

Chairman's Report – Yarlington Parish Council Annual Meeting – April 2026

Parish Councillors

Since the Annual Meeting last year there has been good stability amongst the Councillors. In May I was elected to Chair the Council Meetings, and John Whitehead was elected as the Vice Chairman. I would like to thank him for his support this year.

Following my election as chairman, Malcolm Hunt, resigned from the Council having decided that it was now time for him once again to cheer from the sidelines. His input to the Council over many years cannot be understated.

The vacancy created by Malcolm's resignation resulted in the co-option of Cameron Knee as a Councillor. Cameron's home is in Galhampton, thus adding a second Galhampton Councillor. As well as being responsible for farming land within the parish he also brings a direct link to the National Farmers Union where he is the Branch Chair for Yeovil.

Planning

During this last year the number of planning applications for review by the Council has fallen significantly. There were 8 on-site meetings (7 in North Cadbury and Woolston) and 1 in Galhampton. The Parish Council has been supportive in each of these applications.

The proposed development of 36 houses at Brookhampton by Origin 3 has progressed little since the meetings that were held with local residents last summer. Feedback from Somerset Planning on their Pre-Application came at the end of the year and they are now discussing that feedback with Somerset. Until that process is complete, they cannot finalise plans.

We understand that the decision to refuse the application to build 81 houses on Clare Field, North Cadbury still stands.

The Shatwell Farm Yard development, although not in our Parish, directly affects the residents of Yarlington. It looks to be moving ahead at pace, although the expected completion is not for a further 24 months.

The new farm development for the Newt below the Sleights is also progressing at speed with 4 of the 6 buildings erected and roofed. The expectation is that the buffalo herd will start to occupy the site from October.

Flooding

Following the flooding of 2023, the focus has moved on to preventing a recurrence. It was identified that during the flooding significant quantities of woody material were conveyed through the River Cam and created major logjams where there were constrictions, for example, bridges/culverts, bankside tree stems and restricted channel morphology. To quantify this risk, North Cadbury and Yarlington Parish Council commissioned and paid LT Ecological Services to undertake surveys in certain reaches of the River Cam between Pound Lane (Yarlington) and Ridgeway Lane (Brookhampton). The surveys identified the locations of major logjams as well as more significant accumulations of smaller woody material/debris.

In March this year the Cam Catchment Resilience Project (CCRP) and Yeovil Rivers Community Trust (YRCT), completed work on 21 substantial leaky woody dams in Galhampton, marking the beginning of a wider rollout of practical Nature based Solutions across the catchment.

There are still six major woody accumulations areas on the Brookhampton Reach that require careful management to ensure the balance between conveyance of flows and attenuation of flows in order to protect property and infrastructure. A SRA CFAF application to help cover the costs is considered to be appropriate and the CCRP/YRCT intend to apply in the first tranche of the 2026/27 financial year. The Parish Council has allocated £500 funding towards the project.

Parish Council Emergency Plan

All three village halls have put in place their emergency plans. They are available to view on the Council webpages. These now form the Parish Council Emergency Plan and need to be constantly reviewed as situations change.

Finance

As we finish the last financial year 25/26 and begin the 26/27 financial year, the Parish Council is in a solid financial position with a small excess of income over expenditure last year and a balance equalling one year's budget. This position allows the PC to continue to issue Grants to community projects when requested.

Examples of recent grants paid by the PC are, funding for additional Defibrilators and their upkeep across the Parish, a contribution towards North Cadbury Village Hall's new audio-visual equipment and Yarlinton Village Hall's new sides for the rear terrace.

Highways Maintenance

I am not sure if Chris Jose would consider that he is winning the battle of the potholes, but we are all very thankful to him for keeping on top of the situation and holding Somerset highways to account. Having spent the Easter weekend in Kent, I came away wondering if SCC are actually doing a pretty good job in the battle with potholes in comparison to Kent County Council! But then all things are relative!

Public Rights of Way

I have continued to be very ably supported by Susan Fone, our PPLO, and also by other members of the walking community, to monitor the many ROWs that criss-cross our Parishes and provide such enjoyment to people. We are blessed both by the beauty of our surrounding countryside, and also of those that care so much for them.

Somerset Council Councillors

The PC thanks both Henry Hobhouse and Kevin Messenger for attending so many of our Council Meeting, supporting the PC and passing on news and information from SC.

The Newt

Communications with the Newt continue to be very good with Zoe attending Council meetings, giving news of progress on various estate projects and also listening to any issues the Council and residents have had with activity on the estate. The Council is very grateful to Zoe for her contributions.

In December the Newt paid for drinks and food after the Yarlington Parish Christmas Carol Service, for which the residents and attendees were very grateful.

Antisocial Behaviour

Unfortunately, antisocial behaviour across the Parish is still present, in particular in the case of speeding vehicles. The PC is looking into ways to manage speed limits, although we must accept that simply changing speed limits will not change the behaviour of certain individuals.

Neighbourhood Plan

Andy Keys-Toyer has spent the last year monitoring the Neighbourhood Plan and any elements that need updating. In particular he has been providing a short analysis of how Planning Applications meet or conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan to Councillors before on-site planning meetings, which has really helped focus the discussions and decisions.

Local Community Network

Members of the Council continue to attend and support the Local Community Network meetings, although the benefit to us as a Council still seems to be disappointingly marginal.

Parish Clerk

On a personal basis I wish to publicly thank Becky for her support and guidance to me this last year as Chairman. I know that all the other Councillors think similarly and wish to thank her. She has helped smooth our way through this year, and we are very sad that she has decided to step back. After 20 years sterling support to the Council, you will definitely be missed. Thank you.

We have selected a replacement Parish Clerk, Sarah Goodman, who is here tonight and will over the next 6 weeks take over Becky's responsibilities. We welcome Sarah.

Nick Garrett

Chairman