NORTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Norton Parish Council meeting held on the 12 November 2025 at 7.30pm in Norton Village Hall

Present:

Cllr Richard Page (Chairman)
Cllr Helen Costin
Cllr Martin Griffiths

In Attendance:

County Cllr Richard Stanley (part meeting only)
3 members of the public

12.11.25.1 To receive apologies for absence and confirm the meeting is quorate

An apology was received from Daniel Hinde, Clerk of the Parish Council.
The meeting was declared quorate.

12.11.25.2 To receive declarations of interest in items on this agenda

There were none.

12.11.25.3 To note the resignation of Cllr Richardson

Cllr Page reported that Cllr Jennifer Richardson had submitted her resignation. The Council thanked her for her service to the parish.

12.11.25.4 To receive questions from the public and comments on agenda items

A resident had two questions about planning matters. He asked why all dog owners couldn't use the secure dog paddock at Church Farm and pointed out that The Hoot, Twigworth Fields wasn't in Norton parish. The Council responded that the dog paddock was part of a dog kennels business and was therefore a private facility.

12.11.25.5 To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 September 2025

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 17 September 2025 be approved and signed as a true record of the meeting.

12.11.23.6 Reports

12.11.25.6a County Councillor

County Cllr Stanley (who joined the meeting after this item was taken) said that he would send his report to the Clerk.

12.11.25.6b Borough Councillor

None

12.11.25.6c Chairman's Report

Cllr Page presented his report, attached as **Appendix 1** of these Minutes.

Cllr Page pointed out that the Gloucestershire Association of Parish Councils (GAPTC) had voted to increase its membership fees for the financial year 2026/27 by 18.5%. As a result, he estimated that the Council's membership fee would be over £200.

After discussion, it was **RESOLVED**: That the Parish Council renew its membership of GAPTC for the financial year 2026/27, but that the Chairman should inform the Chief Executive of GAPTC of the Council's concern at the size of the increase.

Cllr Page thanked Norton Court Farms for its proposal to set up a Community Garden with allotments.

12.11.25.6d Members

Cllr Griffiths reported on maintenance of The Green. Plants on the pond were doing well and brambles had been cleared, but several railings on the fence around the pond would need to be replaced.

RESOLVED: That Cllr Griffiths obtain an estimate for the repair of the pond railings to enable the Council to consider authorising this repair at its next meeting.

(County Cllr Stanley joined the meeting at this point.)

12.11.25.6e Norton Parochial Church Council

None.

12.11.25.6f Norton CofE Primary School

None.

12.11.25.6g Neighbourhood Watch

The Neighbourhood Watch's report is attached as **Appendix 2** of these Minutes.

12.11.25.7 To receive a report on Norton Village Hall

Cllr Page reported that:

All improvement works had been put on hold until the future management of the Village Hall had been settled.

Quotes had been sought for the repair of a roof leak.

The Primary School's charges for their use of the premises in term time had been increased to the Norton residents' rate with effect from 2 February 2026.

The charity had a balance of £3,940 at the bank.

12.11.25.8 Finance Report (all documents circulated prior to the meeting)

12.11.25.8a To approve the November 2025 Payment List/those paid since the last meeting, to note receipts and agree actions.

RESOLVED: That the payment list totalling £451.29 and attached as Appendix 3 of these minutes be approved.

12.11.25.8b To received and approve the Bank Reconciliation up to 31 October 2025

RESOLVED: That the Bank Reconciliation attached as Appendix 4 of these minutes be approved.

12.11.25.8c To receive and approve the Budget Monitoring Report up to 31 October 2025

RESOLVED: That the Budget Monitoring Report attached as Appendix 5 of these minutes be approved.

12.11.25.9 To receive an update on the repair of items highlighted as "medium risk" in the Play Area Inspection Report

Cllr Page reported that the Clerk was obtaining quotes for these repairs and would update the Council at its next meeting.

