



DUNCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

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DRAFT MINUTES

Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 3rd March 2025 at Dunchurch Library and Community Hub commencing at 6.00pm

Councillors Present: Cllr Coomber (Chair), Cllr Sly, Cllr Vaughan, Cllr Marsh, Cllr Martin

Staff Present: Becky Maoudis (Clerk & RFO)

There were 42 members of the public present.

1 Welcome by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Cllr Coomber explained the historic role of the Annual Parish Meeting (also known as the Assembly) and explained the legislation surrounding the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence and acceptance of apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Price, Cllr Grogan, Cllr Warren, Cawston Greenway, Dunchurch Pantry, and Dunchurch Bridleway.

3 Approval of the Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 30th May 2024 were reviewed and approved.

4 Dunchurch Parish Council

Cllr Coomber reviewed recent progress and noted several positive developments. A successful staffing reorganisation has led to improved efficiency, and the appointment of highly capable new employees has strengthened the team. Efforts to raise the Parish Council's profile have also seen success, including the publication of articles in the Dunchurch Village Magazine, the launch of a redesigned website, and a well-received presence at the FODS Winter Wonderland event, thanks in particular to Cllr. Jan Gee-Russell's coordination.

Community engagement has been a key focus. The Council has brought together various volunteer groups to plan for the VE Day celebrations in May and has responded to feedback from younger residents by changing the venue for the Play Rangers' club. Two new working groups have been established: one dedicated to VE Day celebration planning and the other to developing a Nature Action Plan, which will focus especially on the creation of Dunchurch Country Park.

Despite these achievements, the Council has also faced significant challenges. Serious health issues affecting up to half of the ten elected councillors have limited available time and resources, impacting overall effectiveness.

Cllr Coomber recorded the Council's sincere thanks to Cllr. Tracey Price for her tireless work in sustaining operations during a very difficult period.

Staffing difficulties earlier in the year created a backlog of unfinished tasks, which required substantial attention from the new Clerk. Additionally, there have been ongoing challenges in explaining the scope and limitations of the Parish Council's powers to residents.

The Council also recognises the difficulty in supporting residents on the outer edges of the parish, such as the 560 households at the Cawston end of Cawston Lane, many of whom may not be aware they fall within the Dunchurch boundary.

Concerns have also been raised regarding flooding and sewage issues, highlighting the considerable legal authority held by Severn Trent Water—a complex area of responsibility that the Council continues to learn more about.

Looking ahead, the Council identified a need for community support in several areas. Most urgently, volunteers are needed to assist with the upcoming VE Day celebration events in May.

Cllr Vaughan introduced plans for the forthcoming VE Day commemoration, scheduled to take place on Saturday, 10th May, in the car park at The Square, Dunchurch. A working group has been established to coordinate the event, comprising representatives from the WI, Friends of Dunchurch Society (FODS), Dunchurch Festival Group, and the Parish Council.

The event is set to be a significant village occasion, featuring a range of displays and participants. Attractions will include tanks, jeeps, and unloaded period weaponry, as well as performances by the Dunchurch Band. Both St Peter's Church and the Methodist Church will be involved in the day's proceedings.

The event will be attended by the Mayor of Rugby, and special guests will include relatives of Halifax bomber crews visiting from Canada, adding a poignant historical connection to the commemorations.

Cllr Vaughan emphasised that this promises to be a major village event, bringing together community groups and residents in honour of VE Day. Volunteers are

warmly welcomed to assist with preparations and on-the-day activities, and anyone interested is encouraged to get in touch.

Councillor Coomber commented that the Council also welcomes residents' help in reporting any issues related to assets for which it is responsible, such as the 42 public bins and numerous lamp posts.

Collaborations with volunteer groups working toward similar goals are strongly encouraged, as such partnerships help reduce costs and increase impact.

The Council also welcomes support in amplifying the voices of younger residents, with Cllr. Cara Martin planning to establish a quarterly youth forum.

Lastly, there is a desire for more active involvement in turning the Community Library into a vibrant hub of local activity.

Pam Camilleri, Community Hub Officer, provided an update on the Dunchurch Library and its recent activities. The library is now entirely operated by a dedicated team of approximately 25 volunteers, with six new volunteers joining recently. In addition, six Duke of Edinburgh Award students are currently gaining their volunteering experience at the library.

A recent user survey was conducted to gather feedback on current services and identify interest in new activities. In response to this, the library has introduced adult watercolour painting sessions every other Thursday and a children's arts and crafts club on the last Thursday of each month. A Lego Club is also set to begin on Saturdays, and further pop-up events are being planned.

