

Minutes of the AUST PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

Held on Tuesday 14th April 2026 at 7:00pm at Elberton Village Hall

Present:

Chair: Cllr. Steve Meredith, Chairman of Aust Parish Council

Speakers: Elizabeth Woodland (Village Agent), Deryck Pritchard (Fundraising Manager, Severn Area Rescue Association), Cllr. Tony Williams (Severn Vale ward member, South Glos. Council (SGC))

Clerk: Emma Pattullo

9 residents

1 Approval of minutes from the previous parish assembly held on 8th April 2025

Cllr Meredith welcomed attendees to the meeting.

The minutes of the 2025 annual parish assembly were presented, agreed as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

2 Speakers' presentations

Elizabeth Woodland – Village Agent scheme

Elizabeth is employed by the West of England Rural Network as a Village Agent covering Aust and surrounding parishes. The scheme aims to support residents in rural communities to lead healthy, independent lives. Elizabeth often works with older residents, but can offer help to any residents over the age of 18. She typically does home visits but also attends various community group sessions.

Help might include signposting to organisations offering support, making contact with suitable community groups or assisting with support applications. For example, in recent months Elizabeth has assisted with Blue Badge and attendance allowance applications, supported residents with dementia and sight loss, arranged a bereavement support course and organised a mutual support network for representatives of the various village halls and community venues in the area.

Elizabeth can be contacted on elizabeth@wern.org.uk or 07880 344 460.

Deryck Pritchard – Severn Area Rescue Association

Deryck gave an interesting presentation on the work of SARA, who receive a small grant from the parish council each year. SARA is the second largest rescue organisation in the country and operates across the Severn estuary, surrounding rivers and open land. In 2025 they were called out to 112 separate incidents across the Severn area; they can also be called on to help with flood rescue in other parts of the country if required. Their main base at Sharpness Dock will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year.

Deryck showed the wide range of equipment used and described the many skills needed by the operational crew, who are all volunteers. He illustrated the talk with photos and video clips including the boats in operation, crew undertaking training exercises – and washing off the Severn mud afterwards!

3 Annual report by Steve Meredith, Chairman, Aust Parish Council

Cllr Meredith gave the following report:

We currently have six councillors with Steve as Chair and Ian Jenkins as Vice-chair. Jeremy Warren resigned in February, so there is now a vacancy for co-option. This is open to all qualifying residents, but it would be useful to have someone else from Littleton.

The council faces an increasing burden of legal requirements, but the clerk manages most of this, not councillors. As part of new requirements, we now have our own website and dedicated email addresses – thanks to the community website for hosting our pages for many years.

Costs always increasing, but we have managed to keep the precept rise to 1% or 11 pence per household for the year!

It has been a fairly quiet year for planning with no significant planning applications considered. The parish council did consider an application for change of use at Whale Wharf, to a tutoring centre for young people, but application has now been withdrawn. One piece of good news is that EDF have had success with trials of their Acoustic Fish Deterrent at Hinkley point C and seem certain that there will be no need to go any further with the saltmarsh development.

Woodwell Meadows has received official designation as a Local Nature Reserve. Heather Bayston has run regular volunteer sessions, mostly focusing on reducing the amount of scrub. The site is looking a lot better – thanks to Heather and all the volunteers. The council has bought some additional equipment for the group, partly funded by a grant from our SGC ward councillors.

We have looked into concerns about camper vans parking at Whale Wharf. Jeremy & Julian Cooper identified a listing of the location on a national “free camping sites” web page, which has now been removed

Several councillors met with National Highways to discuss their plans to re-open the Severn Bridge to HGVs. We are continuing to press them to consider the impacts on residents and local roads and have made sure SGC officers are also aware of local concerns

The council meets on the second Tuesday of the month. Meetings are advertised on the website and noticeboards, and the clerk is working on getting a mailing list set up as well. Residents are welcome to attend, or contact a councillor to raise any issues. Feel free to put yourself forward for co-option!

4 Annual report by Tony Williams, Ward Councillor, South Glos Council

Cllr Williams gave the following update on South Glos. Council matters:

The Local Plan has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for approval, and will hopefully be in place by early autumn this year. This should reduce the amount of speculative development applications.

Social care continues to take up a large portion of SGC’s funding. The council has opened several new homes for looked-after children, as this is more economical than housing them in privately run children’s homes as well as meaning children are more likely to be able to remain in their home area.

Black bin collections will move to three-weekly from May 2026. Households who have a proven need for more frequent waste collections, for example those with children in nappies or who have a large volume of medical waste, can contact the council to discuss a more frequent collection.

Green bins will still be collected every two weeks (where residents subscribe to this service) and recycling will be every week. New recycling bags are being distributed, and all households will now be able to recycle soft plastics within the weekly collection. Currently, around 29% of the average black bin waste is soft plastic, so this development should help to increase recycling rates and keep waste disposal costs down.

Cost of living support is available in various forms, for example the council has been providing warm packs to households who are at risk of fuel poverty and may not be able to keep their homes at a comfortable temperature.

The state of roads across the area continues to be an issue. The council are trying to resurface the worst areas and address pothole repairs as quickly as possible. It is hoped that repair teams will be able to catch up with this now the weather is improving. The highways department are also looking at repainting road markings where these have worn away.

Various new bus lanes and cycle paths are in development, including the cycle route alongside the A38 between Bradley Stoke and Thornbury. Residents have questioned why money is being spent on this rather than pothole repairs; unfortunately the works are being funded by the West of England Combined Authority, with SGC carrying out the works under contract, and so SGC are not able to divert the funding to other road repairs or upgrades.

5 Open Forum

No matters raised.

6 Close of meeting

Cllr Meredith thanked all for attending. The meeting closed at 8:21pm.