12.11.25.10 To discuss the future management of the Village Hall and the outcome of the public meeting

Cllr Page presented his report, attached as **Appendix 6** of these minutes.

After discussion, it was **RESOLVED**: That the Parish Council:

(a) Agrees in principle to take over the management of Norton Village Hall, if requested to do so by the Village Hall Management Committee.

(b) Investigates the governance options of full management responsibility and a hybrid arrangement (as set out in the report).

(c) Considers the budgetary arrangements necessary for the Parish Council to manage the Village Hall.

The Council thanked Cllr Page for his clear and comprehensive report.

(County Cllr Stanley left the meeting at this point.)

12.11.25.11 To receive an update on Local Government Re-organisation

Cllr Page presented his report, attached as **Appendix 7** of these minutes. The contents of the report were noted by the Council.

12.11.25.12 To consider the adoption of an IT Policy

RESOLVED: That the Council adopt the IT Policy (as previously circulated to councillors).

12.11.25.13 To appoint 2 Councillors to complete the Internal Control Policy

The Council agreed to defer consideration of this matter until its next meeting in January 2026.

12.11.25.14 Planning Matters

12.11.25.14a Planning Application No: 25/00868/FUL

The Council noted that this application, regarding alterations at The Hoot, Twigworth Fields, concerned a property in Twigworth parish, rather than in Norton. It was therefore agreed that it would be inappropriate for the Council to comment.

12.11.25.14b Planning Application No: 24/00986/FUL

The Council noted that this application for a change of use from agricultural land to use as a secure dog paddock at Church Farm, Church Lane, Norton had been Permitted by Tewkesbury Borough Council.

12.11.25.15 To receive items for the next agenda

The Council agreed to consider the following matters at its next meeting:

An update on progress with Local Government Re-organisation.

Local flooding issues.

12.11.25.16 To agree a date for the next meeting

Wednesday 14 January 2026 at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

APPENDIX 1

Norton Parish Council

Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 12 November 2025

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

(1) Future Management of the Village Hall

A separate report on the implications of the Village Hall Management Committee's decision to disband and hand over the management of the Village Hall to the Parish Council, and the outcome of the subsequent Public Meeting, is attached and will be discussed under Agenda item 10.

(2) Power outages in Norton

There have been an increasing number of brief power outages in the parish in recent months. As a result I contacted National Grid to find out why this keeps happening.

National Grid told me that the primary reason is increased demand for supply placed on an ageing infrastructure by new housing development in the area. National Grid is working hard to increase capacity and believe that these outages are a short-term problem.

(3) Traffic Regulation Order to reduce A38 speed limit

Councillors will be familiar with the proposal for a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to lower the speed limit from 50mph to 40mph on a section of the A38 through the village.

Gloucestershire County Council made a draft TRO and consulted on the proposals at the beginning of April, but nothing appears to have happened since then. Also, the relevant page about this TRO on the County Council's website hasn't been updated since 31 March.

I have therefore written to the relevant County Council official asking when the TRO will be brought into force and the speed limit lowered. I have also contacted Norton's County Councillor and asked him to lobby the Highways department on our behalf.

I will report the County Council's response to councillors, and to local residents through WhatsApp and the Norton News in due course.

(4) Emergency planning for a flooding event

Following a meeting with Tewkesbury Borough Council's Emergency Planning Project Officer, I am currently working on an emergency plan documenting how the parish council would deal with a significant flooding event in the parish. A draft plan will be submitted to the Council's next meeting in January for approval.

(5) Increase in GAPTC fees for 2026/27

The Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) has voted to increase its membership fees for the financial year 2026/27 by 18.5%. GAPTC's fees are based on the number of electors in the parish in February each year. The membership fee for 2025/26 was £174.10.

If the number of electors were to remain unchanged next February, the Norton Parish Council's membership fee for 2026/27 would be £206.30, an increase of £32.20.

Because of the percentage increase, the Council is asked to confirm that it wishes to continue its GAPTC membership for 2026/27.

