

ENGLISHCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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DRAFT Minutes of the Assembly of the Parishioners of Englishcombe Parish held on Wednesday 4th June 2025 at 7:30pm at The Old Schoolhouse, Englishcombe.

Chairman of Meeting: Cllr Will Pow

Clerk to the Meeting: Jack Turner – Locum Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer.

The Annual Assembly minutes have been redacted as part of the General Data Protection Regulations and therefore, all parishioners' names have been redacted. These minutes are not a verbatim account of what was discussed.

1. Welcome and Introductions.

The meeting Chairman, Cllr Will Pow, opened the meeting welcoming all parishioners to the Annual Assembly. Cllr Pow introduced all Parish Councillors present as well as Cllr Matt McCabe from Bath and North-East Somerset Council to all Parishioners.

Cllr Pow then handed over the meeting to Cllr Anne Corlett, who gave a presentation on the meeting guidelines, the history of Englishcombe Parish, the duties and responsibilities of the Englishcombe Parish Council as well as the Parish Council's relationship with the Duchy of Cornwall.

Cllr Corlett then handed over the meeting to Cllr Mycroft Croisdale-Appleby, who presented the results of the Parish survey that had been conducted over the last few months. The survey returned 33 responses from 120 that had been sent out, however some of these responses did come from multi-generational homes which represented the views of multiple people. The survey was overwhelmingly in favour of having a community space with no responses against this. A variety of responses were received, with village events and parties/celebrations being the most sought-after items available in any new facility. There were concerns raised over parking and safety of children which was thematic in some of the responses. The report and presentation are appended to these minutes for further review.

Cllr Mycroft Croisdale-Appleby then handed the meeting back to Cllr Will Pow at the conclusion of the presentation.

2. A Special Space for the Parish – Open Forum.

Cllr Will Pow opened the meeting to the Parish and questions were answered by himself, the Locum Parish Clerk or Parish Councillors, where appropriate.

A resident raised a question regarding the low response rate and whether the communication of the survey was effective and whether the percentage of people within Englishcombe village, who responded, was tracked.

Cllr Mycroft Croisdale-Appleby responded stating that at least one survey was put through each person's door in the Parish of Englishcombe and some duplicate surveys had been issued, to those who had not realised what the document was. With regards to the percentage of respondents, this was not tracked during the survey.

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A resident commented that the survey held in 2012 had over 100 responses.

A resident stated that the survey was per household and the respondents in one survey could be many due to the amount of multi-generational homes within the Parish.

A resident raised the question on whether The Duchy of Cornwall would consider 33 responses as sufficient and whether there intended level of investment would be reflected through this low response rate.

Cllr Matt McCabe responded stating that in BANES terms, the response was generally ok and in line with other consultations that have been conducted within the local area. Cllr McCabe further stated that the usual good practice threshold for responses, is one third of a Parish.

A resident stated that The Duchy of Cornwall response and open letter to the Parish was realistic, and all the responses of the survey point in one direction. The resident was eager to know the next steps as they considered the options from The Duchy, to be reasonable.

A resident from Innox Grove stated that residents of The Grove have benefitted from The Old Schoolhouse the most. This resident stated that they were in support of option one from The Duchy of Cornwall, as outlined in their letter to the Parish, and they and other residents were ready to push ahead with applying for grants to bring The Old Schoolhouse back up to specification. The resident indicated that there was strong support from a good number of people and wanted to know if the Englishcombe Parish Council would support their endeavours.

Cllr Mycroft Croisdale-Appleby responded that the Duchy of Cornwall had been very clear in their letter that any interested parties would need to build a strong business case supported with financial capacity to ensure that the list of works that The Duchy requires, would be completed in a professional manner.

A resident commented that in Newton St. Loe, there was a thriving community hub that had taken over their Old Schoolhouse building and they now run that facility for the community. They are classed as a charitable group and rent the space off of The Duchy of Cornwall. The resident stated that the community could look at what other Parishes are doing, put a committee together to be responsible for all aspects of the legal, financial and maintenance structure to be able to run the building for the future.

A resident asked the question of how open Englishcombe Parish Council were on changing their position. Cllr Will Pow responded stating that at present, the Parish Council have taken a neutral stance and are committed to carrying out the wishes of the community as represented by the survey, which was to support a space for the Parish. Cllr Anne Corlett stated that the Parish Council does not have the financial capacity to support any group or indeed, the Parish Council, with carrying out these works and they would want to work with The Duchy to ensure there is a community building for the Parish. Cllr Corlett told the meeting that The Duchy could withdraw their offer of support to help a refurbishment of The Wheelwrights Barn, if the sale

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of the Old Schoolhouse fell through. The meeting noted that there was a risk that the community could end this process with no community space at all for The Parish, for the long term.

A resident raised a point stating that they had contacted The Duchy of Cornwall, who stated that they may be open to considering a fourth option which was to sell The Wheelwrights Barn and to use some of the proceeds to go towards bringing The Old Schoolhouse up to specification. The resident stated that The Duchy of Cornwall seemed open to discussion and would the Parish Council support this.