Pam reported a significant increase in usage, with footfall rising by 40% between November 2024 and January 2025, amounting to over 2,000 visitors—the highest recorded to date.

Two Duke of Edinburgh volunteers gave brief reports to the Parish Council, sharing their experiences of volunteering at Dunchurch Library.

The first speaker reflected on having used the library from a young age, appreciating the wide selection of books and the ability to order in specific titles. They described the library as “amazing” in facilitating volunteering opportunities for the DofE Award and expressed gratitude for the welcoming and supportive environment. Their favourite aspect of volunteering has been the sense of community—observing young children reading with parents or seeing friendships form over a shared interest in books brought a real sense of happiness. The speaker shared an intention to continue volunteering beyond the DofE requirements, noting how rewarding it is to spend time in a place that brings so much joy to both current and future generations.

The second speaker described a lifelong love of reading, sharing how books have offered an escape into imagined worlds—from Hogwarts to the world of *Matilda*. They said the library had always fuelled this passion for reading, recalling how

they would beg their parents each week to visit and borrow new books, calling it their “favourite thing to do.”

As they grow older, they continue to rely on the library and were thrilled to have the opportunity to give back through DofE volunteering. They concluded by thanking the library for everything it has done for both children and adults in the community—for nurturing a love of reading, of knowledge, and of adventure.

To receive reports from Borough and County Councillors

Rugby Borough Council Councillor Jon Bennett informed the meeting that a successful negotiation has taken place with the developer Tritax, resulting in the provision of six hectares of green space at the rear of the development by Cawston Wood. This area will be made available as a community park, offering much-needed green space for the benefit of local residents.

6 Reports from Community Organisations

Dunchurch Sportsfield and Village Hall

DSVH has a slightly disappointing year in 2024. The hall has not been as busy as in previous years, with a decrease seen in single hires (children’s parties etc). Some of that may have been due to the Trustee’s decision not to hire the hall until 11pm on Friday and Saturday nights unless the hirers are known to the trustees. This is to reduce the chances of noise/disturbance to our neighbours on Rugby Road.

We thank DPC for the continuing 50% contribution towards grass cutting costs.

Significant upgrade work continued in 2024 with a major upgrade to the electrical system to meet insurance needs, The replacement of a damaged height barrier, replacement gas boiler and zoning of the rooms to improve temperature control, refurbishment of the main hall floor and resealing. In total, just over £28000 has been spent in 2024 with around £50K over 2 years to bring the hall up to a modern specification and ensure that the hirers receive a good experience.

Thanks go to the DSVH Trustees for their voluntary work in keeping the hall in such good order and available for hire.

Dunchurch Photographic Society

An update was provided on the local Photography Group, which meets on Wednesday evenings between September and April at the WI Hall. Following a decline in membership during the Covid period, the group has seen a strong revival, welcoming 10 new members this year and bringing total membership to approximately 36. There has also been a noticeable increase in female members.

The group benefits from strong community outreach, with one member playing a key role in promoting activities through social media. A highlight of the year was a fantastic exhibition held at the Floor One Gallery in the library, which featured a wide and diverse range of photographic work.

Regular meetings include internal competitions and talks from guest speakers to inspire and support members' development. The group is always open to new members—no specific type of camera or prior experience is required, and all are welcome.

Dunchurch Allotments

An update was provided on the Dunchurch Allotments. The site currently has 83 members, with a waiting list of approximately one year. The primary focus of the allotments is to provide services to members, support continuous site improvements, and foster a sense of community among plot holders.

Each year, the allotments host a themed event to engage with the wider village and encourage local interest. This November, the allotments will be taking part in Apple Day, a community celebration focused on seasonal produce and local involvement.

1st Dunchurch Guide Unit

An update was received from the 1st Dunchurch Guide Unit. Girlguiding continues to offer all girls an equal sense of belonging, regardless of their background, providing a safe and supportive space guided by trained volunteers. The unit meets regularly to take part in a wide range of activities, aimed at building confidence, learning new skills, and earning badges in a fun and inclusive environment.

The programme includes a mix of indoor and outdoor activities, patrol-based challenges, and opportunities to learn more about the world around them. Over the past year, the Guides have participated in numerous trips and activities, including learning how to build wood fires, outdoor cooking, shelter building, and nature walks. Many Guides earned badges, including a First Aid Skills Builder badge.