(6) Plans for a Community Garden

At the last Parish Council meeting in September, a resident announced that Norton Court Farm was planning to set up a Community Garden. This would also include allotments: complete with tool storage, water access, compost and a poly tunnel.

This project has since moved a stage further with plans announced to create a Community Interest Company allotment site on a three acre field with easy vehicular access and on a regular bus route.

Norton Court Farm are now looking for volunteers with skills in social media, fundraising, community education and experience of the voluntary/charity sector to become part of the project's steering group.

Full details may be found on the parish council's website and in a poster on the parish noticeboard.

I want to thank Norton Court Farm for launching this initiative, intended to deepen their connection with the local community, which deserves our active support.

Richard F N Page

10 November 2025

Appendix 2

Norton Neighbourhood Watch Report -

Norton Parish Council meeting 12th November 2025.

There are 137 members of the Norton Neighbourhood Watch WhatsApp Group.

September 2025

Report of a man in a car acting suspiciously in the village.

Report of a power cut in the village

Recommendation for a window cleaner

Villager reports inappropriate graffiti which has appeared on the road sign at the entrance to the village, which was since reported and removed.

Poster with information regarding the Norton Christmas Fair

Report of a deer injured by a car on Wainlode Lane. Police made aware and attending.

Resident advises of proposed road works in Norton.

October 2025

Police Alert: Payment Diversion Fraud when buying property

Police Alert: Fake police telephone scam

School tie found and left in bus shelter

Information given by resident to link concerning Public information announced for M5 Junction 10 improvements scheme to be held at the Fire Station.

Resident warns of a load of hardcore dumped on the slip road from village to A38 junction. Reported to Highways.

Recommendation for chimney sweep

Notice by Parish Council of Public Meeting in the Village Hall on 4th November to discuss future of village hall.

Recommendation for bricklayer

Power failure reported by several residents in the village.

Resident provides a link via Facebook to the Cheltenham Neighbourhood Policing Team which gives some good advice

Resident warns of the gas works on Tewkesbury Road with 4 way traffic lights causing long traffic queues.

Residents report of another power cut. Telephone number provided to report such issues.

Date of next History Meeting provided.

Poster advertising Nature in Art Gift and Craft Fair

Spaces available for local businesses and crafters to join the Christmas Gift market

Report of traffic accident at Sandhurst Lane at entrance to A38.

Recommendation for better provider for broadband.

Police Alert: Operation Switch anti-burglary campaign

Resident reports HGV vehicle in Frog Furlong Lane and queries whether there is a weight restriction. Local Innsworth Councillor has been investigating the use of HGV vehicles in this lane. Concerns raised by several Norton residents about amount of traffic using this lane.

Residents share areas around the village which invites Halloween trick and treaters.

Resident asks if a street light at entrance to Church Lane from A38 would be useful. Discussion by residents seems to suggest not to support street lights but other suggestions given.

Power cut in Norton village.

Reminder regarding Public Meeting on 4th November concerning the village hall.

Report of another large vehicle on the Frog Furlong Lane and details reported.

November 2025

Loose dog reported in the village.

Resident advises that Down Hatherley Lane will be closed for 10 weeks from 10th November. However these works may be delayed due to ongoing A38 gas works.

Resident warns of cow loose in the road by Red Lion. Back in a field but owner needs to know. Owner located.

Poster advertising Gloucester Santa Fun Run on 13th December.

Resident advises that the Church Lane sign from Gloucester was knocked down by a car and would be helpful if it was replaced.

Link provided to residents who wish to receive the Norton Newsletter to request being put onto the mailing list.

Resident offers help in response to the Public Meeting concerning the village hall.

Thanks given by Parish Council to residents who turned out for the Public Meeting which was productive.

Recommendation for mobile networks which provide good coverage in the village. Suggestions given by residents.

Recommendation for carpet fitter.

Next Parish Council meeting to be held on 12th November and residents welcome to attend.

