

COMPTONS TOLLER AND WYNFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on

Thursday 16th January

7.00pm at Compton Valence Village Hall

Present: Councillors:

Charles Sclater (Chairman) (Compton
Valence) (CS)

Chris Bennett (Wynford Eagle)

Ashley Stewart (AS) (West Compton) (Vice
Chair)

Jeremy Russell (Compton Valence)

Vacancy (West Compton)

Vacancy (Wynford Eagle)

Officer: Mrs Michele Harding, (Clerk)

In Attendance: Cllr Neil Eysenck (Ward Cllr)

Members of the Public: 4

25/01-1. Welcome and Housekeeping- The Chairman welcomed fellow Cllrs to the meeting and including 4 members of public including the Chair of Frome Valley Parish Council.

25/01-2. To receive apologies for absence. Cllr Simon Simpson.

25/01-3. To receive any declarations of interest or grants of dispensation- none

25/01-4. To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 14th Nov 2024.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed CB

Seconded AS

25/01-5. Matters arising for information only- The roundel replacement is ongoing, CS to provide pictures.

25/01-6. Democratic Forum-

A resident raised a concern regarding signposts that were requested 10 to 15 years ago in West Compton. He urged the council to ensure that this work is completed before any potential dissolution or changes to the council's structure. The Chairman responded by noting that one signpost is currently being maintained and repaired; however, progress has been delayed due to other circumstances.

The Chairman further commented that the staged withdrawal of the parish council would involve reviewing assets such as signposts, grit bins, and other maintainable items to determine their future management and ensuring there are funds to complete these projects.

A discussion followed regarding the challenges of merging with FVPC. The FVPC Chairman emphasized that this matter has not yet been formally discussed at the parish council level. She highlighted concerns about the lack of interest in council affairs and the uncertainties surrounding the responsibilities that would come with taking on another council's duties especially if Cllrs did not attend meetings.

CS noted that during the last election, no candidates initially came forward, and only later did five individuals volunteer to fill the seven available seats, leaving vacancies at Wynford Eagle and West Compton. It was also pointed out that a significant portion of the council's budget is spent on administration, with limited assets to manage, also that the Clerk is temporary, and the PC has had historical issues with recruiting a suitable candidate.

Chairman.....

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The council acknowledged that, geographically, it shares more common interests with Frome Valley Parish, which borders Chilfrome and Toller Fratrum, rather than with the larger neighbouring parish of Maiden Newton, Toller Porcorum or the parish meeting of Askerswell.

Another resident noted that many members of the community regularly benefit from the facilities available in Maiden Newton and Cattistock, such as shops, pubs, and recreational amenities. They emphasised that having democratic representation provides a stronger voice for the community, and that transitioning to a parish meeting should only be considered as a last resort. Also do the PC have an alternative if FVPC decline the grouping.

The Chairman noted that at this stage it would be likely that the PC will still dissolve and become 4 parish meetings.

It was noted that the overall situation is regrettable, with high running costs and a general lack of interest in parish council roles. The council stressed that the parish council serves as the foundation of the community and is best placed to facilitate positive change.

FVPC Chair noted that the FVPC meets 6 times per year, the meetings are not well attended by members of the public and out of the 10 Cllrs with 2 vacancies generally 8 or 9 Cllrs attend the meetings. There have been vacancies in Cattistock parish for about 7 or 8 years. Cattistock village has many community groups who have committees similar to Compton Valence. The other parishes have very few assets and have S106 monies that under the current criteria have no way of spending this money.

25/01-7. To consider the dissolution of the Group Parish Council

- a. **To resolve to dissolve the Grouped Parish Council known as “The Comptons Toller and Wynford Parish Council. (if agreed to arrange 4 parish meetings to resolve this option with the elector’s date to be agreed between 1st March and 1st June) This would mean a reduction to 1 Cllr per parish on the new grouped Council.**

CS explained that the Clerk had gathered information from electoral services and the DAPTC regarding the process that would need to be followed to form a grouped council with Frome Valley Parish Council, should all parties agree.

It was noted that there would be changes to the number of councillors to accommodate the larger council structure, with only four councillors being carried forward—one to represent each parish. To proceed further, a parish assembly would need to be held in each of the four parishes to formally agree to the proposal. These assemblies will be scheduled once all discussions have taken place and arrangements have been finalized. Following extensive discussions during the democratic forum, the Parish Council voted to resolve the dissolution of the grouped parish council, **“The Comptons, Toller, and Wynford.”**

Proposed JR

Seconded CS

All agreed.

