25/03963/FUL

Full Application for Variation of condition 9 (Holiday occupancy only) of planning permission ref. 25/01588/FUL (Variation of condition 9 (Occupation of holiday units) of permission 24/01495/FUL to allow all-year round occupancy of The Augusta House, 18 Clearwater Village) to allow all-year round occupancy of Beavers Retreat, 37 Clearwater Village at Beavers Retreat 37 Clearwater Village Lower Mill Lane Somerford Keynes Cirencester

No objection**25/04033/FUL**

Full Application for Erection of porch to front entrance and extension of decking to rear with associated works at 2 Lakeshore Reserve Lower Mill Estate Somerford Keynes Cirencester Gloucestershire

No objection**25/04037/FUL**

Full Application for Erection of three-storey rear extension and single-storey front extension with associated works at Peregrine House 19 Clearwater Village Lower Mill Estate Somerford Keynes Cirencester

PC to investigate**11. November & December 2025 Income and Expenditure****Income**

Interest Earned November 25 £222.72

Interest Earned December 25 £230.85

Total Income £453.57**Expenditure****December**

Black Nova Design £48.00 (Domain Registration)

Website Domain Renewal £15.59

Microsoft Email Hosting £66.24

Total Expenditure £129.83**Village Lake****£None****VL Total Expenditure****£None**

**CIL Expenditure
November**

Church Staircase Deposit £5586.00

Total CIL Spend £5586.00

Transfers £None

Petty Cash Expenditure £None

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Marcus Gibbons has held two more First Aid Courses. Once more feedback is very positive and the PC would like to thank him again for giving his time.

12.2 The PC was asked whether CIL monies could be used to support projects at Kemble Village School. As we have unallocated CIL money and a number of SK primary school age children go there it was agreed that this is something we could consider. This would also apply to other schools attended by children from our community.

Action: MHO inform Kemble Governors. Process would be that they would identify specific projects and we would vote on what (if anything) to contribute.

12.3 It was noted that SK had a good Christmas and we hope that this was the case for all residents. Many parishioners had outdoor lights, there were well attended community events in the Village Hall, church services and the Baker's Arms put on a number of festive evenings along with the well received reindeer hunt.

Its never (well, almost never) too early to start thinking about next Christmas and the PC wondered if anyone (or group, both adults and young people welcome to contribute) would like to think about some community decorations. If anyone would like to take ownership of this then the PC would provide funding for decorations. Let Karen know at clerk@somerfordkeynes-pc.gov.uk if you would like to participate,

12.4 As the last two items concern spending community funds we would remind everyone that there is still a substantial amount of CIL funding available, so if you have ideas on how to use this please drop a line to clerk@somerfordkeynes-pc.gov.uk
The completion of the bus shelter and the soon to be installed church staircase shows that the process of seeking support and projects being completed does work.

Meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Date of next meeting Monday 9th February 2026

Appendix 1

Cllr Lisa Spivey

GCC Update – Dec '25/Jan '26

LGR

All 7 councils in Gloucestershire took the Local Government Reorganisation through their councils in November 2025 with the result being that 4 councils opted for a single unitary preference (Gloucestershire County Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Cotswold District Council and Stroud District Council. Cheltenham Borough Council opted for the 2 unitary East/West split. Gloucester City went for their own 2 unitary model with a Greater Gloucester Council and a rest of Gloucestershire Council and Forest of Dean District Council said that they did not want any of the options.

The proposals went to government on the 28th November and government will conduct a consultation on all options it considers viable, most probably starting in February 2026 for 7 weeks.

We expect a decision on the model to be implemented in Gloucestershire before parliament's summer recess begins in July.

We are currently undergoing recruitment of a portfolio director for LGR. This is an incredibly important position which will guide us through the changes to local government.

This role will be funded by and work on behalf of all seven councils throughout the transition into new authorities.

The rest of the portfolio team will be recruited over the coming month and work continues on the various workstreams.

For parishes, the most important element will be how the neighbourhoods will be set up and what role town and parishes will want/be able to have in delivering services in their areas.

Budget

Like all councils, we are in the midst of setting our budget for the next few years. This year it has been a difficult process as the government has completely changed how it finances local government with the Fairer Funding Review seeing the re-distribution of money to the most deprived areas of the country. This has meant that Gloucestershire has been adversely affected and we have seen a much worse settlement than anticipated leaving us with £60million of savings to be found over the next 3 years in order to be able to balance our budget. We are working through this now and will have our budget meeting on the 18th February.