Christine Williams

Norton Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator

10th November 2025

Appendix 3

Norton Parish Council

Finance report presented to Norton Parish Council on the 12th November 2025

A summary of financial activity for 2025/26

Income during the period		
	Amount	**Legal Note**
C/f from 2024-25	£ 24,198.83	
Precept paid on 30/04/2025	£ 15,000.00	*Local Government Finance Act (LGFA)1992 sc. 41*
HMRC VAT Refund	£1,052.05	
CIL	2258.08	
Total	**£ 42,508.96**	

Expenditure during the period	Payments Approved at Meeting 17.09.25	Total spend 15/05/2025 to 30/09/2025	Payments made yet to clear 15/05/2025	Total Committed Payments to 30/09/2025	2025 / 2026 Budget	Notes
Clerk's salary and associated costs	838.27	£2,286.12	£0	£2,286.12	£4,878.99	
Hiring of village hall	£0	£0	£0	£0	£250.00	
Maintenance of Parish graveyard	£0	£0	£0	£0	£400.00	
Defibrillator	£0	£0	£0	£0	£75.00	
Grounds maintenance	£0	£0	£0	£0	£2,000.00	
Maintenance of Assets	£0	£0	£0	£0	£200.00	
Insurance premiums	£0	£570.29	£0	£570.29	£700.00	
Audits & Accounts Fees	£0	£0	£0	£0	£362.88	
Subscriptions	£0	£461.72	£0	£461.72	£500.00	
Communications	£0	£0	£0	£0	£200.00	
Website	£0	£144	£0	£144	£365.00	
Training	£0	£0	£0	£0	£150.00	
NDP & Planning Costs	£0	£0	£0	£0	£2000.00	
Norton Nurturing Nature	£0	£0	£0	£0	£850.00	
Bus Shelter Noticeboard	£0	£0	£0	£0	£300.00	
Traffic Management	£0	£0	£0	£0	£1,000.00	
Play Space Maintenance	£96	£192	£0	£192	£500.00	
Contingency	£0	£0	£0	£0	£105.33	
Bank Charges	£0	£17	£0	17		
Total Expenditure	**£934.27**	**£3,671.13**	**£0**	**£2736.86**	**£15,000.00**	

i. The online bank statement of the 31st October 2025 showed a balance of £37,816.68

ii. There are no payments from the previous report which are yet to clear.

iii. The current bank balance includes the following amounts agreed at previous Parish Council meetings which are being held in reserve –

Norton Pond restoration (increased by £280 at 15/07/2020 meeting)	£500.00
Norton Pond legal costs	£1,200.00 (Including VAT)
National Lottery – Grant for Jubilee event – (Adjusted for expenses incurred net of VAT, original amount £1,563.00)	£538.11
Community Infrastructure Levy	£2258.08
Reserve Total	***£4,496.19***
True Current Account Balance	***£42,312.87***

iv. Approval required for the items listed below

Invoices to be considered at the November 2025 meeting -

Recipient	Amount	Details	Legal Note
Clerk – Monthly Salary	£374.13	*September 2025 – D Hinde. This includes a tax refund due to a change in tax code. PATA have advised they will offset this refund against any future HMRC payments the Council needs to pay*	*LGA 1972 s.112(2)*
Clerk Expenses	£15.66	*Invoice 121125DH mileage*	
Village Hall	£61.50	*Invoice 2249*	
Total	**£451.29**		

Appendix 4

Norton Parish Council

Prepared by: _____ Date: _____

Name and Role (Clerk/RFO etc)

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)

	Bank Reconciliation at 31/10/2025			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2025			24,198.83
	ADD			
	Receipts 01/04/2025 - 31/10/2025			18,310.13
				42,508.96
	SUBTRACT			
	Payments 01/04/2025 - 31/10/2025			4,692.28
A	**Cash in Hand 31/10/2025** (per Cash Book)			**37,816.68**
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements			
	Petty Cash	07/03/2023	0.00	
	Parish Council of Norton - Treasure	31/10/2025	37,816.68	
				37,816.68
	Less unpresented payments			
				37,816.68
	Plus unpresented receipts			
B	**Adjusted Bank Balance**			**37,816.68**
	A = B Checks out OK			

