

Avon Dassett Parish Council

AGENDA

I hereby give notice that the ordinary meeting of Avon Dassett Parish Council will be held in The Reading Room on 2 March 2026 at 7.00pm, to which you are summoned for the transaction of the following business

Cllr Trevor Gill (Vice Chair), Cllr Liz Hirst, Cllr Alex Jackson, Cllr Darrell Muffitt (Chair)

The meeting is open to the public and the press, who are welcome to attend the duration of the meeting* and may raise questions or comment on agenda items during Public Participation. Members of the public are not expected to speak at any other time during the meeting.

*Occasionally members of the public and press may be required to leave the meeting if the council resolves to consider 'confidential business'

- 1. Record of Members Present**
- 2. To Receive Apologies and the Reasons for Such Absence**
- 3. To receive the Declarations of Personal or Pecuniary Interests**
- 4. Public Participation - to receive any questions or presentations from the public**
(15 minutes will be allowed for this item)
- 5. To approve the Minutes of previous meeting:**
 - 5.1 Parish Council meeting held on 5 January 2026
- 6. To receive Progress Reports on Outstanding Items not covered later on the agenda (See Clerk's Report)**
 - 6.1 To confirm the completed actions – see Parish Clerk's report
- 7. County and District Councillor Reports**
 - 7.1 Warwickshire County Council
 - 7.2 Stratford District Council
- 8. Planning**
 - 8.1 None
- 9. Community**
 - 9.1 To review the playground maintenance plan
 - 9.2 To consider the maintenance of the Reading Room
- 10. Highways, Street Lighting and Footpaths**
 - 10.1 To receive an update on highways, street lighting and drains
- 11. Finance**
 - 11.1 To approve the payments in the schedule attached to this agenda
 - 11.2 To receive the financial statements for the period ended 24 February 2026
 - 11.3 To confirm the date of the internal audit
 - 11.4 To approve the quote of £220 for the internal audit
- 12. Policies**
 - 12.1 Communications policy
 - 12.2 Complaints policy
 - 12.3 Habitual and Vexatious Policy
- 13. Councillor vacancy**
 - 13.1 To receive an update on the councillor vacancy
- 14. Annual Parish Meeting**
 - 14.1 To consider the arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting
- 15. 2026/27 meeting dates**
 - 15.1 To consider the 2026/27 meeting dates
- 16. Local Government Reorganisation**
 - 16.1 To consider making representations on the Local Government Reorganisation consultation

17. Correspondence (for information only)

18. Councillors' Reports

To report on minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda

19. Items for the Next Agenda

To raise items for future agendas.

20. Date of the next meeting: 11 May 2026 (Annual Parish Council meeting)



Parish Clerk – Joanne Jarman

Email: clerk@avondassettparishcouncil.gov.uk

Tel: 07809 197817

Website: avondassettparishcouncil.gov.uk

Dated: 25 February 2026

AVON DASSETT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Ordinary meeting held on 5 January 2026

1. PRESENT

Cllr Trevor Gill (Vice Chair)
Cllr Alex Jackson
Cllr Darrell Muffitt (Chair)
Cllr Natalie Gist (SDC)
Cllr Chris Mills (WCC)
Joanne Jarman (JJ) – Parish Clerk (minute taker)

One member of the public was present.

2. APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Hirst. Councillors sent their best wishes to Cllr Hirst for a speedy recovery.

3. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL OR PECUNIARY INTEREST

None.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No matters were raised.

5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllr Jackson proposed that the minutes of the Parish Council held on 3 November 2025 be approved.

Seconded: Cllr Muffitt

It was resolved that the minutes be approved.

6. TO RECEIVE PROGRESS REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING ITEMS NOT COVERED LATER ON THE AGENDA

The Clerk's Report (Appendix A) forms part of these minutes. The completed actions are referred to in the report.

ACTION: Tree warden to continue to be chased for quote for cutting back the trees overhanging the cemetery – Clerk

7. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS

7.1 Warwickshire County Council

Cllr Mills presented the report. He noted the swift gritting of the roads in the recent cold weather.