Being the first year as a new Liberal Democrat administration, we have used this opportunity to re-set how we deliver services and fund the priorities that residents told us were important during the election campaign. In our total budget of £697.5million, this includes £15million of extra money being put into fixing our roads and pavements, £2million towards funding the rollout of 20mph schemes where communities want them, and extra £337,000 into youth services, £500,000 to create a virtual social care academy to support carers across the county, £250,000 into improving cycling, investment into building 3 new care homes and 2 new specialist schools and many, many more positive actions.

We await the final settlement from government to be able to fully commit to these ambitious plans.

Scrutiny review

We have undergone a review of our current scrutiny system by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This is key in supporting us to develop the council's scrutiny system and ensure it is fully efficient and effective.

Members and officers were asked their opinions on the current scrutiny process. They provided valuable feedback such as increasing the focus on questioning and accountability and streamlining structures and reducing committees.

The presentation can be found here -

<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s114308/Glos%20Scrutiny%20Review%20Dec%202025.pdf>

We are awaiting the final report from CfGS which we hope to receive by the end of the year. We will then be looking to establish a workshop in the early new year, to take forward the recommendations and shape the future of scrutiny at GCC.

£2million boost for projects driving local growth and innovation

Gloucestershire City Region Board has approved major funding through the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) to boost innovation, jobs, and sustainable growth.

Seven projects will benefit, including a county-wide energy plan, careers hub expansion, inward investment support, advanced engineering growth, tourism data platform, Hartpury University's Resilient Futures Lab, and a new cyber-focused venture studio.

Together, these initiatives aim to strengthen infrastructure, attract investment, and create hundreds of jobs, positioning Gloucestershire as a hub for business, creativity, and long-term prosperity.

National endorsement for active travel

We are thrilled to have been awarded the prestigious Level 3 rating by Active Travel England (ATE) joining six authorities in the highest banding - recognising the county as one of England's highest performing authorities for active travel, and the only predominantly rural council to achieve this milestone.

ATE also announced our four-year funding allocation for Gloucestershire, an amazing near £18 million. This funding will be put to good use delivering an agreed programme of strategic schemes that meet ATE's requirements.

Employment summit

Key partners from across Gloucestershire came together to discuss how to support even more people in the county back to work at an Employment Summit.

We are now looking ahead to our latest government-backed initiative Connect to Work. This is a major new initiative launched in July 2025, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The programme is designed to help people with health conditions, disabilities or other barriers to employment move into or stay in meaningful work.

To find out more, please visit - <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/grow-gloucestershire/employment-and-skills-hub/>

Surge in flu cases

Flu cases are the highest on record for this time of year – 50% higher than last year. The Chief Medical Officers in Gloucestershire have issued an open letter with ‘top tips’ for the public as the county faces a surge in flu cases and a challenging winter.

Please find the letter here - <https://www.nhsglos.nhs.uk/news/take-action-to-help-you-your-families-and-the-nhs-this-winter/>

www.asapglos.nhs.uk can guide you through self-care options and provide information on the best service option for you to avoid unnecessary waits.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service win prestigious award

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) was honoured to receive the highest honour from the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) for its work on equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I).

This prestigious national award recognises the Service’s commitment to embedding ED&I throughout every layer of the organisation.

New Domestic Abuse Strategy

On 8 December Cabinet member Paul Hodkinson launched the new three-year Domestic Abuse Strategy.

The main aims of the strategy are:

- Preventing abuse before it starts.
- Supporting victims and survivors.
- Holding perpetrators to account.

Domestic abuse can affect anyone from any background. In 2023/24, almost 20% of all crimes reported to Gloucestershire Constabulary were domestic abuse.



Solidarity with Ukraine

Council Leader Spivey signed an agreement with the Zaporizhzhia Regional State Administration on 11 December 2025. This will see us work closely together on areas of mutual interest and wherever we can help each other develop.

**Winners chosen in Gloucestershire's
gritter-naming competition**

Our Gritters are essential for keeping public transport moving, helping children get to school and supporting the emergency services to safely reach people who need them.

Thousands of children from Gloucestershire's primary schools were offered the opportunity to take part in a competition to name the 29 gritters in the council's fleet.

This was a great interactive project with local schools, with over 540 entries.

Gritting McQueen, Grit-fire and Feathers McGrit are just three examples of local winning names.



Appendix 2

Report from Mike McKeown

Kemble Ward Monthly Report – December 2025

Prepared by: Mike McKeown

Councillor for the Kemble Ward

Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Digital Services

Cotswold District Council (CDC)

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Local Plan and Planning Matters

The **Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation** closed on 2 January. Regulation 18 is the early, evidence-gathering stage of the Local Plan process, where the council asks residents, organisations, landowners and developers for views on the overall approach and to put forward potential development sites. Around **2,000 responses** were received, which represents strong engagement from across the district.