Appendix 5

9 November 2025 (2025-2026)

Norton Parish Council

Monthly breakdown of Receipts and Payments

All Cost Centres and Codes (Between 01/04/2025 and 31/03/2026)

	Budget	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Variance
PAYMENTS															
Admin costs															
Scribe Accounts															
Bank charge		4.25					4.25	4.25						12.75	-12.75
VAT Refund															
Audits															
Audit Fees	362.88														362.88
Bus Shelter															
Bus Shelter Noticeboarc	150.00														150.00
Bus Shelter	150.00														150.00
Chairman Expenses															
Chairman's Expenses															
Churchyard Maintenar															
Churchyard Maintenanc	400.00														400.00
Clerk Costs															
Clerk Salary	4,878.99	289.46		289.26	578.92	289.26	723.26	448.95						2,619.11	2,259.88
HMRC Payments					216.80									216.80	-216.80
PATA Payroll	162.80				67.35		37.35							104.70	58.10
Clerk Mileage															
Clerk Expenses		69.99		6.26			77.66							153.91	-153.91
Communications															
Communications	200.00														200.00
Community Infrastruct															
Community Infrastructur															
Contingency															
Stationary															
Defibrillator															
Defibrillator	75.00														75.00
Dues & Subscriptions															

Appendix 6

Norton Parish Council

Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 12 November 2025

Agenda item 10 – "To discuss the future management of the Village Hall and the outcome of the public meeting."

Councillors will be familiar with the background to the decision of the Village Hall Management Committee's decision to disband in January and hand over management of the premises to the Parish Council.

In a final attempt to secure local volunteers to help run the Village Hall, I called a Public Meeting to discuss the matter. The meeting was held on Tuesday 4 November and attended by 11 residents and 5 of the current 6 members of the Management Committee. Following a lively debate, the meeting reached the following conclusions:

1. Residents felt that volunteers would come forward if they knew exactly what was involved. I was therefore requested to issue a special edition of the Norton News setting out the tasks that Committee members might be expected to perform, together with a further plea for volunteers.

2. While none of the residents present volunteered to join the Committee, it was agreed that they would speak to their friends and neighbours and encourage them to volunteer.

3. Residents supported the Committee's decision to raise the discounted fee currently charged to the school for their use of the premises, to the rate charged to Norton residents. I was asked to make a further attempt to encourage the school to nominate a representative to sit on the Committee.

4. Residents were unanimous in their support for a Village Hall run by local volunteers, as that would maintain the community's close link with the facility and secure its status as a registered charity. The Parish Council was urged to do everything in its power to maintain the current management structure.

Since the meeting, someone from outside the parish has come forward and offered to volunteer and I've been given the names of several residents who might be interested in joining the Management Committee. I'm in contact with these individuals.

While the Public Meeting was generally very positive, I suspect that it will be difficult to find enough local volunteers to form a new Management Committee, especially as the names of those residents who might be interested have come from third parties, rather than a direct approach from the individuals themselves.

Although I'll continue to do everything I can to find suitable volunteers, we're running out of time. Members of the Management Committee made it very clear at the public

meeting that they will disband unless a new committee can be formed by early December.

I find it disappointing that everyone says what a fantastic community asset our Village Hall is and that it must continue to be run by local volunteers – but no one is prepared to step up and join the Management Committee.

Interestingly, the school have asked whether they could take on the management of the Village Hall. I don't think this is either possible or desirable, but it's an option I'm looking into and will discuss with the Headteacher and Chairman of Governors. I will report further on this option at the Council meeting.

Taking everything into consideration, I believe that Councillors should accept that it is very likely that the Parish Council will be requested to take over the running of the Village Hall in January.