Cllr Muffitt noted the Unitary Authority submissions by WCC and SDC contained similar arguments but drew different conclusions.

7.2 Stratford District Council

Cllr Gist presented the report. Police and Crime Commissioner is consulting on the precept - :

<https://www.warwickshire-pcc.gov.uk/key-information/financial-information/police-precept-options-explainer/>

Cllr Gist will be meeting with the new Community Support Officers.

The reports are available on the [Parish Council website](#)

8. PLANNING

None

9. COMMUNITY

9.1 To receive the playground maintenance plan

The report was circulated prior to the meeting.

The Clerk highlighted that the Multiplay equipment requires maintenance and could be rated as high risk at the next annual inspection. Cllr Muffitt noted that repairs have been made to the gate.

9.2 To consider the business case for the replacement of the junior bay swing

The Business Case was circulated with the agenda.

It was acknowledged that the Parish Council did not have the funds to replace the swing without a grant. Should the grant application not be successful the following are the options:

- Retain the swing and monitor its condition until it fails, accepting the risk
- Dispose of the swing and related matting
- Fundraise with the specific purpose of replacing the swing

Cllr Muffitt noted that the business case has been received and would be considered subject to any grant received.

Cllr Gill suggested that a public works loan could be obtained to fund the replacement of playground equipment.

9.3 To consider making a grant application for the replacement of the junior bay swing

Cllr Muffitt proposed that a grant application in line with the business case be approved.

Seconded: Cllr Jackson

It was resolved that the grant application be made

ACTION: Grant application for the junior bay swing to be submitted by the deadline of 31 January 2026 – Cllr Muffitt/Clerk

9.4 To consider a possible location for the Air Ambulance clothes bank

See Clerk's Report. No other location was considered suitable.

9.5 To consider taking on a project to arrange for cables to be put underground with National Grid

See Clerk's Report.

It was agreed that the Parish Council does not have the capacity to take on this work and suggested that residents work together should they wish to progress this.

Cllr Gill noted that he had asked National Grid for information on which properties in the village currently have overhead cables but they did not hold this information.

10. HIGHWAYS, STREET LIGHTING AND FOOTPATHS

10.1 To receive an update on highways, street lighting and drains

It was reported that the leaves in Church Hill have been cleared by residents. The Parish Council thanked those residents on behalf of the village.

Cllr Gist has reported two potholes.

10.2 To receive an update on the streetlight upgrade

See Clerk's Report.

The streetlight on Park Close is included in the 2026/27 budget.

Cllr Muffitt thanked Cllr Gill for his work on bringing phase 1 of the project to completion.

10.3 To confirm the emergency expenditure of £1,320 authorised by the Clerk for the installation of a streetlight outside of Home Farm House and the removal of the light and cabling from Home Farm House

The lighting in this area was poor and left the area vulnerable. The Clerk authorised the installation of the light.

11. FINANCE

Finance documents are available on the Parish Council website <https://avondassettparishcouncil.gov.uk/finance/>

11.1 To approve the payments in the schedule attached to this agenda

The payments schedule – Appendix B forms part of these minutes.

Proposed: Cllr Muffitt

Seconded: Cllr Jackson

It was resolved that the payments be approved

11.2 To review the financial statements to 31 December 2025

Proposed: Cllr Muffitt

Seconded: Cllr Gill

It was resolved that the financial statements be accepted.

ACTION: Bank signatories and online approvers to be reviewed and updated – Clerk

11.3 To consider the 2026/27 budgets

The budgets were circulated with the agenda.

A discussion took place about the 25.12% percentage increase in the Precept that is required to ensure that work to the streetlights and war memorial are fully funded and reserves maintained. It was noted that this represented £3.31 per Band D property per month

Cllr Muffitt suggested a 15% increase in the Precept; the Clerk reported that this represented £1.76 per Band D property per month. This would leave a predicted shortfall in the maintaining of reserves at 12 months expenditure of about £1,500.