As part of their strong commitment to the local community, the Guides organised a CPR and defibrillator training evening, raising awareness of the *OurJay* charity and inviting members of the public to attend. They have also supported the village through litter picking, helping at fetes, participating in the Village in Bloom campaign, delivering raffle tickets, and collecting items for stalls.

The unit held a Macmillan fundraising evening and filled Christmas shoeboxes to support families in Ukraine and other conflict-affected areas. They also hosted a craft and quiz night, inviting both local residents and those from Thurlaston Meadows.

Several Guides achieved Bronze and Silver awards, and a number attained the highest award in Girlguiding—the Gold Award. Older Guides aged 15+ have remained with the unit, taking on the role of Young Leaders and assisting with the running of weekly activities alongside adult volunteers.

The unit continues to seek additional adult volunteers to support and expand the programme. Volunteers do not need to commit to attending every week, and all help is greatly valued.

1st Dunchurch Scout Group

The Parish Council received a presentation from volunteers of the 1st Dunchurch Scout Group, who provided an update on their activities and progress throughout 2024. It was reported that the group is now supporting over 80 young people through six active sections: two Beaver Colonies, two Cub Packs, and two Scout Troops. This is a significant growth compared to 2021, when only three sections were operational during the Covid-19 recovery period. The group is led by a dedicated team of 20 volunteers who deliver weekly programmes, organise events and camps, and provide governance through the Board of Trustees. All sections have offered their young members at least two overnight experiences this year, including camps and sleepovers, which were fully planned and supervised by the volunteer team.

Weekly activities have focused on helping young people develop essential life skills, including cooking, fire lighting, DIY, navigation, and communication. In addition, they have gained a deeper understanding of their local community through visits to key services such as the Fire Station, Foodbank, and Thurlaston Meadows Care Home. The programme has also placed emphasis on teamwork and adventure through a wide range of group challenges and outdoor experiences.

This year also marked the 25th anniversary of the group's premises at Done Cerce Close. As part of this milestone, the lease for the building was successfully renewed with Warwickshire County Council for a further 25 years. With continued growth in membership, the group is now exploring options to expand their premises—either through an extension or a complete rebuild—depending on feasibility and cost.

The Scout Group expressed its ongoing need for additional volunteers. Support is welcomed in all areas, whether as section leaders, part of the support team, or serving as a trustee to help oversee the group's operations as a registered charity.

Pantomaniacs

An update was received from the Dunchurch Pantomime Group, who shared highlights from their long-standing contribution to village life. The group staged its first pantomime in 1990, and with the exception of a two-year break due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year marked their 34th performance. The 2025 production included nine performances, featuring two matinees, a gala night, and a popular fish and chip supper evening.

The pantomime, which began as a one-off production, has grown into a cherished annual event and is now looking ahead to its 35th show. It remains rooted in family and community, with three generations of the same families often taking part in a single production. The group expressed their heartfelt

appreciation to the community for its ongoing support—especially local shops that act as box offices and residents who continue to fill the audience each year. The pantomime welcomes new participants, regardless of experience or ability. Opportunities are available both on stage and behind the scenes, with technical, set-building, and backstage roles. The experience has helped build confidence in many participants, particularly young people.

In addition to providing entertainment, the pantomime group has made a significant contribution to local good causes. Over the years, they have raised an estimated £132,000, funding items such as a wheelchair and stairlift, and supporting charities and community groups including the OurJay Foundation, Friends of Dunchurch Society (FODS), Myton Hospices, the Arden Centre, and many others.

Rugby and Leam Valley First Responders

An update was provided on the group, a team of trained volunteers who work in partnership with the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) to respond to 999 calls. These volunteers play a vital role in bridging the gap between the time a call is made and the arrival of an ambulance, often providing lifesaving support during critical moments.

The responders are asked to volunteer a minimum of 20 hours per month, though many regularly exceed this. The group, once split into two separate teams, has now been combined into a single, coordinated unit covering the CV21, CV22, and CV23 postcode areas. The team currently operates with two scheme vehicles, five active responders, and nine trainees. A recent WMAS recruitment drive resulted in 477 candidates being invited to interview, showing strong local interest in supporting the scheme.

The responders respond to a wide range of medical emergencies including cardiac arrests, falls, strokes, chest pain, breathing difficulties, seizures, road traffic collisions, and paediatric incidents. In addition to their emergency response work, the group is active in community engagement and fundraising, regularly attending events such as the Barby Fete, Dunchurch Pantomime, Dunchurch Fete, Pawprints Dog Show, Rugby Bikefest, local CPR awareness sessions, and Dunchurch Scouts events, among others.