A month ago, I circulated a report headed: "*Implications for Norton Parish Council in taking over the management of the Village Hall*", I attach a copy of that report (see below) for the Council's consideration.

"1. Current Landscape

Across Gloucestershire, the majority of village halls are charitable trusts run by an independent management committee (usually with charitable status under the Charities Act 2011) and supported, but not directly managed, by their parish councils. This is Norton Village Hall's current status.

The hall is usually owned either by the parish council and leased to the management committee, or by the committee itself, holding the freehold or a trust deed "for the benefit of the inhabitants of the parish."

In Norton's case, the Village Hall was built using a combination of grants and public subscriptions on land transferred to the parish by a Deed of Gift dated 8 December 1947. Although the Deed of Gift states that: "*The General Management and control of the Trust premises and the arrangements for their use shall be vested in a Committee of Management*", there is nothing in the Deed which prevents the parish council (the custodian trustee) from taking over the general management role.

There are several examples of Gloucestershire parish councils managing village or community halls directly, where either:

- The management committee has disbanded or struggled for volunteers;
- The parish council already owns and insures the building; and
- It was deemed beneficial for the parish council to assume operational control.

If it becomes likely that the parish council will need to take over the running of the village hall, it would be beneficial to speak to these councils (Cam, Churchdown, Gotherington, Minchinhampton and Upton St Leonards) particularly Gotherington as their situation appears to mirror ours. (Gotherington Parish Council oversees the building maintenance and booking process after their hall committee disbanded.)

(I have spoken to several of those parish councils since and will report my findings at the Council meeting.)

2. Governance Options for Norton Parish Council

Ignoring the closure of the Hall, I suggest that there are three possible options:

(a) Continue with a Charitable Management Committee (the status quo)
The Village Hall would remain as a separate registered charity with its own Trustees and be run, as now, by a Management Committee of unpaid volunteers elected by local residents. The parish council don't manage the day to day operations, which are vested in the Management Committee by the Deed of Gift, but should appoint a representative (currently me) to sit on the Committee.

(b) Norton Parish Council assumes full management responsibility
The parish council directly manages the booking process, the Hall's finances and maintenance of the premises.

This would require a resolution of the full council and a clear, documented management policy. The parish council would need to comply with local government financial regulations in its management of the Hall's finances, and the Public Works Loan Board if funding improvements.

Several points arising from this option require further investigation:

Can the Village Hall remain a registered charity? This would need to be discussed with the Charity Commission. There is a "Charity Reorganisation" process for transferring or dissolving a charity, but this doesn't appear to be straightforward.

Tewkesbury Borough Council currently hold £82,385 in Section 106 money for the benefit of the Village Hall. This money can only be spent on improvements to the premises or the playing fields and TBC must approve any such work before money can be paid out. It is unlikely, but unclear, whether approval from the Public Works Loan Board would also be required.

The status of the Village Hall's current Treasurer and Booking Clerk would need to be investigated. See below under "Hybrid arrangement" for details.

(c) Hybrid arrangement
The Village Hall remains a charity, but the parish council provides paid administrative support, including maintaining the building and managing the bookings. That administrative support would be provided by a combination of the Parish Clerk and the Village Hall's Treasurer and Booking Clerk.

At present, the Treasurer and Booking Clerk is paid an hourly rate for this work on a self-employed basis. If the parish council takes over the running of the Village Hall, should the Treasurer and Booking Clerk become a parish council employee?

If it is established that the Treasurer and Booking Clerk must become an employee and the person holding this role declines to change their status to that of an

employee, the parish council would need to recruit a part-time employee to carry out at least part of this role.

Clear boundaries between council and charity finances must be maintained to prevent commingling of funds.

Administration of the Village Hall's charity responsibilities, including ensuring compliance with Charity Commission regulations and submission of annual and financial returns (currently carried out by me on behalf of the Hall's Management Committee) would need to be performed by the parish council.