Officers will now analyse those responses alongside the sites submitted by landowners and developers. Details of the proposed sites will be published, and the council will then move to **Regulation 19**, which is the formal consultation on the *draft* Local Plan. Regulation 19 is more focused and asks whether the plan is legally compliant and sound. This stage is expected to take place in **summer 2026**.

On the **Bledisloe Barns** application, additional information was received in December. A decision is now expected by the end of January. There is also a related application for a **Walled Garden** adjacent to the barns. While the garden itself appears acceptable in principle, I remain concerned about its intended use in connection with the barns and potential party-house activity. I have submitted comments and will continue to object. If officers are minded to approve it, I will request that it is referred to the Planning Committee.

Ward Engagement and Visits

I took **Jane Portman, the new Chief Executive of Cotswold District Council**, on a tour of the Kemble Ward. This was a valuable opportunity to highlight local issues, priorities and opportunities directly on the ground.

I also attended several visits with **Roz Savage MP**:

- A meeting at **Kemble Station** with West Midlands Railways to hear about proposals for a new direct service between Swindon and Birmingham. If approved by government, this would roughly double the number of trains passing through Kemble. The proposal is dependent on expanding capacity at Birmingham and would be delivered in the **early 2030s**.
- A visit to **Kemble Primary School**, where I spoke to pupils about climate change. I was very impressed by their understanding, their questions and how strongly they cared about both global and local impacts.
- A visit to **The Tunnel House Inn in Coates** to meet Peter, the new landlord, and see progress on refurbishment. Re-opening is hoped for around April. Alongside the planned re-opening of **The Wild Duck at Ewen**, it will be great to have another strong local pub back serving the community.

Climate Change, Energy and Environment

I attended the **UK100 parliamentary reception** in December. UK100 is a network of councils committed to climate leadership and Net Zero. The event brought together council leaders, industry and central government. I have also started **coaching cabinet members from other councils** who are part of the UK100 Climate Academy Class of 2025. As a 2023 graduate myself, this is a great opportunity both to support others and to learn from how different councils are tackling similar challenges.

I have been engaging with a consultation from **SSEN**, our local Distribution Network Operator. SSEN is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the electricity network. My responses focused on future grid capacity, making it easier for projects such as community energy to connect, and addressing residents' questions about local constraints.

There has been progress on **Kemble Wick flooding**. Aura Power, the solar farm developer, has implemented changes to reduce surface water runoff. The council's flood team and highways are now working on detailed implementation plans. I am hopeful this will reduce flood risk for the village. Increased flooding is one of the most visible local impacts of climate change.

I am also working with the council's **Home Energy Efficiency Officer** to plan events and free home energy efficiency surveys for residents in 2026.

Separately, through **Thames Head Community Energy**, we now have a **thermal imaging camera** that can be loaned to residents. It can help identify heat loss and where insulation improvements may reduce bills and emissions. I have also created an informal AI tool, the **Cozy Home Advisor**, which can provide guidance on home energy improvements. Both of these are community-led initiatives rather than council services. Please contact me if you would like to use either.

Community and Local Projects

I was pleased to see **Rodmarton Parish Council** raise **£3,824 through Crowdfund Cotswolds** to refurbish and relocate a historic phone box and turn it into a community asset, such as housing a defibrillator or a book exchange.

The **EV chargers installed by Thames Head Community Energy at Somerford Keynes Village Hall** are now live and in regular use. Local residents have signed up for reduced-rate charging.

I have been working with **Lower Mill Estate** and the council's mapping team to resolve address and mapping issues that have been causing problems for deliveries and emergency services.

Council Business and Governance

In December, **Cotswold District Council voted unanimously to recommend a single unitary authority option** for Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire. While both the one-unitary and two-unitary models could function, the detailed analysis showed that a single unitary would be **more efficient, deliver better public services, and avoid disruption to critical services**, particularly adult and children's services, during the transition.

The council's **budget consultation** for 2026/27 is open and closes on **14 January**. Residents are encouraged to share their views on priorities and pressures facing the council.

I was very sad to hear that **Councillor Andrew Maclean** is standing down due to serious health issues. I would like to thank him for his excellent service and wish him and his family well. A **by-election in The Rissingtons Ward** will take place on **22 January**.

For full CDC news see: <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news>

As always, please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss any of the above or raise local issues.