The Clerk also stated that the Parish Council has to live within its means and that it might be that not all projects can be funded.

A discussion took place on the justification of a 25.12% increase in the Precept. It was noted that the council tax charge is high in comparison to other villages due to the small number of houses in the village.

Cllr Jackson proposed that the budgeted expenditure and non-precept related income be approved.

Seconded: Cllr Muffitt

It was resolved that the budgeted expenditure and non-related income be approved

11.4 To approve the Precept request for 2026/27

Cllr Muffitt proposed the Precept be increased by 15% and set at £20,252 (25.12% = £22,350).

Seconded: Cllr Jackson

Cllr Gill advocated for a 25% increase but accepted the majority vote for a 15% increase.

It was resolved to set the Precept at £20,252 for 2026/27

ACTION: Precept request for £20,252 to be submitted to SDC – Clerk

11.5 To confirm the appointment of the internal auditor

Cllr Jackson proposed that Bill Robinson be approached to carry out the internal audit for 2025/26

Seconded: Cllr Muffitt

It was resolved that Bill Robinson be approached to carry out the internal audit for 2025/26 and a quote be obtained for approval.

The Clerk confirmed that an external audit will be required this year as the street light upgrade has taken expenditure over the exemption limit.

12. COUNCILLOR VACANCY

12.1 To receive an update on the councillor vacancy

The Clerk confirmed that no applications have been received

13. CORRESPONDENCE

None

14. COUNCILLORS REPORTS

Nothing to report

15. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

2026/27 meeting dates

Communications policy

Complaints policy

Habitual and Vexatious Policy

Annual Parish Meeting

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Ordinary Parish Council meeting – 2 March 2026

The meeting closed at 7.42pm

Signed:

Date:

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:

Tree warden to continue to be chased for quote for cutting back the trees overhanging the cemetery – Clerk

Grant application for the junior bay swing to be submitted by the deadline of 31 January 2026 – Cllr Muffitt/Clerk

Bank signatories and online approvers to be reviewed and updated – Clerk

Precept request for £20,252 to be submitted to SDC – Clerk

APPENDIX A
Avon Dassett Parish Council
Parish Clerk's Report – 2 March 2026

Agenda Reference – 5.1.2026	COMPLETED ACTIONS
9.3	Grant application to the SDC Community Fund It was established that in order to apply for a grant the Parish Council needed to own or hold a lease on the playground. The Clerk was informed that the application would be rejected if neither of these were held. As a result, the application was not submitted.
11.2	Bank signatories and approvers Cllr Jackson has been added as a signatory and previous councillors and clerks removed. Cllr Hirst has been sent the link to apply for online banking to enable her to approve payments.
11.4	Precept Request The request was submitted on 6 January 2026.
	ACTIONS NOT COMPLETE
6	Tree warden to obtain quotes to trim back the trees overhanging the cemetery car park – the Clerk has asked the tree warden to obtain quotes. These have not been received yet.
Agenda Item – 2.3.2026	
9.2	Maintenance of the Reading Room A representative from one of the groups that uses the Reading Room is highlighted that it is in need of some maintenance. The areas that were specifically mentioned were the paintwork both inside and out and some wood missing from one of the front windows. It is proposed that a review of the state of repair of the Reading Room be carried out and a plan be drawn up for the work to be carried out, including costings, for the next meeting.
11.3	Internal Audit The internal audit will take place on 13 April 2026.
14.1	Annual Parish Meeting The Annual Parish meeting needs to be arranged. Sarah Richardson has offered to take this on again this year. We asked parishioners if they would like to take it on last year and had no takers last. The proposed date for the meeting is 18 May 2026.
15.1	2026/27 meeting dates Meetings will continue to take place on the first Monday of every month, unless it is a bank holiday. Meetings will be held as follows: • 11 May 2026 (Annual Parish Council meeting) • 6 July 2026 • 7 September 2026