Someone (either the clerk or a councillor) would need to be designated the charity's administrator for Charity Commission purposes.

All parish councillors would need to become Trustees of the village hall charity.

3. Legal and Financial Implications

A parish council can only exercise those functions which have been granted to it by statute. If the parish council were to take over the management of the Village Hall it could rely on Section 133 of the Local Government Act 1972, which gives the council power to provide and maintain village halls and community buildings for public use.

Section 133 states that: "*A parish or community council may acquire or provide and furnish buildings to be used for public meetings and assemblies or contribute towards the expenses incurred by any other parish or community council or any other person in acquiring or providing and furnishing such a building*."

However, the parish council would be required to take the following actions:

The council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and Insurance Policy must be updated to include the management of assets, income, and bookings.

All Village Hall income and expenditure must be properly budgeted, invoiced, and audited through the parish accounts.

Terms and Conditions of Hire, a Bookings and Fees Policy, and Health & Safety documentation (including risk assessments and any necessary DBS checks) must be in place.

The employment status of the Treasurer and Booking Clerk must be investigated. If the postholder needed to become a parish council employee, rather than remaining self-employed, the council would need to put an employment contract in place and add the post to the council's payroll.

The Village Hall's current charitable status must be reviewed and might need to be dissolved or transferred.

There would be a significant financial cost involved if the parish council were to take over the running of the Village Hall and therefore this cost would be borne by the community through an increase in the parish council element of Council Tax.

Those increased costs are likely to fall in the following areas:

Staff costs – The Parish Clerk's hours (currently six paid hours per week) would need to be reviewed and amended to take account of his increased workload.

While direct payments to the Treasurer and Booking Clerk are unlikely to increase if the postholder becomes an employee, there would be additional oncosts associated with this change of status which would need to be met.

Audit requirements – Generally speaking, parish council accounts must be audited by an internal and an external auditor. But parish councils with income and expenditure under £25,000 (like Norton at present) are exempt from an external audit.

However the addition of the village hall's income and expenditure would take the parish council over the £25,000 threshold and therefore the council would incur the costs associated with an external audit.

Effect on Council Tax – The latest village hall accounts show a loss of £3,081.29 for the financial year to date, with a bank balance of £2,320. This is mainly due to unexpected maintenance costs for a building over 50 years old and large utility bills: which in 2024/2025 equated to more than half of the Hall's annual rental income.

This loss will either have to be made up during the remainder of the year, or covered by an increase in hire charges. Potentially, if the financial situation doesn't improve, the Village Hall might need to be subsidised from the parish council's reserves.

As previously explained, if the parish council take on a management role, the council's precept (£15,000 for the current financial year) will need to increase significantly for 2026/2027 to take account of the administration costs associated with managing the premises.

Until now the Village Hall has been run by a team of unpaid volunteers. In future, if the parish council takes over, those tasks will be carried out by paid council staff at the community's expense.

4. Transitional arrangements

The following would be required:

Formal Handover Agreement – Comprising a written record confirming transfer of assets, equipment, and bank accounts from the Management Committee to the parish council.

Due Diligence – Including a review of the Hall's insurance, service contracts, and maintenance schedules and an inspection of the building's safety certificates, including those for fire, electrics and legionella.

Adopting Updated Policies – Including:

- Terms and Conditions of Hire for the Village Hall;
- Bookings and Fees Policy;
- Maintenance and Inspection Schedule; and
- Risk Assessment Template.

5. Communication with Residents

Following the passing of an appropriate resolution, the parish council should publicly confirm that the council is taking over management of the Village Hall to safeguard the facility for the community and invite residents to remain involved in the running of the premises through volunteer groups.**"**

Recommendation:

That the Parish Council:

(d) Agrees in principle to take over the management of Norton Village Hall, if requested to do so by the Village Hall Management Committee.
(e) Investigates the governance options of full management responsibility and a hybrid arrangement (as set out in the above report).
(f) Considers the budgetary arrangements necessary for the Parish Council to manage the Village Hall.