Chairman.....

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- b. To resolve that if the 4 separate parishes are in agreement to apply to Dorset Council to join with the neighbouring Parish Council (Frome Valley Grouped Parish Council).**

The PC resolved to request that Frome Valley PC considers taking on the 4 parishes of Compton Valence, West Compton, Toller Fratrum and Wynford Eagle and make this application to Dorset Council if FVPC are in agreement.

Proposed JR Seconded CS All agreed

The Chairman thanked everyone for their comments and feedback and for the Chair of FVPC for attending to listen to the discussions and proposals.

Councillors agreed they will attend the Frome Valley Parish Council meeting on 27th January to engage in discussions and explore the feasibility of merging, ensuring all parties are in agreement before any final decisions are made.

Sara Palmer and a member of the public left the meeting at 19:52

25/01-8. Finance

- i. To agree to submit the precept request for 2025-26 in order that any costs uncured in grouping with FVPC are covered.**

It was proposed to submit a precept of £2600 as per the agreed budget for 2025-26.

Proposed CS Seconded JR

Cllr Neil Eysenck was asked to explain the letter that came out with the precept forms noting the tax base adjustment for Band D from second homes, NE will look into the calculations and come back to the PC.

- i. To approve all payments and receipts due or paid**

Payments		
Admin costs	Dec-Jan	420.00
Accounting software	Dec-Jan	28.80
Hugo Fox	Website Dec-Jan	23.98
CVVH	Hall hire- Jan	20.00
Receipts		
Interest		7.38

All payments were made in line with internal controls.

Proposed CS Seconded CB. Bank balance as of 16th January 2025 £5076.29

A request to contribute to the costs of running the defibrillator in Compton Valence at a cost of £150 towards new batteries and pads was agreed.

Proposed JR Seconded AS All agreed

25/01-9. To consider any planning applications or planning matters -None in circulation.

25/01-10. To consider any Highways or rights of way matters

Chairman.....

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- CS explained the issues still outstanding with the stream edge and potholes still not being repaired following a site meeting with the highways officer.
- Cllrs agreed to take pictures of all the fingerposts that require repair and ask Normtec to look at the repairs with grants from CPRE.
- Cllrs felt there were no grit bins required in the parishes at this stage.

A reminder of the road closure at Wynford Eagle was noted.

25/01-11. To consider any correspondences received and previously circulated.

Cllr Neil Eysenck provided an update from Dorset Council, covering several key topics.

Firstly, he highlighted the **scheme of delegation within planning**, urging parishes to clearly indicate whether they **support or object** to planning applications. He noted that in some instances, the absence of objections had led to confusion for case officers, resulting in approvals for applications that did not align with the parishes' actual views.

Neil then addressed his **ongoing concerns with highways**, stating that he has requested a meeting with highways officers. He expressed frustration with the current reporting system, emphasizing that reported issues are not being processed or actioned effectively. While he acknowledged the challenges posed by limited funding for highways, he stressed that he continues to receive numerous complaints from the parishes he serves regarding the lack of service improvements in this area.

Regarding **devolution**, Neil discussed the proposal to create a new “**Wessex**” region, which would involve Dorset, Wiltshire, and Somerset combining under a mayoral system to enhance strategic planning and funding opportunities. He mentioned that central government is encouraging Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) to join this initiative, with the goal of improving regional cooperation. It was noted that this process could progress rapidly, with an election anticipated in **May 2026**. The government’s intention is to streamline regional governance by reducing the number of authorities it deals with to 18-20; however, concerns were raised about the potential for additional layers of bureaucracy and associated costs. He also pointed out that with the loss of the rural support grant, participation in this new strategic authority could open access to alternative funding sources.

Finally, Neil commented on the **proposed grouping of parishes**, stating that after listening to the council’s discussions and reasoning, he understood the desire to merge with Frome Valley Parish Council. He acknowledged that remaining as a grouped parish council posed financial and administrative challenges. While the new arrangement would cover a larger area, he agreed that it could result in cost savings and greater efficiency while ensuring that each parish retains its voice within the council.

25/01-12. Date and Items for next meeting – 13th March 2025 at Compton Valence Village Hall.

To hold 4 Parish meetings followed by a Parish Council meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm

Chairman.....

Date