	• 2 November 2026 • 4 January 2027 • 1 March 2027 • 10 May 2027 (Annual Parish Council meeting)
16.1	Local Government Reorganisation The government has started its consultation on the proposal for local government reorganisation in Warwickshire. The deadline for responses is 26 March 2026. The link to the consultation is as follows: Proposals for local government reorganisation in Warwickshire - GOV.UK The Consultation questions are: <i>Having considered the proposals at the links above, please respond to the following questions:</i> Question 1 <i>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?</i> Question 2 <i>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?</i> Question 3 <i>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?</i> Question 4 <i>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?</i> Question 5 <i>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?</i> Question 6 <i>To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?</i> Question 7 <i>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?</i> Question 8 <i>If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-7 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on the proposal.</i> <i>For each question, you can provide the following answers:</i> • strongly agree • somewhat agree • neither agree nor disagree • somewhat disagree • strongly disagree • don't know <i>You will also be invited to explain your answers to questions 1 to 7 using a free text box at question 8.</i>
For Information	
	Accessibility

	I attended a presentation recently on making documents as accessible as possible. To this end the agenda and minutes is in a slightly different format to enable the Parish Council so meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. Policies and other reports will be updated to meet the guidelines as they fall due for review.
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PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS - to 24 FEBRUARY 2026

Date	Payee	Total Payments	Total Receipts
6.1.2026	ENC	1,320.00	-
6.1.2026	J Jarman expenses	16.20	-
2.1.2026	Google	14.00	-
8.1.2026	M and D Watts	16.25	-
8.1.2026	TFM Farm and Country	50.57	-
12.1.2026	Bank charges	4.25	-
13.1.2026	Charlie Dancer	120.00	-
19.1.2026	Valda Energy	65.19	-
20.1.2026	EDF Energy	102.89	-
20.1.2026	J Jarman	397.28	-
23.1.2026	Sky	38.94	-
28.1.2026	Ionos	1.20	-
2.2.2026	British Gas (last street light elec)	5.76	-
2.2.2026	Google	14.00	-
5.2.2026	VAT refund to 31.1.2026	-	3,670.38
11.2.2026	M&D Watts	16.81	-
16.2.2026	Bank charges	4.25	-
17.2.2026	EDF Energy	44.28	-
20.2.2026	J Jarman	397.28	-

AVON DASSETTT PARISH COUNCIL PAYMENTS FOR AUTHORISATION MEETING DATE: 2 March 2026

D Watts	Coffee morning - April and May	50.00
J Jarman	Travel expenses x 1 (2.3.2026)	16.20
C Dancer	Cleaning - April and May	80.00
		146.20

AVON DASSETT PARISH COUNCIL 2024 - 2025 FINANCIAL YEAR
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD TO
24-Feb-26