Dunchurch Junior School PTA

The Parish Council received an update from the Dunchurch School Parent Teacher Association (PTA) on recent fundraising efforts and contributions to the school. Between September and December 2024, the PTA successfully raised £5,630, a testament to the enthusiastic support from parents, grandparents, carers, and the school community. Events included crazy hair day, pyjama day, break the rules days, jingle-bell jogs, and festive Grinch visits during the Christmas period.

All funds raised go directly back into supporting the school, with the PTA working hard to keep outgoings low by relying on generous donations. Notable contributions during this period include funding a two-day art course, talk and

draw therapy training for two teachers, and providing seasonal treats such as selection boxes, Easter eggs, hot chocolate, and doughnuts for pupils. While the PTA had initially hoped to fund repairs to play equipment, limited funds meant this could not be covered through regular fundraising alone. As a result, the PTA held a special fundraiser and donated £4,000 specifically to enable the essential repairs to go ahead.

The PTA remains grateful for any support, whether through volunteering time, financial contributions, or donations of books or pre-loved school uniforms.

Dunchurch and Thurlaston Educational Foundation

An update was provided on the work of the Dunchurch and Thurlaston Educational Foundation, a small local charity established in the 1960s. The charity was originally formed to manage land intended for a secondary school. When the Harris School was built instead, the land was sold, and the proceeds were divided between the Harris School and the Foundation, with the Foundation's share invested to support its charitable aims.

The Foundation operates on a modest annual budget of approximately £3,000, which is used to support young people under the age of 25 in the parishes of Dunchurch and Thurlaston for educational purposes. Assistance is offered in a wide variety of ways, including covering Brownie and Scout subscriptions, supporting university-related costs, and helping to fund educational trips and activities.

Each year, the Foundation typically supports between 5 and 20 young people, depending on individual needs and available resources.

Knowing Stillness Meditation Group

A sense of peace and tranquility descends on one corner of Dunchurch each Wednesday morning—despite the occasional arrival of the refuse collection. The session begins with a brief introduction, followed by an extended period of silence.

Meditation is shared both in person and remotely, allowing those unable to attend in person to participate. Sessions are also recorded for use later in the week.

Planning is underway for a third weekend retreat this June.

Newcomers are warmly welcomed—participants simply practice and learn together in a supportive atmosphere. There is no charge for sessions, though small donations are appreciated to help cover costs.

Dunchurch Band

Dunchurch is proud to be home to a friendly and traditional village brass band. Rehearsals are held on Tuesday evenings, 7:30–9:30pm at the WI Hall, Mill Yard, Southam Road. 2024 was a successful year for the Band, with several new players joining and the relaunch of the Training Band.

New members are always welcome, with a particular appeal to bass/tuba players, as there are currently vacancies in the bass section.

The Training Band meets on Monday evenings (term time only), 7:00–8:00pm, and is open to beginners aged 7 and up, or brass players up to Grade 3–4 (or equivalent). Instruments and tuition are available for complete beginners—just come along or get in touch.

In 2024, the Band performed at a wide range of local events, including the Dunchurch Festival Group Fete, the 1940s Variety Concert, Remembrance Service, Friends of Dunchurch Winter Wonderland, St. Peter's Nativity and Carol Service, and festive performances at the Dun Cow and Dunchurch Social Club. To book the Band for your event or concert, please get in touch.

Looking ahead, the Band hopes to perform at this year's VE Day celebrations and the Dunchurch Fete.

A heartfelt thank you goes to the Dunchurch Festival Group, Friends of Dunchurch, the Parish Council, and other local organisations for their continued support.

Friends of Dunchurch Society

The Friends of Dunchurch Society continues to play an active role in village life. The Society has welcomed a number of young people undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and it is encouraging to see them choosing FODS as a route to gain their qualifications. The Society is always grateful for new volunteers, many of whom become involved with other village groups over time.

FODS has benefited from continued financial support through donations from the Dunchurch Festival Group and Dunchurch Village Hall. Recent fundraising efforts have included the Spring Fair in April, which raised £750, and the Winter Wonderland event, which raised £674. All funds raised are directed toward ongoing projects in the centre of the village. The Society extends its thanks to all stallholders, shoppers, entertainers, and volunteers who contributed to these successful events.

