

Report Sep 2025 : Concerns Regarding Biodiversity Practices, Communication, and Grounds Maintenance received from Love Where You Live

1. Biodiversity Practices and Maintenance

Recent maintenance activities at the OSC orchard and car park have led to confusion among residents. Although the hedge is not under Council ownership, the Council's contractor was instructed to trim the Council's side due to safety concerns—specifically, overgrown brambles encroaching into the car park. It is confirmed that a check for nesting birds was conducted prior to the work.

Additionally, concerns were raised regarding the timing of grass cutting prior to the Bug Hunt event. While not intended to undermine biodiversity efforts, the timing may have negatively impacted the event's outcomes. The Council is reviewing its seasonal maintenance scheduling to better align with biodiversity goals and community expectations. This topic is on the agenda at the September Council meeting, and community participation is encouraged.

2. Transparency and Communication

The importance of clear and timely communication is acknowledged. The Council is currently reviewing how biodiversity-related decisions and project updates are published to ensure they are, Accessible, Consistent and Easy to understand

Feedback from residents is actively guiding this process and will be considered in future discussions.

3. OSC Grounds Development

Clarification regarding the Jubilee Garden at the OSC: the Council has not agreed to its removal. As documented in minute C-2025-092, the current design is to be retained. Minute C-2025-090 refers to sourcing third-party support for developing draft plans for the orchard garden area. These plans will be made available for public input once prepared, to dispel confusion and reassure residents.

4. Meeting Minutes

Delays in publishing meeting minutes causing frustration. Improving the timeliness of these publications is a priority. Internal processes are being reviewed to ensure minutes are released promptly and within the one-month requirement.

There was also concern about conflicting information in the June meeting minutes (C-2025-080 and C-2025-082). To clarify:

- During the Clerk's absence, Cllr. D Heath was authorised to instruct the maintenance contractor.
- Minute C-2025-02 confirms that all future instructions will be issued solely by the Clerk. This process is clearly understood and consistently followed.

5. Community Engagement

The Council encourages active participation from residents, businesses, and community groups in public meetings—especially on complex topics such as biodiversity, grounds maintenance, and environmental projects. Collaborative engagement is key to shaping a greener and more inclusive future for Porlock.