	Year to Date	Budget	Variance	Year ended 31 March 2025
<u>RECEIPTS</u>				
Precept	17,610.00	17,610.00	0.00	15,610.00
Interest Received	157.62	240.00	(82.38)	264.64
Burial Ground Fees	0.00		0.00	200.00
Donations from Village Events	500.00		500.00	371.45
Church Steps	100.00		100.00	50.00
Hire of Reading Room and Car Park	30.00	340.00	(310.00)	505.00
Hire of Reading Room for elections	350.00			
Donations for stolen tubs	235.10			
Mowing Refund	1,167.17	963.00	204.17	1,117.86
FOI fees	0.00		0.00	
VAT Reimbursed	4,730.77	800.00	3,930.77	1,340.01
	£24,880.66	£19,953.00	£4,342.56	£19,458.96
<u>PAYMENTS</u>				
<u>Reading Room</u>				
Cleaning	160.00	480.00	(320.00)	280.00
Electricity	445.76	700.00	(254.24)	650.91
Maintenance	85.35	265.00	(179.65)	245.03
Broadband	330.22	353.00	(22.78)	352.80
	£1,021.33	£1,798.00	(£776.67)	£1,528.74
<u>Administration</u>				
Clerk's Salary	4,369.88	4,828.00	(458.12)	4,307.50
Training	-	252.00	(252.00)	-
Audit fees	220.00	200.00	20.00	200.00
Data Protection	47.00	35.00	12.00	35.00
Election Fees	-	-	0.00	-
Councillor and Clerk Expenses	191.00	300.00	(109.00)	594.04
Subscriptions	225.60	220.00	5.60	218.00
Insurance	789.84	662.00	127.84	-
	£5,843.32	£6,497.00	(£653.68)	£5,354.54
<u>Village Maintenance</u>				
Street Light upgrade	16,500.84	150.00	16,350.84	267.10
Street Light Electricity	1,019.34	960.00	59.34	437.12
Mowing	3,591.60	4,406.00	(814.40)	3,672.00
Cemetery maintenance	440.00	500.00	(60.00)	299.29
Tubs	406.83	200.00	206.83	361.90
	£21,958.61	£6,216.00	£15,742.61	£5,037.41
<u>Playground</u>				
Inspection	115.20	118.00	(2.80)	172.80
Equipment and Repairs	686.01	1,000.00	(313.99)	-
	£801.21	£1,118.00	(£316.79)	£172.80
<u>Communication and IT</u>				
Website	12.00	305.00	(293.00)	1,326.00
Email Accounts and IT	143.07	144.00	(0.93)	497.92
	£155.07	£449.00	(£293.93)	£1,823.92
<u>Miscellaneous</u>				
Coffee Morning Expenses	155.48	240.00	(84.52)	229.72
Section 137	-		0.00	362.66
Section 145 - Entertaining and Events	40.06		40.06	100.00
Defibrillator	309.60	189.00	120.60	365.65
Bank charges	47.17			4.25
Community Projects	60.00		60.00	172.92
PWLB loan repayments		1,291.00		
	£612.31	£1,720.00	£136.14	£1,235.20
	£30,391.85	£17,798.00	£13,837.68	£15,152.61
<u>NET RECEIPTS OVER PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR TO DATE</u>				
	(£5,511.19)	£2,155.00	(£9,495.12)	£4,306.35

Bank Reconciliation

Current Account	7,771.73
Deposit Account	14,346.05
Total Bank Balances	£22,117.78

	Balance at 31.3.2025	Paid out/in	Balance carried forward
Earmarked Reserves			
Website	250.00		250.00
Village Cemetery	825.71		825.71
Reading Room Maintenance	40.00		40.00
Tubs		-297.12	297.12
Playground	1,700.00	-400.00	2,100.00
General Reserves	£19,302.07		

Overspend to be recovered	
St John's Steps Appeal Funds	£312.29
Receipts	
8.5.2024	-50.00
23.6.2025	-100.00
24.6.2025	-100.00
Plaques bought	
14.5.2024	40.00
23.6.2025	40
Overspend balance	£142.29

Avon Dassett Parish Council

Communications Policy

Avon Dassett Parish Council

Communications Policy

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This policy was approved by the Parish Council meeting on 2 March 2026. It will be reviewed every three years.

Avon Dassett Parish Council

Communications Policy

1. Aims

Avon Dassett Parish Council “the Parish Council,” aims to establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between the Parish Council and the Parishioners, and vice versa.

To provide information on important matters in an appropriate manner and also to facilitate and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

It will aim to use clear and established methods of communication and wherever possible will seek to use appropriate channels of communication.

2. Introduction

Each Parish Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interest of the whole community. They will endeavour to do their best and are available to help Parishioners with regard to matters relating to the parish of Avon Dassett.

If the matter is important, parishioners should be asked to send a letter or an email to the Clerk to ensure that this will be brought before the Parish Council and dealt with in a suitable and professional manner.