Future plans include a fashion show in collaboration with Wanda Fashion, scheduled for September. Preparations are also underway for Winter Wonderland 2025, and the village tea room will be reopened during selected events to provide a welcoming space for residents and visitors.

The Make a Difference Group will resume its duties in the spring, undertaking a range of tasks such as planting, watering, sweeping, tidying, painting, dead-heading, weeding, litter picking, and general maintenance around the centre of the village. New volunteers are encouraged to join and support this work.

The Society acknowledges the importance of the Dunchurch Village Magazine in offering a free platform for non-funded village groups. FODS is grateful to the Dunchurch Parish Council for resuming its support of the magazine, which assists in its continued publication. Thanks are also extended to Sue Protheroe

for her work as Editor and her coordination of FODS events and the tea room, as well as to Janet Beaumont and Julie Young for their contributions in producing high-quality editions of the magazine.

FODS would like to formally thank all trustees and volunteers for their continued dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm in serving the community.

Dunchurch Festival Group

The Dunchurch Festival Group (DFG) reported that the success of the past year has been largely due to the dedicated team of individuals who support and contribute to the group's efforts. Thanks to strong attendance at events hosted by DFG, funds have been raised entirely through the generosity and participation of the local community and supporters from further afield.

As a result, the group has been able to provide support to a range of local charities, organisations, and individuals. This continued community engagement has been vital in enabling DFG to fulfil its aims.

Volunteers are always welcome, and the group encourages anyone interested in getting involved to come forward.

Further reports were sent prior to the meeting and are included in appendices 1.

7 Open Forum

A member of the public raised concerns regarding the removal of hedgerows as part of the ongoing Homes England development. They had contacted the developer directly and highlighted that the work is taking place during the nesting season. In response, the developer stated that the works are being carried out under ecological supervision.

A second member of the public contributed to the discussion, expressing views on the trade-offs between the benefits of the new road infrastructure and the environmental loss resulting from the development.

The Parish Council noted the concerns raised and acknowledged the importance of balancing development needs with environmental protection.

8 Vote of Thanks and Formal Closure of the Meeting

A vote of thanks was extended to everyone who attended the meeting, as well as to all the volunteers across Dunchurch for their continued support and contributions to the community. Particular appreciation was expressed to fellow members of the Parish Council, acknowledging their dedication and hard work—often in challenging circumstances and not always under enjoyable conditions.

The meeting was formally closed at 7.08pm

Dunchurch Pantry

Been running for nearly 4 years now and I supply about £200+ (wholesale cost) of groceries per week for the use of anyone in the village that is struggling. I have no way of monitoring who is taking the food (and don't really want to know because I don't want to cause anybody any embarrassment or make anyone feel uncomfortable). I try to drip-feed the food onto the shelves to stop anyone taking too much at any one time. People taking the food who don't need it is a concern, but there is simply no way that I can police it. I just hope people use it in the spirit that it is intended.

Cawston Greenway

Set up 16 years ago with a weekly workday every Wednesday morning. Designed to get people (men) talking and working shoulder-to-shoulder to encourage conversations and allow friendships to develop (we share coffee, cookies and laughs every week). We have created a nature path that is open for everyone and a place for youth to go and do their thing without causing a nuisance to others. Plenty of picnic benches for families and a super geocaching trail, plus a dino trail for younger people. The concept of getting out into nature to help with mental wellbeing is catching on, and I am glad to be able to provide a platform where men's mental health is one of the core objectives, the other two being a corridor for wildlife and, a path for as many sections of the community as possible (youth, families, walkers, cyclists, nature lovers, mobility scooter and pushchair friendly, etc.)

Dunchurch Bridleway

Same concept as Cawston Greenway and made to connect to the greenway just north of the old Dunchurch railway station, via a public right-of-way. Created benches for picnics and conversations. Fortnightly workday every Friday morning. It is part of a circular walk that connects with Cawston Greenway and goes through the woods. A great geocaching trail exists along this path, too. The eastern end connects to a 5-mile circular walk around the perimeter of Dunchurch which is all on public right-of-way paths. It would be interesting to see if this route could be formalised as "Dunchurch Circular Trail" or something similar and get some way markers to point people around it and a small volunteer team to look after it.

Both the greenway and bridleway are there to encourage active travel between the two communities and there are loads of avenues of interest to go down, such as wildflowers, butterflies, birds and nesting box management, bushcraft skills, wildlife habitat management, etc. so there really is something for everyone.

It also gets us men out from under our wives' feet!!