Appendix 3

Report from Mike Wilding Village Lake

Somerford Keynes Parish Council

QUARTERLY LAKE REPORT for Jan 26 Meeting

1. Volunteer mornings: It has become increasingly difficult to attract volunteers to our volunteer mornings, which were held on the 4th and 11th October. However essential cutting back of brambles etc..alongside the path, levelling out some tree root trip hazards with bark chips, potting up about a dozen oak saplings for future replanting & assembling our 2nd 4 wheeled barrow, were achieved by the three or four volunteers who came along. Some of our committee have found time available at a premium this year, due to family demands and work on other village projects.

Winter work will include the annual bonfire (for which we have permission from Natural England). This is usually a popular volunteer morning!

- 1. Lake water levels:** Following the lowest recorded since installation of our water gauge, two or three years ago, in the very wet December, our highest water levels were recorded. The gauge readings relate directly to Ordnance Datum (Newlyn)
- 2. Wildflower areas:** The main wildflower area was improving each year, and underwent its autumn maintenance, which was strimming down to ground level. The yellow rattle, which is a parasite on grass, sown each year was starting to do its job in keeping grass growth low, allowing the wildflowers not to be smothered. However we still have an invasive species, hog weed to deal with. A final close cut with the mower is required before daffodil shoots appear.

The snowdrop area (we plant more “in-the-green” each spring) was strimmed, to remove the thick scrub and nettles, that could otherwise suffocate the snowdrops when they appear in January. The snowdrop area requires regular maintenance.

4. Boardwalk: Investigation into the cause of the collapse of the oak post carrying John Sweet’s memorial plaque, found the cause not to be rot in the longitudinal timbers, but persons unknown being pushed against it. It was repaired by committee chairman and J Uncles (contractor) who also inspected all the longitudinal timbers and tightened the support bolts.

Autumn weather proved unsuitable for cleaning and oiling of the decking which is postponed until a dry spell in 2026

- 1. Budget:** The remainder of our £1250 Lake Budget for 25/26 will primarily be spent, wildflower areas overseeding and north side tree work in the late winter, ahead of the bonfire.

The Lake Committee: Mike, Nick, Lisa, Graham & Jane 31 Dec 25

Appendix 4

Somerford Keynes Parish Council **Precept 2026/27**

We recently published our half year financial statement for FY25/26. That looked all sources of income for the Parish Council (PC) including that from the Community Infrastructure Levy, interest on PC funds and VAT reclaims.

We have stated that we aim to cover operational expenditure from two predictable and known sources, those being precept and rental of our Parish Field. The latter will enter year four of a five year agreement with discussions already underway with the current renter around extending. Its income is guaranteed for FY26/27.

We last increased our precept in 2024/25 based on the additional administrative burden caused by managing CIL money and associated projects (resulting in the Clerk needing to work more hours) plus general inflationary pressures. We kept it at the same level in 25/26 and propose to freeze again for 26/27 based on the following;

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	Actual	Forecast	Forecast
<u>Income</u>			
Precept	£6300	£6300	£6300
Parish Field Rent	£1653	£1736	£1822
Total Income	£7953	£8036	£8122
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Clerk's Salary	£2673	£5434	£4477
Essential Spend	£1615	£1763	£1833
Expenses	£135	£264	£295
Village Lake	£1344	£1378	£1433
One Off – New Laptop	£400		
Total Expenditure	£6167	£8839	£8038

Explanation and Assumptions

Essential spend covers items like insurance, audit charges and subscriptions.

Expenses are items such as printer ink, stationery and funding for events such as the Annual General Meeting.

The Village Lake was gifted to the community by a gravel extraction company, as a public byway there are maintenance obligations for the PC which incur costs each year.

In the half year statement we explained that family issues around the end of March 2025 meant the Clerk's Q4 invoice was not submitted until early 2025/26. Thus there were three payments in 24/25 and will be five in 25/26. This resulted in a significant surplus for income in 24/25 and a deficit in 25/26. If the two are combined there is a surplus.

We have increased forecast 25/26 costs from the half year summary as we have awarded a back dated pay increase to the Clerk.

From 25/26 to 26/27 an inflationary increase in costs is assumed. No one off items are foreseen.

Whilst the surplus of forecast spend to known income is fairly small for 26/27 at the half year point in 26/26 the PC had a balance of £17916 in general funds, a buffer of over two times projected 26/27 expenditure.

We will gain additional income from interest on funds we hold and potential reclaims of VAT from 25/26 projects but do not count this in our forecast fixed spend so there is income upside.

Summary

We will keep the precept at the same level for 26/27.

This will cover forecast spend and we have sufficient financial buffers to provide for unforeseen activities.

We closely monitor all expenditure and projected costs and have reporting and processes to manage this effectively. We are confident that this level of management, scrutiny and transparency ensures that the finances of Somerford Keynes Parish Council are in a very good state.