If parishioners wish to communicate with the clerk in confidence, they should write directly to them by post to:

Avon Dassett Parish Council
The Reading Room
Avon Dassett
Southam
Warwickshire
CV47 2AL

3. Bi- Monthly Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council will usually meet 6 times per year (with addition extra meetings as necessary) in The Reading Room, Avon Dassett and the dates will be published in the minutes for meetings and also on Avon Dassett Parish Council’s website. Meetings are open to members of the public and our local Stratford on Avon District and Warwickshire County Councillors are usually in attendance.

We will meet the statutory notice periods required to advertise Parish Council meetings. Agendas and Minutes will be published on the Avon Dassett Parish Council website, made available to the Avon Dassett Community website and displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard. In addition, subscribers to our internal communication facility will receive an email advising them of the dates for meetings, or that the respective agendas and minutes are available and also giving them a link to the relevant documents on the Parish Council website.

4. Annual Parish Council Meetings

The Annual Parish Council Meeting will be held in May when Councillors will elect the Chair and appoint the Vice Chair for the forthcoming year.

Avon Dassett Parish Council

Communications Policy

5. Email Correspondence

Councillors are required to use .gov.uk email addresses provided by the Parish Council for emails relating to Parish Council business.

If emails which relate to Parish Council matters, are received by councillors to their personal email accounts they should be forwarded to their gov.uk email addresses and the originator informed of the correct email address.

All emails between Councillors or Councillors and the Clerk are to be treated as strictly confidential irrespective of whether they are marked as such.

6. Avon Dassett Parish Council Website

Avon Dassett Parish Council operates its own website for the provision of information to Parishioners and the world at large. It will be maintained by the Clerk.

The website gives full contact details and also a communications forms to enable contact with us from our website

7. Email Facility

Avon Dassett Parish Council has developed and implemented a secure mailing list that we will anonymise and use as the basis for communications and distribution. To enable us to achieve this the express agreement of each resident who wants to be contacted by email will be obtained.

This facility will circulate information on behalf of Avon Dassett Parish Council. It will also, upon receipt of a specific request, circulate information on behalf of local clubs, societies and fund raisers. It will not circulate information on behalf of local businesses where to do so would imply support for that particular business entity.

8. Social Media

Avon Dassett Parish Council, will, where appropriate, use social media to supplement its communication facilities.

9. Paper

When requested, Avon Dassett Parish Council will deliver paper copies of communications to residents.

Avon Dassett Parish Council

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This policy was approved by the Parish Council at its meeting on 2 March 2026 and will be reviewed every three years.

Avon Dassett Parish Council “the Parish Council,” is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the Parish Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the Parish Council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the Parish Council and how we will try to resolve your complaint.

This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about Parish Council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how parish council employees have dealt with your concerns.

This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:

- a) complaints by one Parish Council employee against another Parish Council employee, or between a Parish Council employee and the Parish Council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the Parish Council’s disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- b) complaints against Councillors. Complaints against Councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Parish Council annually and, if a complaint against a Councillor is received by the Parish Council, it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer, Stratford on Avon District Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against Councillors is available at <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/council-democracy/complaints-about-councillors.cfm>

The appropriate time for influencing Parish Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Parish Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Parish Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Parish Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Parish Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Parish Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Parish Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

You may make your complaint about the Parish Council’s procedures or administration to the Clerk. The Parish Council prefers that any complaints are made in writing but you can also arrange to speak by phone or in person in advance of submitting your complaint in writing. The addresses and numbers are set out below.

Wherever possible, the Clerk will try to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the Clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within ten working days.

If you do not wish to report your complaint to the Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council who will report your complaint to the Parish Council. The Clerk or the Parish Council (as appropriate) will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you and/or from staff or members of the Parish Council.

The Clerk or the Chairman of the Parish Council will notify you within 28 working days of the outcome of your complaint and of what action (if any) the Parish Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. (In exceptional cases the twenty-eight working days timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept informed.)

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the full Parish Council and (usually within ten weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

Habitual and vexatious complaints are dealt with under the Habitual and Vexatious Complaints Policy.