Cllr Will Pow responded stating that the Parish Council are taking a pragmatic approach to their communication with The Duchy of Cornwall and the relevant points of view raised by the community, through the survey and Parish assemblies.

A resident stated that any person or entity wishing to take on The Old Schoolhouse would not only need a capital resource to fund the works to bring it up to the required specification, they would also need proof of future cash for the immediate running of a building under the full-repairing lease that The Duchy of Cornwall were offering. The resident stated that the current building was not fit for purpose and a lot of work would be required to bring it up to specification.

The meeting noted that The Duchy of Cornwall would be getting out surveyors to survey the building and to compile a schedule of works that need to be done to the building in order for the building to remain operational. The meeting noted that the Duchy of Cornwall did not want to maintain the building going into the winter period.

A resident stated that if the reverse of what has been offered does happen and the Wheelwrights Barn is sold to fund the partial renovation of The Old Schoolhouse, what would the amount of proceeds be to fund the renovations as the Barn is likely to have a lesser sale value than The Old Schoolhouse. The resident also stated that the Wheelwrights Barn is leased on a long-term lease to the Parish Council and the breaking of this lease may be difficult when it comes to wanting to sell this property instead of The Old Schoolhouse.

A resident commented that there were grants available for community groups to maintain community spaces. This resident also stated that the community would need to be responsible for the day to day management of any facility probably on a 10-20 year basis, depending on what lease is issued.

A resident stated that whilst a business plan to renovate The Old Schoolhouse is feasible, it is a distinct possibility that the group could run out of money and what happens to the property when that happens.

A resident stated that in order to formulate a proper, professional business plan, the group needed more time from The Duchy of Cornwall as well as a full schedule of works along with a surveyor's report. The Clerk of the Parish Council would obtain this information after the meeting and communicate it to the Residents Action Group.

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A resident stated that it was needed to see if The Duchy of Cornwall could be flexible on their timescales in order for any interested parties to get their business plan in order.

In response to the above, a resident stated that the community could get an order entitled a 'Asset of Community Value' placed upon The Old Schoolhouse to preserve it for being sold for a further six months. Cllr Anne Corlett warned against this as this was likely to further complicate the situation with The Duchy and would probably result in the loss of a sale of any of the Duchy owned properties in the Parish, thus leading to increased tensions and frustration from The Duchy and residents alike.

A resident stated that once they had timescales, an indicative schedule of works and have scoped out potential funders, that they would be in a place to put together a fully costed business plan. The resident asked if the Parish Council could do this and Cllr Will Pow confirmed that the Clerk would do this. The meeting noted that this could be done in parallel with a letter from intent from the Residents Action Group which the Parish Council would pass on to The Duchy, once they had met to discuss the document, in order to ensure things are kept moving along at a good pace.

A resident stated that group did not have to raise all of the funds now but could raise the initial funds for the renovation then obtain further funding once the building has been leased to them.

The meeting noted that the community needs to be mindful of how they communicate with The Duchy and that all communication should be amicable and open. There was a general feeling that if the Residents Action Group wished to push ahead with their campaign, that they should be leading on this and not the Englishcombe Parish Council, as the Parish Council need to be represent the whole view of the community and not just one group. The meeting noted that the Parish Council could be happy to triage communication between the group and The Duchy, in certain circumstances.

A resident stated that a large number of the community wanted to keep The Old Schoolhouse.

A resident asked whether access to The Old Schoolhouse will be revoked once the lease has expired. Cllr Mycroft Croisdale-Appleby stated that there will likely be no access once the lease has expired and the site may be secured by The Duchy.

A resident stated that even if the Old Schoolhouse was put back to specification, the Parish would be without a community space for up to a year as the Wheelwrights was also not fit for purpose.

A resident queried whether The Duchy of Cornwall would sell The Wheelwrights under the current lease. It was noted that the lease would need to be broken for that to be considered.

A resident stated that there may likely be opposition to the redevelopment of The Wheelwrights from neighbours depending on the scope of works and what impact it would have environmentally and physically to those in close proximity.

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As the open forum drew to an end, Cllr Mycroft Croisdale-Appleby ran through the next steps in this process which included:

- Englishcombe Parish Council to present results of the community survey to The Duchy at a meeting in mid-June and to also feedback communication to The Duchy from both Parish meetings.
- The Residents Action Group to build their business case, if that was there wish to do so.
- The Parish Council to communicate with The Duchy, on behalf of the Parish.

A resident asked what the meeting held on the previous evening was and it was noted that this a meeting regarding the Residents Action Group, which was open for anyone to join. The resident stated that the Parish needs to be careful and to note have too many sub-committees and discussions without informing the community.

It was noted that the Residents Action Group should act in a more formal and professional manner with the presentation of their case, as it would be beneficial to them. The Residents Action Group stated they would keep the Parish informed.

3. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 6th May 2026 at 18:45.

The meeting noted that the date of the next ANNUAL Assembly of the Parish would be on Wednesday 6th May 2026 at 18:45, which will be a week before the meeting of the Annual Parish Council meeting.