

Dorchester Annual Parish Meeting 13th April 2026

Dorchester Abbey 7.30pm

Councillors Present Chairman Mike Corran, Vice Chairman John Taylor, Councillors Mike Atkinson, Chris Hill, Stephen Woods, Robin Jones, Becky Waller,

Approximately 200 residents attended.

Parish Council Annual Report 2025/6

The Chairman of the Parish Council Mike Corran gave his report, based on the following script.

Firstly, as a reminder of why we are here, we are required by law to hold an Annual Parish Meeting, a meeting of the electorate that elects the Parish Council, so you can hold us to account.

In this year's report

- I will give an update on council activity
- Our Clerk, Jenny, will give you an update on our finances
- We will take a few questions on these reports
- Then I will hand over to John Taylor who is going to lead an update of our 4 D2030 priorities to give an update – Pavilion, Traffic, Nature & Environment, Social Housing
- We will then update residents and answer any question we can about the decision by the Coop to close our Store

As always I would like to start my annual updates with some well deserved thanks for all the great work that goes on in our community. There are too many to mention but they encompass a vast range of activities that make our community what it is. Some of our update will touch on some of their work.

I would specifically like to thank your parish councillors who give their time and energy to change Dorchester for the better, no more so than in the last couple of weeks following the Coop announcement. As a group we have lively debates and share our opinions openly which is all the better for good decision making. Long may it continue.

And, of course, we are entering the final year of our current council term, with elections next Spring. And no doubt there will be a chance for others, maybe in this room to put their name forward to represent our community. Give it some thought, more about it all in a few months time.

I would also like to thank our district and county councillors, Robin Bennett and Gavin Mclauchlan, for their support for Dorchester, both practical and financial.

And one last thanks, to our Parish Clerk. This year Jenny has completed the transformation and modernisation of how Dorchester manages its operations and its money.

So, what has the Parish Council been doing for you apart from the Dorchester2030 initiatives?

- This year was the first year of our new grounds maintenance contract with BGG, which manages the rec, the allotments, the cemetery and the closed churchyard by the abbey, and we added more footpaths and verge areas. We are delighted both with their work and the extension we have made to the contract to better manage hedges and the routes to the bus stop in particular.
- We have been trying to smarten and improve the village and we hope you like the results so far. To list a few; the new orientation boards; the cleaned bus shelters on the bypass which we will now do regularly; the footpath to Meadside
- Each year the PC is allowed to make some donations and this year we have been able to help our local school with roadside safety, Green DoTs of course as well as local community assets that residents of Dorchester use such as Benson library, Citizens Advice and the Burrow at Berinsfield. We are always open to requests that help local groups, so please don't be shy, contact any councillor or the Clerk if you have an idea.

Planning has again not overly taxed the parish council this year until the Coop changes arose.

So, in summary, another year of progress on the basics of parish council life, but always with more to do.

At this point I'm going to hand over to Jenny to give an update on our finances for the past year.

Financial Report FY 2025/26 The Clerk/RFO gave a report.

The total Precept budget from SODC was £63,360.00.

Some budget lines were underspent, cost savings on the general grounds maintenance, less mowing and strimming due to dry summer. Cost saving son Administration and stationery/publications.

Year end there was a surplus of approximately £9000 which was transferred to the Reserves, and approximately just under £5000.00 was spent from this on the Pavillion Refurbishment program which is ongoing.

Reserves at 31 March 2026 £73,228.00

Annual Accounts will be available to anyone who wishes for a copy from 3rd June 2026 as the External auditor must received a copy before they are made available to the public.

The Chaiman then handed over the meeting to John Taylor who is going to update you both on Dorchester 2030 and then with Stephen Woods, will update you on the Parish Council's approach to the Coop changes.

See Appendix for the presentation.

We do now have the opportunity for any further questions before we bring this part of the evening to a close and then move on the formal Extra Meeting of the Parish Council.

NOTES ON D2030

To remind you we agreed 4 priorities in response to the D2030 survey we did in 2023

- to refurbish our pavilion
- to seek to promote affordable housing
- to address a range of traffic issues
- to develop a nature recovery plan

Councillors and others have been working hard on these priorities. We have made good progress on most fronts but rather than listen to me I'm going to hand over to the councillor groups who lead each element of our plan to give you an update. We will do this in the following order:

- Traffic – an update from Mike Atkinson
Much has been done to the bypass A40744 , re lining and 50mph limit signs to be installed July 2026. Thames Valley Police have relaunched their campaign against anti social behaviour (noise). Urged residents to report to TVP or contact MA, more reports then more action will be taken.
Speed Watch group formed and training on equipment use, will start in selected areas in the next few months.
Parking, some new white lines around certain junctions have helped. Relining of road markings liaison with Highways to get more done.
20mph stickers for your wheelie bin avail able collect one on leaving.
- Social Housing – now the Community Land Trust – John Taylor
Updated that the CLT is now incorporated and they continue to work with landowners and look at housing opportunities within Dorchester

Nature recovery plan – Mike Corran

- Plan has burst into life recently
- Focus is on what we as residents can do?
- We have some initial steps and will do more if residents are interested and get involved.
- Working with Abbey and their River of Life project
- Current priorities have been
Setting up a network of approx. 10 litter pickers that cover the village and its surrounds.
Making bird boxes available to residents at a discounted price of £10.00.
Launching a “My Garden Slot” in Dorchester News.
Considering if there are “informal” footpaths that may benefit from formalising. Also will discuss with landowners the best way forward.

- The Pavilion – Becky Waller

Presented the site plans, paper copies available to view. Progressing, awaiting final decision on Planning application and CIL Grant funds

The Co-op Shop

John Taylor opened the subject of the recent developments regarding the Co-op shop.

He invited the buyer Mr & Mrs Croft to read out the statement they had prepared, Mrs Croft read their statement, Appendix 1.

JT then began his presentation detailing SOS Save Our Shop Group initiatives and actions to date, Appendix 2. Following the presentation JT and Mr & Mrs Croft took a number of questions.

He invited the buyer Mr & Mrs Croft to read out the statement they had prepared, Mrs Croft read their statement, Appendix 1, and then took a number of questions.

The meeting closed with strong support for the SOS objective “To ensure a village shop continues to operate in Dorchester with long term security”.

Meeting closed at 21.00