Contacts

Please refer to the Contacts page on the Parish Council's website

<https://avondassettparishcouncil.gov.uk/contact/>

Avon Dassett Parish Council

HABITUAL OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy was approved at the Parish Council meeting on 2 March 2026. It will be reviewed every three years.

Background

This document sets out guidance and procedures to help deal with people who repeatedly complain to Avon Dassett Parish Council “the Council” or who complain in an unreasonable way.

The Council will endeavor to deal with all complaints in an efficient and effective manner. However, the Council may have to initiate further action, if the complainant behaves in ways which can impede the investigation of the complaint; have significant resource implications; hinder the complaints service for others; be offensive, abusive or threatening.

There are times when nothing further can be done to solve a real or perceived problem and continual contact with the person complaining is time consuming and costly for the Council.

This document explains how the Council will decide if a complaint should be classed as habitual or unreasonable. It then gives advice about how the complaint should be recorded. Finally, options are listed to help process such complaints or cease contact with complainants.

Introduction

This policy identifies situations where a complainant or complainants, might be ‘habitual or ‘vexatious’ and ways of responding to these situations.

In this policy the term habitual means ‘done repeatedly or as a habit’. The term vexatious means irritating, annoying or causing distress. This policy is intended to assist in identifying and dealing with persons who seek to be disruptive to the Council through pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct.

It is recognised that complainants can use repeated Freedom of Information “FOI” requests, the advice on the Information Commissioners web site suggests Councils should treat all requests for information as FOI requests, or Subject Access Requests as a means of perpetuating a complaint which has been determined and therefore the term complaint in this policy includes requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 as well as those made under the Council’s complaints procedure.

Habitual or vexatious complainants can be a problem for Councilors and Council staff. The difficulty in handling such complainants is that they are time consuming and wasteful of resources in terms of Officer time and displace scarce human resources that could otherwise be spent on other Council priorities. Whilst the Council endeavours to respond with patience and sympathy to the needs of all complainants there are times when there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or to rectify a real or perceived problem.

Habitual or Vexatious Complainants

For the purpose of this policy the following definition of habitual or vexatious complainants will be used:

The repeated and/or obsessive pursuit of:

unreasonable complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes; and/or
reasonable complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Where complainants continue and are considered to be habitual or vexatious in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule A, the Clerk or Chairman will inform the individual informally that their behavior is considered by the Council to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach.

After taking into account the considerations set out in Schedule B and if there is no improvement in

behavior, the Council will consider the matter, and, if considered necessary, will inform the complainant in writing that their behavior falls under the terms of the Habitual and Vexatious Complaints Policy.

A copy of the Policy will be sent to the individual with a letter giving details of any restrictions which will apply. Schedule C details the options available for dealing with such complainants.

The letter should also state the length of time the restrictions are to apply and that any legitimate new complaint made in an acceptable manner will always be considered.

Once a complainant has been determined to be habitual or vexatious, their status will be kept under review for one year. If a complainant subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach, then their status will be reviewed.

Where there is dispute about action taken or not taken by the Council, the complainant may refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer at Stratford on Avon District Council.

Schedule A - Criteria for Determining Habitual or Vexatious Complainants

Complainants (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed to be habitual or vexatious where previous or current contact with them shows that they meet any of the following criteria:

Complainants:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint where the Council's complaints process has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted.
- Persistently change the substance of a complaint or continually raise new issues or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further concerns or questions whilst the complaint is being addressed. Care must be taken, however, not to disregard new issues which are significantly different from the original complaint as they need to be addressed separately.
- Complainants are repeatedly unwilling to accept documented evidence given as being factual or deny receipt of an adequate response in spite of correspondence specifically answering their questions, or do not accept that facts can sometimes be difficult to verify when a long period of time has elapsed.
- Complainants repeatedly do not clearly identify the precise issues which they wish to be investigated, despite the reasonable efforts of staff to help them specify their concerns, and/or where the concerns identified are not within the remit of the Council to investigate.
- Complainants regularly focus on matters which are not sufficiently serious to an extent which is out of proportion to their significance and continue to focus on these points. It is recognised that determining what is 'not sufficiently serious' can be subjective and careful judgement will be used in applying this criterion.
- Complainants have been aggressive, threatened verbally, or used physical violence towards employees or Councillors and their families at any time. This will cause personal contact with the complainant and/or their representative to be discontinued and the complaint will, thereafter, only be continued through written communication.