Richard F N Page
10 November 2025

Appendix 7

Norton Parish Council

Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 12 November 2025

Agenda item 11 – "To receive an update on Local Government Re-organisation."

For the past few months, Gloucestershire's seven councils have been working together (with assistance from local partners, including the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils) to develop proposals for the future of local government in the county. Three proposals have been tabled.

Proposal for one unitary council for the whole of Gloucestershire.

Proposal for two unitary councils: one for the West (Gloucester, Forest of Dean, and Stroud) and one for the East (Cheltenham, Cotswold, and Tewkesbury).

Proposal for two unitary councils: an expanded Gloucester City, called Greater Gloucester, taking in several nearby parishes (including Twigworth and Down Hatherley, but not Norton), with the other covering the rest of the county.

Before these proposals are submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (the Government's deadline is 28 November), they must be formally approved at meetings of each of the seven Gloucestershire councils, which are taking place over the next two weeks. Tewkesbury Borough Council will be meeting next Tuesday, 18 November, to consider the proposals.

Before selecting which option best meets their criteria, the Government is expected to consult Gloucestershire residents and other key stakeholders early next year. A decision on which proposal should be implemented in the county is likely to be made next summer.

About the options

Single Unitary Authority

- Would mean one council for the whole county.
- Would maintain the current county-wide approach to delivering fire and rescue services, adult social care, children's social care and education services.
- Would aim to make decisions quicker, cut out repeated work, and provide better, more consistent services.
- Expected to save more than £21 million per year, with £164 million in net savings over the next 10 years.
- Local communities would have more say through new Neighbourhood Partnerships and links with town and parish councils.
- Would invest in digital technology to make services easier to use.
- Meets Government requirements and puts Gloucestershire in a strong position for future changes.

Two Unitary Authorities

- Would mean two councils: one for the East and one for the West.
- Would keep a strong local identity for different parts of the county.
- Expected to save nearly £11 million a year, with more than £55 million saved in ten years.
- Local people would have more say through Neighbourhood Partnerships and links with town and parish councils.
- Both councils would invest in digital technology for better services.
- Meets Government requirements and supports Gloucestershire's ambitions.

Expected timeline for Local Government Re-organisation

28 November 2025 – Gloucestershire councils submit their detailed proposals and plan for new unitary structure.

December 2025 to April 2026 – Government reviews the proposals, with a decision and legislative changes to follow.

May to December 2027 – Elections are held for the new unitary authority/authorities, followed by the formation of shadow authority/authorities.

April 2028 – The new unitary structure is introduced with the new authority/authorities taking over from the seven current councils.

Devolution proposals

The White Paper issued by the Government last year had two aims: make the local government structure simpler (known as Local Government Re-organisation), and give local areas more control over decisions (known as Devolution).

Part of devolution involves powers that currently sit with central Government being given to a local area. The Government intends to do this by establishing strategic authorities in areas like Gloucestershire that don't currently have one. The role of a strategic authority can vary, but the aim is that local decision makers have more of a say in what happens in their area and are responsible for large projects that make a difference to residents' lives, including:

- Better, quicker transport
- Affordable housing projects
- Skills programmes
- Employment support

For Gloucestershire, devolution would involve the setting up of a new strategic authority, made up of Gloucestershire and other neighbouring areas such as West of England (Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire) or Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The authority would be led by a directly elected mayor. This

strategic authority would be in addition to the creation of the new unitary authority/authorities to replace the county's seven existing councils.

Devolution could mean:

- More powers and more funding being passed down from Government.
- Better coordination of services across the whole region.
- Better support for skills development for our residents.
- More strategic control over planning and housing.
- A stronger voice for the region with central Government.

Plans for the devolution of powers to strategic authorities are currently taking second place to local government re-organisation. I will present a further report on devolution in Gloucestershire as this subject develops.

Richard F N Page
10 November 2025