It should also be noted that Avon Dassett Parish Council in consultation with the affected individuals will refer any actual or threatened verbal or physical abuse to Warwickshire Police for investigation.

- Complainants have, in the course of addressing a registered complaint, had an excessive number of

contacts with the Council – placing unreasonable demands on employees. A contact may be in person, by telephone, letter, email or fax or any other means. Excessive contact will be determined considering the specific circumstances of each individual case.

- Complainants have harassed or been verbally abusive towards employees or Councillors dealing with the complaint, the Council recognises that complainants may sometimes act out of character in times of stress, anxiety, distress and could have mental health issues and will make reasonable allowances for this.
- Complainants are known to have recorded meetings or face-to-face/telephone conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved.
- Complainants make unreasonable demands on the Council and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable, for example, insist on responses to complaints or enquiries being provided more urgently than is reasonable or within the Council's complaints procedure or normal recognised practice.
- Complainants make unreasonable complaints which impose a significant burden on the resources of the Council and where the complaint:
 - clearly does not have any serious purpose or value; or
 - is designed to cause disruption or annoyance; or
 - has the effect of harassing the Council or individual Councillors or staff; or
 - can otherwise fairly be characterised as obsessive or manifestly unreasonable
- Complainants make repetitive complaints and allegations which ignore the replies which have been supplied in previous correspondence.

Schedule B - Considerations prior to taking action under the policy

Different considerations will apply depending on whether the investigation of the complaint is ongoing or whether it has been concluded. To some extent the latter is easier to deal with. It is in effect the complainant simply refusing to take no for an answer, and the Council has the option of ending all communication with the complainant, and where appropriate referring the complainant to the Information Commissioners Office. However, where the complaint is ongoing there needs to be some continuing contact with the complainant.

The decision to designate someone as a habitual and vexatious complainant is onerous and could have serious consequences for the individual. Before deciding whether the policy should be applied Councillors should be satisfied that:

- the complaint is being or has been investigated properly;
- any decision reached on it is the right one;
- communications with the complainant have been adequate; and
- the complainant is not now providing any significant new information that might affect the Council's view on the complaint.
- Or that the way in which the complainant has acted is unreasonable.

Schedule C - Options for Dealing with Habitual or Vexatious Complainants

The options below can be used singularly or in combination depending on the circumstances of the case and whether the complaint process is ongoing or completed.

- A letter to the complainant setting out responsibilities for the parties involved if the Council is to

continue processing the complaint. If terms are contravened, consideration will then be given to implementing one or more actions as indicated below.

- Decline contact with the complainant, either in person, by telephone, by fax, by letter, by email or any combination of these, provided that one form of contact is maintained. This may also mean that only one named person will be nominated to maintain contact (and a named deputy in their absence). The complainant will be notified of these persons.
- Notify the complainant, in writing, that the Council has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. The complainant will also be notified that the correspondence is at an end, advising the complainant that they are being treated as a habitual or vexatious complainant and as such the Council does not intend to engage in further correspondence dealing with the complaint.
- Temporarily suspend all contact with the complainant, in connection with the issues relating to the complaint being considered habitual or vexatious, while seeking advice or guidance from its legal advisers or other relevant agencies. This temporary suspension of contact may include the blocking of e-mails from the complainant to those who may have been subjected to harassment.

If the complainant is not satisfied with a response to their information request, they are entitled to ask for an internal review of the claim and/or contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113
Web: www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/

Jo Jarman Clerk & R.F.O.
Email: clerk@avondassettparishcouncil.gov.uk
Website: www.avondassettparishcouncil.gov.uk